

Appendix: Complete Text of Benjamin's Speech with Notes and Comments

PROLOGUE (MOSIAH 1:1–2:8)

Benjamin's Instructions to His Sons (Mosiah 1:1–8)

¹And now there was no more *contention in *all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who *belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had *continual peace all the remainder of his days.

²And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names *Mosiah, and *Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in *all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become *men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the *prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were *delivered them by the hand of the Lord. ³*And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the *plates of brass, saying:

My sons, *I would that ye should remember that were it not for *these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have *suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the *mysteries of God. ⁴For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for *he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the *commandments of God, even down to this present time. ⁵I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and *understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always *before our eyes, that even our fathers would have *dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our *brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the *traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. ⁶O my sons, I would that ye should remember that *these sayings are true, and also that these* records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can *know of their surety because we have them before our eyes. ⁷And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to *search them diligently, *that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land *according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers.

⁸And many more things did king Benjamin teach his sons, *which are not written in this book.

1:1 *contention*. Behind this word may stand the Hebrew word *rib*, which can refer to either physical battle or legal disputations. Compare W of M 1:16.

all the land of Zarahemla, all the people, all the remainder of his days. Note the inclusiveness: all space, all people, all time—a powerful introduction.

belonged to king Benjamin. The concept of people belonging to their king is found in 1 Sam. 21:7, “chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul”; and in 1 Kgs. 1:8, “mighty men which belonged to David.” In 1:10 Benjamin refers to the people in Zarahemla as “my people,” and in 4:4, he expands this to read: “my friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people.” In creating this sense of belonging to the king, Benjamin sets the stage for a realization of his people’s dependence on their heavenly king: “King Benjamin’s sermon about how God supports us from moment to moment as well as immediately blesses us (when we keep His commandments) was not designed to be a popular sermon in self-sufficient times like ours. For us to be called ‘unprofitable servants’ and to be reminded that even our bodies are made of the dust of the earth that also ‘belongeth to him’—these are hard sayings that bruise our pride. Unless, through humility and obedience, we can transform feeling owned into a grand sense of belonging, and being purchased into gratitude for being rescued, and dependency into appreciation for being tutored by an omniscient God, which He does in order that we might become more dependable and have more independence and scope for service in the future.” (Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 1980, 24). See the notes on Mosiah 4:4, *brethren*.

continual peace. This refers to the quality and depth of the peace, not necessarily the duration. It refers variously to just a year as in Alma 3:32, or for twenty-two years as in Mosiah 10:5; this expression is not found in the standard works outside of the Book of Mormon; see Mosiah 7:1; 19:29; 29:43; Alma 4:5; 16:12; 30:2, 5; 49:30; Hel. 3:23, 32; 3 Ne. 6:9.

all the remainder of his days. The phrase *remainder of . . . days* is unique to the Book of Mormon, occurring nine times: Mosiah 1:1; 5:5; 29:11; Alma 62:43; Hel. 5:4 (twice); Ether 10:30; 11:3, 18. A comparable phrase in the KJV is in Isa. 38:10 “residue of my years,” and other phrases in biblical Hebrew express a parallel meaning. For example, after “land rests [root *SQT] from war” a specific number of years is often mentioned; *land rests* is often found at the end of an era (Josh. 11:23; 14:15; Judg. 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28). The compiler of Chronicles frequently uses this phrase at the end of the reign of a king (2 Chron. 14:1, 6; 20:30). The elements of these OT verses compare well with those of Mosiah 1:1, which mentions a cessation of war or contention in the land and looks forward to the end of a reign of a king.

1:2 *Mosiah* Possibly related to the Hebrew *mosia*, “deliverer, savior,” a divine and human epithet in Ps. 7:10 (MT 7:11); 17:7; 18:41 (MT 18:42); 106:21; 2 Sam. 22:42; Isa. 49:26; 60:16; Jer. 14:8; TB *Berakhot* 49a (God); Judg. 3:9 (Othniel), “deliverer”; Neh. 9:27. In biblical times, this name or title appears to have applied to a person or officer who was a victorious hero appointed by God; a liberator, one who delivered his people by nonviolent means, and who established justice. Benjamin’s decision to name his son Mosiah after his own father Mosiah₁ signals a wish for the son to be a similar kind of king who “hearken[ed] unto the voice of the Lord” and was a savior for the righteous Nephites. “Indeed, the themes of God’s salvation and the deliverance of his people are strong in the book of Mosiah,” thus meaningfully reflecting the connotations of the word *mosia*; “in several respects, the Book of Mormon usage of this term is quite remarkable, meaningful, and wholly consistent with Hebrew usage” (Welch, *Reexploring*, 105–7). See the notes on Mosiah 5:8, *no other name*, and *take upon you the name of Christ*.

Helorum, and Helaman. Robert Smith suggests that the name could derive from the Hebrew *hlmm*, “hammer,” while Joanne Hackett notes that the Bible name *Helem* has the meaning “yoke,” and adds the possibilities of **HLM* “to dream”; *helem* “strength.” John Tvedtnes comments that although it is unlikely, we should consider the possibility that *he-* is the definite article (the expected form would be with *ha-*), which would allow a comparison of Helorum with the name Luram (Moro. 9:2). It should be noted that Alma₂, who was a friend and fellow missionary of the sons of Mosiah, apparently named his son after their uncle, Helaman. For more comments on these names, see this volume p. 38.

all the language of his fathers. The phrase *language of his fathers* does not occur in the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, *language* generally refers to speech or words (1 Ne. 1:15; 3:21; 5:3, 6, 8; 10:15; 17:22; Alma 5:61; 7:1; 26:24; 46:26; Hel. 13:37) and also in a more technical sense, to a system of written communication (1 Ne. 1:2; 3:19; 2 Ne. 31:3; Jacob 7:4; Enos 1:1; Omni 1:17–18, 22, 25; Mosiah 1:2, 4; 8:6, 11–12; 9:1; 24:4; 28:14, 17; 3 Ne. 5:18; Morm. 9:24; Ether 1:33, 35–36; 3:22, 24; 12:39; Moro. 10:16). Speculation as to what Benjamin meant by *the language of his fathers* has varied. Apparently Benjamin taught his sons Egyptian (see 1:4), just as the ancient “Jews adopted Greek, an international language, in preference to Hebrew, even as a vehicle of holy writ, for the purpose of commanding the widest possible hearing”; and so too did Nephi “choose to record his message . . . in a world language rather than in his own tribal Hebrew” (Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites*, 1994, 17). He may also have taught them Hebrew or other languages: Sperry speculates on the limited persistence of Egyptian among the descendants of Nephi: “When the Nephites left Jerusalem they may have had an active speaking knowledge of Egyptian,” but “within a few generations, . . . a knowledge of Egyptian would have been limited to comparatively few of their descendants. . . . I see few resemblances to either Egyptian or ancient Hebrew characters in the few lines of hieroglyphics copied from the plates and left us by the Prophet Joseph Smith” (*JBMS* 4/1, 1995, 210–11, but compare Ricks and Tvedtnes, who argue that although the “language,” i.e., *script*, was Egyptian, the underlying language was Hebrew, *JBMS* 5/2, 1996, 156–63). The phrase *all the language of his fathers* would seem to imply more than Egyptian alone and thus that “the Nephites . . . had freely altered the Egyptian to suit their own purposes” (M.18, 129; for further discussion of Benjamin as a linguist, see this volume, pp. 36–37). In commenting on how he had educated his children, Benjamin reflects his awareness of the biblical requirement that parents should “teach [the commandments] diligently unto [their] children” (Deut. 6:7; see also Mosiah 4:14; notes on 4:15, *teach them*, below; and this volume p. 4). “It appears to be a characteristic of goodly parents to spend an adequate portion of their time and energy teaching their children the things of God” (Ogden, in *Studies in Scripture* 7, 17–18). Following Benjamin, Ezra Taft Benson emphasizes the importance of understanding the language of holy writ: “If they didn’t know the right words, they wouldn’t know the plan” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 36).

men of understanding. This phrase occurs a number of times in the KJV OT: Ezra 8:16; Job 34:10, 34; Prov. 1:5; 10:23; 11:12; 15:21; 17:27–28; 20:5; 28:2; Eccl. 9:11. It appears most often in Proverbs, where the virtues of the man of understanding are extolled. The Hebrew term for *understanding* is from the common root *BYN, the basic meaning of which is “to discern.” In Alma 17:2, the sons of Mosiah are referred to as “men of a sound understanding,” following the tradition laid down by their grandfather Benjamin and his fathers. In the latter days, this phrase was used in connection with the organization of the Relief Society, “I again ask the sisters in every ward of the Territory to . . . get women of good understanding to be your leaders, and then get counsel from men of understanding” (Young, *JD*, 12:194); and also to describe returned missionaries, “They are broadened in their minds, they are enlarged in their capacities, they have increased in their experience, and they become men of understanding, because their faculties have been aroused and developed” (George Q. Cannon, *Collected Discourses* 4, 6 October 1895). Oliver Cowdery, however, used it in a derogatory fashion when describing anti-Mormon intellectuals of his day, who employed “the weak and vain excuse framed, either to justify themselves, or to blind the eyes of the more ignorant; for any man of principle or judgment might see at once, that these excuses in the minds of men of understanding would not weigh any thing” (*Evening and Morning Star*, Jan. 1834, 121).

prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers. Evidently, these prophecies were found in the Nephite records, or they may have been handed down orally. See also the notes on Mosiah 1:2, *all the language of his fathers*, above.

delivered them by the hand of the Lord. The idea that the words of the prophets are not their own but come from the Lord is found often in the OT: Ex. 4:12; 24:12; Num. 23:5, 16; Deut. 5:22; 18:18; Isa. 59:21; Jer. 1:7–9; 25:30; 26:4; Ezek. 2:7; 3:27. See also D&C 1:38; 18:33–36. The duty of the messenger in the ancient world was to repeat precisely the words that he or she was entrusted to deliver. See the Ugaritic *Legend of Keret* A ii: 55–57; A iii 140–42 (message and repetition of a message); A ii: 62–71; A iii:156–64 (a command and a carrying out of a command), in Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 1969, 143–44; compare *Iliad* 2.11–15, 28–34, 65–69; 4.192–96, 204–6; 6.87–98, 269–78; 9.122–57, 264–99; 11.187–94, 200–9, 793–802 (16.36–45); 12.343–50, 357–63; 15.159–67, 176–83; 23.113–16, 134–36; 24.113–16, 134–36, 146–58, 175–87.

1:3 *and he also taught them.* King Benjamin frequently ventured beyond the mere symbolic religious functions of ancient kings and personally taught his sons and his people concerning God’s commandments (K.11, 114). On Benjamin as a father, see this volume, pp. 4, 38, 41.

plates of brass. Benjamin placed great importance on the plates of brass, “in spite of the fact that they had many prophets.” A modern application of this would be, “don’t get the idea that because we have a prophet we don’t have to pay much attention to the scriptures” (N.25, 438). For a discussion of the king’s responsibility to possess a copy of the law and read in it all the days of his life, see Deuteronomy 17:18–19 and this volume, pp. 192–93. Gary Sturgess suggests that the small plates of Nephi might also have been read during the ceremony (*JBMS* 4/2, 1995, 114, 131). For the term *plates of brass*, see 1 Kgs. 7:30; Sirach 50:3; 1 Ne. 3:3, 12, 24; 5:11, 14, 18–19; 2 Ne. 4:15; 5:12; Omni 1:14; Mosiah 28:11, 20; Alma 37:3–5; and the notes on Mosiah 1:16, *engraven on the plates of brass*, below.

I would that ye should. This subjunctive imperative carries a sense of urgency, but also gentleness, and is found fifty-three times in the Book of Mormon and the D&C, each with an injunction to remember or obey. Benjamin uses it thirteen times. See 1 Ne. 1:18, 22:30; 2 Ne. 2:28; 4:3; 31:4; Omni 1:2, 26; Mosiah 1:3, 6, 7 (twice), 10; 2:31; 4:11, 26, 28; 5:8, 11, 12, 15; 15:1; Alma 3:19; 5:43; 6:5; 7:23; 9:14; 12:5; 13:1, 13; 19:5; 32:22; 36:2; 37:43; 38:5, 10; 39:9; 44:3; 60:23, 34; Hel. 5:6, 7; 7:23; 8:19; 15:5; 3 Ne. 12:48; 13:1; 23:6; 26:13; 27:31; Morm. 1:3; D&C 9:1; 46:7, 10; 53:7.

these plates. The plates referred to are the plates of brass, see notes on *plates of brass*, above.

suffered in ignorance. Sin as a result of a lack of knowledge has special treatment. One type of sin referred to specifically in the law of Moses was a sin or transgression committed in error or ignorance (Lev. 4:2, 13, 22, 27; 5:15, 18; Num. 15:24–29; see also the notes on Mosiah 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*, below). Ancient Israel divided sin “into three categories in order of severity”: (1) “Khet (inadvertent sin),” which is “‘mark-missing,’ [compare Jacob 4:14] on the analogy of X who draws the bow to shoot an arrow at Y, but instead of striking Y, strikes Z. Regardless of intention, X is held responsible for shooting Z.” It is to this sin that Benjamin may have been referring, since without the stipulations of the law contained in the brass plates, they would not have been able to keep the law. (2) “Avon (advertent sin) . . . is often referred to as ‘crookedness,’ on the analogy of a Jew who eats pork. He knows he is not permitted according to the Torah, yet he chooses to eat pork in order to satisfy his appetite. This is a premeditated action to satisfy a human need with no regard for the culpability of his act.” (3) “*Pesha* (demonstrative sin)” has to do with rebelliousness. “Surely included within [this] category would be the three cardinal sins of Judaism: bloodshed, adultery, and idolatry . . . but *pesha* is not limited to those three specific sins. *Pesha* is the ultimate proof of divine love; because we have the freedom to submit our wills to God, we have also the freedom to pit our wills against God” (Anderson and Culbertson, *Anglican Theological Review* 68/4, 1986, 308–9; see Milgrom on sacrifice or inadvertent sin in the notes on Mosiah 2:32, below). With regard to inadvertent sin, “the

Hebrew Bible's connection between sin and ritual uncleanness, contracted through normal biological processes . . . or disease," then "corresponds to the contemporary experience of being 'stained' by circumstances for which we are not personally responsible, e.g., our complicity in the oppression brought about through the unjust structures of society" (Brown, *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 44/1-2, 1990, 155). See further the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*, below.

mysteries of God. The term *mystery* or *mysteries* does not appear in the KJV OT. However it is widely used in the NT (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16; Rev. 10:7), in the Book of Mormon (1 Ne. 1:1; 2:16; 10:19; Mosiah 2:9; Alma 12:9-10; 26:22), and elsewhere in early Jewish and Christian literature: Sirach 42:18-19; *Testament of Levi* 2:10; 1 *Enoch* 16:3; *Sib. Or.* 12:64; *Odes of Solomon* 8:10; 1QH 11:10; 1Q27; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.22 (189); 37 (266). The KJV OT has a comparable term *secret* or *secrets*, Hebrew *sod* (see, for example, Job 15:8; 29:4; Ps. 25:14; Prov. 3:32; Amos 3:7). In its earliest contexts, the word *sod* referred to the council of God in which the prophet learned the confidential and intimate and hence mysterious will of God (Welch, in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi*, 1988, 46). Inasmuch as Benjamin will disclose to his people the words spoken to him by the angel of the Lord, his reference to the *mysteries of God* may relate back to the ancient Israelite concept of divine mystery. For more on *mysteries*, see this volume, p. 7, and generally chapter 9.

1:4 *he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians.* The *he* referred to is Lehi, who taught Nephi; see 1 Ne. 1:1-2. "Benjamin's three sons—Mosiah, Helorum, and Helaman—were taught to read the modified Egyptian script in which Laban's plates of brass and Nephi's plates of gold were written" (T.46, 207). "The Nephite record reflected the Hebrew culture and background of the Jews, but was written in Egyptian characters" (M.18, 130). Nibley believes that the brass plates were probably written in the Hebrew language but by use of a demotic script that was introduced in Egypt around 750 BC (N.25, 438). The term *language of the Egyptians* can also be found in 1 Ne. 1:2; Morm. 9:32-34; see also notes on Mosiah 1:2, *all the language of our fathers*, above.

commandments of God. The specific commandment that parents teach their children the things of God is found most often in Deuteronomy: Deut. 4:9-10; 6:7; 11:19; 31:19, 22. It is also noted in Lev. 10:11 and Ps. 34:11.

1:5 *understand of his mysteries.* A similar expression is found in Eph. 3:4, "when ye read, ye may understand . . . the mystery of Christ"; *mysteries of God* is found in 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Ne. 2:16; 10:19; Mosiah 1:3; 2:9; Alma 12:9-10; 26:22; D&C 6:7; 8:11; 11:7. Because the word *mysterion* could refer to sacred knowledge, Benjamin's use of this term may reflect the sacred temple setting in which he was speaking, or it may refer to the fact that all truths are mysteries until they are understood: "There are in the gospel such things as mysteries. A mystery is, of course, some truth that is not understood. All the principles of the gospel and all truth pertaining to the salvation of men are simple when understood. Until it is understood, however, a simple truth may be a great mystery" (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:296). The importance of understanding these mysteries is explained as follows, "The secular knowledge is to be desired; the spiritual knowledge is a necessity. We shall need all of the accumulated secular knowledge in order to create worlds and furnish them, but only through the mysteries of God and these hidden treasures of knowledge may we arrive at the place and condition where we may use that knowledge in creation and exaltation" (Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 1973, 280). See notes on Mosiah 1:3, *and he also taught them*, above. On mysteries and revelation, see this volume, pp. 5-8, and generally chapter 9.

before our eyes. This passage is reminiscent of the admonition to the Israelites to keep the law "as frontlets between thine eyes" (Ex. 13:8-10; cf. Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21); "for a memorial" (Ex. 13:14-16). It is unclear when this commandment began to be interpreted mechanically and phylacteries came into use, but from the beginning these

biblical passages dealing with frontlets were associated with teaching religion to the children, as it is here. See also Matt. 23:5; Letter of Aristeas 158–59; *tefillin*, “phylacteries” from 1Q, 4Q, and Wadi Murabba’at (Midrash *Sifre Deut.* 6:4); see also Alma 3:16–18, “marking themselves in the foreheads.”

dwindled in unbelief. This phrase is unique to the Book of Mormon: 1 Ne. 4:13; 12:22; 13:35; 2 Ne. 1:10; Alma 45:10, 12; 50:22; Hel. 6:34; 15:11; 3 Ne. 21:5; 4 Ne. 1:34, 38; Morm. 9:20. Interestingly 4 Ne. 1:38 distinguishes between dwindling in unbelief and willfully rebelling against God. In the KJV OT, apostasy is generally described as either *rebellion* or *forsaking*. Benjamin ensured the preservation of his people from ignorance by teaching them from the plates of brass, citing Lehi who taught his children Egyptian, so that they could read the engravings and pass knowledge on to further generations. Because he believed that without this knowledge, his “people would be no better off than the Lamanites,” the “grand passion of Benjamin’s life was the preservation intact of the mysteries and practices of his people as they went back to the beginning” (N.28, 298). Benjamin had a vivid example in front of him of one nation that had dwindled in unbelief: “The Mulekite civilization is a classic illustration of a nation without the anchor of scriptural writ going adrift in a troubled sea” (M.18, 130).

brethren. By referring to the Lamanites as their *brethren*, Benjamin includes them as family, part of the tribe of Israel and the house of Lehi. This tradition was carried on by the sons of Mosiah in Alma 17:9. See also Jac. 2:35; 3:5; 7:25; Enos 1:11; Jarom 1:2; Mosiah 11:19; 22:3; 25:11; 28:1; Alma 3:6; 17:9, 11; 19:14; 24:1, 20; 26:3, 27; 27:20; 43:11, 29; 48:21; Hel. 4:24; 15:4, 11, 12; 4 Ne. 1:43; Moro. 1:4; 10:1; D&C 3:18; 10:48; Testimony of Three Witnesses. See also the notes on Mosiah 1:1, *belonged to king Benjamin*, above; 1:13, *weak like unto their brethren*; and 3:1, *my brethren*, below.

traditions of their fathers. See Gal. 1:14, in which Paul was “zealous of the traditions of [his] fathers,” and 1 Pet. 1:18, “by tradition from your fathers.” Among the Israelites and Jews crucial debates often centered around the role of custom or tradition in contrast with the specific provisions of the written law. Benjamin favors the written law over oral traditions, objecting especially to any traditions that are not correct.

1:6 *these sayings are true.* Benjamin certifies as a witness the truthfulness of the words on the plates and the integrity of those ancient records. The phrases *these sayings are true*, *these records are true*, or *true sayings* and *true records* do not occur in the KJV OT. *True sayings* is found in 1 Tim. 3:1 and Rev. 19:9. The concept of true records is found in the writings of John: John 8:13–14; 19:35; 3 Jn. 1:12. *True words*, *word* or *words of truth* appear in the OT: 2 Sam. 7:28; 1 Kgs. 17:24; Ps. 119:43, 160, Prov. 22:21; Eccl. 12:10, as well as the NT: John 17:17; Acts 26:25; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18; Rev. 21:5. Reference is also made to *true law*, *true laws*, and *law of truth*: Neh. 9:13; Ps. 119:142; Mal. 2:6. The Book of Mormon contains several statements attesting to the truthfulness of records or words: 1 Ne. 1:3; 13:39; 2 Ne. 9:40; 11:3; 31:15; Mosiah 1:6; 5:2; 17:9, 20; 29:37; Alma 3:12; 5:47; 6:8; 30:43; 38:9; Hel. 9:37; 3 Ne. 5:9, 18; 8:1; 17:25; 18:37. Turner emphasizes the importance of the truthfulness of the records, “The contents of these three sets of plates provided the scriptural underpinnings of Nephite government and law” (T.46, 208). By bearing testimony to his sons, Benjamin highlights the importance of parents bearing testimony to their children: “It was human testimony . . . that excited this inquiry [after a knowledge of the glory of God] . . . That inquiry frequently terminated . . . in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainties” (A.01, 25). See the notes on Mosiah 5:2, *we know of their surety*, below.

records are true. Bearing witness of the truth of the Nephite records is an important task of the prophets of the Book of Mormon; see 1 Ne. 1:3; Alma 3:12; 3 Ne. 5:9, 18; 8:1; 17:25; 18:37; Ether 4:11; see also D&C 1:39; 67:8; 128:4; 138:60; John 8:13, 14; 19:35; 3 Jn. 1:12.

know of their surety. The phrase *know of a surety* occurs in Gen. 15:13; Acts 12:11; 1 Ne. 5:8.

1:7 *search them diligently.* The phrase *search diligently* is found in the KJV in Matt. 2:8. A *diligent search* is in the KJV Ps. 64:6; 77:6. In Psalm 64:6, the word *diligent* is a translation of a cognate accusative (literally “search a search”). *Search them diligently* appears twice more in the Book of Mormon, 3 Ne. 23:1 and Moro. 7:19, and also in D&C 84:94; 90:22, 24 (D&C 136:26 has *diligent search*).

that ye may profit thereby. The idea of teachings being profitable to the people can be found in 1 Ne. 19:23; 2 Ne. 2:14; 4:15; 5:30; W of M 1:2; often *profit* is linked with learning.

keep the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land. In many respects, Benjamin’s words are consonant with the theology of Deuteronomy; compare “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do” (Deut. 29:9). Obedience is of critical importance to Benjamin. “A knowledge of the things of God is inseparably connected with obedience to the commandments of God. . . . Prophets of all ages have taught that God cannot be known, nor can his gospel be understood by the carnally minded, the disobedient, or the rebellious” (M.18, 131). Keeping the commandments is also mentioned in Deut. 4:2; 6:17; 10:13; Ps. 119:115; 1 Chron. 22:12; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.; 1Q22 I–II. *Keep the commandments* is likewise found 36 times in the Book of Mormon, with 5 occurrences in Benjamin’s speech: Mosiah 1:7; 2:13–14, 31, 41. Nibley sees in Benjamin’s entire discourse a comparison with Moses’ iteration of the law in Deuteronomy, according to which Benjamin offers in 1:7 a “conscious” echo of Deut. 7:9, for “the promised rewards are the same; . . . heaven and earth will bring forth in abundance, you will never have to fear a foreign enemy—success and security should be yours” (N.29, 223–24). See notes on Mosiah 2:13, 22, 31, *commandments*, below. For further information on *fear*, see the notes on Mosiah 2:10, *that ye should fear me*; 4:1, *fear of the Lord*.

according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers. Benjamin recognizes that his promises are the same as those given by other prophets. The idea that obedience to commandments leads to prosperity is widespread throughout the scriptures and is particularly prevalent in Deuteronomy, where it is often expressed in language similar to that of the Book of Mormon. Welch sees in this emphasis on Deuteronomy a possible reflection of the likelihood that the “book of law” found during Josiah’s reign and during Lehi’s day was all or part of the book of Deuteronomy. This book appears to have been the basis for religious reforms implemented at that time (*Ensign*, Sept. 1976, 28–29). In fact, in a ceremony somewhat similar to Benjamin’s assembly, the newly discovered book was read before all Israel (2 Chron. 34:30). Certainly Lehi would have been greatly influenced by the concepts and even language of this “book of law.” It is even conceivable that Lehi had been present at that ceremony. Prosperity involves more than material or physical well-being; it also involves a wide array of spiritual and divine blessings (see Deut. 28:1–14; Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 1989, 196–97). On obedience leading to prosperity, see, for example, Deut. 29:9; Josh. 1:7; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 1 Chron. 22:13. On promises to the fathers, see Deut. 6:3; 19:8; Neh. 9:23. As widespread as this idea is in the Bible, it is expressed more strongly and more frequently in the Book of Mormon. See for example 1 Ne. 2:20; 4:14; 2 Ne. 1:9, 20; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 2:31; 26:37; Alma 1:31; 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13, 43; 38:1; 48:15, 25; 50:20; 62:51; Hel. 3:20; 4:15; 12:1; 3 Ne. 22:17. See notes on Mosiah 2:22, *prosper in the land*, below.

1:8 *which are not written in this book.* This verse is almost identical to John 20:30, which is in turn closely related to many other biblical texts. The Book of Mormon has other similar passages: 1 Ne. 10:15; Alma 9:34; 13:31; 3 Ne. 7:17; see also John 21:25. Compare references in the OT to the fact that additional words were spoken that could not be contained in the written record: 1 Kgs. 11:41; 14:29; 15:7, 23, 31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 22:39, 45; 2 Kgs. 1:18;

8:23; 10:34; 12:19; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 18, 28; 15:6, 21, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 22:13; 23:28; 24:5; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 25:26.

Benjamin Confers the Kingship on Mosiah (Mosiah 1:9–17)

⁹And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made *an end of teaching his sons, that he *waxed old, and he saw that he must very soon go *the way of all the earth; therefore, he thought it *expedient that he should *confer the kingdom upon one of his sons. ¹⁰Therefore, he had Mosiah brought before him; and these are the words which he spake unto him, saying:

My son, I would that ye should *make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or *the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for *on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people *out of mine own mouth that thou art *a king and a ruler over this people, whom the *Lord our God hath given us. ¹¹And moreover, I shall *give this people a name, that thereby they *may be distinguished above all the people which the *Lord God hath *brought out of the *land of Jerusalem; and this I do *because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord. ¹²And I give unto them a name that *never shall be blotted out, *except it be through transgression. ¹³Yea, and moreover I say unto you, that if this *highly favored people of the Lord should fall into transgression, and become *a wicked and an adulterous people, that the Lord will *deliver them up, that thereby they become *weak like unto their brethren; and he will no more preserve them by his *matchless and marvelous power, as he has hitherto preserved our fathers. ¹⁴For I say unto you, that if he had not *extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen *into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred.

¹⁵And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of these sayings to his son, that *he gave him charge concerning all the affairs of the kingdom. ¹⁶And moreover, he also gave him charge concerning the records which were *engraven on the *plates of brass; and also the plates of Nephi; and also, the sword of Laban, and the ball or director, which *led our fathers through the wilderness, which was *prepared by the hand of the Lord that thereby they might be led, every one according to the *heed and diligence which they gave unto him. ¹⁷Therefore, as they were unfaithful they did not prosper nor progress in their journey, but were *driven back, and incurred the displeasure of God upon them; and therefore they were smitten with *famine and sore afflictions, to *stir them up in remembrance of their duty.

1:9 *an end*. The phrase *make* or *made an end* is found 45 times in the Book of Mormon and appears to be formulaic and to mark a transition, such as between Mormon's editorial commentary and his abridgment (Morm. 8:13). This leads to the proposition that Benjamin has delivered a formal period of instruction to his sons as he approaches the end of his life. See 1 Ne. 7:1; 10:2; 14:30; 16:1; 22:29; 30:18; 31:1; 2: Ne. 1:1; 4:3, 8, 10, 11; 30:18; 31:1; Jac. 2:22; 3:14; 7:27; Omni 1:3, 9, 11, 30; Mosiah 1:9, 15; 4:1; 6:3; 8:1, 19; 13:25; 25:7, 14, 17; Alma 6:1; 12:19; 14:1; 24:17; 35:1; 44:10; 3 Ne. 5:19; 10:19; 15:8; 17:18; 18:36; 19:35; 26:12; 28:24; Morm. 8:13; Moro. 1:1. See also notes on Mosiah 4:1, *made an end of speaking*, below.

waxed old. This phrase, meaning to grow old (see the comments on impending death, this volume, p. 91), appears several times in the OT and three times in the NT. Most often people are said to *wax old* (Gen. 18:12; Josh. 23:1; 2

Chron. 24:15; Ps. 32:3), but the phrase may also refer to garments (Deut. 8:4; Neh. 9:21), the root of a cut-down tree (Job 14:8), and a bag (Luke 12:33). People *wax old like a garment* (Ps. 102:26; Isa. 50:9; Heb. 1:11), as does the earth (Isa. 51:6). Interestingly, the old covenant is said to have *waxed old* (Heb. 8:13). Three Hebrew roots are rendered *wax old* in the OT: *ZQN, which means to become old; *BLH, meaning to become old and worn out with particular reference to clothing; and *TQ, which means to advance in years. The phrase also occurs in the Book of Mormon in 2 Ne. 4:12, referring to Lehi; in 2 Ne. 7:9 and 8:6, which are parallel to Isaiah; and in Jacob 5:3, where the allegorical olive tree waxes old.

the way of all the earth. This phrase appears in Josh. 23:14 and 1 Kgs. 2:2. The English is a literal translation of a Hebrew expression. In the Book of Mormon it is found in 2 Ne. 1:14; Alma 1:1; 62:37; and Hel. 1:2.

expedient. Benjamin uses the word *expedient* here and in Mosiah 4:27; 5:3; 6:1. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines *expedient* as "tending to promote the object proposed; fit or suitable for the purpose; proper under the circumstances." Benjamin's usage does not convey the sense of a practical shortcut, as in the modern meaning of the word, but more of being suitably necessary for reconciliation. See also notes on Mosiah 5:3, *expedient*, below.

confer the kingdom. Benjamin is conferring the kingdom on his son, rather than the heir assuming the throne on the death of the previous king. Further information on such a coregency is found in this volume, pp. 238–39.

1:10 *make a proclamation.* Proclamations and gathering together often occur together in the OT for various reasons. Proclamations are made (1) to gather people at the temple, (2) to celebrate feasts—specifically the feast of booths, (3) to declare liberty at the jubilee, and (4) to announce a new king (see this volume, pp. 167, 188–89). Proclamations are often, although not exclusively, made by kings. Examples of these four types of proclamations are (1) Hezekiah's proclamation to gather the people to observe the Passover in 2 Chron. 30:5. (2) Ex. 32:5, where Aaron "made a proclamation" and said, "To morrow is a feast to the Lord." Unfortunately, at this feast the golden calf was worshiped. In Lev. 23 a proclamation is made in association with feasts: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts" (Lev. 23:2; see also 23:4, 21, 37). In 1 Kgs. 21:9 a fast is proclaimed by Jezebel. In 2 Kgs. 10:20 a solemn assembly is proclaimed for Ba'al. Neh. 8:5 reads: "And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written." This is directly tied to the festival of booths, although it is postexilic. (3) In Lev. 25:10 "liberty" is "proclaimed" as part of the jubilee. In Jer. 34:12–22 the people are condemned because they have not followed the commandment to "proclaim liberty," again as part of the jubilee. Thus this root is often associated with feasts (it is also used in a number of other ways). (4) A new king is proclaimed in Dan. 5:29: "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." Benjamin's listing of the recipients of this proclamation is unusual (Mosiah 1:10). He emphasizes that it is to go throughout all his land and among all his people, namely the Mulekites (the people of Zarahemla) as well as to the Nephites (the people of Mosiah). Biblical proclamations specify the following: "through Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 24:9); "throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan" (2 Chron. 30:5); "throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity" (Ezra 10:7); "in all their cities and in Jerusalem" (Neh. 8:15); "in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem" (Jer. 11:6). Some gatherings occur without specific mention of a proclamation, although it is likely that proclamations did occur in association with these gatherings. In Lev. 8:4, Moses gathers an assembly to dress Aaron in the clothing of the high priest (perhaps analogous to a coronation); in Ex. 35:1, Moses gathers the children of Israel to make covenants; see also 2 Chron. 30:5, "make proclamation throughout all Israel . . . that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at

Jerusalem”; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:3, “And there was a proclamation . . . that they should be gathered together at Jerusalem” (1 Esdras 5:47; see also Ezra 10:7; Mosiah 1:18; 2:1; 7:17;). See also this volume, p. 91, and notes on Mosiah 2:1, *proclamation*.

the people of Zarahemla. The Mulekites. See Omni 1:14, 18–19. They were more numerous than the Nephites. See Mosiah 25:2.

on the morrow. Although Benjamin is announcing the assembly for the next day, it should not be assumed that this was a hasty decision. Preparations had undoubtedly been underway for some time because of the necessity of constructing a tower, the need to distribute copies of the speech, and so forth. Because it probably would have taken all the people in the land of Zarahemla more than one day to assemble, it seems likely that they had already gathered at the temple, either for other festival purposes or in anticipation of the coronation announcement.

out of mine own mouth. Compare Job 9:20, which says “Mine own mouth shall condemn me,” and Isaiah talks of words from his mouth in Isa. 45:23; 48:3; 55:11.

a king and a ruler. The combination of *king* and *ruler* occurs six times in the Book of Mormon: 1 Ne. 16:38; Jacob 1:9; Mosiah 1:10; 2:30; 23:39; 29:2. See also D&C 38:21, “no king nor ruler.” Twice the phrase is turned around, “a ruler and a king” (Mosiah 2:11; 6:3), and once the phrase “king and leader” is found (Alma 47:6). No similar combination is found in the KJV. The context of the passages does not seem to uphold the supposition that this phrase might indicate that the two terms referred to two different aspects of the office, or even two different offices held at the same time by an individual. For example, in the first reference Laman uses these terms to speak of Nephi before kingship had been established. It has been suggested that Benjamin saw a distinction between *a king and ruler*, and *the king and ruler*, Christ being *the king* and *the ruler* (M.18, 132). For more information on the role of the king as intermediary between God and the people, see this volume, pp. 234–35.

Lord our God. This is a common phrase in the OT. The first term probably represents the tetragram YHWH and the second *elohenu*. These two words appear in the often recited verse, Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” See also *Lord God*, noted under Mosiah 1:11, below.

1:11 *give this people a name*. The full name is given to the people in Mosiah 3:8. Speaking generally, the name Benjamin gives his people is that of Christ (Mosiah 5:10), which “is a sacred title which means ‘anointed’ or ‘anointed one.’ . . . One does not have the right to assume it; rather, it must be conferred” (M.18, 132). “In becoming the sons and daughters of Christ, they took upon themselves both his *name* and his *nature*” (T.46, 223). For further references, see Mosiah 1:12; 5:7–13; 25:12; *Gospel of Philip* 58:17–59:6; 64:23–31 (Nag Hammadi Codex 2:3). See Madsen, in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1990, 1:458–81. For further comments on the new name, see this volume, pp. 58, 243, 252–53, 286, 290–91, 296; and on covenant, see the notes on Mosiah 5:5, *enter into a covenant*, and this volume, pp. 243–44, 255, 258–59.

may be distinguished. In a recent article, Peter Machinist looks at how scholars have tried to find ways in which Israel was distinct from the other peoples in the Near East. Machinist examines two proposals: (1) in their individual traits and (2) in the way Israel “patterned and emphasized” cultural ideas. He suggests that neither of these features can be called distinctive. He investigates if and how the Israelites considered themselves distinct, and finds 433 examples of OT statements that show that distinctiveness was important to them. The reasons implicit in these passages concerning distinctiveness show that (1) “the core of Israel’s claim to distinctiveness is her special relationship to her God,” (2) “the unique relationship between Israel and Yahweh only underscores the uniqueness of Yahweh himself,” (3) certain behavioral traits set Israel apart, and (4) because of this relationship and

the behavior exhibited, Israel obtained a unique status from God, or in other words, she was blessed. Machinist notes the diversity on the placement in the Bible of the distinctiveness passages and suggests that they not only reflect the opinion of the canonical organizers but that of Israel as a whole. Benjamin and his people were equally conscious of their special status before God and among all the peoples of the earth. Interestingly, the Nephite concern over distinctiveness is specifically connected with their exodus from the land of Jerusalem (Mosiah 1:11); many of Machinist's passages establishing Israelite distinctiveness arise out of passages about Israel's exodus from Egypt (Ah, Assyria—: *Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography, Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, 1991, 196–212).

Lord God. The Hebrew expression used here would probably have been the Tetragrammaton YHWH for Lord (pronounced *adonai*) and *elohim* for God. See also notes on Mosiah 1:10, *Lord our God*, above.

brought out of the land of Jerusalem. See also notes on Mosiah 2:4, *who had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem*, below. Compare Ex. 32:7, “thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt.”

land of Jerusalem. “The land of Jerusalem is *not* the city of Jerusalem. Lehi ‘dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days’ (1 Ne. 1:4), yet his sons had to ‘go down to the land of our father’s inheritance’ to pick up their property (1 Ne. 3:16, 22). The apparent anomaly is readily explained by the Amarna Letters, in which we read that ‘a city of the land of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib, has been captured.’ It was the rule in Palestine and Syria from ancient times, as the same letters show, for a large area around a city and all the inhabitants of that area to bear the name of the city” (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 1988, 101–2).

because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments. See Deut. 6:17, “diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God.” See the notes on Mosiah 4:6, *diligent in keeping his commandments*. On the state of their worthiness: “One presumes that the people are previously baptized church members who are confident they are righteous” (R.41, 103). See also this volume, p. 290.

1:12 *never shall be blotted out.* In the KJV, *blotted out* is used in two ways. Sin or transgression is blotted out (Neh. 4:5; Ps. 51:1, 9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 18:23; Acts 3:19), and names or remembrances are blotted out from the book of life or from under heaven (Ex. 32:32–33; Deut. 9:14; 25:19; 29:20; 2 Kgs. 14:27; Ps. 109:13; Col. 2:14; Rev. 3:5; in Num. 5:23 a curse is blotted out from a writing). The Hebrew root here is *MHH, and it is also translated “put out” in Deut. 25:6 and “wiped out” in 2 Kgs. 21:13. Brigham Young explained that “We receive the Gospel, not that we may have our names written in the Lamb’s book of life, but that our names may not be blotted out of that book” (Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1941, 7). See further the notes on Mosiah 5:11, *blotted out*, below.

except it be. This phrase appears frequently in Benjamin’s speech (six times; once while addressing his sons and five times while speaking to the people). It appears only three other times in the Book of Mormon. On those three occasions, Christ and the atonement figure highly. Although the expression does not appear in the KJV OT, in the Hebrew OT a number of different words are used to express this idea: *lule* = “except,” *ki im* = literally “that if” (this is most often used), *bilti* = a particle of negation, *im lo* = if not, *im lo ki* which is literally “if not that.” Through such provisos, Benjamin makes it clear that the blessings promised in the covenant with God will never be revoked by God so long as his people do not fall into transgression.

1:13 *highly favored.* The term *highly favored* occurs seven times in the Book of Mormon: 1 Ne. 1:1; Mosiah 1:13; Alma 9:20; 13:23; 27:30; 48:20, and Ether 1:34. In the KJV it appears in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:28.

a wicked and an adulterous people. *Wicked and adulterous* occurs in the KJV only in Matt. 16:4, however adultery is repeatedly used as a figure of apostasy much earlier by Jeremiah (a contemporary of Lehi), Hosea, and other Israelite prophets.

deliver them up. Benjamin uses this phrase to mean “turn them over to destruction.”

weak like unto their brethren. It is interesting to note that the Nephites referred to the Lamanites as “their brethren” throughout the Book of Mormon (see notes on Mosiah 1:5, and 3:1, *brethren*), and that the Nephite view characterized their Lehite relatives as *weak*, a relatively mild critique.

matchless and marvelous power. Although this phrase does not occur in the KJV, the Hebrew has an interesting phrase *koah gadol* which means literally “great power” and is usually translated “great power” or “mighty power.” See also notes on Mosiah 2:11 and 4:6, *matchless power*, below.

1:14 *extended his arm, preservation, into hands.* The words *extended . . . arm* do not appear in the KJV (*extended* usually appears with *mercy*), but *outstretched arm* or *stretched out arm* occurs sixteen times: Ex. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8; 1 Kgs. 8:42; 2 Kgs. 17:36; 2 Chron. 6:32; Ps. 136:12; 27:5; 32:17; 32:21; Ezek. 20:33, 34. The Hebrew verb used in these instances is *natah*, the very word which the KJV translators rendered as *extend*. The English *preservation* or *preserve* does not appear with *arm* or *arms outstretched*, neither does it occur with *from the hand[s]* or *into the hand[s]*. But a Hebrew root *NSL, which means “to deliver,” appears dozens of times with both *into the hands* and *out of the hands*. Most of the time when it is in association with *hands* it is translated by KJV as “to deliver” (once it is translated “rid” because it occurs in a passage in which it is parallel with a similar word that is translated “to deliver”). This verb is also translated “preserved” thirteen times in the KJV: Gen. 32:30; Ps. 12:7; 25:21; 31:23; 32:7; 40:11; 61:7; 64:1; 140:1, 4; Prov. 20:28; 22:12; Isa. 49:8; however, in none of these cases does it occur with *hands*. Accordingly, Joseph Smith’s translation in this verse fits with the Hebrew use of these words but does not tie in with the KJV. See David Rolph Seely, “The Image of the Hand of God in the Exodus Traditions,” Ph.D. diss., 1990; Seely, *in Fortunate the Eyes That See*, 1995.

into the hands of the Lamanites. David in 2 Sam. 24:14 talks of falling “into the hand of the Lord,” rather than “into the hand of man.”

1:15 *he gave him charge.* In the scriptures, this phrase is typically used for solemn instructions from kings and priests. See Gen. 28:6, Num. 27:23, Job 34:13, and 2 Sam. 18:5. Benjamin’s instructions were for “things both temporal and spiritual”; the charge to Mosiah was to “care for [the Nephites’] spiritual records and their sacred relics (the sword of Laban and the Liahona)” (M.18, 134). For details of tasks for successors, see this volume, p. 99. In dating this coronation at or around the New Year, four references in the Book of Mormon support the convention of changing rulers at that time of the year: in Mosiah 29:44, Alma begins his reign at the commencement of the first year of the judges; in Alma 2:1, 6–7, 9, Amlici is consecrated by his supporters at the commencement of the fifth year; in Alma 4:20, the judgment seat was passed to Nephiah in the commencement of the ninth year; and in Alma 24:20, the Lamanites come up to the land of Nephi for the purposes of destroying the old king and installing a new one. In the last case, the Lamanite attempt failed, so they attacked the Nephites on the fifth day of the second month (Alma 16:1).

1:16 *engraven on the plates of brass; and also the plates of Nephi.* For similar concepts see the notes on Mosiah 1:3, *plates of brass*, above; 2:13. Compare 1 Kgs. 2:3; Deut. 17:18–19.

plates of brass, plates of Nephi (records); sword of Laban; ball or director (Liahona). Anciently, upon coronation, a typical king would have been given national treasures consisting of (1) a genealogy, (2) a symbol of power and rule, and (3) an orb—a symbol of royalty or power over the earth. The three tokens of Nephite kingship reflect those traditions—the plates of brass included a genealogy of Lehi back to Joseph (1 Ne. 5:14), and the sword of Laban was a symbol of power and rule (even more than that, it was used by Nephi and the kings after him, including Benjamin, as a literal weapon in defense of their people). The sword was often a symbol of kingship in Europe, Asia, and Africa (see *JBMS* 2/1, 1993, 39–79). Also, the Liahona was at one time not just a symbol, but a director of otherworldly power over the earth (T.45, 28–32; R.38, 213–14). For details of the insignia of the kings, see this volume, pp. 35, 247–49; for references to the Urim and Thummim, see this volume, pp. 281, 293 n. 8; Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel*, 1997.

led our fathers through the wilderness. Ps. 106:9, “he led them . . . through the wilderness”; Alma 37:39 refers to the Liahona showing “the course which they should travel in the wilderness.”

prepared by the hand of the Lord. This phrase occurs only here and in 2 Ne. 5:12, where it also refers to the Liahona.

heed and diligence which they gave unto him. This phrase is also used in connection with the Liahona in 1 Ne. 16:28–29, where the heed and diligence are accorded to the Liahona or its pointers. Here, and in Mosiah 1:17, the Lord is the one whom they should heed. Likewise in Alma 37:40 the Nephites’ faith in God is the catalyst. Alma 12:9 explains that the mysteries of God can be unfolded to people only “according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” See also the notes on Mosiah 1:17, *stir them up in remembrance*, below.

1:17 driven back. This phrase makes specific allusion back to the time when Nephi used this distinctive phrase three times to describe the peril when his ship was driven back by the adverse winds that arose because of wickedness during the ocean crossing (1 Ne. 18:13–15). Later in the Book of Mormon it is used to describe the defeat of various armed groups. In the KJV it is found in Ps. 114:3, 5 to describe the parting of the waters of the Jordan at the time of the Israelite crossing.

famine and sore afflictions. This phrase also appears in Mosiah 9:3. In the KJV the phrase does not occur; rather, famines are often described as being sore (Gen. 41:56–57; 43:1; 47:4, 13; 1 Kgs. 18:2; Jer. 52:6).

stir them up in remembrance of their duty. 2 Pet. 1:13 reads “stir you up by putting you in remembrance.” Benjamin’s meaning is somewhat different: God uses famines and afflictions to motivate people to remember their duty to be faithful and obedient to God. In the Hebrew Bible, remembrance is itself an active concept that entails obedience. Louis Midgley points out that “to remember often means to be attentive, to consider, to keep divine commandments, or to act” (M.19, 128). The *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* adds these meanings: to mention in prayer; to proclaim, to celebrate, to solemnize; to believe, obey, become converted, turn about; and to confess. Thus, Benjamin does not use recollection to stir people up, as in 2 Peter, but rather outside pressures are used by God to stir people to do their duty. In Lev. 23:24, a festival rite of memorial is given. See also this volume, p. 170, and the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 2:41; 4:11, 30; 5:12; 6:3 on remembering.

The Gathering (Mosiah 1:18–2:8)

¹⁸And now, *it came to pass that Mosiah went and *did as his father had commanded him, and proclaimed unto all the people who were in the land of Zarahemla that thereby they might gather themselves together, to go *up to the temple to hear the words which his father should speak unto them. ^{2:1}And it

came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had *made a proclamation *throughout all the land, that the people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them. ²And there were a great number, even so many that they *did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land. ³And they also took of the *firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the *law of Moses; ⁴And also that they might give thanks to the Lord their God, *who had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, and who had *delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and *had appointed *just men to be their teachers, and also a just man to be their king, who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla, and who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might *rejoice and *be filled with love towards God and all men. ⁵And it came to pass that when they came *up to the temple, they *pitched their tents round about, every man *according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, *and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. ⁶And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof *towards the temple, that thereby they might *remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them; ⁷For the multitude being so great that king Benjamin could not teach them all within the walls of the temple, therefore he *caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them. ⁸And it came to pass that he began to speak to his people *from the tower; and they could not all hear his words because of the greatness of the multitude; therefore he caused that the words which he spake should be *written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also *receive his words.

1:18 *it came to pass.* Ten elements of Mosiah 1:18 are repeated in exactly the same order in Mosiah 2:1: (1) it came to pass; (2) Mosiah; (3) did as his father had commanded him; (4) proclamation; (5) all the people; (6) all the land; (7) people gathered themselves; (8) up to the temple; (9) hear the words; (10) speak unto them. The significance of this precise phenomenon is unclear.

did as his father had commanded him. In Jacob 5:70, the servant in Zenos's allegory, "did as the Lord had commanded him." In Matt. 21:6, "the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them."

up to the temple. "A society's most sacred spot is the location where the holy act of royal coronation takes place" (R.38, 213). Israelites thought of their temple as the mountain of the Lord (Isa. 2:2; Ps. 24:3), and thus one always ascended *up* to the temple. Assembly at the temple is a feature associated with the Israelite Feast of Tabernacles and indicates the sanctity of the occasion. In addition, assembling at the temple reflects the assembly conducted by Ezra at the rebuilt temple on the return from Babylon, when they wished to recommit themselves to the law of Moses (T.49, 222). For information on the temple at Zarahemla, see Welch, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 1994, 343–61, and this volume, pp. 244–47, 299–300.

2:1 *made a proclamation; gathered themselves together.* It was prescribed that Israel's feasts were to start by proclamations (Lev. 23:2, 4, 21, 37; 2 Chron. 30:5). Even unauthorized feasts began with proclamations (Ex. 32:5; 2 Kgs. 10:20). After the exile, when Ezra wanted to reestablish the law, he began with a proclamation that the people should gather themselves together to hear him read it to them (Ezra 10:7). To begin the Feast of Booths specifically, he sent forth a proclamation (Neh. 8:13–15). Israelites often gathered to go to battle, but also to make covenants and participate in feasts (Ex. 35:1; Lev. 8:3–4; Num. 8:9; Deut. 4:10; 31:12, 28; 1 Kgs. 8:1–2; 2 Chron. 5:1–3; Neh. 8:1); Ex. 32:1, "the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron"; 2 Chron. 30:3, "the people

gathered themselves together to Jerusalem”; see the notes in Mosiah 1:10, *make a proclamation*, above; see also 1 Sam. 10:19–20; 11:14–15; 2 Kgs. 23:1–2; 2 Chron. 34:29–30; Ezra 3:1; Neh. 8:1; 1 Esdras 5:47; 9:3, 38. Other uses for proclamations include gathering to hear the announcement of a new king and to declare liberty at jubilee. “Apparently all King Benjamin’s people have come together on short notice, eager to listen to their beloved king. . . . One presumes that the people are previously baptized church members who are confident they are righteous” (R.41, 103). See also the notes on Mosiah 1:18, *it came to pass*, above.

throughout all the land. This phrase is used thirty-two times in the Book of Mormon, nineteen times in the OT, and once in the NT. In Lev. 25:10, it refers to the proclamation of the jubilee.

2:2 *did not number them*. Censuses were often taken in the OT (Ex. 30:12; Num. 1:1–4, 26; 2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21). Generally the purpose was to prepare for war, but censuses were also taken as preparation to serve God (Num. 4:1–3, 21–23). In 1 Chron. 23, some kind of census appears to have been associated with David making his son Solomon the king, a situation somewhat analogous to Benjamin’s coronation of Mosiah. Although the Nephites were not numbered at this time, Nibley assumes that a census would have been a customary action at such an assembly, which he equates with the ancient year-rite. However, the names were taken of all those who entered into the covenant at the conclusion of King Benjamin’s address (N.27, 502 n. 6). Compare Mosiah 25:12–13; Gen. 16:10; 32:12; 1 Kgs. 3:8; 2 Chron. 5:6; Rev. 7:9. For further comments on census taking, see this volume, pp. 120, 125, 144 n. 2.

2:3 *firstlings of their flocks; sacrifice; burnt offerings*. The firstlings belonged to the Lord, according to Ex. 13:1–16. Note that in these verses specific mention is made of giving thanks to the Lord who delivered them from Israel, as in Mosiah 2:4. Rules regarding burnt offerings are found in Lev. 1, 6:8–13. The sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock marks this as a New Year’s offering. (N.28, 299). More animal sacrifices were prescribed for the Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkot), which forms part of the New Year rites, than for any other of the festivals (T.49, 222; B.03, 2). For discussion on the autumn festival complex, see this volume, pp. 121–26, 150, 159–90, 254–55. Although firstlings were not used for burnt offerings, they were used along with other animals in the sacrificial peace offering and were clearly sacrificed at the temple (R.40, 171–72). Further, since the Nephites were not descended from Aaron—and therefore had no Aaronic priests to whom to bring the sacrifice—they, like Abel, would have presented the firstlings to the Lord to be completely consumed as a burnt offering. The Nephites themselves would have been forbidden by the law of Moses from making use of those sacrificial offerings as food since they did not have the Aaronic Priesthood (T.48, 230–31). Other references to firstlings can be found in Deut. 12:17, “the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock”; “All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep” (Deut. 16:19–20); “sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males” (1 Esdras 5:47–53; 9:6, 38, 41; Ex. 13:15; compare Luke 2:23).

law of Moses. “And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings” (Ex. 10:25); “offer sacrifices and burnt offerings” (2 Kgs. 10:24; see also Jer. 7:22); “according to the law of Moses” (2 Chron. 30:16; Luke 2:22); “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Neh. 8:1–18; see 1 Ne. 5:9; 7:22; 2 Ne. 25:25–30; Alma 30:3; 3 Ne. 15:2–10; Lev. 23:24–25; see also the section on horns in this volume, pp. 162–64); “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Ezek. 40:1; Lev. 23:27; 25:9–10; Jubilee [Luke 4:18–19]; TB *Rosh ha-Shanah* 8b [1:1]); “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of the tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first

day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Acts 23:34–36); this is a solemn assembly with a *silentium* (John 7:2, 37); Num. 18:15–19; Deut. 15:19–20; Josh. 23–24; Judg. 21:19; 1 Sam. 1:3, 21; 10:8; 11:14–15; 12:17 (“wheat harvest” = Fall Ingathering); 2 Sam. 6:17–19; 1 Kgs. 6:1, 38; 8:1–66; 12:26–33; 2 Kgs. 23:2–3, 23; Ezra 3:1–6; Neh. 7:73; 8:2; 14–18; Deut. 31:10–12; 1 Esdras 5:48–53; 8:41–53; 9:5–6 (3 Ezra); 2 Macc. 1:9; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.3.3 (81); 3.10.1–3 (237–43). On the observance of the law of Moses by Book of Mormon prophets and peoples, see Welch, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 1994, 301–19, and the sources cited there.

2:4 *who had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem.* This designation of the Lord is a modification of the description of God as the one who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and occurs over fifty times in the OT: Ex. 12:17; 16:6; 20:2; 29:46; Lev. 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:42, 45; 26:13, 45; Num. 15:41; Deut. 1:27; 5:6; 6:12; 8:14; 13:5, 10; 20:1; 29:25; Josh. 24:17; Judg. 2:12; 1 Sam. 12:6; 1 Kgs. 8:21; 9:9; 2 Kgs. 17:7, 36; 2 Chron. 6:5; 7:22; Ps. 81:10; Jer. 2:6; 7:22; 11:4, 7; 16:14; 23:7; 32:21; 34:13; Ezek. 20:10; Dan. 9:15; Amos 9:7; Micah 6:4. See also notes on Mosiah 1:11, *land of Jerusalem*, above.

delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. This phrase or variations thereof occur a number of times (Judg. 2:18; 8:34; 1 Sam. 12:10, 11; 22:1; 2 Sam. 22:18; 2 Kgs. 17:39; Ezra 8:31; Ps. 18:17, 48; 31:15; 59:1; 78:42; 143:9). Alma 45:1 reads “the people of Nephi were exceedingly rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God”; see also Alma 29:9–12 (with New Year marked at Alma 28:1–30:4); 1 Sam. 7:14; 14:48.

had appointed. The same Lord God who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies had appointed just men. B. H. Roberts says of Joseph Smith, “He claimed to have received revelation from God; the visitation of angels, who conferred upon him a holy Priesthood, a divine commission, by virtue of which he was appointed to preach the Gospel and reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ on earth” (Defense of the Faith and the Saints, 1907–12, 2:437).

just men. This was the highest praise of a Nephite for a *saddiq*, leader (see Words of Mormon 1:17; Enos 1:1; Omni 1:25; Mosiah 19:17; 23:17; 29:13; Alma 3:6; 13:26; 20:15; 63:2; 3 Ne. 8:1). *Just* means righteous, charitable, good, and is a primary virtue in the Psalms (see Ps. 7:9).

rejoice. This time of festival and convocation was typically a time of joy.

be filled with love towards God and all men. Benjamin is defining the love of the higher law and in so doing answers the question, “How do you get so good that you can love people whether they deserve it or whether they don’t” (Rector, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1984, 114). See also John 15:10–12, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; . . . that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full . . . love one another, as I have loved you” (see also Wisdom of Solomon 3:9; 6:18–19; John 14:15–16; Rom. 13:10; 1 Jn. 2:3–5); Acts 24:16, “toward God, and toward men.”

2:5 *up to the temple.* Compare Deut. 12:5–6, “unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name”; Mosiah 7:17; 25:1–7; Alma 2:1–7; 2:8–10; 20:9–12; 3 Ne. 3:13, 14; 4:4. Paul Hyde finds that Benjamin’s speech has 132 elements that identify it as a temple address. Notable are the elements on the desire to become clean from the sins of their generation (2:27); Benjamin mentions his garments (2:28); gives instruction on creation and the nature of God (2:20–21, 23; 3:8; 4:9); the breath of life (2:21, 23); the acquisition of knowledge (4:6, 11–12); teachings on the fall of Adam (3:11, 16, 19, 26; 4:6–7); man’s state as the dust of the

earth (2:25; 4:2); witnesses (2:14); the law of sacrifice and obedience (2:3, 22, 34; 5:5); admonition to give heed in order to stay out of the power of enemies, (2:30–33); messengers sent from the presence of God (3:13); reference to divers unholy and impure practices (4:29); the law of consecration (4:16, 21, 26); the giving of a name (5:8–9, 11, 14); and the promise of sealing (5:15). (Paul Hyde letter to John Welch). For other temple elements, see this volume, pp. 299–300, 309, and Welch, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 348–60.

pitched their tents round about. In Ex. 33:7–11, Moses pitched the tabernacle outside the camp and all who sought the Lord took their tents and went out of the camp. They stayed “every man at his tent door” and watched while Moses entered the tabernacle and spoke with the Lord. Note also that there was a pillar of cloud at the front of the tabernacle and “all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.” Some have seen this as the historical background of the booths. See also Num. 1:52–2:34; Neh. 8:14–17. “As the word *tent* can also mean household or people, . . . in a very real sense the families of Benjamin’s colony turned toward the temple” (D.06, 51).

according to his family . . . separate one from another. The separation of families into booths or tents was a Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot practice, according to the Talmud. The practice in the ancient world was that the New Year festival was to be spent dwelling in tents or booths (N.28, 299–300; see also this volume, pp. 120, 123–24, 154, 183–86). Booths represented the temporary dwellings used by the Israelites after leaving Egypt (T.49, 222). Contemporary Jews must build their own booths; the covering, usually made of palm branches, if available, should be sufficiently sparse so they are able to see the stars. This is an interesting parallel to the early Mormon tradition of building wooden tabernacles covered with pine boughs for large numbers of the saints, in both Nauvoo and Salt Lake, to assemble and hear the word of the Lord (W.57); this puts us in mind of Gordon B. Hinckley’s announcement regarding the new assembly building (see *Ensign*, May 1996, 65). In Lev. 25:10, the jubilee celebration calls for assembly “every man unto his family.”

and their sons, and their daughters. See Gen. 36:6, “his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house”; 1 Sam. 30:3; 2 Chron. 31:18; Deut. 31:12.

2:6 towards the temple. Ex. 33:8–10 confirms the tradition of having the opening of the tent toward the tabernacle, as was found in the camp of Israel (T.49, 223). Just as the Jewish synagogues were oriented toward the temple in Jerusalem as the focus of their prayers, Mohammed ordered his followers, wherever they were, to pray toward Jerusalem. Only when the Jews failed to convert did Mohammed change the focus of his followers to Mecca.

remain in their tents. See Ex. 33:8, 10, “when Moses went out unto the tabernacle [*ha-ohel*], . . . all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent [*ohalo*] door, and looked after Moses, . . . And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door”; see also Ex. 18:7; Lev. 14:8; Num. 11:10; 16:26–27; Deut. 1:27; 33:18; Josh. 3:14; 7:21–23; Hosea 12:9; Ps. 27:5, *sukko* “his pavilion”; Ps. 78:60, *ohalo* “his tabernacle”; Hebrew *ohel* “tent” of the wilderness = *sukkah* “booth” of the Law, as in Lev. 23:42–43, “Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths [*sukkot*]: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt”; Neh. 8:14–18; note the use of dwelling in pavilions and tabernacles in 1 Kgs. 20:12, 16; Job 5:24; Prov. 14:11; Mal. 2:12; see also Gen. 9:27; 1 Kgs. 8:66; 1 Chron. 20:1; Job 8:22; Jer. 4:20; 10:20; 30:18; Ps. 52:5; 78:55; 84:10; 120:5; Ugaritic Texts 128:3:18–19; 2 Aqhat V:32–33; Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.4.5 (123). For a discussion on tents, see this volume, pp. 120, 123–24, 154, 183–86; and the notes on Mosiah 2:4, *according to his family*.

2:7 *caused a tower to be erected.* The significance of Benjamin's tower is more than just a platform to enable his voice to carry farther: In Neh. 8, Ezra caused the people to gather and build a wooden structure (called a pulpit in the KJV, the Hebrew word is most often translated "tower") from which he read the book of the law to the people on the first day of the seventh month (the beginning of the autumnal feast). He also sent teachers around who "caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place" (Neh. 8:7). These teachers "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8). During this ceremony, "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6; see notes on Mosiah 4:1, *fallen to the earth*, below). In the course of this festival, Ezra read about the feast of booths and had the Israelites gather branches and construct booths; see also Hebrew *ammud*, "pillar, standing-place" (2 Kgs. 11:14; 23:3; New English Bible with Apocrypha "dais") at the temple, for the coronation of Jehoash, 2 Kgs. 11:17: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people"; renewal of covenant under King Josiah, 23:1-3: "And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, . . . and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord . . . and made a covenant before the Lord, . . . to keep his commandments. . . . And all the people stood to the covenant" (see also 2 Chron. 23:13; 34:29-32; Deut. 17:14-20); Neh. 8:4, "Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood" = Hebrew *migdal-eß*; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:42, "And Esdras the priest and reader of the law stood up upon a pulpit of wood"; Isa. 2:15; Neh. 3:25-27; note the sixty-cubit-high stone Jewish temple tower of Onias 4 in Egypt (Josephus, *Wars* 7.10.3 [427], Greek *pyrgos*); *bima* or *almemar* (= Moslem *al-minbar*, not to mention *minaret*, or Vedic *yupa*), and on the "Portion of the King" spoken from a similar pulpit in the temple; see also Alma 31:21, "*rameumptom* . . . holy stand," whereon a kind of abbreviated Jewish *amidah*, "standing (prayer)," is recited by the Zoramites; see also Mosiah 11:13; the tower of Babel in Ether 1:3; Gen. 11:4-5; 35:21. Compare the wooden platform used by the king according to the Mishnah (T.49, 206). The fact that Benjamin had a tower constructed correlates with the platform constructed for the Feast of Tabernacles in Neh. 8:4, called a *migdal*, which is the normal Hebrew word for tower (T.48, 229). In addition the Nephite tower can be equated with a tower and altar discovered at Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified by Joseph Smith as Nephite (Gentry, *BYUS* 13/4, 1973, 570). Nathan the Babylonian gives an account of the wooden tower built for the installation of the Exilarch (this volume, pp. 123-24). The tower in the vineyard, described in Isa. 5:1-7 and quoted by Christ in Matt. 21:33-35, has been seen as the temple (Tvedtnes, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 700 n. 101). The Shepherd of Hermas uses the same imagery of the tower representing the church (ibid., 674). Further information on the tower can be found in this volume, pp. 245-47.

2:8 *from the tower.* In Hebrew, the Bible places the king *upon*, rather than *beside*, a pillar or platform at the time of his coronation. (S.44, 2). John M. Lundquist points out that the pillar, whether stone, wood, or bronze, is a sign of the covenant between the king and his society (in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 1994, 284-86). The pillar may have been used as a pedestal.

written and sent forth. Eugene England uses this scripture to attest to the success of Benjamin and his father in "making language an effective resource" (E.07, 28-29).

receive his words. There is a connection here between Benjamin receiving the words of the angel and the reading of the law found in Deut. 31:11, "When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing"; see also 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:40, "Esdras the chief priest brought the law unto the whole multitude, . . . to hear the law in the first day of the seventh month."

BENJAMIN'S SPEECH: PART 1

Indebtedness to the Heavenly King (Mosiah 2:9–28)

⁹And these are the words which he spake and caused to be written, saying: My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you *this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that *you should hearken unto me, and *open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded *to your view. ¹⁰I have not commanded you to come up hither *that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man. ¹¹*But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in *body and mind; yet I have been *chosen by this people, and *consecrated by my father, and was *suffered by the hand of the Lord 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. ¹²I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have *not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you; ¹³*Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should *make slaves one of another, nor that ye should *murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and *have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you—¹⁴And even I, myself, have labored *with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that *ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was *grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are *witnesses this day. ¹⁵Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things *that I might boast, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things *that ye may know that I can answer a *clear conscience *before God this day. ¹⁶Behold, 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, for I have only been in the service of God. ¹⁷And behold, I tell you these things that ye may *learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are *only in the *service of your God. ¹⁸Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to *serve one another? ¹⁹And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to *thank your heavenly King! ²⁰I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the *thanks and praise which your *whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has *created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in *peace one with another—²¹I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has *created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, *by lending you breath, that ye may *live and move and do *according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be *unprofitable servants. ²²And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that *if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and *he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. ²³And now, in the first place, *he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are *indebted unto him. ²⁴And 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?²⁵ And now I ask, *can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. *Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, *it belongeth to him who created you.²⁶ And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am *no better than ye yourselves are; for *I am also of the dust. And ye behold that *I am old, and am about to *yield up this mortal frame *to its mother earth.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, that I might be found blameless, 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.²⁸ I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together that I might *rid my garments of your blood, at this period of time when I am about to go down to my grave, that I might go down in peace, and my immortal spirit may join the *choirs above in singing the *praises of a just God.

2:9 *this day*. This phrase is used here and four other times in Benjamin's speech, it appears to be an important covenantal marker, occurring as it does at ritual and covenantal high points in the text. It is used in connection with assemblies called by Jacob and Alma in the Book of Mormon and as the Hebrew word *etzem*, used only in connection with Yom Kippur, Shavuot, and as a remembrance of the Exodus (W.54).

you should hearken unto me. Benjamin is signaling that his message is not to be taken lightly. Benjamin wants their minds open "that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view" (Mosiah 2:9). This is "a *silentium*, which is the proper designation for a solemn assembly in the presence of the Byzantine Emperor; it is taken from the formula with which meetings are formally opened in many Christian churches: 'The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence [lit. "hush"] before him.' Habakkuk 2:20." (N.28, 300, 503 n.10). Israel Knohl, quoting Yehezkel Kaufmann "who laid down the foundations for the discussion of the issue of the place of prayer in the Priestly Temple," points out that silence was the rule in the temple, since no reference was made "to the spoken word in describing temple rites. All the various acts of the priest are performed in silence. . . . Even prayer is absent. . . . Therewith the Israelite cult became a domain of silence, . . . [an] awe of holiness" (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 115/1, 1996, 17).

open your ears that ye may ear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds. In Deut. 29:4, Moses tells his people that the Lord had not yet given them a heart to perceive, eyes to see, or ears to hear. In Isa. 6:10, Isaiah is told by the Lord to "make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart." The Savior paraphrased Isaiah in Matt. 13:15, and the Nephites had access to this passage from the plates of Laban as demonstrated by Nephi quoting it in 2 Ne. 16:10. Although Benjamin substitutes "minds" for "eyes," the comparison is clear, which brings an interesting Hebrew word pair to light: "eye(s) // heart" can be found in Isa. 44:18; Ps. 73:7; Prov. 4:21; 21:4; 23:33; Koh. 2:10; and Sirach 43:18; see *JBMS* 4/2, 1995, 44–46.

to your view. "The word *view* may be a key word to understanding the mystery the people receive. Jacob mentions this view: 'We would to God that we could persuade all men . . . to believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross' (Jacob 1:8). Jacob, implying that coming to Christ involves a kind of participation in the Savior's atonement, invites men from a casual performance of the Gospel into a visceral experience. . . . The Gospel is organized around various symbolic 'viewings' of the atonement of the Son of God" (M. Catherine Thomas, unpublished paper).

2:10 *that ye should fear me.* If the Nephites are indeed celebrating a Feast of Tabernacles, then certainly Benjamin would feel it is his duty to motivate the Nephites to fear God. Additional evidence helps to demonstrate that this may be his purpose. Passages in Deuteronomy that emphasize fearing God are significantly similar to those in Benjamin's discourse: Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 6:1–3, 22–24; see also Deut. 6:13; Lev. 25:43–46 for the concept of fearing God and serving him. For further discussion of fear, see this volume, pp. 174, 179; and the notes on Mosiah 3:7, *anguish*; 3:19, *natural man*; 4:1, *fallen to the earth*; 4:2, *mercy*, below.

2:11 *But I am like as yourselves.* In the Paragraph of the King (Deut. 17:14–20), the king was not to have “his heart . . . lifted up above his brethren”; for a discussion of God as king, see this volume, pp. 167–68, 188–89.

body and mind. This pair of words occurs here and in Alma 17:5.

chosen by this people. In the OT it was God who was said to have chosen the king who was then acclaimed by the people (1 Sam. 10:24). In the Book of Mormon the people played a more direct role in the choice of their king (2 Nephi 5:18), and had even greater power over the selection of their chief judges (Mosiah 29:25; Alma 4:16; 10:24; 60:1). While Benjamin says that he was chosen by his people to be king, he affirms that he had been commanded by God to declare Mosiah to be king (1:10; 2:30). Both divine investiture and popular acclamation played a role. See also notes on Mosiah 1:10, *king and a ruler*, above.

consecrated. Information on anointing can be found in this volume, pp. 249–50; see also the notes on Mosiah 6:3, *consecrated his son*, below; and TG, “Consecrate” and “Consecration.”

suffered by the hand of the Lord. Corresponds to Deuteronomy 17:20 in the Paragraph of the King (T.49, 224).

kept and preserved. These words occur in 2 Ne. 25:21; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 1:5; 2:20; 28:11, 15; Alma 9:22; 37:4. They do not appear in this form together in the KJV but they are found in the present tense “keep” (Hebrew root *SMR) and “preserve” (Hebrew root *NSR) in parallel passages in Ps. 12:7; 140:4; Prov. 2:8, 11; 4:6, and in the Book of Mormon in Mosiah 28:20; Alma 37:14; 44:4; D&C 117:16. Correlation is found here with a traditional rabbinic prayer, “known as Shehecheyanu. (Praised [or Blessed] art Thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us [alive], and hast preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season; for more on the *She-hecheyanu*, see this volume p. 190.) This prayer is recited on eating first fruits, on doing things for the first time, and at certain prescribed times, including the first day of every festival” (B.03, 3); see Mosiah 7:20; Num. 6:24, “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee” (beginning of priestly Day of Atonement blessing); Ps. 41:2, “The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed”; and Neh. 9:6; Wisdom of Solomon 11:25. See also notes on Mosiah 2:20, *created . . . prepared*, below.

matchless power. This phrase is found seven times in the Book of Mormon (1 Ne. 17:42; Mosiah 1:13; 2:11; 4:6; Alma 9:11; 49:28; Hel. 4:25). It does not appear in the KJV. The closest phrase in the KJV is “none . . . like” which is often used in reference to God. Interestingly, the phrase “none . . . like” only occurs once in the Book of Mormon in 2 Ne. 25:5, where the words are separated by a long phrase. See also the notes on Mosiah 1:13 and 4:6, *power*.

might, mind and strength. This phrase first appears in 2 Ne. 25:29. It also appears in Alma 39:13; Moro. 10:32; D&C 4:2; 11:20; 33:7; 59:5; 98:47. In addition, “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” is found in Matt. 22:37; “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength” in Mark 12:30; “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength” in Luke 10:27; Deut. 10:13 has “love the Lord your God, and . . . serve him with all your heart and with all your soul”; see also Josh. 22:5. As Benjamin declares himself a servant to the Nephites, so too do the Nephites have an obligation to serve God.

2:12 *not sought gold nor silver.* An integral part of the Paragraph of the King (Deut. 17:14–20) was the warning to kings not to use their power to gain wealth and satisfy their own lusts: “neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deut. 17:17). Benjamin here asserts that he has not abused his power (T.49, 225). In Acts 20:33 is found “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.”

2:13 *Neither have I suffered.* Benjamin is making a negative confession, a list of wrongs that he, as a king, has not committed (see this volume, p. 172). In 1 Sam. 12:1–15, Samuel makes a similar negative confession: “Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed?” (1 Sam. 12:3). Benjamin’s speech contains many clues about legal concepts and practices operative in his kingdom and legal system: evidence that Benjamin indeed enforced the law of Moses as it applied in his land includes such factors as the limitation of royal power; prohibitions against burdensome taxation, confining in dungeons, making slaves of one another, murder, plunder, stealing, adultery, and any manner of wickedness; Hebrew attitudes toward property are reflected in the statement that the earth belongs to God (Mosiah 2:25); Benjamin divided humans into six ages—infants, little children, children, young men, men, and old men—perhaps each one having particular legal status; as in Jewish law, legal liability requires a warning (Mosiah 2:36), and the mention of those who have ignorantly sinned (see Mosiah 3:11) brings into question mental capacity; as with Hebrew law, Benjamin’s law placed a high value on oral testimony (Mosiah 3:23–24); the law known to Benjamin also implied duties: to care for children (Mosiah 4:14–15) and to give to the beggar (Mosiah 4:16–23), together with placing duties on the poor, “who have not and yet have sufficient,” not to covet (Mosiah 4:25); also, the duty to return the thing borrowed (see the notes on Mosiah 4:28, and this volume, p. 195), and to feed stray livestock (Mosiah 5:14; see also Ex. 23:4); for a discussion of righteous administration and the role of the king, see this volume, pp. 27–30, 31–42, 48–50, 234–38.

make slaves one of another. For information on slavery, see this volume, pp. 40, 58, and notes on Mosiah 2:41, *state of never-ending happiness*, below.

murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery, . . . wickedness. This specific list of sins is repeated in Alma 23:3 and Hel. 6:23. A partial list consisting of *murder, plunder, steal, bear false witness against*, and *do all manner of iniquity* is in Hel. 7:21. Ether 8:16 has *murder, plunder, lie, commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms*. See also 2 Ne. 26:32; Alma 1:32; 16:18, 23; 30:10; for a discussion of these lists of prohibitions, see this volume, pp. 40–41, 61–62.

have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you.

Another requirement of the king in Israel was that he possess a copy of the book of the law and read from it every day: “that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: . . . and that he turn not aside from the commandment” (Deut. 17:19); see also 1Q22 I–II, “[And God spoke] to Moses . . . Interpret [for the heads of] families of the Levites and for all the [priests] and decree to the sons of Israel the words of the Law which I commanded [you] on Mount Sinai to decree to them” (translations of DSS by Garca Martnez). For further discussion of fear, see this volume, pp. 174, 179, and the notes on Mosiah 3:7, *anguish*; 3:19, *natural man*; 4:1, *fallen to the earth*; 4:2, *mercy*, below. For further information on commandments, see the notes on Mosiah 1:7, *commandments*, above.

2:14 *with mine own hands.* The theme of the Lord’s servants ministering or laboring with their own hands is also found in connection with Paul’s activities in Acts 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12.

ye should not be laden with taxes. The Lord through Samuel warned Israel that any king they set up over themselves would take their fields, vineyards, olive groves, a tenth of their seed, a tenth of their sheep, etc. (1 Sam. 8:10–18).

Further comments on conflicting views of kingship can be found in this volume, pp. 234–44.

grievous to be borne. This phrase occurs in Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; 1 Ne. 17:25; Mosiah 7:15, 23; Ether 10:5 (the last three are specifically associated with taxes as well). See also Deut. 17:16–17; Neh. 5:14–15; Sirach 46:19.

witnesses this day. This phrase is found in Mosiah 7:21; Ruth 4:9–10. The theme of witnesses is found in Josh. 24:22; 1 Sam. 12:5; Neh. 10:29; 2 Cor. 11:19; 1 Thes. 4:9; for notes on witnesses, see this volume, pp. 226, 228.

2:15 *that I might boast.* Benjamin was not motivated in his *deeds* by a desire to boast. The pitfalls of having one’s heart lifted up in pride because of power or riches are found in Deut. 8:12–14; 17:20; Jer. 9:23. See also Mosiah 2:16, *I do not desire to boast*, below; and this volume, p. 227.

that ye may know. See Ex. 10:2; 11:7; 31:13; Josh. 3:4; Job 19:29; Isa. 43:10; Jer. 44:29; Ezek. 20:20; Micah 6:5; Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24; John 10:38; 19:4; Eph. 1:18; Col. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:13; Mosiah 17:9; 24:14; 3 Ne. 11:14; 21:1; 29:1–2; Morm. 3:20; Ether 2:11; Moro. 7:15, 19; 9:1; D&C 41:3; 43:8.

clear conscience. Used here and in Mosiah 2:27.

before God this day. Acts 23:1, “in all good conscience before God until this day”; see also 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 Sam. 12:2–5.

2:16 *I do not desire to boast.* Benjamin’s humility and modesty are apparent throughout his speech. He was unconcerned with projecting his political image because he had Christ’s image in his countenance. Benjamin is an example to us as we try to tame our egotistic selves (M.15, 12).

2:16–25; 38–40 Concerning moral persuasion and the biblical use of motive clauses, Laramie Merritt points out that motive clauses are “grammatically subordinate sentences in which the motivation for the commandment is given. . . . [which] preach obedience, . . . explain how the law developed and help people understand to what ends commandments are given.” In these verses Benjamin uses motive clauses to instill a sense of debt and gratitude in his people, telling “how men acquire this debt” and warning “what happens when the demands of justice are not satisfied” (Welch, *BYU Law Papers*, 21 April 1994).

2:17 *learn wisdom.* See 2 Ne. 28:30; Alma 32:12; 37:35; 38:9; D&C 97:1; 136:32. In the same way that Benjamin is teaching that wisdom is knowing that to serve one’s fellow beings is serving God, so Moses in Deut. 4:6 teaches that wisdom was keeping and doing God’s judgments.

only. The word may mean “simply,” “truly,” or “merely.” The context points, however, to the sense of “merely.” See this volume, pp. 67–69.

service of your God. King Benjamin’s statements on service are fairly unique. Similar statements are only found from the Savior in Matt. 25:40, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” and from John in 1 Jn. 4:20, “for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” That this service is essential to salvation has been established by Robert Millet, “Love of man is vitally related to love of God; the Saints can remain clean through service to God. This service is essential to salvation” (M.21, 238). Theodore Burton also quoted this scripture as an example of how we repay the great debt we owe Christ: “[Mosiah 2:17] explains how we *can* repay Jesus Christ for his great mercy to us. His sacrifice atoned even for our personal sins and makes mercy available to you and to me. . . . This service. . . can include

significant good works that could compensate Jesus for his restitution made for us” (*BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1984–85, 99). Susan Easton Black refers to the establishment of government: “As an example of service to humanity being service to God, Benjamin established his civil government based on the commandments of God. This teaching reflects the Savior’s comment in Matt. 25:40 that ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’” (B.02, 40–41). Robert Millet and Joseph F. McConkie explain that “To stain our clothes and soil our hands in the service of others is but to cleanse our own souls” (M.18, 137). See also notes on Mosiah 4:14, *serve the devil*, below.

service. Regarding service, servitude, indebtedness, and slavery, see further pp. 40, 58 in this volume. If Benjamin’s speech fell on a jubilee year, then Alma 30:4 and Hel. 6:14 may be the next such jubilees; Lev. 25:8–55 requires manumission of Hebrew bondservants at jubilee, while Ex. 21:2 requires the release at the sabbatical; see notes on Mosiah 5:8, *made free*, below; see also Matt. 25:34–45. The theme of service is found in Neh. 2:3; Ezra 6:18; Rom. 9:4; Heb. 9:6, 21. See also Mosiah 4:15; Ex. 3:12; 10:26; Num. 3:7–8; 8:11; Josh. 22:27; 2 Chron. 8:14; Mal. 3:14; TB *Abot* 1:2 “The world stands upon three things: upon the *Torah*, upon the temple service [*abodah* “work”], and upon deeds of loving kindness”; 1Q22 III on the sabbatical year. For comments on service, see this volume, pp. 11–13, 67–69, 77–82, 334–36, 412–16.

2:18 *serve one another*. This phrase is found in Gal. 5:13; see also John 13:13–15; Acts 20:35.

2:19 *thank your heavenly King*. Hugh Nibley emphasizes that God is the real king and that this “is the theme of the king’s address from the tower” (N.25, 455). For information on kingship, see this volume, pp. 299, 323–24; for comments on the nature of God, see this volume, pp. 234–54; for a discussion on humility, see this volume, pp. 11, 32–33, 432–35.

2:20 *thanks and praise*. These two words (or *thank* and *praise*) occur together in 1 Chron. 16:4, 35; 23:30; 25:3; 29:13; 2 Chron. 31:2; Neh. 12:24; Ps. 30:12; 35:18; 79:13; 106:1; Dan. 2:23; Alma 26:8; Ether 6:9. For a discussion of this phrase, see this volume, pp. 69, 74, 78, 169, 189–90, 334.

whole soul. This phrase is found in Jer. 32:41; 2 Ne. 25:29; Enos 1:9; Omni 1:26; W of M 1:18; Mosiah 2:21; 26:14.

created . . . preserved. This word pair is found only here and in the next verse (Mosiah 2:21). The theme of *kept and preserved* is found in 1Q22 IV. The first part of the Qumran ceremony, referred to at the beginning of the discussion on Mosiah 5:5, *covenant*, below, required a blessing of God and his works. The counterpart is found in 1QS I 18–20; 4QBarkī *Nafshi*. Benjamin is breaking down pride, “The proud, so far as their own lives are concerned, along with those whom they adversely affect, mock the plan of salvation (Jacob 6:8). Those who boast of their independence from God are like the goldfish in a bowl who regards himself as self-sufficient” (Maxwell, *Meek and Lowly*, 59).

peace one with another. This phrase is found in Mark 9:50; similar phrases occur in 2 Cor. 13:11; Lev. 26:6; Num. 6:26, “and give thee peace” (end of priestly Day of Atonement blessing).

2:21 *created you from the beginning*. Similar phrases are also found in Mosiah 7:27; Alma 18:32, 34; Ether 3:15.

by lending you breath. This phrase is unique to Benjamin, who is again emphasizing our dependence on God: “some of us nevertheless feel as though we own ourselves, our time, our talents, and our possessions; these are signs of our self-sufficiency. Actually, God lends us breath and sustains us from moment to moment” (M.17, 93). See further this volume, pp. 140–41, 182, 191, 258.

live and move. This word pair appears also in the KJV in Gen. 1:21, 28; 9:3; Lev. 11:46; Ezek. 47:9; Acts 17:28, and in D&C 45:1.

according to your own will. In Leviticus freewill offerings are made “at your own will,” Lev. 19:5; 22:19, 29.

unprofitable servants. One interpretation of Benjamin’s intent in using this phrase is that unprofitable servants are those who consume more than they produce. Since, in Mosiah 4:19, Benjamin refers to temporal blessings, of which we have earned nothing, we have not even earned our own keep and are therefore unprofitable servants (N.24, 110). Perhaps “at first reading [unprofitable servants] may sound harsh, deprecating, and discouraging, for surely our service to God is significant. But when our service is compared with our blessings, an ‘outside audit,’ said Benjamin in effect, would show us ever to be in arrears. . . . Furthermore, our service is made possible by the elements which make up our natural bodies, but these belong to God” (M.16, 10). Profit has been defined as a word implying “personal gain or benefit. . . . God is perfect—in knowledge, power, influence, and attributes. He is the Creator of *all* things. . . . We must somehow disabuse ourselves of any notion that we can bring personal profit to God by our actions. That would make God indebted to men, which is unthinkable” (M.20, 1:12). An interesting parallel to Benjamin’s expression that “yet ye would be unprofitable servants” is found in the Nishmat prayer at the conclusion of the Hallel (Grace after Passover meal): “Were our mouths as full of song as the sea, and our tongues as full of jubilation as its multitudes of waves, and our lips as full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, and our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon, and our hands as outspread in prayer as the eagles of the sky and our feet as swift as the deer—we still could not sufficiently thank You.” The phrase *unprofitable servant* or *servants* is found in Matt. 25:30; Luke 17:10; Mosiah 22:4.

2:22 *if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land.* A requirement of a king was to have the law of Moses, here written on the brass plates of Laban (T.49, 225–26). Promised blessings of prosperity in the land associated with keeping the commandments are found in Deut. 11:8; 30:16; 1 Chron. 28:8; 1 Ne. 2:20; 4:14; 17:13; 2 Ne. 1:9, 20, 32; 3:2; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Mosiah 1:7; 2:31; Alma 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:25; 50:20; Hel. 3:20. In 1 Kgs. 2:3 the promise for keeping the commandments is that “thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest.” See Deut. 10:12; Mosiah 2:24. Regarding *prosper in the land*, note the presentation of the *wedjat eye*, “prosperity,” at the Egyptian *sed*-festival/jubilee. One of the blessings of obedience has been linked to the requirement to bring the gospel to the Lamanites (Pratt, JD, 17:300). In 1947 at April general conference, Spencer W. Kimball said, “little prosperity has come to the Navajo and little can come until we Gentiles, their ‘nursing fathers,’ help to train them” (Conference Report, April 1947, 150). Notably, the time of prosperity during and following Benjamin’s reign led indirectly to the highly successful mission of Benjamin’s grandsons to the Lamanites. For a discussion on the blessings of obedience, see this volume, pp. 133–34, 281–82.

he never doth vary from that which he hath said. A variant of this phrase is found in Alma 7:20 and D&C 3:2. The second part of the Qumran ceremony referred to at the beginning of the notes on Mosiah 5:5, *covenant*, was for priests to recount God’s mighty works and his favors toward Israel; see 1QS I 21–22.

2:23 *he hath created you.* Benjamin is commenting on the divine nature of our creation, “each of us would have a body of flesh and bones. [Our earthly parents] would provide it for us, obviously with the help of our Heavenly Father, who, I believe, has a hand in when we come and the fact that we do come” (Rector, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1981, 18). See also the notes on Mosiah 2:20, *created . . . preserved*, above.

indebted. This word appears in Benjamin’s speech three times: here and in 2:24, 34. It also appears in the KJV in Luke 11:4 but nowhere else in the scriptures in this form. See also notes on Mosiah 2:34, *eternally indebted*, below.

2:24 *doth immediately bless you.* Drawing another parallel to 1Q22 II–III, there the Lord recounts the blessings he will give the children of Israel once they cross the Jordan river, if they keep his commandments: “[And when you cross the Jordan] for me to give you large [and good] cities, houses full of every [wealth, vineyards and olive groves] which you [did not plant, wel]ls bored which you did not dig, and you eat and become replete. . . . [God will bless you, forgiving you your si]ns.” See also the notes on Mosiah 2:36, *blessed, prospered, and preserved*, below.

of what have ye to boast? If the king cannot boast, how much less can common people?

2:25 *can ye say aught of yourselves?* “God asks only two things: first to recognize his gifts for what they are, and not to take credit to ourselves” (N.24, 109; see this volume, p. 128).

Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth. Equating man with dust in a way that emphasizes man’s humble state is found in Gen. 3:19; 18:27; Job 34:15; Ps. 103:14; Eccl. 3:20; 12:7; Mosiah 2:26; 4:2; Hel. 12:7–8. That man is “created of the dust of the earth” is found in Gen. 2:7; Morm. 9:17; D&C 77:12; Abr. 5:7. In Jacob 2:21 we find the idea of God creating man from the dust of the earth so that he can obey God’s commandments, similar to verses 22–24 above; see also this volume, pp. 2, 261–64; and the notes on Mosiah 2:13; 2:26; 4:2, *commandments*.

it belongeth to him who created you. This has similarities with Lev. 25:23, “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.” See also notes on Mosiah 2:13, *neither have I suffered*, and 4:2, *less than the dust of the earth*.

2:26 *no better than ye.* Benjamin begins his discourse on an economic note and sees the keynote as “absolute equality” (N.29, 225).

I am also of the dust. See this volume, pp. 261–64.

I am old. For information on Benjamin’s age, see this volume, p. 27.

yield up this mortal frame. This phrase is not found in the KJV. It appears nine times in the Book of Mormon: here and in Alma 52:25; Hel. 5:52; 14:21, 25; 3 Ne. 3:6, 7; 4:16, 27.

to its mother earth. This phrase is also found in 2 Ne. 9:7; Morm. 6:15. In both instances the context is also of the dead returning to the mother earth.

2:27 *walking . . . before God.* This phrase or variations of it occur a large number of times: Gen. 17:1; 24:48; 48:15; 1 Sam. 2:30, 35; 12:2; 1 Kgs. 2:4; 3:6; 8:23, 25 (twice); 2 Kgs. 20:3; 2 Chron. 6:14, 16; 7:17; Ps. 56:13; 116:9; Isa. 38:3; Mal. 3:14; 1 Ne. 16:3; Mosiah 4:26; 18:29; 26:37; Alma 1:1; 5:27; 7:22; 45:24; 53:21; 63:2; Hel. 6:34; 15:5; 16:10; 3 Ne. 24:14; Ether 6:17, 30; D&C 5:21; 18:31; 20:69; 21:4; 25:2; 46:7; 68:28; 109:1; Moses 5:26.

blood should not come upon me. See Alma 5:22; 60:13; Isa. 1:15; 59:3; Jer. 26:14–15; Lam. 4:13; Ezek. 3:18–20; 33:1–9; Acts 5:28; 18:6; 20:26. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:28, *rid my garments of your blood*, below.

I shall stand to be judged of God. The king is subject to the rule of God (see Deut. 17:14–20; D&C 134:1).

2:28 *rid my garments of your blood.* Benjamin’s use of the key words of garments and blood signal this as a temple oration. Jacob used a similar phrase at the temple of Nephi, “Behold, I take off my garments, and I shake them

before you; . . . I shook your iniquities from my soul, . . . I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood” (2 Ne. 9:44). He also said “And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day” (Jacob 1:19). Later Mormon wrote, “And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief” (Morm. 9:35). His son Moroni wrote “And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood” (Ether 12:38). Finally the Three Witnesses adopted this phrase for their testimony, “And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Compare Acts 20:26; Rev. 7:14. For more on guilt, see this volume, pp. 133, 164–67; see also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*, and 2:38, *enemy to God*.

choirs above. Compare the concourse of angels (1 Ne. 1:8); see also Welch, in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi*, 1988, 36.

praises of a just God. Similar phrases are found in 1 Ne. 1:8; Morm. 7:7; Isa. 6:1, 3; *Testament of Levi* 3:8; *Testament of Abraham* 20:12; 1 *Enoch* 39:12; 2 *Enoch* 17:1; 19:3; 20:4; 21:1; 42:4; 1 Tim. 1:17.

The Coronation Announcement (Mosiah 2:29–30)

²⁹And moreover, I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might declare unto you that I can *no longer be your teacher, nor your king; ³⁰For even at this time, my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting to speak unto you; but the Lord God doth support me, and hath suffered me that I should speak unto you, and hath commanded me that I should declare unto you this day, that *my son Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you.

2:29 *no longer be your teacher*. “Now one of the best-known aspects of the year-drama is the ritual descent of the king to the underworld—he is ritually overcome by death, and then ritually resurrected or (as in the Egyptian *Sed* festival) revived in the person of his son and successor, while his soul goes to join the blessed ones above. All this, we believe, is clearly indicated in King Benjamin’s farewell” (N.28, 302–3). For further discussion on this speech as a farewell address, see this volume, chapter 4.

2:30 *my son Mosiah is a king and a ruler*. This pronouncement is a formal declaration, probably accompanied by formalities, presentation to the people, and acclamation by the assembly. On the selection of the king by God and the people, see notes on Mosiah 2:11, *chosen by this people*, above.

BENJAMIN’S SPEECH: PART 2

Obedience to God and King (Mosiah 2:31–41)

³¹And now, my brethren, I would that ye should do *as ye have hitherto done. As ye have kept my commandments, *and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son, or the *commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him, ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have *no power over you. ³²But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions

among you, and ye *list to obey the *evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah. ³³For behold, there is a *wo pronounced upon him 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, having transgressed the law of God *contrary to his own knowledge.

³⁴I say unto you, that there are not any among you, except it be your little children that have not been taught concerning these things, but what knoweth that ye are *eternally indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him all that you *have and are; and also have been taught concerning the records which contain the prophecies which have been spoken by the *holy prophets, even down to the time our father, Lehi, left Jerusalem; ³⁵And also, all that has been spoken by our fathers until now. And behold, also, they spake that which was commanded them of the Lord; therefore, *they are just and true. ³⁶And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that *after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have *no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be *blessed, prospered, and preserved—³⁷I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in *open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an *enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in *unholy temples.

³⁸Therefore *if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an *enemy to God, the *demands of divine justice do awaken his *immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to *shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with *guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is *like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever. ³⁹And now I say unto you, that *mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment. ⁴⁰O, all *ye old men, and also *ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should *awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have *fallen into transgression. ⁴¹And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are *blessed in all things, both *temporal and spiritual; and if they *hold out faithful to the end they are *received into heaven, that thereby they may *dwell with God in a *state of never-ending happiness. *O remember, remember that these things are true; for the *Lord God hath spoken it.

2:31 *as ye have hitherto done.* When a new king was installed the old order was dissolved, which necessitated reestablishing the public order.

and also the commandments of my father. By citing two generations of success in his dynasty, Benjamin seeks to insure his son's new position as king. Looking back to Mosiah₁ would have been especially important in continuing the allegiance of the people of Zarahemla who had participated in appointing him king and thereby had agreed to obey Mosiah₁ (Omni 1:19).

commandments of God. One of the six ceremonial components of an Israelite covenant speech is the commandment to obey the law. Although specific reference to the stone tablets at Sinai was not included in Benjamin's speech, Benjamin admonished obedience to a particular body of Nephite legal and religious law (K.11, 106). See also the notes on Mosiah 1:7; 2:13, *commandments*, above; 5:5, *covenant*, below.

no power over you. A similar promise as a result of obedience is found in Lev. 26:3–8, "Ye shall . . . dwell in your land safely. . . . And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword." It would appear that this

blessing has a concomitant curse—the woe pronounced on those who “list to obey” the evil spirit. A correlation can be drawn between Benjamin’s promise and Moses’ blessing/curse on the Levites in Deut. 33:11, which Christensen translates as “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel” (ZAW 101, 1989, 282). See also notes on Mosiah 1:7, *promises*, above.

2:32 *list to obey*. Benjamin, by using the phrase *list to obey*, is talking about a conscious decision, an exercise of agency which leads to actions “contrary to . . . knowledge” and a state of “open rebellion.” This is *pesha* referred to in the discussion on *suffered in ignorance*, Mosiah 1:3. During Yom Kippur, which according to Lev. 16:29 is set on the tenth day of the seventh month (therefore during the same New Year season), the sacrifice of the goats takes place. This entails the sacrifice of two goats—one is designated as the Lord’s goat, and the other the *scapegoat* or the Azazel goat (Lev. 16:7–10). The scapegoat, which is on the high priest’s left hand, provides an interesting antecedent for Benjamin’s concepts of listing to obey and open rebellion. According to Milgrom, when the purified high priest laid his hand on the live scapegoat, he transferred the “*awonot* ‘iniquities’—the causes of the sanctuary’s impurities, all of Israel’s sins, ritual and moral alike, of priests and laity alike” (*Anchor Bible: Leviticus 1–16*, 1044). The sins to which Benjamin refers are intentional; hence the term “contrary to his own knowledge.” Repentance would not normally be available to those who committed such sins, unless they had “subsequent remorse . . . that is responsible for converting [their] deliberate sin into an inadvertence, expiable by sacrifice” (*ibid.*, 295). The sacrifice of the Azazel goat, then, would cover those who were in a state of rebellion only if they repented; for further discussion on the scapegoat ritual and sacrifice, see this volume, pp. 164, 176–79; and the notes on Mosiah 5:9–10, 12, *right hand of God . . . left hand of God*, below. “The sacrifice of Yom Kippur requires prior restitution for sins committed. If such restitution is not made, the Yom Kippur liturgy is considered effective for the community as a whole, but not for those individuals who have failed to make rectification. Until such restitution is made, those individuals are considered cut off from the community” (Anderson and Culbertson, *Anglican Theological Review* 68/4, 1986, 312–13). Ancient Israel had a community relationship with God, “Guilt . . . derives not only from the sin which each and every individual has committed, but also from the corporate guilt of past generations. Individual responsibility for sin . . . does not alter the fact that the guilt for sin either in the past or in the present rests on the whole community. The Old Testament does not preach a religious individualism in which a man can stand in a private and personal relationship with God” (Mayes, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 15/3, 1973, 252; for more on guilt, see this volume, pp. 133, 164–67; see also the notes on Mosiah 2:28, *rid my garments*; 2:38, *enemy to God*). Benjamin says that if the sinner does not make restitution “and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God . . . his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (Mosiah 2:38–39; see the notes on Mosiah 2:38, *unquenchable fire*, and 3:27, *fire and brimstone*, below). An obvious parallel is Mosiah 3:11, in that the atonement is available to all who repent and have faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. In the comparison between Benjamin’s speech and the initiation covenant ceremony at Qumran, the third part of the ceremony is “Levites recount the sins and rebellions of the sons of Israel under the dominion of Belial” (1QS I 22–23). See the discussion on contention in this volume, pp. 130–35.

evil spirit. This term is used in the KJV OT in connection with Saul in 1 Sam. 19:9–11. It also appears in the NT in Acts 19:15–16. In the Book of Mormon it is also found in 2 Ne. 32:8; Mosiah 2:37; 4:14. See the discussion in this volume, pp. 340–41.

2:33 *wo*. Did this wo take the form of a curse, a ban, or shame? Compare Jacob’s pronouncement of woes in 2 Ne. 9:27–38. See also the notes on Mosiah 4:23, *wo be unto that man*, below.

listeth. List means “to incline” not “to listen.” See also Mosiah 2:32, *listeth to obey*, above.

dieth in his sins. Dying in sins is mentioned in the KJV in Ezek. 3:20; 18:24; John 8:21, 24 (twice), and in the Book of Mormon in 2 Ne. 9:38; Mosiah 15:26; Alma 12:16.

drinketh damnation to his own soul. A very interesting phrase that Benjamin used three times, here and in Mosiah 3:18, 25. Variants appear in 1 Cor. 11:29 and in 3 Ne. 18:25, referring to those who partake of the sacrament unworthily. A number of similar phrases also occur—"to drink wrath" or "to drink of the cup of wrath." Benjamin used this in Mosiah 3:26; 5:5, and it appears in Job 21:20 in the OT and in Rev. 14:8, 10; 16:19; 18:3 in the NT, also in D&C 35:11; 43:26; 88:94. In Isa. 51:17, 22 is found "cup of fury." The Hebrew of the Isaiah passages is identical to that of Job. The Isaiah passages are repeated in 2 Ne. 8:17, 22, indicating that Benjamin was probably familiar with them. Finally, one is reminded of the trial of bitter waters to test for infidelity in Num. 5:11–31. The *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, under "Redemption," contrasts the cup of wrath (Mosiah 3:26) with the cup of salvation.

wages. Punishment for sin is described as wages in Rom. 6:23; Alma 3:27; 5:42; Morm. 8:19; D&C 29:45. In Alma 3:27 and D&C 29:45 the *wages* are connected with "listening to obey" (see discussion on Mosiah 2:32).

everlasting punishment. This phrase is found in Mosiah 27:31; Matt. 25:46; 4 Macc. 12:12, 18; 18:5; *Testament of Gad* 7:6; *Testament of Benjamin* 7:5; see also Matt. 25:41, "everlasting fire." See TG, "Eternal."

contrary to his own knowledge. A similar phrase is found in Alma 9:23, again in connection with the Nephites, at which time Alma warns that it would "be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than them"; see also the consequences of transgressing against knowledge in Lev. 26:21, 27–28; Heb. 10:26; 2 Pet. 2:21; see also the discussion on Mosiah 2:32.

2:34 *eternally indebted.* This point was previously established by Benjamin with the words "forever and ever" (Mosiah 2:24). Referring to the term in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 5:13, Luke 14:34), Matthew Black points out that "the Aramaic term *hobha*, 'debt' or 'sin' . . . is the equivalent of *hayyabha*, 'debtor' or 'sinner.'" He explains further, "'Sin' was conceived of in terms of a debt; we may compare the parable of the Unforgiving Debtor" (*An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 1946, 102). See also notes on Mosiah 1:3, *suffered in ignorance*; 2:32, *list to obey, above*; and 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*, below. See also TG, "Debt."

have and are. See this volume, pp. 12–13.

holy prophets. W of M 1:16; see also 2 Pet. 3:2; Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; Rev. 22:6; 2 Baruch 85:1; see notes on Mosiah 3:13, *holy prophets*, below.

2:35 *they are just and true.* See also Rev. 15:3; 1 Ne. 14:23; Alma 18:34; 29:8; 3 Ne. 5:18; Moro. 10:6; D&C 20:30–31; 76:53. See also notes on Mosiah 4:12, *just and true*, below.

2:36 *after ye have known and have been taught all these things.* Knowledge puts people on notice, makes them legally and morally responsible. See notes on Mosiah 3:21, *none shall be found blameless*, below.

no place in you. This phrase is found in John 8:37, referring to the word of the Lord; Alma 34:35; Hel. 6:35; 13:8.

blessed, prospered, and preserved. *Blessed* and *prospered* occur as a word pair in Mosiah 25:24; 3 Ne. 5:22; 4 Ne. 1:18; Ether 10:28. See also the blessings in 1Q22 II–III cited in the notes on Mosiah 2:24, *doth immediately bless you*, above.

2:37 *open rebellion against God*. This phrase also is found in Alma 3:18 and Morm. 2:15; Welch defines this as the state of those who transgress the law contrary to their own knowledge in *Reexploring*, 62–63; see also the discussion on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; and in this volume, pp. 72–73, *essence of sin*.

enemy to all righteousness. This phrase also occurs in Mosiah 4:14; Alma 34:23; *enemy of all righteousness* is found in Moro. 9:6; Acts 13:10; Sirach 1:30.

unholy temples. See also Alma 7:21; 34:36; Hel. 4:24; D&C 97:17; Lev. 26:11; John 2:19–21; 14:17; Acts 7:48–50; 17:24; 1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19–20; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21–22.

2:38 *if that man repenteth not*. Repentance is the only way out.

enemy to God. Benjamin used this phrase here and in Mosiah 3:19. Abinadi used it twice in Mosiah 16:5. It also appears in Mosiah 27:9 and Moro. 7:12. It is also used in the KJV in Lev. 26:14–17 and James 4:4. See the discussion on guilt, this volume, pp. 133, 164–67; see also the notes on Mosiah 2:28, *rid my garments*, and 2:32, *list to obey*; see also the notes on Mosiah 3:19, *putteth off the natural man*, below.

demands of divine justice. The *demands of justice* are mentioned in 2 Ne. 9:26; Mosiah 15:9; Alma 34:16; 42:15, 24. Notice that the *demands of justice* are set against the claims of mercy.

immortal soul. Benjamin recognized the individual existence of souls which cannot die.

lively sense. A vivid expression.

to shrink from the presence of the Lord. “The wicked and rebellious may suffer some anguish of conscience in this life (Alma 38:8; D&C 124:52), but the great penalty for their rebellion is in the future” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, 38). The angel uses this phrase when speaking to Benjamin in Mosiah 3:25. The phrase the *presence of the Lord* may be a temple expression; hence also “unholy temples” (Mosiah 2:37).

guilt, and pain, and anguish. This is a tripartite expression; cf. *thoughts, words, deeds* (Mosiah 4:30); *mind, body, spirit* (Alma 17:5).

like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever. This phrase is very similar to another passage in Benjamin’s address: Mosiah 3:27, “And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever.” They are both similar to a passage in Jacob 6:10, “And according to the power of justice, for justice cannot be denied, ye must go away into that lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever, which lake of fire and brimstone is endless torment.” The last part of this verse “endless torment” finds a parallel in Mosiah 2:39, “never-ending torment.” The description of “endless torment” as “fire and brimstone” was also used by Jacob twice in 2 Ne. 9:19 and 26 and by Nephi in 2 Ne. 28:23. In D&C 76:44 the phrase is “and the fire is not quenched,” which is their torment. The idea of never-ending torment is also found in Rev. 14:10–11; 20:10; D&C 19:6. The curse of wrath and torment is also found in 1Q22 II, “[Be] very [careful], for your lives, [to keep them, lest] the wrath [of your God] against you be enkindled and reach you, and it closes the skies above, which make rain fall upon you, and [the water] from under[neath the earth which gives you [the harv]est.” See also notes on Mosiah 3:27, *lake of fire and brimstone*, below.

2:39 *mercy . . . claim.* Jacob, in speaking of the atonement in 2 Ne. 9:25, declared that the “mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them.” Benjamin used the phrase here and in Mosiah 3:26. Later, Alma used *mercy* as the subject of the verb *claim* five times while teaching Corianton in Alma 42:21–24 and 31. It also appears in D&C 88:40. *Mercy* is also the object of the verb *claim* in Alma 12:34 and in Moro. 7:27.

2:40 *ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children.* No women are mentioned here, although they were present (Mosiah 2:5).

young men. On the question of the age of the *young men*, Fred Woods has analyzed the comparable term in 2 Kgs. 2:23, *n^earim q^etannim*, “children or small boys” but “imprecise with regard to exact age,” with *y^eladim*, “children,” cited in 2 Kings 24, and compared them with Gen. 37:2 in which Joseph is called a *na’ar* at the age of seventeen. His conclusion is “that the age of the youths designated by these combined words would probably fall slightly under twenty years (BYUS 32/3, 1992, 48).

awake to a remembrance of the awful situation. The word *awful* appears 45 times in the Book of Mormon but nowhere else in scripture. Usually it describes hell, guilt, wickedness, fear, chains, or the state or situation of the wicked. In Ether 8:24, Moroni used the similar phrase “awake to a sense of your awful situation.” For more information on *fear*, see notes on Mosiah 1:7, *keep the commandments*; 2:10, *that ye should fear me*; 4:1, *fear of the Lord*. For remembrance, see the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 2:41; 4:11, 30; 6:3. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:25, *awful view of their own guilt*, below.

fallen into transgression. This phrase is found almost exclusively in the Book of Mormon: Enos 1:13; Jarom 1:10; Mosiah 1:13; 7:25; 15:13; Alma 9:23; 10:19; 24:30; 44:4; 46:21, 22; Hel. 3:16; 4:26; 3 Ne. 6:5. It is also found in D&C 5:32.

2:41 *blessed in all things.* Abraham is described as being “blessed in all things” in Gen. 24:1; hence, Benjamin is promising his people the blessings of Abraham.

temporal and spiritual. See also 1 Ne. 15:32; 22:3; 2 Ne. 2:5; Alma 7:23; 12:16. Contrast this with the phrase “[he who drinks] damnation to his own soul” (2:33). The cup of salvation is that of a “material deliverance attended by spiritual blessings” (*Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 208).

hold out faithful to the end. This is also found in D&C 6:13. Variations are in Alma 5:13, “faithful until the end” and D&C 31:13 and 81:6, “faithful unto the end”; Rev. 2:10 has “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

received into heaven. In the KJV in Mark 16:19 the Lord is “received up into heaven” and in Acts 10:16, in Peter’s vision of the unclean beasts, the vessel which held them is “received up into heaven.”

dwell with God. This phrase and variations are found in 1 Ne. 10:21; 15:35; Mosiah 15:23; Alma 24:22; Morm. 9:4; Moro. 8:26. Similar phrases are also found in 2 Ne. 2:8; Morm. 7:7; 9:3; D&C 76:62; 133:35; Moses 6:57.

state of never-ending happiness. Benjamin is perhaps alluding to the choice made by a Hebrew slave at the end of his six-year term of servitude, after which a slave—and we are all debt-servants in Benjamin’s mind—could decide to become a permanent slave because of his love for his master (Ex. 21:5). “Dwelling with God in a *state of never-ending happiness* seems suggestive of the temporary slave’s choice to become a permanent part of his master’s

household” (Cannon, *BYU Law Papers*, 1995). For information on slavery, see this volume pp. 40, 58, and the notes on Mosiah 2:13, *make slaves one of another*, above.

O remember, remember. Remember is used often in the scriptures, but in only five places in this same format: Alma 37:13; Hel. 5:9, 12; 14:30; D&C 3:3. In Hel. 5:9 the repetition may actually be a conscious device, for Helaman implores his sons, “O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake”; see also the notes on the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 4:11, 30; 6:3 on remembering.

Lord God hath spoken it. See also Morm. 8:26; 1 Kgs. 14:11; Isa. 22:25; 25:8; Joel 3:8 (MT 4:8); Obad. 1:18, “for the Lord hath spoken it.” This declaration formally and overtly marks the end of this section of the speech. See notes on Mosiah 3:27, *Thus hath the Lord commanded me*, below.

BENJAMIN’S SPEECH: PART 3

The Name of the Lord Omnipotent (Mosiah 3:1–10)

3:1 And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. ² And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me. ³ And he said unto me:

Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. ⁴ For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy. 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, 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 curing all manner of diseases. ⁶ And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men. ⁷ And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. 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. ⁹ And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. ¹⁰ And he shall rise the third day from the dead; 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.

3:1 again. It is possible that a break or pause occurred between the ending of section 2 and the beginning of section 3.

my brethren. Benjamin referred to the men in his kingdom as his “brothers.” This is consistent not only with the overall concept of Israel as a family or household of God with God as the father, but it is also consonant with the legal requirement of Deut. 17:15, that the king shall be “one from among thy brethren.” See the notes on Mosiah 1:5, *brethren*; 1:13, *weak like unto their brethren*.

I would call your attention. Benjamin alone uses this phrase; it appears here and in Mosiah 4:4. In the KJV the verb *hear* is used often to express the same idea: Num. 12:6; 16:8; Deut. 6:3–4, etc.

somewhat . . . speak . . . concerning. This expression is unique to the Book of Mormon, being found in 2 Ne. 6:8; 25:1; Omni 1:12, 27; W of M 1:3; Alma 54:6; 56:2; Ether 12:6; compare 1 Kgs. 2:14, “moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee.”

which is to come. Eph. 1:21; “that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). This formulation is used seven times in the Book of Mormon: Mosiah 3:1; 4:11; 5:3; Alma 5:48; 21:8; 51:40; Hel. 8:23.

3:2 *made known unto me by an angel.* The formulation “angels making known” does not appear in the KJV. It is found in the Book of Mormon in 1 Ne. 14:29; Alma 11:31; 13:26; 36:5; 40:11. The concept of a heavenly messenger appearing to impart wisdom and give a divine commission is found in the literature on enthroning a Mesopotamian king to whom is revealed “the great mystery of heaven and earth, the hidden things, . . . the hidden knowledge possessed by the gods” (Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, 1950, 20). A parallel can be drawn with Ezek. 2:9–3:2, the calling of the prophet and the imparting of knowledge in the form of a roll of a book (ibid., 331–32). Moses, too, “is elevated above the human sphere, and, in Samaritan literature thought to be pre-existent and divine, ascends to heaven . . . the bringer of divine revelation” (ibid., 46–47). Messages delivered or introduced by angels are common in scriptural and pseudepigraphic literature. In the Book of Mormon, see for example 1 Ne. 8 (Lehi led by an angelic guide), 1 Ne. 11 (Nephi’s vision directed by an angelic escort). See also Ezek. 40–48 (Ezekiel’s vision); Zech. 1–6 (Zechariah’s vision). From the books of Enoch and other texts involving angelic escorts, see 1 Enoch 1:2–9; 17:1–19:3; 21:1–36:4; 72:1–82:20; 108:5–15; 2 Enoch 1:4–10; 3:1–22:11; 37:1–38:2; 3 Enoch 4–48:10; Moses 6:26–36. On the phenomenon of the angelic escort in general, see Davis, *Journal of Theological Studies* 45/2, 1994, 479–503.

angel . . . Awake. The story of a prophet being awakened by a heavenly being who has a message for him is also found in the calling of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1–18). Other instances of visions occur at waking or soon afterwards: two of Daniel’s visions (Dan. 8:18; 10:7–11) and one of Zechariah’s (Zech. 4:1–2). For information about the angel, see this volume, pp. 65–66, 112–13, 283–87, 406 n. 63; see also the notes on Mosiah 3:4, *hath sent me and mayest rejoice*, and 4:11, *spoken by the mouth of the angel*, below.

Awake. Susan Easton Black sees this awakening as the transition from slumbering in the types and shadows of the law of Moses to finding the gospel of Christ (B.02, 43).

stood before me. See also Dan. 8:15; 10:15–16; Zech. 4:1; Acts 10:30.

3:3 *glad tidings of great joy.* *Glad tidings* is not found in the KJV OT but appears in the NT: Luke 1:19; 8:2; Acts 13:32; Rom. 10:15. In the Book of Mormon the phrase appears in Alma 13:22–23; 39:15–16, 19; Hel. 13:7; 16:14; 3 Ne. 1:26. A similar phrase, “good tidings,” occurs in 2 Sam. 4:10; 18:27; 1 Kgs. 1:42; 2 Kgs. 7:9; Isa. 40:9 (twice); 41:27; 52:7; 61:1; Nahum 1:15; Luke 2:10; 1 Thes. 3:6; Mosiah 12:21; 15:14, 18; 27:37; Hel. 5:29; 3 Ne. 20:40. *Glad tidings of great joy* is not found in the KJV, but it appears here, in Alma 13:22 and Hel. 16:14. It is also found three times in the D&C. In Alma 13:22, Alma specifically affirms Benjamin’s testimony, declaring that the “glad tidings of

great joy” are proclaimed by the voice of the Lord or “by the mouth of angels.” See also Isa. 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him [Nahum 1:15; 1 Ne. 13:37; Mosiah 12:20–21, 32–33, 15:15–18, 3 Ne. 20:40] that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace”; Isa. 52:9, “Break forth into joy”; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:53–54. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:4, *mayest rejoice*, and 4:11, *exceedingly great joy*.

3:4 *heard thy prayers*. Benjamin had been praying to receive further light and knowledge about the items revealed to him. This is significant for at least two reasons: first, God usually does not reveal important information to people unless they make a petition asking for it (1 Ne. 15:8; Matt. 7:7), and second, prophets often make requests, known as intercessory prayers, pleading with the Lord on behalf of their people. Thus, for example, Lehi prayed “on behalf of his people” (1 Ne. 1:5), and Enos poured out his soul on behalf of the Nephites and Lamanites (Enos 1:9–17). Because the revelation given to Benjamin deals with the salvation and welfare of his people in general, it is reasonable to assume that Benjamin’s prayer was an intercessory prayer offered on behalf of others. Such efforts by prophets to intercede at the throne of God on behalf of their people have been identified as one of the notable functions of classic Israelite prophecy. See Welch, in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi*, 1988, 38–39. Compare Encyclopedia Judaica, 13:1170. Prophetic intercessory functions were served by other prophets such as Abraham (Gen. 20:7), Samuel (1 Sam. 7:5–9), and Jeremiah (Jer. 14:11).

judged of thy righteousness. God judges not only the transgressions but also the righteousness of his children. Throughout the book of Psalms, the sentiment of the righteous is to invite and desire, not to fear and worry about, the judgment of God. Judging was seen as a positive attribute of God in biblical times. For an insightful discussion of the concept of judgment in the Psalms, see Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1938, 15–22.

hath sent me. Angels, prophets, and apostles are sent as authorized agents to carry specific messages from the Lord. The word missionary literally means one who is sent (from the Latin, *mitto*). In this case, being sent involves more than merely acting as a delivery boy; it implies full authority to act on behalf of the sender, with the accompanying obligation to deliver the message verbatim and to fulfill the delegated assignment precisely. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:2, *angel . . . Awake*, and 3:4, *mayest rejoice*.

mayest rejoice. The angel was sent with instructions to give King Benjamin permission to rejoice and to tell his people that they may also be filled with joy. Evidently more is involved here than a mere expression of happiness. Just as “joy” in 2 Ne. 2:25 embraces the attainment of the full purpose of life, “Man is that he might have joy,” so here the angel announces the good news of the eternal gospel that Benjamin and his people may rejoice and be filled with joy, that is that they have attained and shall fulfill the measure of their creation and shall enjoy all the blessings of the atonement of Jesus Christ through the gift and power of God and their righteous obedience. B. H. Roberts describes it as the joy that “will arise from a consciousness of moral, spiritual, and physical strength; of strength gained in conflict” (*The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 1996, 266, and in general, 265–67). Talking of the change in fortunes as a result of the Depression, President Kimball contrasts the worldly pleasures obtained from spending material wealth with the joy that comes from spending time with family: “Having lost their expensive cars, or unable to purchase gasoline for them, groups remained at home and found real joy in family associations and in teaching the children the way of life” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 1982, 354). Millet and McConkie describe this joy as when one receives a remission of sins, he “delights in fellowship with those of the household of faith; his confidence once again begins to wax strong in the presence of the Lord; the word of the Lord becomes sweet to the taste; and the strength of the Lord enables him to bear life’s burdens with perspective” (M.18, 158). For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

3:5–10 *For behold, the time cometh.* Messianic expectations in ancient Israel are not limited to those found in the Book of Mormon; both Zechariah and Haggai saw in Zerubbabel a partial fulfillment of Messianic prophecies, implying that older Messianic prophecies were common knowledge at that time (van der Woude, ZAW 100, 1988, 138–40). The Dead Sea Scrolls contain Messianic references: Paolo Sacchi, after first defining Messianism and citing specifically 2 Sam. 7, Isa. 11:1–5, Jer. 23:5, Zech. 3:8, 6:12, Ezek. 34:23–24, 37:25; 45:9, and generally Chronicles, Job, Ruth and Jonah, highlights those details in 11QMelch, in which the eschatological leader of the sons of light appears as a “superhuman figure.” Sacchi sees this exposition of the role of the Messiah as a “new form” of Messianism dating from about 200 BC, again showing that Messianic expectations had been in existence for a long time (ZAW 100, 1988, 201–9). In contrast to the NT declaration in John 4:25–26; 6:69; 20:31, which is “clear, . . . the Book of Mormon is *emphatic*” (Maxwell, *Not My Will, but Thine*, 1988, 45). For a discussion of the angel’s preview of Christ’s life, see this volume, pp. 343–54.

3:5 *Lord Omnipotent.* Benjamin uses this phrase five times; it is found only in his speech in the Book of Mormon: Mosiah 3:17–18, 21; 5:2, 15. In the KJV it is found only in Rev. 19:6. As a king, a potentate with great power, Benjamin related especially to the idea of God’s power and omnipotence.

the Lord . . . reigneth. Also found in 1 Chron. 16:31; Ps. 47:8; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Isa. 52:7; Rev. 19:6; Mosiah 12:21; 15:14; 27:37; 3 Ne. 20:40 (quoting Isaiah).

from all eternity to all eternity. Also found in Alma 13:7 and Moro. 8:18; D&C 39:1; Moses 6:67; 7:29, 31. According to this formulation, eternity is without beginning as well as without end. In the KJV a portion of this idea is expressed with the word *everlasting*: Ps. 41:13; 90:2; 103:17; 106:48; see also Moro. 7:22.

shall come down. The condescension of the Lord from heaven to dwell in a mortal body was a consistent element of Nephite messianic expectation. Lehi saw “One descending out of the midst of heaven” (1 Ne. 1:9), and Nephi was asked by the angel, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” (1 Ne. 11:16). Essential to the Christology taught by early Book of Mormon prophets was the understanding that God himself, “Who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity,” would humble himself and become mortal. See Millet, in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi*, 1988, 167–69.

tabernacle of clay. See also Alma 7:11–12. The phrase *tabernacle of clay* is unique to the Book of Mormon, used only here by Benjamin and by Mormon in Moro. 9:6.

healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight. A fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q251), from about 100 BC, contains the following similar messianic expectations: “And when the Messiah comes then he will heal the sick [make the blind see], raise [or resurrect] the dead, and to the poor announce glad tidings.” See Wise and Tabor, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18/6, 1992, 60–65; see also Garca Martnez, *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1997, 131–32. For a text to speak more than a hundred years before the time of Christ so explicitly about the miracles to be performed by the Messiah is news to most of the world; but to those who see continuity between the Old Testament and the New, this text, which named three of the four points also found in Mosiah 3:5, sounds quite familiar. Compare Matt. 11:5 and Luke 7:22 (blind receive sight, lame walk, lepers cleansed, deaf hear, dead raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them); and Matt. 15:32 (dumb speak, maimed whole, lame walk, blind see). See also Isa. 35:5–6, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped”; Luke 4:18–19; Isa. 61:1–2, which is a sabbatical and jubilee proclamation; see also Lev. 25:10; Sirach 48:5. Christ’s ministry was revealed to Benjamin as a continuous series of examples of service (B.02, 41).

3:6 *evil spirits*. See Matt. 10:8, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils”; 10:1, “power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease”; Luke 9:1, “power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases”; see also Matt. 9:32–35; 12:22, 24; 11QPsAp IV 15.

hearts of the children of men. This phrase is found in 2 Chron. 6:30; Prov. 15:11.

3:7 *temptations*. Benjamin’s report that Christ “shall suffer temptations” calls to mind the temptations of Jesus in Matt. 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–12. The Greek word for temptation comes from the verb *peirazo*, whose meanings include to attempt, to try to do a thing, to test (either with good or bad intent), as well as to tempt. Thus the sufferings endured by Jesus during his forty days in the wilderness were as much a test as a temptation. Benjamin’s reference to the sufferings of hunger, thirst, and fatigue seem to focus on the forty-day period of trial in the wilderness, whereas the “pain of body” relates more to the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, so great that “blood cometh from every pore.”

hunger, thirst, and fatigue. These words first appear in 1 Ne. 16:35. They are also found here and in Mosiah 7:16; Alma 17:5; 60:3.

even more than man can suffer. Benjamin is confirming the great suffering of the Savior, “Any theology which teaches that there were some things he did not suffer is a falsification of his life” (M.14, 6). See also TG, “Jesus Christ, Redeemer.”

unto death. See also Matt. 26:38, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”; Mark 14:34; Sirach 37:2.

blood cometh from every pore. This prophesies the event reported in Luke 22:44 that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood.” Benjamin, in his declaration of the suffering of Christ in Gethsemane and in keeping with the role of the Book of Mormon as “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” affirms the literal nature of Luke’s description. This verse in Luke is unique to his Gospel, and since the times of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, lines have been drawn as to whether this verse was symbolic or literal. Some assert, “in using the expression ‘as it were great drops of blood,’ he does not declare the drops of sweat to have been actually drops of blood” (Dionysius, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:115); others saw it literally, “And in an agony He sweats blood, and is strengthened by an angel” (Hippolytus, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:230). Modern commentators have noted, “Cases are known in which the blood, violently agitated by grief, ends by penetrating through the vessels which inclose it, and driven outward, escapes with the sweat through the transpiratory glands” (Godet, *Commentary on Luke*, 1981, 476). Further uncertainty about Luke 22:43–44, however, arises because these words are not present in the earliest NT manuscripts of Luke. Joseph Fitzmyer concludes, nevertheless, that there can be at least “no doubt that a tradition about Jesus’ agony in the garden as found in these verses [Luke 22:43–44] is ancient” (*Luke*, 1985, 1443). Raymond E. Brown evaluates textual, stylistic, structure, scribal, and other evidence and concludes: “While clearly the evidence available does not settle the issue of whether Luke wrote 22:43–44, in my judgment the overall import of the five types of evidence or reasoning discussed above favors Lucan authorship” (*SBL 1992 Seminar Papers*, 159); see further the scholarly sources cited by Brown. In 1Q22 IV the blood symbolism is used for remembrance, “[And you shall] take [the blood and] pour [it] on the earth . . . and it will be forgiven them.” See also Luke 22:44; Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 2:9; 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:21, 24; 3:18; 1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Ne. 11:33; Hel. 5:9; 3 Ne. 11:14; Moro. 10:33. For further discussion of the sweat of blood and suffering, see this volume, pp. 14, 172, 175–76, 347.

anguish. The anguish of Jesus was not only physical but also mental and spiritual. The word *anguish* comes from the German word *Angst*, meaning fear, worry, or concern, and is related to the words anxiety and anger, describing mental as well as physical states.

wickedness and . . . abominations. This is a very common word pair in the Book of Mormon. It occurs 46 times: 1 Ne. 1:19; 14:4, 12; 27:8; 28:14, 17; Jacob 2:10, 31; Mosiah 3:7; 7:26; 11:20; 29:18; Alma 4:3; 21:3; 37:21, 23; 37:29 (twice); Hel. 4:11; 6:24, 34; 7:27; 9:23; 13:14–17; 3 Ne. 2:3; 7:15; 9:7–8, 10–12; 30:2; 4 Ne. 1:39; Morm. 2:18 (3), 27, 3:11; Ether 14:25; Moro. 9:15. It is also found in D&C 10:21; 45:12. The theme of abomination of the people is found in 1Q22 I, “they will desert me and ch[oose the sins of the na]tions, their abominations and their disreputable acts.”

3:8 *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning.* This title is repeated verbatim in Hel. 14:12. In 3 Ne. 9:15, Christ uses most of the elements contained in this title but not in exactly the same way. Ether 4:7 has a title that is similar but not identical. For *Son of God* see Mark 1:1; Dan. 3:25; Matt. 1:21, 23; 4:6–7; Luke 1:31–33, 70; 2:21, 30; 24:27; John 5:39, 46–47; 12:41; Acts 3:18, 21, 24; 20:22–23; 1 Pet. 1:10–11; 2 Esdras 7:28–29 (4 Ezra); 1 Ne. 10:4–7; 11:18; 2 Ne. 25:19–20, Mosiah 15:1–9; Alma 5:48; 7:10; 3 Ne. 20:24; for the specific name of a king of Judah given centuries before his birth, see 1 Kgs. 13:2; 2 Kgs. 21:24 (Josiah); see also Isa. 44:28; 45:1 (Cyrus). For notes on the creation, see this volume, pp. 169–70.

from the beginning. See also Isa. 9:6; Jonah 1:9; John 1:1–3, 17–18; Acts 4:24; 1 Jn. 5:7; 2 Ne. 2:14; Jacob 2:5; Mosiah 4:2, 9; 7:27; 15:2–4; Hel. 14:12; 16:18; Judith 13:18.

his mother shall be called Mary. The name Mary was a common Jewish name. In Hebrew it is spelled Miriam, notably also the name of the sister of Moses (Num. 26:59). The name in Hebrew means “one who is exalted.” In other words, the mother of the Savior would be called “one who is exalted.”

3:9 *cometh unto his own.* See John 1:11, “He came unto his own.”

that salvation might come. The Hebrew word for salvation is *yē‘uah*. In Hebrew prophecy, the name *Jehovah* was often equated with salvation. “The Lord [is] my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he [is] my God” (Ex. 15:2; see also Ps. 27:1; 118:14; Isa. 12:2). Thus the parallelism in Benjamin’s text is strong: “*He cometh unto his own // that salvation might come unto the children of men.*”

through faith on his name. The earliest reference to faith on God’s name is Acts 3:16. In the OT, names were often symbolic, so that having faith on the name of God can be associated with the reverence attached to it. In the Hebrew scriptures, the name of God was represented by the Tetragrammaton YHWH and pronounced adonai. Thus it may be said that the name represented the concept of God. For further information on names, see Barr, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 52/1, 1969, 11–29; Madsen, in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1990, 458–81. See also notes on Mosiah 5:8, *take upon you the name of Christ*, below.

he hath a devil. Fulfillment of this prophecy is found in John 10:20; see also Matt. 12:24. Bruce R. McConkie describes this argument as “an affirmative denial of [Christ’s] Messiahship” (*The Mortal Messiah*, 3:167).

scourge. According to Webster’s 1828 dictionary, to *scourge* means to whip severely, lash; or to punish with severity; to chastise; to afflict for sins or faults, and with the purpose of correction.” Deut. 25:3 allowed a convicted party to be beaten, but not in excess of forty stripes or blows.

crucify. Crucifixion was not only a Roman form of punishment but is attested as well as a Hebrew mode of execution. Deut. 21:22 provides for execution in capital cases: “And if a man hath committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree . . .” Although this passage is ambiguous, whether hanging

on a tree was a mode of execution or simply displaying the body after stoning, passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls make it clear that crucifixion was used by Jews as a mode of execution before Roman times. Tvedtnes, *Insights*, April 1997, 2. See *Temple Scroll* (11Q19) LXIV 6–13 in Garca Martnez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 1996, 178; Peshar Nahum, frgs. 3–4 I 7–8, in *ibid.*, 196; 3 Ne. 4:28.

3:10 *third day*. Jesus had prophesied that he would rise on the third day. The third day is significant in many OT accounts. For example, Moses told the people at Sinai to purify themselves “and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mt. Sinai” (Ex. 19:11); Jonah was in the depths of the sea, “in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17). See Howton, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 15/3, 1962, 288–304; Walker, *Novum Testamentum* 5, 1960, 261–62; Landes, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86/4, 1967, 446–50.

from the dead. See Matt. 20:19, “and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again”; Mark 10:34, “and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again”; see also Matt. 28:7; Luke 18:33; 1 Ne. 19:10; 2 Ne. 25:13; Mosiah 3:7; 5:12; Hel. 14:20, 27, 3 Ne. 10:9; 4 Macc. 6:1–29; Wisdom of Solomon 10:5. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:9, *scourge*, above.

standeth to judge the world. In ancient Israel, judges stood to render judgment; God as the *judge of the world* is a theme found in Moses’ speech in 1Q22 IV; see also notes on Mosiah 3:24, *judge*.

righteous judgment. The death and resurrection of Jesus was essential in order to make a righteous judgment possible.

BENJAMIN’S SPEECH: PART 4

The Atonement of the Lord Omnipotent (Mosiah 3:11–27)

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

¹²But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he *rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be *through repentance and *faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. ¹³And 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 whosoever should *believe that Christ should come, the same might receive *remission of their sins, and *rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them. ¹⁴Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a *stiff-necked people, and he *appointed unto them a law, even the *law of Moses. ¹⁵And *many signs, and wonders, and *types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they *hardened their hearts, and understood not that the *law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood. ¹⁶And even if it were possible that *little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, *as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ *atoneth for their sins. ¹⁷And 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, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. ¹⁸For behold he judgeth, and his *judgment is just; and the *infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men *drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as *little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to

come, in and *through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. ¹⁹For the natural man is an *enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and *putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, *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.

²⁰And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the *knowledge of the Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. ²¹And behold, when that time cometh, *none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent. ²²And 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. ²³And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me. ²⁴And thus saith the Lord: They shall *stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be *judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. ²⁵And if they be evil they are *consigned to an *awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the *presence of the Lord into a state of misery and *endless torment, from whence they can *no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls. ²⁶Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the *wrath of God, which *justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever. ²⁷And their *torment is as a *lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up *forever and ever. *Thus hath the Lord commanded me. *Amen.

3:11 *his blood atoneth*. In discussing the atoning blood of Christ, Benjamin refers to the full range of atoning concepts under the law of Moses and focuses on Christ's blood actually being spilt (W.53, 232). In addition, one may compare the blood of the covenant sprinkled on the people by Moses at the first Sukkot (T.49, 222). The words *blood* and *atone/atonement* do not occur together often in the scriptures. In the KJV OT they are found in Ex. 30:10; Lev. 12:7; 16:18, 27; 17:11; 2 Chron. 29:24. The passages in Ex. 30 and Lev. 16 have reference to the Day of Atonement (see this volume, pp. 174–83). In the NT the concept of atoning blood is found in Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:10–11; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Rev. 1:5. Heb. 13:10–13 clearly equates the sin offering of Ex. 29:10–14 with the atonement of Jesus—including the casting out of the “scapegoat” (see also Matt. 21:39; John 19:17–18; Heb. 10:6, 10; 4 Macc. 6:29). Benjamin uses this combination of blood and atonement three times: Mosiah 3:11, 15, 16. Compare Alma 21:9; 24:13; 34:11; and D&C 76:69. The symbolism of the blood of atonement is found in Moses' speech in 1Q22 IV. For further discussion of the law of Moses and the atonement of Christ, see this volume, pp. 99, 176–77; and generally chapter 5; see also the notes on Mosiah 1:3, *suffered in ignorance*; 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*.

transgression of Adam. The word transgression means literally “walking across” from the Latin *trans*, across, and *gredi*, a step. Dallin Oaks explains that Adam and Eve “were in a transitional state, no longer in the spirit world but with physical bodies not yet subject to death and not yet capable of procreation.” Therefore they “could not fulfill the Father's first commandment [be fruitful and multiply] without transgressing the barrier between the bliss of the Garden of Eden and the terrible trials and wonderful opportunities of mortal life” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73). “In order to obey the command of God to multiply and people the earth, Adam and Eve transgressed the law. Their deliberate action resulted in their fall” (Bailey, “Adam: LDS Sources,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:16). Robert J. Matthews explains that “The creation of the earth was a multistep process in which the fall of Adam and Eve and

their expulsion from the Garden of Eden were the final necessary steps in bringing about the mortal condition. . . . The Fall was a benefit to mankind. It was part of the Father's plan" (Matthews, "Fall of Adam," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:485–86). Benjamin makes it clear that the transgression of Adam led to the fall, which created the possibility of sin, and that the blood of Christ atones for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, which was a necessary part of the plan of salvation. Compare Rom. 5:14, "Adam's transgression." See the notes on Mosiah 3:7, *blood cometh from every pore*.

not knowing the will of God. People who live and die never knowing the will of God concerning them are reconciled to God through the atoning blood of Christ. Apparently, this refers to people who never knew the will or law of God expressly. Jewish law assumed that all people knew a portion of God's will concerning all humanity and that all people were naturally knowledgeable of the requirements imposed upon all mankind by the covenant made by God with Noah, which covered such things as the Noachide prohibition against murder (Gen. 9:6).

ignorantly sinned. An important concern under the law of Moses was atoning for sins that a person committed ignorantly or unwittingly. While modern theologies would be less inclined to consider ignorant transgressions to be sins at all, the law of Moses included provisions for atoning for sins that were committed ignorantly. See Welch, *JBMS* 1/1, 1992, 119–41. Benjamin here includes the concept of inadvertent sins. This idea is repeated in 3 Ne. 6:18, where it is contrasted with the concept of rebelling, as it is in Mosiah 3:12. The ancient mind included in its concept of sin unintentional transgressions, accidents, errors, or misjudgments: "Impurity could result, for example, from any direct or indirect contact with a corpse, even if the person was unaware of the contact. . . . Inadvertent sins . . . stood at the crux of the concept of expiation and atonement in the ancient system of sacrifices" (W.55, 2). See also the notes on Mosiah 1:3, *suffered in ignorance*; 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:11, *his blood atoneth*.

3:12 *rebelleth against God*. This is a most serious sin. It appears often in the OT: Deut. 1:26; 9:23; Josh. 22:16, 19, 22, 29; 1 Sam. 12:14; Ps. 5:10; 107:11; Dan. 9:9; Hosea 13:16. The phrase is not found in the KJV NT. It is found in the Book of Mormon: Jacob 1:8; Mosiah 2:37; 3:12; 15:26; 16:5; 27:11; Alma 3:18; 10:6; 36:13; 62:2; Hel. 8:25; 3 Ne. 6:18. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 3:19, *enemy to God*.

through repentance and faith. This phrase is found here and in Mosiah 3:21. Variants include "baptized unto repentance, through faith" in Alma 9:27, and "through faith and repentance" in Alma 22:14. For comments on repentance, see this volume, pp. 177, 181, 227, 350–54, 446–51.

faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. This concept is also found in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

3:13 *holy prophets*. The description of prophets as *holy* is found 28 times in the Book of Mormon, 5 times in the D&C and 4 times in the NT. In most cases the reference is to revelation given from their mouths. Holiness was usually understood in the OT as referring to the sancta in the temple, the domain of the priests. It appears that the Nephites did not rigidly distinguish the priestly domain from the prophetic realm. See the notes on Mosiah 2:34, *holy prophets*, above.

among all the children of men. The implication is that prophets of God have been among all people in all lands of the world. George Q. Cannon said, "There have been many faithful men in all nations and among all people unto whom God has given great light and knowledge. He gave light and knowledge to Luther and Calvin and Melancthon and Cranmer and George Whitefield and John Wesley and Edward Irving and Alexander Campbell and to Confucius, Socrates and Plato and many other philosophers and teachers" (*Writings of LDS General Authorities*, 1965, 1:308).

every kindred, nation, and tongue. Usually the word *people* is added to this group, which usually begins with *nation* instead of *kindred*. See Rev. 5:9; 14:6; 1 Ne. 19:17; 2 Ne. 26:13; Mosiah 3:20; 15:28; 16:1; Alma 9:20; 37:4; 45:16; D&C 10:51; 77:8, 11; 98:33; 133:37. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:20, *knowledge of a Savior*.

believe that Christ should come. These “holy prophets” would declare not only ethical teachings or predictions about the future, but would give sufficient knowledge that “whosoever should believe that Christ should come” would be forgiven of sins.

remission of their sins. This phrase is found in Acts 10:43, “Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

rejoice with exceedingly great joy. See also Matt. 2:10, “rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” See also the notes on Mosiah 3:3, *glad tidings of great joy*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 4:11, *exceedingly great joy*; and this volume, pp. 284–86, 288–89.

3:14 *stiffnecked.* This term appears in the KJV, mostly in Exodus and Deuteronomy, referring to the children of Israel: Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27; 2 Chron. 30:8 (referring to the Israelites at the time of Moses); Acts 7:51 (paraphrasing Deut. 10:16). It appears no less than 25 times in the Book of Mormon.

appointed unto them a law. Webster’s 1828 dictionary includes an entry under *appoint* that refers directly to biblical phraseology; *appoint* means “to constitute, ordain, or fix by decree, order or decision,” so that when Benjamin uses this phrase, it is in the same sense as “Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?” (D&C 132:10), i.e., that the law is ordained by God.

law of Moses. The phrase law of Moses appears in biblical texts as early as Joshua 8:31. The law of Moses embodies not only the rules of sacrifice, but also the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20), the civil and ethical teachings of the Code of the Covenant (Ex. 21–23), the laws of chastity, holiness, and consecration in the book of Leviticus, and many rules of charity, kindness, and purity found in Deuteronomy. Because the people were “stiffnecked,” the law of Moses needed to spell out these exalted concepts in more explicit and sometimes mundane terms, together with stringent punishments for transgression. This does not mean, however, that the principles promoted by the law of Moses were retrograde or defective, even though they did not constitute the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3:15 *many signs and wonders.* It is interesting that these phrases appear together and in a verse that mentions the law of Moses. *Signs and wonders* (miracles) are both used often in the KJV OT in connection with the story of Moses and Pharaoh. Benjamin’s text, in using these words and *stiffnecked* in the previous verse, harks back to the experience of the Israelites at the time when the law of Moses was received. See also variations on this theme in Deut. 4:34; 7:19; Acts 5:12; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4; Wisdom of Solomon 10:16; Hel. 16:13.

types, and shadows. This phrase shows that “the foretelling role of the law of Moses is made more clear in the plain and precious Book of Mormon” (Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment*, 1986, 46); “Knowing that the God they worship is a being in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning from that course which he has and shall pursue everlastingly, it is no surprise to spiritually literate souls to learn that the prophecies of the First Coming are but types and shadows of similar revelations relative to the Second Coming” (McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 1978, 31). And further, “There are in the Feast of Tabernacles more ceremonies that center in Christ, more similitudes that tell of his life and ministry, and more types and shadows that testify of him and his redeeming

sacrifice than in any of the other feasts. In a general sense, the Feast of Tabernacles has all that the other feasts had, and a great deal more that is unique, distinctive, and reserved for this most joyous of all festive occasions” (McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1978, 177–78; see also *Mormon Doctrine* and *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* under “Types and Shadows”). Looking at types and shadows as a form, “To the modern and the western mind all this over-obvious dwelling on types and shadows seems a bit overdone, but not to the ancient or Oriental mind. The whole Arabic language is one long commentary on the deep-seated feeling, so foreign to us but so characteristic of people who speak synthetic languages, that if things are alike they are the same” (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 212). In addition, “Divination of the future is an essential and unfailing part of the year-rite and royal succession everywhere, especially in the Old World, but again Benjamin gives it a spiritualized turn, and what he prophesies is the earthly mission of the Savior, the signs and wonders shown the ancients, being according to him ‘types and shadows showed . . . unto them concerning his coming’” (ibid., 303–4).

hardened their hearts. Becoming hard-hearted means losing sight of the purpose and spirit of the law. It also has to do with becoming stubborn, proud, and unwilling to obey the word of the Lord. Pharaoh hardened his heart (Ex. 7:14), and likewise the people of Israel hardened their hearts even though they too were shown many signs and wonders.

law of Moses availeth nothing. Although the Nephites knew that the law of Moses by itself would ultimately avail nothing, they continued to observe the law of Moses strictly. See Welch, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 1994, 302–9.

3:16 *little children.* This is the first time that the salvation of little children, as a group apart from the children of men, is mentioned in the Book of Mormon. This point of Nephite doctrine is stated extensively in Mormon’s letter to Moroni (Moro. 8). Commenting on this, Calvin Rudd says that, “Before that time [of accountability] they are considered ‘infants’ or ‘little children’ and are not required to be baptized. They are considered ‘alive in Christ’ and are ‘whole’ (Moro. 8:8–12; JST, Matt. 18:10–11)” (“Children: Salvation of Children,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:267). Joseph Smith said, “The doctrine of baptizing children, or sprinkling them, or they must welter in hell, is a doctrine not true, not supported in Holy Writ, and is not consistent with the character of God. All children are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the moment that children leave this world, they are taken to the bosom of Abraham” (TPJS, 4:197).

as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ. These words show that “we are descendants of Adam; we all have a common father. . . . The blessings of the fall have passed upon all men; all can be redeemed because Adam fell and Christ came” (McConkie, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1982, 30). The phrase is similar to 1 Cor. 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The pairing of Adam and Christ in the plan of salvation is also found in Mosiah 3:19; Alma 22:13; 40:18; Morm. 9:12; Moro. 8:8.

atoneth for their sins. Compare 1 Jn. 1:7, “the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin”; see also Lev. 17:11; Isa. 53:5, 10–11; Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:6–21; 1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 2:13; Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5; compare *Testament of Benjamin* 3:8; 2 Macc. 12:44–45; 4 Macc. 6:28–30; 17:21–22; 1QS V 6; V 3–4, 10; IX 4.

3:17 *no other name.* For the ancient Israelites, of necessity, types and shadows replaced clear revealed light; for the Nephites no symbolic replacement took place, but the name was given (B.02, 42). Nibley explains, “Why the name? Because he is all we have. The account of him is the story—the name we refer to. You have no identity without your name” (N.25, 469). For a further discussion of the name, see this volume, pp. 46, 179–80, 252–53, 286–87; and notes to Mosiah 3:9, *through faith on his name*; 5:8, *no other name given*.

salvation . . . in and through the name of Christ. The idea of gaining salvation only through the name of Christ occurs in the NT. In Acts 4:12 we read “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” This idea occurs often in the Book of Mormon, especially in King Benjamin’s speech. See Mosiah 3:9, 17; 5:8; Alma 11:40; 26:35; 34:15; D&C 109:4; 6:52.

3:18 *judgment is just.* This phrase is also found in Mosiah 29:12, “the judgments of God are always just,” and in John 5:30, “I judge: and my judgment is just.”

infant perisheth not. This phrase is unique to Benjamin.

drink damnation. The sense here is that *damnation* is the equivalent of the “dregs of the bitter cup” in Alma 40:25–26 and the “wine of the wrath of God” in Rev. 14:8–11. Bruce R. McConkie says that “agency, which is the law of choosing between opposites, requires both rewards and punishments. But both of these come in varying degrees. The better man’s works, the higher his reward will be; and the more evil his deeds, the greater his punishment. The highest reward is eternal life for the sons of God, and the greatest condemnation is eternal damnation for the sons of perdition” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 1985, 96).

little children. The concept of becoming as a little child is found in Matt. 18:3–4, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Why the emphasis on children? . . . Children will accept the gospel. They will accept the plan and obey and will offer no resistance” (N.25, 469). See this volume, p. 447–48.

through the atoning blood of Christ. See the discussion of the atonement in this volume, pp. 99, 176–77, 420–26; generally chapter 5; and the notes on Mosiah 3:7, *blood cometh from every pore*, and 4:2, *apply the atoning blood of Christ*.

3:19 *enemy to God.* See the discussion on the *natural man* below, and Rom. 8:7–9; 1 Cor. 2:14; James 4:4; Wisdom of Solomon 13:1. See also notes on Mosiah 2:38, *enemy to God*, above.

putteth off the natural man. Essentially, the natural man is the unrepentant person; see also Alma 26:21. Definitions of the natural man vary on the question of proactivity: one view is that “the natural man is the earthy man who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations” (K.12, 112); another commentator sees “natural men and women [as] unregenerated beings who remain in their fallen condition, who may be upright and moral with regard to the world, but who have not hearkened sufficiently to the Light of Christ to be led to the gospel” (M.23, 74). A further view concentrates on man’s willful rebellion against his spiritual nature: “Mormonism teaches that man is essentially good by nature. The moral nature of man cannot be described in terms of the ‘fall,’ since all pre-earth men were capable of evil in its definition of that which is contrary to the will of God; ‘natural’ is the opposite of ‘spiritual,’ meaning those who have chosen to disobey God; sin has to do with acts” (B.04, 57–61). Since infants are in full fellowship with God, they can only become *natural men* because they will not hearken to the voice of the Lord (B.05, 1095). Similarly, “people are basically good” with a tendency to do right; evil is against our nature (P.32, 73); Marion G. Romney affirms this: “Men are by nature of the spirit. They are natural born spirit children of God. . . . Those who reject the guidance of the Spirit and in rebellion yield to the temptations of the Evil One become carnal, sensual, and devilish” (*BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1961, 4). The natural man is “contrasted with the man of Christ” (A.01, 30). Referring to the effect of the atonement on the fall, “the natural man, which is Adam, is conquered by the perfect man, which is Christ; and thus ‘all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel’ (Third Article of Faith)” (McConkie, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1982, 30). M. Catherine Thomas interprets Benjamin’s understanding of the natural man as follows: “Resistance to our spiritual

natures manifests itself as guilt, despair, resentment, self-pity, fear, depression, feelings of victimization, fear over the scarcity of needed things, and other forms of distress. These are all functions of the fallen self, and we all necessarily experience them. . . . King Benjamin called this fallen self the natural man” (*BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1995, 47). Making the change from the natural man requires “Changing fallen human nature from evil to good . . . the cessation of feeding the evil desire, which will cause that evil desire to die” (R.34, 102); “The spirit is law-abiding and truth-seeking, but the ‘flesh’ is corrupt and untamed. It must be disciplined. . . . The ‘evil’ in fallen man must be interpreted in terms of the holiness that characterizes God and those who become like him. . . . The natural man is every man who is in a state of sin” (T.47, 77–78). Finally, Neal A. Maxwell notes, “Too often when we seek to excuse ourselves, it is, ironically, the ‘natural man’ we are excusing. Yet scriptures inform us ‘the natural man’ is to be ‘put off.’ . . . ‘He’ certainly should not be ‘kept on’ because of a mistaken sense that the natural man constitutes our individuality” (*BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1992, 105), and “Such is the scope of putting off the burdensome natural man who is naturally selfish. So much of our fatigue in fact comes from carrying that needless load. This heaviness of the natural man prevents us from doing our Christian calisthenics; so we end up too swollen with selfishness to pass through the narrow needle’s eye” (*Men and Women of Christ*, 1991, 31). With regard to *putting off*, Logion 37 of the *Gospel of Thomas* reads, “His disciples said, ‘When will You become revealed to us and when shall we see You?’ Jesus said, ‘When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then [will you see] the Son of the Living One, and you will not be afraid.’” Jonathan Smith sees the undressing and nudity as a sign of being reborn. Treading upon the garments is a “specific reference to prebaptismal exorcism.” The garments refer ultimately back to Adam and Eve, and to tread on them “is a renunciation of sin, flesh, and the world” (*History of Religions* 5:237–38). Thus putting off the natural man is a renunciation of the natural man so that we can become “blameless before God.” Other references to the natural man are found in D&C 67:12; Moses 1:14. The only reference to natural man in the KJV Bible is in 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 3:9 has “put off the old man”; see also Eph. 4:22; Col. 2:11. Comments on the natural man in this volume can be found at pp. 17–18, 128–30, 352–54, 427–32, 466–67.

submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love. Neal A. Maxwell sees these attributes as “*eternal and portable!* Being portable, to the degree developed, they will go with us through the veil of death, and still later they will rise with us in the Resurrection” (*BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1992, 104). Similar, though not identical, lists are found in Alma 7:23; 13:28. On being *submissive*, see this volume pp. 10–12, 13, 33, 44, 52–54.

meek. Neal A. Maxwell, commenting on the Savior’s meekness, says, “If our emulation of Him is to be serious, amid rampant egoism, we should ponder how, through ‘all of these things,’ He was so self-disciplined and how His self-discipline was aided by His meekness. Meekness can be a great help to us all in coping with the injustices of life and also in avoiding the abuse of authority and power, to which tendency most succumb—except the meek” (*Even As I Am*, 1985, 20–21; see also this volume, pp. 18–20).

humble. The Hebrew word that most nearly describes the state of humility required to put off the natural man is *sepeh ruah*, “lowly of spirit” (see Prov. 16:19; 29:23). In Greek only one word is used for being humble, *tapeinos*, also meaning “lowly of spirit.”

patient. The Hebrew *arek* means “slow to anger.”

full of love. Neal A. Maxwell adds this to the qualities of sainthood and discipleship that Benjamin details in this verse, equating it with Alma 7:23 and phrases such as “humble and submissive,” “easy to be entreated,” “full of patience and long-suffering” (*We Will Prove Them Herewith*, 1982, 61). We are reminded of the Savior’s declaration

that he is “filled with compassion” for his children (Mosiah 15:9; 3 Ne. 17:6–7; D&C 101:9; see also this volume, pp. 13–15).

willing to submit. Bringing this to a personal level, Harold B. Lee said, “I am aware that I have had to submit to some tests, some severe tests, before the Lord, I suppose to prove me to see if I would be willing to submit to all things whatsoever the Lord sees fit to inflict upon me, even as a little child does submit to its father” (*Improvement Era*, Jan. 1968, 26). Neal A. Maxwell has remarked extensively on this scripture, requiring that we “strip ourselves of pride in order to be obedient to Him. In that process we make ourselves so much more useful in the achievement of God’s purposes among His children” (M.17, 88; see also this volume, pp. 10–12); “Further, as it must be with anyone who seeks sainthood, Paul had to be ‘willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him’” (Maxwell, *All These Things*, 1980, 31); “We can scarcely attain that attribute of sainthood—being ‘full of love’—unless we are willing to communicate by giving and receiving appropriate counsel, correction, and commendation” (ibid., 72–73). On the subject of voluntary submission, “only volunteers will trust the Guide sufficiently to follow Him in the dangerous ascent which only He can lead” (M.17, 89).

submit to his father. Jehovah rehearses these conditions of redemption to Israel in Lev. 26:40–41; the context of obedience to parents is found in Col. 3:20.

3:20 *knowledge of the Savior shall spread.* A similar prophecy is found in 1 Ne. 19:17, “Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, saith the prophet; every nation, kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed,” and 2 Ne. 26:13, “And that he manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” See also the notes on Mosiah 3:13, *every kindred, nation, and tongue*.

3:21 *none shall be found blameless.* An important part of ancient Jewish law was the necessity of warning the people before they could be convicted of a transgression. The Talmud required evidence in court that a person had been specifically warned immediately prior to committing a crime before that person could be convicted and put to death. The angel’s point that the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout the world, therefore, has legal significance connected with the fact that “none shall be found blameless,” for all have been warned. On the necessity of warning as a part of a prosecutor’s case under Jewish law, see Elon, *The Principles of Jewish Law*, 1975, 473.

3:23 *I have spoken the words.* The angel emphasized that he had delivered *the* very words that he had been commanded to deliver. “From the fact that many ancient Near Eastern accounts show the messenger delivering the identical words he received from the council, it has been concluded that it was apparently important to these people that ‘the message [be] delivered in precisely the same words that had been given to the divine couriers’” (Welch, in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi*, 1988, 40, citing Mullen, *The Divine Counsel in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, 1980, 209–10).

3:24 *stand as a bright testimony.* The concept of words standing as a testimony also appears in 2 Ne. 25:28; Mosiah 17:10; Alma 39:8; Ether 5:4.

judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. This is very similar to phrases in Mosiah 16:10; Alma 11:44; 3 Ne. 26:4; 27:14; Morm. 3:20; see also Ps. 62:12; Sirach 16:12, 14; 35:19; John 12:48–49; Rev. 20:13. For more on *according to his works*, see the notes on Mosiah 4:13, *that which is his due*; 4:28, *the thing that he borroweth*, below. For more on *judging*, see Mosiah 3:10, *standeth to judge the world*, above.

3:25 *consigned*. This word appears only in the Book of Mormon and is most often used in describing the state of the wicked: Alma 9:11; 28:11; 40:26; 42:1, 14; 50:22; Hel. 7:9; 12:26.

awful view of their own guilt. Benjamin refers here to the supposition that “in the final judgment we judge ourselves” (E.07, 31). See also the notes on Mosiah 2:40, *awake to a remembrance of the awful situation*.

presence of the Lord. Variations on this phrase are found in Gen. 4:16; Job 1:12; 2:7; Jonah 1:3, 10; Acts 3:19.

endless. On the word *endless* as an attribute and name of God, see D&C 19:10. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:27, *torment and fire and brimstone*.

no more return. Describing the world of the dead as a place from which no one can return is a common practice, not only in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 1:14), but also throughout ancient Near Eastern literature. See Smith, “Shakespeare and the Book of Mormon,” FARMS, 1980.

3:26 *wrath of God*. Rev. 14:10 reads, “shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, . . . the cup of his indignation”; Jer. 25:15 has “the wine cup of this fury . . . to drink it”; see also Rev. 14:19; 16:19, “the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath”; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 51:17, 22; 75:8; 2 Ne. 8:17, 22.

justice . . . mercy. On the operation and conjunction of justice and mercy as divine attributes, see Alma 42.

3:27 *torment*. When Alma underwent his conversion, he reported that he was “racked, even with the pains of a damned soul . . . racked with torment” (Alma 36:16–17). The torment was spiritual and emotional but was also experienced as physical. In Revelation, torment is described as “the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man” (Rev. 9:5). In the Book of Mormon, torment is often described as endless, which is a synonym for God’s torment (D&C 19:10). See the notes on Mosiah 3:25, *endless torment*.

lake of fire and brimstone. It is interesting that the metaphor for hell is culturally determined by the worst conditions or imagination of a particular culture. For instance, in Tibet and Japan hell is represented by a mountain of nails and a river of boiling lead, while in Scandinavian countries it is intense cold. It could thus be inferred that the images of fire and brimstone were influenced by some familiarity with volcanic activity. In Gen. 19:24, we read that “the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire.” In the Book of Mormon this phrase is used as a simile, whereas in the OT and in the book of Revelation, it is used in a literal sense. On this metaphor, Kevin Christensen writes, “How should we understand the Book of Mormon descriptions of punishments, as prophets mention ‘unquenchable fires,’ or ‘the everlasting gulf of misery,’ or the ‘lake of fire and brimstone?’ In several cases, such terms are express metaphors for intense shame and guilt (see Mosiah 3:25, Alma 12:17; and D&C 19). The ‘awful gulf’ (1 Ne. 15:28) represents hell and separation from God. Nephi’s brothers ask whether the symbols represent ‘the torment of the body in the days of probation, or doth it mean the final state of the soul after the death of the temporal body, or doth it speak of things which are temporal?’ (1 Ne. 15:31)” (*JBMS* 2/1, 1993, 16). Brigham Young explained, “We believe that all will be damned who do not receive the gospel of Jesus Christ; but we do not believe that they will go into a lake which burns with brimstone and fire, and suffer unnamed and unheard of torments, inflicted by cruel and malicious devils to all eternity. The sectarian doctrine of final rewards and punishments is as strange to me as their bodiless, partless, and passionless God” (JD, 11:125–26); “Fire and brimstone characterize the person, not the place” (Turner, “Sons of Perdition,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1391). Benjamin’s concept of hell appears to be that of Gehenna, the place of punishment, rather than the broader hell or Hades. Richard Bauckham differentiates between the concept of hell as Hades and as Gehenna. Hades “retains its close association with death and is not confused with the place of eternal torment for the

wicked after the day of judgment, which was usually known as Gehenna” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:14). Duane Watson elucidates, “By at least the 1st century CE there emerged a metaphorical understanding of Gehenna as the place of judgment by fire for all wicked everywhere (*Sib. Or.* 1.100–103)” and “This association of fiery judgment and Gehenna was once attributed to the influence of the Iranian Avestan doctrine of the ultimate judgment of the wicked in a stream of molten metal (*Yasna* 31.3; 5.19). However, the Zoroastrian molten metal was purgatorial, not penal” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:927–28). Afonso categorizes the abode of the dead as the Netherworld, adding the term Sheol, the etymology of which is “obscure.” An interesting comment is that “For Israel, however, the Lord rules over the whole universe, His sovereignty extends from heaven to Sheol (Ps. 139: Job 26:6; cf. Ps. 90:2; 102:26–28). However, there is no communication between the dead and the Lord (Ps. 88:6); no praise to the Lord comes from the netherworld (Isa. 38:18; Ps. 30:10; 88:12–13)” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 12:997). See also notes on Mosiah 2:38, *like an unquenchable fire*; 3:25, *awful view and endless torment*.

forever and ever. Eternal torment is treated in 2 Ne. 9:16; Rev. 14:10–11, “shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. . . . And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever”; Rev. 20:10, “the lake of fire and brimstone, . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”; Matt. 3:12, “he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”; see also Lev. 26:14, 16; 1 Enoch 48:9; 3 Macc. 2:5; Luke 3:17; Rev. 19:20; 20:14–15, 21:8; 2 Ne. 9:16; 1Q22 II. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:25, *endless torment*.

Thus hath the Lord commanded me. See the notes on Mosiah 2:41, *Lord God hath spoken it*. Again this phrase brings to an end this section of Benjamin’s speech.

Amen. “The Hebrew word, meaning ‘truly,’ is transliterated into Greek in the New Testament, and thence to the English Bible. . . . The Hebrew infinitive conveys the notions ‘to conform, support, uphold, be faithful, firm.’ In antiquity the expression carried the weight of an oath” (McKinlay, “Amen,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:38).

The Declaration of the People (Mosiah 4:1–3)

^{4:1}And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had *made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he *cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had *fallen to the earth, for the *fear of the Lord had come upon them. ²And they had viewed themselves in their own *carnal state, even *less than the dust of the earth. And they *all cried aloud with one voice, saying: *O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive *forgiveness of our sins, and our *hearts may be purified; for we *believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who *created heaven and earth, and all things; *who shall come down among the children of men. ³And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words *the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were *filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having *peace of conscience, because of the *exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

4:1 *made an end of speaking the words*. See also Num. 16:31; Judg. 15:17; 1 Sam. 24:16; Jer. 26:8; 43:1; Mosiah 8:1, 19; 25:14, 17; Alma 6:1; 14:1.

cast his eyes. Instead of *looking* somewhere, Book of Mormon figures often *cast* their eyes about in order to see. This phrase is also found in the KJV: Gen. 39:7; Neh. 6:16; but it is much more common in the Book of Mormon: 1 Ne. 8:13, 17, 25; 2 Ne. 25:20; Mosiah 19:6; Alma 33:21–22; Hel. 5:43, 48; 3 Ne. 11:3, 8; 15:1; 17:5, 24; 23:8; also Moses 1:27. Similar phrases can be found, such as “lifting” the eyes: Gen. 13:10, 14; 18:2; 22:4, 13, 63; 24:64;

31:10, 12; 33:1, 5; 37:25; 43:29; Ex. 14:10; Num. 24:2; Deut. 3:27; 4:19; Josh. 5:13; Judg. 19:17; 1 Sam. 6:13; 2 Sam. 13:34; 18:24; 2 Kgs. 19:22; 1 Chron. 21:16; Job 2:12; Ps. 121:1; 123:1; Isa. 37:23; 40:26; 49:18; 51:6; 60:4; Jer. 3:2; 13:20; Ezek. 8:5; 18:6, 12, 15; 23:27; 33:25; Dan. 4:34; 8:3; 10:5; Zech. 1:18; 2:1; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1; Matt. 17:8; Luke 6:20; 16:23; 18:13; John 4:35; 6:5; 11:41; 17:1; 1 Ne. 21:18; 2 Ne. 8:6; Hel. 5:36; D&C 104:18; Moses 1:24; or “setting eyes” on something: Gen. 44:21; Ps. 17:11; Prov. 23:5; Jer. 24:6; Amos 9:4; and Acts 13:9.

fallen to the earth. Nibley correlates this act with “the Year Rite proskynesis required on the day of coronation when all the human race demonstrated its submission to divine authority” (N.28, 304). With regard to the outward display of repentance, “how beautiful the day when a person’s conversion brings him to his knees before God in repentant awareness and a determination to qualify according to God’s commandments” (Cannon and Pinegar, *The Mighty Change*, 1978, 39). Falling to the ground either because of fear or worship occurs in Gen. 44:14, when Judah and his brethren returned to the palace of the Egyptian official whom they did not recognize as Joseph; in Lev. 9:23–24, the people fell in fear and obeisance when the fire consumed the altar; in Num. 16:20–22, the people fell to the ground in fear of reprisal for sin, after which Moses asked for mercy for them; Deut. 9:18–25 recounts how Moses fell down before the Lord for forty days and forty nights for the sins of Israel; in the NT, Matt. 17:5–7, the disciples fell to the ground when the voice from the cloud proclaimed the divine Sonship of Christ; see also 1 Esdras 9:47; Sirach 50:17. “Confession of sin and unworthiness by the initiate” is a part of the Qumran initiation ceremony and is found in 1QS I 24–II 1.

fear of the Lord. This phrase can be found 45 times in the scriptures: 1 Sam. 11:7; 2 Chron. 14:14; 17:10; 19:7, 9; Job 28:28; Ps. 19:9; 34:11; Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26–27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; 11:2–3; 33:6; Acts 9:31; 2 Ne. 12:10, 19, 21; 21:2–3; Enos 1:23; Mosiah 29:30; Alma 19:15; 36:7; Moses 7:17; JST Gen. 7:21; JST Isa. 2:10, 19, 21. Key ideas associated with the fear of the Lord are that it stops enemies of the Lord from bothering his people; it motivates righteousness, calling on the Lord for help, or repentance; it is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge; it can be taught and learned; it must be chosen; and it comes upon people at judgment times. This fear is a desire “to be free from sinning . . . willing to forego eating and drinking, sleep and rest, riches and honors, even life itself in the quest for freedom from transgressing against . . . God. . . [It] is not a motive open to atheists and agnostics” (Riddle, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1987, 168). For more information on fear, see notes on Mosiah 1:7, *keep the commandments*; 2:10, *that ye should fear me*; 2:40, *awake to a remembrance*.

4:2 *carnal state*, or *carnal nature*. This phrase occurs only in the Book of Mormon and is found in Mosiah 16:5; 26:4; 27:25; Alma 22:13; and 41:11. A carnal state is often also associated with being in a sinful or fallen state. See the notes on Mosiah 3:19, *natural man*.

less than the dust of the earth. This phrase is repeated in Hel. 12:7. See note on Mosiah 2:25, *Ye cannot say*, above.

all cried aloud with one voice. In the ancient world, “the *hazzan*, the *praecentor*, or *stasiarch*, would be handed a piece of paper, . . . then the emperor . . . or someone else would tell him what he wanted the people to chant.” Referring to the account of Nathan the Babylonian, “the whole thing is directed by the man on the tower. The old man, the *praecentor*, comes down, they ask questions, the king interprets the law to them, and they all answer together. . . . It isn’t as if they all spontaneously recited this whole thing in one voice. It says it was in one voice, but that’s the way it was done” (N.25, 471). See also the notes on Mosiah 5:6, *righteous covenant*, below.

O have mercy. Other instances in which people have asked for mercy and forgiveness for their sins are Ps. 51:1–2, “blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin”; Ps. 25:7,

“Remember not the sins of my youth”; Ps. 33:22, “Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee”; and Ps. 85:7, “Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.” First Baruch 1:13–14 has another example of confession at the temple: “Also pray for us to the Lord our God, for we have sinned against the Lord our God and the wrath and anger of the Lord have not turned from us until this day. . . . Make confession in the house of the Lord on the day of the feast and during the days of the solemn assembly.” In 1 Baruch 3:1–8 we read, “O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, a soul in anguish and a troubled spirit cry to you. Listen, O Lord, and have mercy upon us, because we have sinned against you. You live for ever but we perish continually. O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, listen to the prayer of the dead ones of Israel and of the children of those who sinned against you and who did not obey the Lord their God so that the evil has clung to us. Remember not the iniquities of our ancestors but remember your power and your name at this time. For you are the Lord our God, and we shall praise you, O Lord. You have put fear of you in our hearts that we would call upon your name, we shall therefore praise you in our captivity, reminding ourselves of all the wrongdoing of our ancestors who sinned against you. Behold, in our captivity where you have banished us we are at this day an object of reproach, curse and repugnance because of all the iniquities of our ancestors who rebelled against the Lord our God” (translations from 1 Baruch are by Emanuel Tov). See also the notes on Mosiah 5:2, *with one voice saying*, below.

apply the atoning blood of Christ. See Hel. 5:9, and the notes on Mosiah 3:7, *blood cometh from every pore*; 3:18, *through the atoning blood of Christ*, above. See also pp. 176–77 in this volume.

forgiveness of our sins. See further the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 4:26, *from day to day*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

hearts may be purified. The need to purify one’s heart is written about in Acts 15:9; James 4:8; Hel. 3:35; D&C 88:74; and 112:28. This can be tied in with the need for having a pure heart, which is found numerous times throughout the scriptures. See Ps. 24:4; Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22; Jacob 2:10; 3:1–3; Alma 5:19; 3 Ne. 12:8; D&C 41:11; 5:18; 97:16, 21; 101:18; 122:2; 123:11; 124:54; 136:11. The word that is translated as “pure” in Ps. 24:4 is often translated as “clean.” The phrase *clean heart* occurs in Ps. 51:10; 73:1; Prov. 20:9.

believe in Jesus Christ. “What is needed is faith in Christ and faith enough to repent” (W.56, 7). This declaration by the people echoes the specific words of the name given to them by Benjamin in Mosiah 3:8.

created heaven and earth. See Mosiah 3:8; 5:15; 1Q22 I.

who shall come down among the children of men. See Mosiah 3:5; 7:27; 13:34; 15:1; 17:8. The same phrase appears in D&C 65:5, but in reference to the second coming.

4:3 *the Spirit of the Lord came upon them.* This idea is found in Num. 24:2; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; 19:23; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; 24:20; Ezek. 11:5; 1 Ne. 13:12; 22:2.

filled with joy. See Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13; 2 Tim. 1:4; 1 Ne. 5:1; 8:12; Mosiah 3:4; 4:20; 21:24; 25:8; Alma 4:14; 19:30; 22:15; 29:10; 36:20; 57:36; 62:1; Hel. 3:35; 5:44; 3 Ne. 17:17; D&C 11:13; 75:21; JS–H: Oliver Cowdery footnote. “This is a marvelously happy event. . . . [Christ] is ready to bring us back into the great eternal order of things. . . . Now [Benjamin’s people] have a glimpse of it, they are filled with joy” (N.25, 471).

remission of their sins. See Matt. 26:28; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43–44; Rom. 3:25; 2 Ne. 25:26; 31:17; Enos 1:2; Mosiah 3:13; 4:11–12, 20, 26; 15:11; Alma 4:14; 7:6; 12:34; 13:16; 30:16; 38:8; Hel.

14:13; 3 Ne. 1:23; 7:16, 23, 25; 12:2; 30:2; Moro. 3:3; 8:11, 25–26; 10:33; D&C 13:11; 19:31; 20:5, 37; 21:8–9; 27:2; 33:11; 49:13; 53:3; 55:1–2; 68:27; 84:27, 64, 74; 107:20; 137:6; 138:33; JS–H 1:68–69; A of F 1:4; 1Q22 III. On the repentance process, see this volume, pp. 357–59, 448–51. For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

peace of conscience. Benjamin refers to his having a clear conscience in Mosiah 2:15, 27, but the idea of *peace of conscience* is perhaps best represented by “a conscience void of offence towards God” (Acts 24:16; see also D&C 135:4).

exceeding faith. This is the faith that enables men to work mighty wonders (2 Ne. 3:24), it is that with which the pure in heart pray (Jacob 3:1), and the quality of those called to the priesthood after the order of the Son (Alma 13:3), as was exhibited by the brother of Jared so that the finger of God was visible to him (Ether 3:6–9).

BENJAMIN'S SPEECH: PART 5

The Goodness of the Lord Omnipotent (Mosiah 4:4–12)

⁴And king Benjamin again *opened his mouth and began to speak unto them, saying: *My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people, I would again call your attention, that ye may hear and understand the remainder of my words which I shall speak unto you. ⁵For 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—⁶I 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 towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the *foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his *trust in the Lord, and should be *diligent in keeping his commandments, and *continue in the faith even unto the end of his life, I mean the life of the *mortal body—⁷I say, that this is the man who *receiveth *salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world 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. ⁸And this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is *none other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any *conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you. ⁹Believe in God; believe that he is, and *that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has *all wisdom, and all power, both *in heaven and in earth; believe that *man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. ¹⁰And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and *humble yourselves before God; and *ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things *see that ye do them. ¹¹And again I say unto you as *I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the *glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such *exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and *always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his *goodness and long-suffering towards you, *unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the *depths of humility, *calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing *steadfastly in the faith of *that which is to come, which was *spoken by the mouth of the angel. ¹²And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall *always rejoice, and be filled with the *love of God, and always *retain a remission of

your sins; and ye shall grow in the *knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of *that which is just and true.

4:4 *opened his mouth and began.* “It’s a conversation. It’s an antiphonal between the king and the people” (N.25, 471).

My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people. Benjamin addresses his audience as friends, brothers, kinsmen, and his subjects. In so doing, he recognizes a fourfold spectrum of interpersonal relationships based on the bonds of social friendship, obligations of religious covenantal relationships, family bloodlines, and governmental authority. See the notes on Mosiah 1:1, *belonged to King Benjamin*; 1:5, *brethren*; 1:13, *weak like unto their brethren*; and 3:1, *my brethren*.

4:5 *knowledge of the goodness of God.* A few writers speak of knowing of the goodness of God. See Ps. 52:1; Rom. 2:4; Wisdom of Solomon 11:23; 1 Ne. 1:1; 5:4; Mosiah 4:6, 11; 5:3; 25:10; 27:22. For comments on the goodness of God, see this volume, pp. 257–58, 354–58.

a sense of your nothingness. Again Benjamin remarks on the nothingness of mankind, but now as part of the process of repentance, “such realization reminds all of us of our puniness before God and fosters feelings of humility—placing us in a teachable frame of mind” (Asay, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1991, 161). Hugh Nibley adds that “I don’t think that would offend them at all. If you were in the presence of celestial glory, you would certainly feel that way and you wouldn’t feel at all insulted. They don’t feel like crawling under rocks though. They feel pretty good about it” (N.25, 471). The relationship of man to God can be explained in terms of Moses’ experience, “What he saw confirmed man’s worth in the sight of God even though, comparatively speaking, a meek man may feel he is ‘nothing’ (see Mosiah 4:5). In God’s plans, man, as God’s child, is as ‘everything’ to him. Our loving, redeeming Father has so said, declaring to an overwhelmed and meek Moses: [Moses 1:39]” (Maxwell, *Behold, I Say unto You, I Cannot Say the Smallest Part Which I Feel*, 1973, 87). See this volume, pp. 126–30, 180, 190.

worthless. On Benjamin’s discussion of the worthlessness and the fallen state of the human condition, see the explanation in Mosiah 2:21. Humans are less than the dust of the earth because they are created out of the dust and it belongs to God, and for every act of obedience God blesses man and therefore man remains entirely in God’s debt. Having a sense of one’s present state of nothingness, however, does not imply that man has no potential for becoming redeemed and exalted through the merits of the Savior.

fallen state. This phrase occurs in 1 Ne. 10:6; 2 Ne. 25:17; Mosiah 16:4–5; 27:25; and Alma 42:12. See also the notes on Mosiah 4:2, *carnal state*.

4:6 *goodness of God.* The goodness of God is one of his primary attributes. See Matt. 19:17, “there is none good but one, that is, God.” See also notes on Mosiah 4:5, *knowledge of the goodness of God*.

matchless power. The Lord is described as having *matchless power* in 1 Ne. 17:42; Mosiah 1:13; 2:11; Alma 9:11; Alma 49:28; Hel. 4:25. See also the notes on Mosiah 1:13, *matchless and marvellous power*, and 2:11, *matchless power*.

wisdom. Benjamin includes among the attributes of God his goodness, power, wisdom, patience, and long-suffering love toward his children. “Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which

he is pursuing is according to his will”(Lectures on Faith, comp. N. B. Lundwall, n.d., 33). On the divine attributes of God, see Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 1996, 413–22.

long-suffering. See 1 Ne. 19:9; Mosiah 4:11; Alma 5:6; 9:11, 26; 26:16; 42:30; Morm. 2:12; Moro. 9:25; D&C 138:28; JST 1 Pet. 3:20; JST 2 Pet. 3:15. In the KJV NT see Col. 1:11. See also the notes on Mosiah 3:18, *full of love*, and 3:19 generally for the attributes of Christ that are to be emulated.

foundation of the world. See 2 Ne. 27:10; Mosiah 15:19; 18:13; Alma 12:25; 13:7; Hel. 5:47; 3 Ne. 1:14; Eth. 4:14, 15, 19; Moro. 8:12; Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Heb. 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:19–20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.

trust in the Lord. Prov. 29:25, “whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe”; Ps. 4:5, “put your trust in the Lord”; 71:1, “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.”

diligent in keeping his commandments. For Benjamin, salvation is conditioned on trusting in the Lord, being diligent in keeping his commandments, and continuing in faith to the end of mortal life.

continue in the faith. See Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 2:15.

mortal body. See Rom. 6:12; 8:11.

4:7–12 *receiveth salvation*. Another part of the Qumran ceremony of initiation involves “the blessing of those who are among the lot of God by the priests” in 1QS II 1–4. In a similar way, Benjamin is recounting the blessings that come to those who enter into the covenant.

4:7 *salvation*. “These verses [6–7] constitute a marvelous summary of the plan of salvation. A knowledge of God, his attributes, the central role of the Atonement, the necessity of keeping the commandments and enduring to the end—all these are mentioned. Further, we are taught that the Atonement comes in answer to the Fall. That is, Christ atoned for all ‘since the fall of Adam.’ Those who have postulated the existence of pre-Adamites create the theological difficulty of having creatures not subject to the Fall and therefore not eligible for the redeeming effects of the Atonement” (M.18, 159–60).

who are, or who ever shall be. See also Rev. 1:4, 8, “which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

end of the world. Dan. 6:26, “shall be even unto the end”; Matt. 28:20, “even unto the end of the world.”

4:8 *none other salvation*. The supreme sacrifice that is required of us is not a “blood atonement,” rather it is nothing less than a willingness to part with our most precious possession (N.27, 588–91). See also Mosiah 3:17; Mark 12:32; Acts 4:12.

conditions whereby man can be saved. These are also discussed in Alma 5:10; Hel. 5:11. “We do not barter where salvation is concerned” (M.18, 160).

4:9 *Believe in God*. Benjamin lists six things that a person must believe. In a way, this verse comprises a basic statement of the Nephite faith. Benjamin exhorted people to believe (1) in God, (2) that he created all things, (3) that he is omniscient and (4) omnipotent, (5) that man cannot comprehend all that God can comprehend, and (6) that man must fully repent. See this volume, pp. 70–71; for a discussion of Benjamin’s steps to build faith in God, see this volume, pp. 75–76; for a discussion of the nature of God, see this volume, pp. 10, 71, 253–54.

that he created all things. See Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11; 3 Macc. 2:3; Sirach 18:1; Wisdom of Solomon 1:14.

all wisdom . . . all power. God has *all wisdom*. See Alma 26:35; Abr. 3:21. One might make a distinction between being all-wise and being omniscient. God has *all power*—see Matt. 28:18; 1 Ne. 9:6; Alma 12:15; Alma 26:35; Morm. 5:23; Ether 3:4; Moro. 8:28; D&C 19:3; 61:1; 84:28; 93:17; 100:1; Moses 6:61; man is unable to comprehend all that God does—see Job 27:5; Micah 4:12; Morm. 9:16; D&C 121:12; Isa. 55:8–9; Wisdom of Solomon 17:1; Rom. 11:33–34, 2 Baruch 14:8–9. For a discussion of power, see this volume, pp. 134–35.

in heaven and in earth. See also Dan. 6:27, “in heaven and in earth”; Ps. 113:6, “in heaven, and in the earth!” See also Ps. 135:6; Matt. 28:18, “in heaven, and in earth”; Alma 44:5; 1Q22 I, “[Take] the heavens and the [earth as witnesses].”

man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. See Isa. 55:8–9; Wisdom of Solomon 17:1; Rom. 11:33–34; 2 Baruch 14:8–9.

4:10 *humble yourselves before God.* See 2 Chron. 34:27, “and thou didst humble thyself before God”; 2 Kgs. 22:19, “and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord”; Ex. 10:3; 1 Kgs. 21:29; 2 Chron. 33:12, 23; Acts 20:19; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6.

ask in sincerity of heart. See Hel. 3:27; Moro. 10:4; D&C 5:24.

see that ye do them. Benjamin is adding the injunction that works are necessary to the exercise of faith, “I have said that we show our faith even to ourselves by our works. . . . Turning this statement [Mosiah 4:10] around, we may also say, if you do all these things, see (or recognize or acknowledge to yourself) that ye believe them. We need to trust what our own good deeds tell us about ourselves” (Rasmussen, *Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, 15:169–70). Neal A. Maxwell applies this instruction: “The same challenge persists for the disciple in each age: to conform his life to the requirements of the Realm of which he would be a citizen” (*The Smallest Part*, 1973, 41). Dallin Oaks described this section of King Benjamin’s speech as the “therefore what,” the action to be taken following the instruction (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 72). See also John 13:17.

4:11 *I have said before.* Benjamin is employing deliberate repetition; see the discussion of parallelism and chiasmus in chapter 11 of this volume.

glory of God. This phrase occurs in Ps. 19:1; Prov. 25:2; John 11:4, 40; Acts 7:55; Rom. 3:23; 5:2; 15:7; 1 Cor. 10:31; 11:7; 2 Cor. 1:20; 4:6, 15; Philip. 2:11; Rev. 15:8; 21:11, 23; 2 Ne. 1:25; 27:16; Mosiah 27:22; Alma 19:6; Morm. 9:5; D&C 4:5; 76:70; 82:19; 88:116; 93:36; 135:6; Moses 1:2; JST Isa. 29:21; JST Matt. 6:22.

exceedingly great joy. See the notes on Mosiah 3:3, *glad tidings of great joy*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 4:11, *exceedingly great joy*; and this volume, pp. 284–86, 288–89.

always retain in remembrance. One of Benjamin’s favorite phrases is *always retain*. It is not enough to obtain knowledge; one must *always retain* in remembrance these things. Likewise, it is not enough to be forgiven, one must *retain* a remission of one’s sins (Mosiah 4:26). Compare “Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” (Prov. 4:4); “And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28). See the notes on Mosiah 1:16, 17; 2:41; 4:30; 6:3 on remembering. For further information on remission of sins, see this volume,

pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

goodness and long-suffering. Compare 1 Baruch 2:27–28, “Yet you have treated us, O Lord our God, with all your goodness and great mercy.” See also the notes on Mosiah 4:6, *long-suffering*.

unworthy creatures. See Sirach 16:16–17.

depths of humility. This phrase is used a few times: 2 Ne. 9:42; Mosiah 21:14; Alma 62:41; Hel. 6:5; 3 Ne. 12:2; JST Matt. 5:4. See also 2 Ne. 17:11; Alma 63:8.

calling on the name of the Lord daily. Benjamin emphasizes the importance of daily religious observance, not just once a week or on special occasions. Abinadi also emphasized daily observance of the law of Moses (see Mosiah 13:30), which may be reminiscent of the daily sacrifices offered in the temple in Jerusalem. See Welch, in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 1994, 305–6. Variants of this phrase are found in Gen. 4:26; 2 Kgs. 5:11; Ps. 88:9; 116:13, 17; Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:9; Neh. 1:6; Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Ne. 9:52; 33:3; Alma 34:21.

steadfastly in the faith. This idea is used a few other times. See Alma 1:25; Hel. 15:8; Ether 12:4.

that which is to come. This phrase occurs in Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:8; Mosiah 3:1; 5:3; Alma 5:48; 21:8; 58:40; Hel. 8:23; D&C 1:12; 104:51; 128:21. Similar phrases can be found in Isa. 41:22; 42:23; 45:11.

spoken by the mouth of the angel. This phrase seems odd to English speakers, since we would just say that the angel spoke it, not his mouth. But the mouth is continually associated with words in the OT. Things are declared or spoken by the mouth: 1 Kgs. 22:13; 2 Chron. 36:22; Ps. 17:10; 49:3; 66:14; 145:21; Prov. 8:7; Isa. 1:20; 40:5; 58:14; Jer. 9:12; 23:16; 36:4; Micah 4:4; Matt. 12:34; Acts 3:21; 1 Ne. 3:20; 5:13; 2 Ne. 9:2; 25:1; Mosiah 18:19; Alma 5:11; 7:1; 13:26; 3 Ne. 1:13; Ether 1:39; 15:3; D&C 27:6; 29:21; 43:30; 84:2; 109:45; 110:14. God put words in people’s mouths; see Num. 22:38; 23:5, 12; Deut. 18:18; 2 Sam. 14:3, 19; Jer. 5:14. For similar phrases see Deut. 32:1; Job 8:2. For more information on the angel, see this volume, pp. 65–66, 112–13, 283–87, 406 n.63; see also the notes on Mosiah 3:2, *angel . . . Awake*; 3:4, *hath sent me*, and *mayest rejoice*.

4:12 *always rejoice*. Benjamin emphasizes the daily or continual rejoicing that comes with and from daily righteousness.

love of God. This phrase is repeated in Luke 11:42; John 5:42; Rom. 5:5; 8:39; 2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Thes. 3:5; Titus 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 3:16, 17; 4:9; 5:3; Jude 1:21; 1 Ne. 11:22, 25; 2 Ne. 31:20; Jacob 7:23; Alma 13:29; 4 Ne. 1:15; Morm. 3:12. *Love of Christ* appears in Eph. 3:19.

retain a remission. Giving to the poor is a step in the repentance process. Benjamin is advocating a “modest life of practical wisdom, not the life of frantic fanaticism,” which will enable us to grow incrementally and retain a remission of our sins (H.10, 165). For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

knowledge of the glory of him. See Hab. 2:14, “with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord”; 2 Cor. 4:6, “of the knowledge of the glory of God.”

that which is just and true. See Rev. 15:3, “just and true”; Col. 4:1, “that which is just and equal”; 1 Enoch 25:5; 27:3. See also notes on Mosiah 2:35, *just and true*, above.

BENJAMIN’S SPEECH: PART 6

Stipulations of the Covenant (Mosiah 4:13–30)

¹³And 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. ¹⁴And ye will not *suffer your children that they go *hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they *transgress the laws of God, and *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. ¹⁵But ye will *teach them to *walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to *love one another, and to *serve one another. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷Perhaps 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—¹⁸But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done *he perisheth forever, and hath *no interest in the kingdom of God. ¹⁹For 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? ²⁰And 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? Nay; 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. ²¹And now, *if God, who has created you, on whom you are *dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye *ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have *one to another. 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, which *doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and *yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done. ²³I 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. ²⁴And 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; I would that ye *say in your hearts that: *I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give. ²⁵And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye *remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for *ye covet that which ye have not received. ²⁶And 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. ²⁷And 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. ²⁸And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbor should return the *thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps thou shalt *cause thy neighbor to commit sin also. ²⁹And *finally, I cannot tell you *all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. ³⁰But 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.

4:13 *to injure one another.* See Lev. 25:14, 17. Benjamin is calling for a paradigm shift to a moral life, so that it is not just a question of cleaning up pollutions but becoming a moral society in order that his people will be able to make commitments at or in the temple, which will be followed by the temple blessings given to a covenant people. In a similar way, in a translation of Hag. 2:10–19, David Hildebrand points out a contrast between the life before “this day” and thereafter. He sees the sacrifice as being not one just of ritual purification, but also of ethical purification; in other words, it is a call for a moral change of heart in order to be worthy of being a temple people. Once this has been accomplished, Hildebrand translates Hag. 2:19 as, “From this day on, I will bless you,” implying blessings for obedience to moral behavior (*Vestus Testamentum* 39/2, 1989, 154–68).

live peaceably. See Lev. 26:6; Matt. 5:38–41; Rom. 12:18.

that which is his due. See the notes on Mosiah 4:28, *the thing that he borroweth*; 3:24, *according to his works*; and this volume, pp. 193–95; see also Prov. 24:12, “render to every man according to his works”; Rom. 2:6, “render to every man according to his deeds”; Ps. 62:12; see also Lev. 25:15–16, 50; 1 Cor. 4:5; Sirach 16:14.

4:14 *suffer your children.* Nibley asks, “Why the emphasis on little children, because they are the only segment of society that offers no resistance to the message, because they are not guilt-ridden, naive. We have a subconscious burden of guilt. . . . Only the children are blameless because the others can save themselves. . . . 40,000 children die of hunger and hunger-related diseases every day; something is wrong here; that’s something to be afraid of” (N.25, 467–74). For a discussion of instructions to parents, see this volume, pp. 366, 435–39. For further information see TG, “Family, Children, Responsibilities toward.”

hungry, or naked. See Matt. 10:42; 25:40; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:51.

transgress the laws. See Rom. 2:27; Alma 1:32; Alma 60:33.

fight and quarrel with one another. The behavior of children was regulated under the law of Moses. A son who struck his father was liable to be put to death (Ex. 21:15), and a rebellious and stubborn son could be brought before the elders and also executed (Deut. 21:18–21). Benjamin recognizes that fighting and quarreling of any kind is a precursor to such pugnaciousness, and thus he requires his people by way of covenant, not to allow their children to fight and quarrel one with another.

serve the devil. Just as Benjamin has spoken about serving God and being in the *service* of one’s fellowman, he now declares that misconduct results in *serv*ing the devil. Benjamin’s words would probably have been understood in the strong sense of serving, namely becoming a servant to or a slave of the devil. See the discussion of the word *service* in connection with Mosiah 2:17, above.

the master of sin. See John 8:34, “servant of sin”; Rom. 6:20; 2 Pet. 2:19.

evil spirit. See Mosiah 2:32. Here again the evil spirit is described as the source of contention.

enemy to all righteousness. Reference this phrase with the discussion on the *natural man* in Mosiah 3:19 and *rebellion* in Mosiah 2:32–37. See also Acts 13:10, “thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.”

4:15 *teach them.* See this volume pp. 366, 435–39; and notes on Mosiah 1:2, *all the language of his fathers.*

walk in the ways of truth and soberness. The definition of the word sober means far more than avoiding drunkenness. Sobriety includes being alert, having good judgment, and exercising practical wisdom. See Ps. 119:30; 2 Pet. 2:2. “Way of God in truth” appears in Matt. 22:16 and Mark 12:14. The idea of walking in truth can be found in 1 Kgs. 2:4; 3:6; 2 Kgs. 20:3; Ps. 26:3; 86:11; Isa. 38:3; 2 Jn. 1:4; 3 Jn. 1:3–4; Hel. 6:34. See also Acts 26:25, “of truth and soberness”; Deut. 31:13; Prov. 2:13 (2:20); Eccl. 11:9; Isa. 8:11 (2 Ne. 18:11); Judith 10:13.

love one another. See Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Thes. 4:9; 1 Jn. 4:11.

serve one another. See Mosiah 2:18 (16–21); Hosea 6:6; Gal. 5:13; TB Abot 1:2.

4:16 *succor.* The word *succor* means to aid, assist, and to provide relief to someone in need. It apparently comes from the words *sub-* and *cur*, literally meaning “to go beneath” or “to run to help or assist.” See Holland, “Come unto Me,” CES Fireside, delivered at Brigham Young University, 2 March 1997.

administer. This is a fairly formal term, appropriate to priestly administrations or the services of a minister. Administration implies loving, righteous, organized, and effective service. It requires more than simply the act of giving.

not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain. Benjamin’s stern and emphatic instructions on giving to the poor are borne out by rabbinic commentary (*Rabbinic Anthology*): “But how does he who follows after righteousness find righteousness? Because God will give him money to do charity with it to men worthy of charity, so that he may receive reward” (804); “He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses” (1137); “All the almsgiving and loving deeds which the Israelites do in this world are great advocates between them and their Father in heaven. Great is almsgiving, for it brings the Redemption nearer” (1142); “The door which is not open to charity is open to the doctor [i.e., those who do not give charity when in health, either will fall ill or promise to give when sick]” (1139). Modern commentators have said, “That doesn’t sound very optional, does it? After we have done all the good things we have been called to do with as much sincerity as we have to commit to the cause, if we do not take a lively interest in those who have special needs, then we do not meet the conditions [of readiness to meet the Lord]” (Hanks, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1982, 39). Nibley, commenting on a news report of people dying of starvation on the sidewalks of San Francisco adds, “What is going on here? What a society when it comes to that” (N.25, 474). See also the notes on Mosiah 4:19, *are we not all beggars.*

turn him out to perish. See Deut. 15:7–8, “thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother”; 1 Jn. 3:17, “whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” See also Lev. 25:35; Prov. 21:13; Acts 20:35; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:51, 54.

4:17 *brought upon himself.* Jewish law discusses the causes of poverty and the conditions under which one may or may not withhold charity because the poor person has brought upon him or herself an impoverished condition. See Mishnah, *Pe'ah* 7–9; *Hullin* 134a. Tobit 4:16 cautions against giving alms grudgingly. In Jewish law, charity is said to be “a legal obligation” (Falk, *Law and Religion*, 1981, 92).

4:18 *he perisheth forever.* Poverty in the ancient world was not only a matter of deprivation of life’s comforts and luxuries, but usually was a matter of life and death itself. Human beings in the ancient world were particularly vulnerable to starvation, disease, the ravages of war, and the vicissitudes of weather. Turning away a beggar indeed was setting him out to perish, to die, to be destroyed.

no interest in the kingdom of God. Brigham Young offers an explanation of this state of rebellion: “I wish the people to understand that they have no interest apart from the Lord our God. The moment you have a divided interest, that moment you sever yourselves from eternal principles” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 283).

4:19 *are we not all beggars.* Again, Benjamin’s emphatic insistence on our nothingness compared to God causes comment, “This stings a lot of people; they don’t like it at all. They try to give it an allegorical or symbolic interpretation—spiritually beggars, etc. . . . I am talking about goods and substance and going hungry . . . [not] about what you call spiritual things” (N.25, 474). See also Prov. 22:2; 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 16:40; see also this volume, pp. 15, 74, 80, 129; and the notes on Mosiah 2:13, *neither have I suffered*; 4:16, *not suffer that the beggar*.

all depend on the same Being. Benjamin returns here to the crucial point that he made at the beginning of his speech, namely that all people are totally dependent upon God for all of their substance and daily sustenance. As a result, all human beings are morally obligated to give to their fellow beings, because all are beggars before God. A similar moral basis underlies the law and ethic of the book of Deuteronomy.

both food and raiment. *Food* and *raiment* appear as a word pair in several Hebrew texts. The term *raiment* includes any kind of clothing. See Deut. 10:18; 1 Tim. 6:8. See also the notes on Mosiah 4:19, *unprofitable servants*.

for gold, and for silver. *Gold* and *silver* appear frequently as a word pair in biblical texts. It operates here as a hendiadys or merism, encompassing all forms of wealth. See 2 Chron. 32:27, “for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, . . . and for all manner of pleasant jewels.”

4:20 *begging for a remission of your sins.* Benjamin uses a dramatic word here. More than simply asking for forgiveness, people must beg for forgiveness. Benjamin expects religious people to see themselves as beggars before God, impoverished, in utter need, and wholly dependent upon the loving kindness of God. For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*.

poured out his Spirit upon you. Almost always it is the Spirit of the Lord that is being poured. Rarely it will be something else, like the spirit of sleep or grace. See Prov. 1:23; Isa. 29:10; 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28–29 (MT 3:1–2); Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:17–18; 2 Ne. 27:5; Jacob 7:8; Mosiah 18:10, 12–13; 25:24; Alma 8:10; 16:16; 19:14, 36; Hel. 6:36; 3 Ne. 12:6; D&C 19:38; 27:18; 44:2; 95:4.

mouths should be stopped. Benjamin describes here an experience of joy so profound that it leaves one utterly speechless. Such joy is the result of a depth of need that is desperately urgent, followed by a resolution of that problem that is so sudden and complete that it leaves the person overwhelmed and unprepared as to what to do or

say next. Spiritual experiences often come most powerfully when they are least anticipated, unpremeditated, and most unexpected.

4:21 *if God*. . . Benjamin's logic here is similar to that in Mosiah 2:18–19. His moral argument is one of transferred obligation. If God, or if Benjamin as king, do certain things, then how much more are their subjects, who owe them various duties, obligated to do likewise.

dependent. Nibley says emphatically, “No one is independent” (N.29, 227–28).

ask . . . *receive*. The idea of receiving from the Lord what you ask is preserved in Matt. 7:7–8; 21:22; John 14:13–14; 16:24 (this verse also ties the idea in with being full of joy, as does Mosiah 4:21); James 1:6; 5:16; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Ne. 15:11; Enos 1:15; 3 Ne. 18:20; 27:29; Moro. 7:26; D&C 4:7; 6:5; 8:1; 11:5; 14:5, 8; 18:18; 29:6; 42:61; 49:26; 66:9; 75:27; 88:63; 103:31, 35; 124:95, 97; Moses 6:52; Midrash *Pesiqta' deRab Kahana'* 176a; see also TB *Megilla* 12b. For a discussion on prayer and *receive what is right*, see this volume, pp. 9–19.

one to another. See Deut. 15:10–11, “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land”; Lev. 25:35–36; Luke 6:33; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:51, 54.

4:22 *And if ye judge*. Such judging need not be formal; see “judge not” (Matt. 7:1–2; 3 Ne. 14:1–2).

how much more just. This form of argumentation is called *a fortiori*, using an argument for a smaller or lesser group to apply to a larger or greater group; for instance, B. H. Roberts tell us that “we may get arguments dealing with the nature of the Deity, as e.g. the interesting *a fortiori* argument from creature to Creator in Ps. 94” (*Seventy's Course in Theology, Third Year, 1994, 27*).

your condemnation. This is a strong indictment by Benjamin against judging. In TB *Abot* 2:3, Rab Hillel said “Do not judge your fellow man until you have been in his place” (used in connection with *Kol-nidre* of *Yom Kippur*/the Day of Atonement), i.e., forgive and be forgiven; see the Rambam (Maimonides), *Yad (Mishne Tora), Matnot Aniyim*, 10:1–14, on the eight-stage ladder of *s^edaqah*, “charity” (“righteousness”), especially the injunction to be a cheerful giver—else the giving is in vain (Prov. 22:2, 9; 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Esdras [3 Ezra] 9:54; Tobit 4:7–11, 16; 12:8–9; Sirach 4:1–10). On the requisite works of charity, see Matt. 19:16–30; Mark 10:17–31; Luke 12:33; 14:33; 18:18–30; 2 Cor. 8:11–15; James 2:14–18; 1 Jn. 3:17–18. Philo Judaeus translated the Hebrew of *s^edaqah* “righteousness; charity” as Greek *philanthropia* (*De Cherubim* 99); see also TB *Abot* 1:6, “Judge everyone with the scale weighted in his favor,” and 2:7, “The more charity, the more peace”; TB *Ketubot* 66b–68a, *Sukka* 49b, *Baba Batra* 9a–10a, *Pesahim* 49a *Baraita*; TY *Pe'ah* 1:1, 15c; Midrash *Pesiqta' deRab Kahana'* 28:13; 13:1; Matt. 5:42; 6:1; 7:1–2; Luke 6:37–38; Lev. 25:35–37; Deut. 15:7–8; Wisdom of Solomon 12:22; 3 Ne. 12:42.

doth not belong to you but to God. Withholding charity from those in need “is stealing, holding on” to God's property (N.29, 229).

yet ye put up no petition. In other words, people put up no petition to God for their basic sustenance, the life they enjoy, the breath they breathe from day to day. Truly, most things that we receive from God are given to us without any petition or asking on our part.

4:23 *wo be unto that man*. The *wo* uttered here in connection with withholding substance and in 4:25 regarding denying the beggar parallels further parts of the initiation ceremony at Qumran, “Cursing of the lot of Belial, his

works (and all associated with him) pronounced by Levites and confirmed by those entering the covenant by saying the solemn ‘Amen, Amen,’” in 1QS II 11–18. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:33, *wo*.

substance shall perish with him. For this concept see also Dan. 5:16–17; Acts 8:20.

4:24 *I say unto the poor*. Benjamin also imposes moral obligations on the poor who would ask for, and presumably receive, sustenance and support. Jewish law imposed obligations on the recipients of charity, especially requiring them to be in actual need before accepting charity (Mishnah *Pe’ah* 9).

say in your hearts. It is sufficient to say such things in one’s heart. It is not necessary that they be said aloud (Deut. 15:9). God looks upon the heart and judges (1 Sam. 16:7). Jesus also taught that the seat of morality is essentially in the heart (Matt. 5:28).

I give not because I have not. At times the desire of our hearts can be accepted as the deed, only when action is truly impossible, and only when the deed is not an ordinance of the gospel (O.30, 30–31).

4:25–26 *remain guiltless . . . walk guiltless*. Alma 7:22 contains the phrase “walk blameless before him [God].” The idea of walking before the Lord can be found in Gen. 17:1; 1 Sam. 2:30, 35; 1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:23, 25; 9:4; 2 Chron. 6:14, 16; 7:17; Ps. 56:13; 116:9; 1 Ne. 16:3; Mosiah 18:29; Alma 45:24; 53:21; 63:2; Hel. 6:34; 15:5; Ether 6:17, 30; D&C 5:21; 18:31; 20:69; 25:2; 68:28; 109:1. The most common phrase in all of these is to “walk uprightly before the Lord.”

4:25 *ye covet that which ye have not received*. “Thou shalt not covet” is the tenth commandment in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; see also Rom. 7:7; 13:9; Mosiah 13:24). One of the many problems with coveting is that it fundamentally denies that all things belong to God. Just as the giver must accept God’s ultimate ownership in order to share his wealth properly with the poor, the poor must receive it in the same spirit, recognizing the same dependence of all people on God.

4:26 *retaining a remission of your sins*. For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:28, *cause thy neighbor*. For other blessings that come from remembering the poor, see Ps. 41:1–3.

from day to day. Retaining a remission of one’s sin is a daily process. Repeating the transgression itself causes the weight of the former sins to return (D&C 82:7). Moreover, failure to serve others in need is essentially unbecoming, for a recipient of remission has been the beneficiary of the gift of God.

according to that which he hath. TB *Arakin* 8:4; TY *Pe’ah* 1:1, 15b, 23, place reasonable limits on giving.

feeding the hungry, clothing the naked. Benjamin focuses mainly on the importance of filling two needs: feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Compare Isa. 58:7; Ezek. 18:7. He does not require his subjects to achieve complete economic equality or a pro rata distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, Book of Mormon economic doctrine generally advocates and promotes an equal distribution of wealth among people. Indeed, communities prosper most when wealth is most evenly distributed among its members. See Robison, *JBMS* 1/1, 1992, 35–53.

visiting the sick. See Jacob 2:19; Alma 4:12–13; Matt. 25:35–36; further references are found in Matt. 25:37–44; Tobit 4:16; Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.3 (307).

administering to their relief. This phrase is found a few times in the scriptures. It is connected with helping the needy in Jacob 2:19; D&C 38:35; 44:6. In Alma 60:30 it is used to mean helping in times of war; in 1Q22 III it is specific to the sabbatical year and part of Moses' speech. On the sabbatical year, see this volume, pp. 190–93.

both spiritually and temporally. The dichotomy between spiritual and temporal ideas appears elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. See 1 Ne. 22:1–3. It is unclear exactly how the Nephites conceptualized this dichotomy, but for Benjamin's purposes, people were required to feed and protect the human spirit and mind, as well as body.

according to their wants. This phrase can be found in Alma 35:9; D&C 42:33; 51:8. It is written as "their wants and needs" in Mosiah 18:29; D&C 51:3; 82:17.

4:27 *in wisdom and order.* A comparable phrase is found in 1 Cor. 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." For discussion on *wisdom and order*, see this volume, pp. 8–10, 16, 366.

might win the prize. A similar expression can be found in 1 Cor. 9:24; Philip. 3:14.

4:28 *the thing that he borroweth.* Under Israelite law, failure to return that which a person has borrowed was the equivalent of theft. See Jackson, *Theft in Early Jewish Law*, 1972, 17–18, 91. Jewish law placed no significance on the fact that the person had received the possession of property lawfully, whereas Anglo-American common law makes the taking of property a crime only if a person possesses that property unlawfully (Chitty, *A Practical Treatise on the Criminal Law*, 1978, 4:917; "Larceny," *American Jurisprudence*, 50:160). It was also important for a person under ancient law to return exactly what he had borrowed; otherwise a dispute could ensue over whether the value of the returned object was equal to the value of the borrowed object. Accordingly, in the laws of Eshnunna 18–21, repayment of a loan had to be made in the kind of property stipulated in the loan document, and thus, presumably, a lender could require the borrower to return precisely the thing or the kind of thing that had been borrowed. Returning specific property to its proper owner was also a major concern at the time of jubilee (Lev. 25:25–34). See also the notes on Mosiah 2:13, *neither have I suffered*; 4:13, *that which is his due*; and this volume, pp. 193–95.

cause thy neighbor to commit sin. Failure to return the exact object borrowed could result in a lawsuit and therefore might cause the lender to commit sin in enforcing his legal rights, by overstating his case, or by wrongfully employing self-help to collect his property. Benjamin desired to avoid both the problems of the delinquent debtor and the problems of the overzealous creditor. For further information on remission of sins, see this volume, pp. 16, 197–98. See also the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*; 2:34, *eternally indebted*; 3:4, *mayest rejoice*; 3:11, *ignorantly sinned*; 3:13, *remission of their sins*; 4:26, *retaining a remission*.

4:29 *finally.* For comment on final warnings, see this volume, pp. 97–98.

all the things whereby ye may commit sin. Benjamin recognized that it was impossible to number all the commandments in the Torah. Jewish law eventually identified 613 commandments. The Book of Mormon does not take such an approach to the law of God.

4:30 *watch yourselves.* The verb for *watch* most likely comes from the Hebrew root *SMR, which means "to watch or keep." *Keeping oneself*, using this root, occurs in Ps. 18:23; 2 Sam. 22:24.

your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds. Nibley points out that "these are the three things you produce: thoughts, words, and deeds" (N.25, 480). Alma says that people will be judged according to these three elements

(Alma 12:14).

observe the commandments of God. This idea of observing can be found in Ex. 34:11; Num. 15:22; Deut. 5:32; 6:25; 8:1; 12:28, 32; 15:5; 24:8; 28:1, 13, 15; 32:46; Josh. 1:7; 2 Kgs. 17:37; 21:8; 2 Chron. 7:17; Neh. 1:5.

coming of our Lord. See 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Thes. 3:13; 2 Thes. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:16.

end of your lives. A variant of this phrase is found in Deut. 11:12, “even unto the end of the year”; Matt. 28:20, “even unto the end of the world.”

remember, and perish not. “Remembrance is a saving principle of the gospel and a distinctive aspect of Israelite mentality” (M.19, 127). The Hebrew word *zakor* not only means “to remember,” but also “to obey.” *Reexploring*, pp. 127–29. See also this volume, p. 170, and the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 2:41; 4:11; 6:3 on remembering.

The Covenantal Response of the People (Mosiah 5:1–5)

5:1¹And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, *he sent among them, *desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them. ²And they all cried *with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, *we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a *mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have *no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. ³And we, ourselves, also, through the *infinite goodness of God, and the *manifestations of his Spirit, have *great views of that which is to come; and were it *expedient, we could *prophesy of all things. ⁴And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with *such exceedingly great joy. ⁵And we are willing to *enter into a covenant with our God *to do his will, and to be *obedient to his commandments in all things that *he shall command us, all the *remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the *cup of the wrath of God.

5:1 *he sent among them.* Because not all of the people were under the sound of Benjamin’s voice, he apparently had to send priests or officers to obtain the response of his people.

desiring to know. This is a common phrase in the Book of Mormon, variations of which appear fourteen times: 1 Ne. 2:16; 11:1; 15:6; 2 Ne. 5:33; Mosiah 7:10; 12:25; 29:1; Alma 19:3; 22:3; 32:24; 33:1; 60:6 (twice); D&C 15:4; 16:4; 18:1; 49:2; it appears nowhere in the Bible.

5:2 *with one voice, saying.* This phrase in Mosiah is used when a people make a covenant as a group and individually. It is used similarly in Ex. 24:3. It is also used when a group praises or calls on God for help. It is the *acclamatio*, also part of the year-rite (N.28, 305). In Acts 4:24 the phrase “with one accord” has the same basic meaning. See Neh. 10:29; Acts 19:34; Mosiah 4:2; Alma 43:49; 3 Ne. 4:30; 20:9; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:47; Sirach 50:17.

we know of their surety. To know something “of a surety” is to know it firmly, steadfastly, and faithfully. This word is related, in ancient legal contexts, with the idea of suretyship (Kittle, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1:602). A surety is a guarantor. When something is assured or has a surety standing behind it, the guarantor agrees to step in and make good any losses or to compensate for any shortfalls. Some guarantors or insurers, of

course, are compensated, but the legal concept of suretyship is Anglo-American common law, developed out of the assumption that the surety was gratuitous and uncompensated.

mighty change. When Benjamin speaks about a *mighty change*, one might consider the process involved in achieving it. One view is that this comes about by extending the love and grace the Lord has given us to others (H.10, 164); it also involves repentance, and it is “not just a change of actions, but a change of heart. . . . Part of this mighty change of heart is to feel godly sorrow for our sins. This is what is meant by a broken heart and a contrite spirit. . . . This mighty change, which is brought about only through faith in Jesus Christ and through the operation of the Spirit upon us . . . is likened to a new birth” (Benson, *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 2–5). Our responsibility is not just to ourselves, “In a spiritual sense, repentance and growth require the flowering of our fellows, and we must aid and abet ‘the mighty change.’ Encouraging communications will not only stretch the shy, but the able also, who possess additional but unused abilities” (Maxwell, *All These Things*, 1980, 83). Benjamin is also talking about the process of sanctification, “They humbled themselves and prayed mightily that God would apply the atoning blood of Christ and purify their hearts. The Spirit came upon them and filled them with joy; a mighty change came into their hearts and they had ‘no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Ott, “Sanctification,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1259–60). See also Alma 5:14. For a discussion of *mighty change*, see this volume, pp. 44, 284–85, 288–90, 443–46.

no more disposition to do evil. The mark of full conversion is that a person’s desires are changed. Sin is no longer attractive. The long-term losses and eternal consequences are seen as if in the present, and therefore short-term values are seen for what they really are. Unholy practices and transgressions offensive to God are not looked upon with the least degree of allowance as one comes to view matters from a divine perspective. See D&C 1:31.

5:3 *infinite goodness*. This phrase occurs in 2 Ne. 1:10; Hel. 12:1; Moro. 8:3. The same idea is expressed in Mosiah 28:4 with the phrase *infinite mercy*. Similar ideas are found in the KJV, for instance, “the Lord is good, his mercy endureth forever” in 1 Chron. 16:34, 41; 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1–4, 29; 136:1–26; Jer. 33:11. The earliest of these uses, with the possible exception of the Psalms, is from Jeremiah. The phrase *endureth forever* comes from the Hebrew word *olam*, which means “without end,” “eternal,” or “infinite.” The idea is the same and could well be translated “infinite.” Similar phrases are found in 1 Kgs. 10:9; Ps. 25:6; 52:8; 89:2; Hosea 2:19.

manifestations of his Spirit. A *manifestation* is literally something brought to hand (*manus*). Therefore it is open and plain, and is as direct and immediate as a handshake or an event at hand. Benjamin’s people received great manifestations, experiencing open, intimate revelations. For a discussion on revelation, see this volume, pp. 8–10, 31–32, 64–66, 100.

great views. A full response to a powerful spiritual experience often includes the expansive view opened to the soul. For example, Moses viewed the entire world (Moses 1); to Nephi on the mountain great expanses were unfolded to his view (1 Ne. 11); Micaiah saw all Israel (1 Kgs. 22:17).

expedient. The word *expedient* is often associated in the Book of Mormon, not with efficiency or expediency in a modern sense, but usually with the atonement. See, for example, Alma 34:13.

prophecy of all things. This does not necessarily mean foretelling the entire future. The word prophecy also refers to “speaking forth” or speaking freely, and in that sense Benjamin’s people were so filled with the spirit that words of joy gushed forth.

5:4 *such exceedingly great joy.* The joy here is expressed as a result of faith in King Benjamin's words, given him by an angel; a similar phrase is used in Matt. 2:10 when the three kings saw the star and knew the words of the angel were true.

5:5 *enter into a covenant with our God . . . to be obedient to his commandments.* Benjamin is here signaling the terms of the covenant. According to the *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, the six elements involved in covenant making are (1) the preamble mentioning the names of the partners; (2) a preliminary history of the relationship of those entering the covenant; (3) a basic declaration about the future relationship of the partners; (4) details of the new relationship; (5) an invocation of the respective gods worshipped by both sides to act as witnesses; (6) a pronouncement of curse and blessing ("Covenant"). Stephen Pfann has reconstructed from 1QS and other parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls a sequence of steps that may have comprised the initiation ceremony at Qumran (paper given at the July 1996 Dead Sea Scroll Convention in Provo, Utah). These steps have their counterparts in Benjamin's speech; see notes above for Mosiah 2:20–24, 32–33; 4:1–4; 7–11; 23–25; 5:11–12, 15; 6:3. The *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* also points out that Martin Noth "has drawn attention to the most recent textual finds, which show that the covenant was mediated by a third party between the two sides." In this case the covenantal relationship exists between the people, their king, and God (see Mosiah 2:31). For a recent study of the OT background on covenant making, the role of covenant in creating the identity of a people, the manifestation of divine presence in guaranteeing covenant validity and boundaries, covenant promises and relationships, see Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul*, 1995. On covenant, see this volume, pp. 295–97; on relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, see this volume, pp. 167–69, 235, 243–44, 253–61. On the nature of God, see the notes on Mosiah 3:11, *not knowing the will of God*; and this volume, pp. 10, 71, 253–54. The idea of entering into a covenant with God is found often throughout the scriptures; see Deut. 29:12; 2 Chron. 15:12; Ezek. 16:8 (in this passage it is God who enters into a covenant with his people); Mosiah 18:10; 21:31–32; Alma 7:15; D&C 5:3. For the idea of entering into a covenant with someone other than God, see Jer. 34:10; Mosiah 6:2; 18:13; Alma 43:11; 44:15, 20; 46:20, 31, 35; 53:15–18; 62:16–17; Hel. 1:11; 2:3; 6:21–22; 3 Ne. 5:4–5; 6:3, 28–29; 7:11; D&C 132:7. *Covenant* occurs with equal frequency in the Dead Sea Scrolls (as the Hebrew *b^erit*), appearing fully 32 times in the *Rule of the Community alone*. Baltzer, in *The Covenant Formulary*, 1971, views the *Rule of the Community* as a covenant document, exhibiting the following sections: (1) preamble: God and the community, representing Israel wandering in the wilderness, 1QS I 1–5, participants in the covenant; (2) review of God's relations with Israel; (3) terms of the covenant, 1QS V–XI; (4) formal witness, 1QS I 5–II 4; (5) blessings and curses, 1QS II 5–26; IX 22–27; (6) recitation and deposit of the covenant. The association of a covenant with keeping or obeying the commandments can be found in Deut. 7:9; 2 Kgs. 23:3; 2 Chron. 34:31; Neh. 1:5; Ps. 103:18; Dan. 9:4; Mosiah 6:1; 18:10; 21:31–32; Alma 7:15; 60:34; D&C 5:28; 136:2; JST Gen. 9:21; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:47, 50; this is the *acclamatio* of the year-rite, but can be applied to any covenantal reaffirmation. In his speech in 1Q22 III, Moses says, "Keep al[l the words of] this covenant [carrying them out.]" For further comments on Benjamin's covenant with his people and God, see this volume, pp. 102, 187–88, 199–200, 295–97.

to do his will. The people were willing to entirely submit their desires to the will of the Father and to covenant to do his will. See the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10; 3 Ne. 13:10) and Jesus' utterance in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

5:5–12 *obedient; name of Christ; remember to retain.* In these verses, Benjamin incorporates the three promises that are the essential elements of the sacramental prayers (W.52, 286).

he shall command us. See 3 Ne. 18:10–11; Moro. 4:3; Ex. 24:3; see also Heb. 13:21, "to do his will."

remainder of our days. Variants are found in Deut. 31:12–13, “and observe to do all the words of this law . . . as long as ye live”; 1 Sam. 12:4–5; 3 Ne. 18:7; Moro. 4:3; 5:2.

cup of the wrath of God. See Mosiah 3:26; Isa. 51:17, “the cup of his fury”; Rev. 14:10, “drink of the wine of the wrath of God”; see also Rev. 14:8, 19; 15:7; 2 Ne. 8:17, 22; 3 Ne. 18:8–9; Moro. 5:1–2.

BENJAMIN’S SPEECH: PART 7

The Covenantal Relationship (Mosiah 5:6–15)

⁶And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is *a righteous covenant.

⁷And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be *called the *children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath *spiritually begotten you; for ye say that *your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

⁸And *under this head ye are *made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is *no other name given *whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should *take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be

obedient unto the end of your lives. ⁹And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the *right hand of God, for he shall *know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the

name of Christ. ¹⁰And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the *left hand of God. ¹¹And I

would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be *blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress,

that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. ¹²I say unto you, I would that ye should *remember to retain the name *written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye

*hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you. ¹³For 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? ¹⁴And again, doth a man *take an ass which belongeth to his *neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his *flocks,

but will drive him away, and cast him out. I say unto you, that even so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called. ¹⁵Therefore, I would that ye should be *steadfast and immovable,

*always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may *seal you his, that you may be *brought to heaven, that ye may have *everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the *wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who *created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is *God above all. Amen.

5:6 *a righteous covenant.* Joseph F. Smith commented on this scripture: “Surely, it is a righteous covenant. It could not be other than a righteous covenant; for the covenant was with God, to do His will, to be obedient to His commandments in all things all the remainder of their days” (Conference Report, April 1898, 66). Thus it can be said that an unrighteous covenant would involve not doing God’s will or not obeying his commandments.

5:7–12 *called the children of Christ* (taking the name of Christ). Benjamin completes the covenant by having his people take upon themselves the name of Christ, “With a new name comes a new identity, and a new self-

definition. Names associated with ordinances are not mere sounds, but have divine power concentrated in them. Through exceeding faith and repentance (Alma 13:11–12) and through priesthood ordinances (D&C 84:20–22), one learns how to gain access to the enabling power of Jesus Christ and to take upon himself the name, the nature, and the power of Christ. . . . It is through the divine name that one gains the power to take on the divine nature and, indeed, to be assimilated to Christ and the Father” (M. Catherine Thomas, unpublished paper). The OT conception of a name does not make a distinction between the name and the nature of the thing named; to know the name of something is to understand its nature. In the NT Peter and John were asked, “By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:7).

5:7 *children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters.* Becoming children of Christ is recognized in modern LDS doctrine as the divine investiture of authority: “Christ is also our Father because his Father has given him of his fulness; that is, he has received a fulness of the glory of the Father” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:294). Neal A. Maxwell explains, “Jesus is even described as the Father, because under Elohim’s direction he is the Father-Creator of this and other worlds (see D&C 76:24). Furthermore, He is the Father of all who are born again spiritually. When we take upon ourselves His name and covenant to keep His commandments, it is then that we become His sons and daughters, ‘the children of Christ’” (*Men and Women of Christ*, 1991, 37). Bruce R. McConkie links this concept to being born again: “In setting forth that all men must be born again to gain salvation, we have seen that this means they must be ‘born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters’ (Mosiah 27:25). Whose sons and whose daughters do we become when we are born again? Who is our new Father? The answer is, Christ is our Father; we become his children by adoption; he makes us members of his family. Nowhere is this set forth better than in the words of King Benjamin to his Nephite subjects” (*The Promised Messiah*, 1978, 352). See also 3 Ne. 9:17; Mormon 9:26.

spiritually begotten. See Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5, “this day have I begotten thee”; also 2 Cor. 6:18, “and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” See this volume, pp. 125, 283–90, 447–48.

your hearts are changed through faith on his name. This is how Benjamin proposes his people make the *mighty change* spoken of in Mosiah 5:2. The idea of having one’s heart changed occurs once in the OT, in a vision of Daniel about King Nebuchadnezzar becoming like a beast. In Dan. 4:16 a heavenly messenger says to “let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him.” The only other book of scripture in which this phrase occurs is the Book of Mormon, where it is a common concept. The idea of having one’s heart changed by God occurs in Mosiah 5:2, 7; Alma 5:7, 12–14, 26; 19:33; Hel. 15:7. On the changing of hearts through faith on Christ, “As we earnestly strive to become one with Him, being swallowed up in His purposes, we come to resemble Him. Christ who has saved us thus becomes the father of our salvation, and we have His image increasingly in our countenances and conduct” (Maxwell, *Men and Women*, 1991, 49).

5:8 *under this head.* Jesus is referred to as a *head*, perhaps referring to his station as the head of this family of believers or the leader of its priesthood order.

made free. See notes on Mosiah 2:17, *service*.

no other name given. “The only way a person can come back or be exalted into the presence of God the Eternal Father . . . is through Jesus Christ. . . . That is why the scriptures in so many places state that there is only one name given by which mankind can be saved, or, better stated, exalted into the presence of God the Father. . . . We can take upon ourselves this holy name only by means of a covenant with God . . . in the waters of baptism. We thus take upon ourselves a new and holy name” (Burton, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1989, 174). Further references

to the name of Christ are in Mosiah 3:17; 5:9–10; 6:2; 25:23; 26:18; 3 Ne. 18:11; Moro. 4:3; 5:2; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Pet. 4:14; Sirach 23:10; this volume, pp. 58, 243, 252–53, 286, 290–91, 296.

whereby salvation cometh. See Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

take upon you the name of Christ. Compare Num. 6:27. On the importance of taking upon oneself a new name in connection with covenant making, see Madsen, in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1990, 458–81. See the notes on Mosiah 3:2, *through faith on his name.*

5:9–10, 12 *right hand of God . . . left hand of God.* In referring to the right and left hand of God, Benjamin is equating the name he is giving them which puts them on the right hand of God, rather than some other name which would put them on the left hand of God, with the scapegoat ritual (see Lev. 16 and the notes on Mosiah 2:32, *list to obey*). Sorenson makes a comparison with the “head” that makes one free, saying “one might imagine that [Benjamin] looked to his right at the head of the sacrificial animal that symbolized Christ and whose blood would be used in purifying the people” (S.42, 1). The idea of the right and left hand of God occurs often. Sometimes the distinction is made as to whether it is good to be on the right hand of God as opposed to the left, and sometimes not. Being found on the right hand of God is associated with receiving exaltation, and Christ is most often the one found on the right hand of God. The name Benjamin means “son of the right” (see this volume, pp. 25–26). The phrase *left hand of God* appears only twice in the Book of Mormon, both times here in this chiasmic passage. Being on the left hand was a negative, inauspicious, or sinister thing. The preferred son stood on the right hand of the father. “There are a few instances where left has a negative connotation: ‘A wise man’s heart inclines him toward the right, but a fool’s heart toward the left’ (Eccl. 10:2). . . . Left-handedness was unusual in ancient Israel” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:274). As the ancient person oriented himself to the east, favorable and warm regions were to the south on his right, but dark and cold regions were to the north on his left (see Richard C. Martin, “Left and Right,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, 1995, 496; Needham, ed. *Right and Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification*, 1973). For references to there being a difference whether one is on the right or the left, see Ps. 98:1; Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Mark 16:19; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33–34; 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Alma 5:58; 28:12; Hel. 3:30; Ether 12:4; Moro. 7:27; 9:26; D&C 76:23; 104:7; Moses 7:56; JS-M 1:1; and JST Gen. 7:63–64. For equality of position—right hand or left—see 1 Kgs. 22:19, “all the host of heaven standing by him [the Lord] on his right hand and on his left”; see also 2 Chron. 18:18.

5:9 *know the name by which he is called.* Knowing the name and knowing God are often synonymous in the scriptures and are essential parts of salvation. “And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Num. 6:27). “Every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory” (Isa. 43:7). Many will claim to know the name, but in fact will not: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name hath cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:22–23). Likewise, the five foolish virgins seek to enter the banquet hall, but they will be told: “Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matt. 25:12). See also the notes on Mosiah 1:11; 3:8; and 5:8 on the name of Christ.

5:10–12 For the chiasmic nature of these verses, see this volume, pp. 69, 370–73.

5:11 *blotted out.* This phrase occurs in Ps. 109:13, in which the wicked will have their posterity cut off and their name blotted out. It is also found in Num. 5:23; Deut. 9:14; 29:20; 2 Kgs. 14:27; Rev. 3:5; Mosiah 1:12; 26:36; Alma 1:24; 5:57; 6:3; Moro. 6:7; D&C 20:83. But the idea is preserved in many places with phrases such as having

one's name cut off or destroyed. See Josh. 7:9; 1 Sam. 24:21; Ps. 83:4; Isa. 14:22 (see also 2 Ne. 24:22); 48:19 (see also 1 Ne. 20:19); 56:5; Jer. 11:19; JST Zeph. 1:4. This idea, though the actual word *name* may not be used, is often implied in reference to being blotted out from the book of life. See Ex. 32:32–33; Deut. 25:19; Ps. 69:28. The part of the Qumran initiation ceremony dealing with cursing (see notes on Mosiah 4:23, *wo be unto that man*) has to do with excommunication of unfaithful members and correlates to the names of the covenant makers being blotted out through transgression (1QS II 11–18). For *blotted out*, see also the notes on Mosiah 1:12.

5:12 *remember . . . always*. Either always remembering something or always remembering to do something is a frequent theme in the Book of Mormon. See also the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 2:41; 4:11, 30; 5:12; 6:3 on remembering. References can be found in 1 Ne. 15:25; Mosiah 4:11; Alma 29:12; 3 Ne. 18:7, 11; Moro. 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79; 46:8, 10.

written always in your hearts. This idea is found frequently in the KJV, especially the idea of the Lord's people having his law written in their hearts. See Prov. 3:3; 7:3; JST Isa. 51:7; Jer. 17:1; 31:33; Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 3:2–3; Heb. 8:10; 10:16. For the Lord's saying in the Book of Mormon, as he did in the OT, that his people had his law written in their hearts, see 2 Ne. 8:7. In Mosiah 13:11, Abinadi accuses Noah and his people of not having the commandments written in their heart.

hear and know the voice. The ultimate benefit of service is that a person thereby learns to recognize the voice of the master whom he serves. "Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made" (Romney, *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93).

5:13 *the master whom he has not served*. This is an important concept: "If we are not serving Jesus, and if he is not in our thoughts and hearts, then the things of the world will draw us instead to them! Moreover, the things of the world need not be sinister in order to be diverting and consuming" (Maxwell, *BYU Firesides and Devotionals*, 1992, 105; see also this volume, pp. 10–12).

5:13–14 *stranger . . . neighbor*. In Moses's speech in 1Q22 III, Moses gives instructions on the treatment of neighbors or brothers and strangers or foreigners/aliens.

far from the thoughts and intents of his heart. God judges by looking upon the intents and thoughts of the heart. Alma realized that we will be judged by our words, our deeds, and our thoughts (Alma 12:14).

5:14 *take an ass*. See Ex. 13:13; 34:20, "And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck"; the ass is ritually unclean according to the Mosaic Code, Lev. 11:1–8; Deut. 14:3–8. In typical ancient Near Eastern covenant-making fashion, and in accordance with Deut. 11:26–28 and 27:14–26, Benjamin ends his covenant ceremony by pronouncing a blessing and a curse. Here, Benjamin compares the fate of the disobedient person with that of an ass that tries to live and eat where he does not belong. To what extent can Benjamin's reference to the ass in this ritual context be connected with any other ancient ceremonial practices? If Benjamin had spoken of a goat instead of an ass, a connection with the Israelite Day of Atonement ritual would have been obvious (Lev. 16:10). Benjamin does not, however, speak of a goat. Nor does he say that the ass, which shall be driven away and cast out, shall bear the sins of the people. Undoubtedly he does not make use of the traditional scapegoat for the simple reason that using an animal to carry away the sins of the people would be inconsistent with the understanding now revealed through Benjamin that only the blood of Christ (Mosiah 3:18–19, 21) atones for sin. The scapegoat ritual, although probably remaining symbolically meaningful to Benjamin, had been superseded. Thus it is suggested that Benjamin intentionally avoided any

reference to a goat in this context but spoke instead of an ass, as several reasons may elucidate: (1) Benjamin may have felt a need to refer to some kind of animal in the place of the scapegoat, and the ass proved more suitable than other candidates, such as sheep, which were symbols of obedient followers, and even of the Lord himself (1 Ne. 10:10). (2) The fabled stubbornness of the ass could have been, in Benjamin's mind, a good characterization of the rebelliousness of sinners, those that "remaineth and dieth an enemy to God" (Mosiah 2:38). Other traditions, however, could have led Benjamin to consider the ass to be adequately endowed with strong innate virtues, enabling the ass to please his master, but at the same time to be characteristically foolish, foreign, and stubborn. (3) The ass appears to have had significance among the Israelite descendants of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and perhaps it therefore had particular meaning to the posterity of Lehi who was from that lineage. The Hebrew word *l'hi* means "jawbone" or "cheekbone," words which have many direct associations with asses. (4) That the ass was used in covenant rituals in the ancient Near East generally is addressed in Hiller's book, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*, 1969, 40–41. (5) The ass was uniquely "redeemable"; see Ex. 13:13 and 34:20. If any of these ideas has merit, Benjamin might have drawn upon these traditions in creating a powerful analogy here, leading to this interpretation: if Joseph is associated with the ass, then his descendants would constitute the "flock" to which Benjamin refers. Thus the sinner is likened to a foreign or wild ass, who is not permitted to eat with the asses of the master. The idea that the "flock" here is a flock of asses is consistent with the verse which immediately precede Benjamin's expulsion simile (Mosiah 5:13). This implies that the "flock" is not a flock of passive animals, but must be a group of animals capable of rendering useful service to the master. A group of asses would symbolize such a group of servants bearing the burdens of the master. The concept of feeding another man's animals when they stray into your land is part of the law. See notes on Mosiah 2:13, *neither have I*.

flocks. The question of what animals the Nephites had in their flocks is complicated. "Twelve creatures are specified in the Book of Mormon: ass, cow, dog, goat, wild goat, horse, sheep, ox, swine, elephant, 'curelom,' and 'cumom.' . . . Some animals were included in the flocks and herds that the Nephites began to raise (2 Ne. 5:11). . . . Still, goats, wild goats, and horses that the early Nephites were said to 'raise' were not included in either the flocks or herds (Enos 1:21). . . . Present knowledge of the species in Mesoamerica indicates that there were enough of the right sorts of animals in that setting that all twelve of the Book of Mormon's beasts can be plausibly accounted for" (Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1985, 288–91).

5:15 *steadfast and immovable*. Benjamin, as part of changing the moral paradigm of his people so that they might be a temple people, is stipulating behavior. "The pattern is less a matter of error-free obedience to multiple commandments than it is a basic *attitude* that helps us cope patiently with our failings" (H.10, 163). The only way to remove the bonded name is through transgression (B.02, 46). The phrase *steadfast and immovable* also occurs in 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Ne. 2:10; Alma 1:25; 3 Ne. 6:14.

always abounding in good works. Neal A. Maxwell explained, "the works we are to do are those things which He did—and of which he told us to go and 'do likewise'" (Maxwell, *Even As I Am*, 1985, 31–32). He further elucidated, "Faith, hope, and charity draw to them other needed virtues, such as patience and temperance. We will be abounding in good works if we have faith, hope, and charity (Alma 7:24), because, knowing that there is divine purpose in life and personal accountability, we also know that what we do really matters" (Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness*, 1981, 48–49). See also Ether 12:4.

seal you his . . . everlasting salvation and eternal life. See John 6:27; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30; 2 Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:2–8; 9:4; D&C 68:12; 77:8–9, 11; 124:124; 131:5. In Alma 34:35 we read that it is possible to be sealed unto Satan. The phrase *everlasting salvation* occurs in Isa. 45:17; Alma 26:15; D&C 6:3; 11:3; 12:3; and 43:25. This phrase refers to the Jewish New Year (*Rosh ha-Shanah*) and Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) greeting: "May you be

inscribed for a good sealing!" The closing of the Qumran initiation ceremony, the Maskil's closing blessing of the community is given in 1QSb IV 25–26, which reads, "You shall be around, serving in the temple of the kingdom, sharing the lot with the angels of the face and the Council of the Community [. . .] for eternal time and for all the perpetual periods."

brought to heaven. Hugh Nibley comments on the change in tone, "Notice the last verse of the preceding chapter, verse 15. It ends on a very upbeat affair. This is an interesting thing about this meeting. This was at the end of the very brilliant reign of Benjamin, who has made them victorious over their enemies and assured prosperity in the land. Things were going wonderfully. They are at the peak of their power, glory, and influence. It must have been a splendid affair, and all Benjamin does during his whole speech is to throw cold water on their pride, etc. Don't get any ideas that you are anybody at all. He really cuts them down to size again and again. . . . We are less than the dust. We are nothing and have no right to claim anything at all. He goes on and on; that's the whole theme. Then when he gets to the end of his speech, it's upbeat" (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 2:9).

everlasting salvation. "And because it is the power of God that saves men, it includes both what the Lord does for us and what we must do for ourselves to be saved. On his part it is the atonement; on our part it is obedience to all that is given us of God. Thus the gospel includes every truth, every principle, every law—all that men must believe and know. Thus it includes every ordinance, every rite, every performance—all that men must do to please their Maker. Thus it includes every priesthood, every key, every power—all that men must receive to have their acts bound on earth and sealed eternally in the heavens. The fulness of the everlasting gospel, meaning all that is needed to enable men to gain a fulness of *everlasting salvation*, has been given of God in successive dispensations" (McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, 1982, 98).

wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy. God is ascribed as having the attributes of wisdom, mercy, power, and justice. While there are many passages in which he is ascribed one of these attributes separately, several of them are combined in the following references: Ps. 136:5; Prov. 1:3; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; 1 Cor. 1:24; Rev. 5:12; 7:12; 2 Ne. 2:12; 9:8; Jacob 4:10; Mosiah 4:6, 9; Alma 26:29, 35; 31:35; Moses 6:61. Many similar references can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

created all things, in heaven and in earth. Notice this reference to God, harking back to elements in the new and sacred name given in Mosiah 3:8. With this compare *el elyon qoneh samayim wa'ares*, translated as "God most high, creator of heaven and earth" (see Habel, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, 1972, 321–37), or "God most high, lord/possessor of heaven and earth (in the traditional-revisionist reflections of Lipinski, "qnh," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1993, 7:67–68. This phrase is also to be compared with the Phoenician-Picture Hittite Inscription of Azitawadda from Karatepe (see Donner and Rllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, 1973, 26:III:18, vol. 1:6), and in a neo-Punic inscription from Leptis (see *ibid.*, 129:1, vol. 1:25). Elkunirsa is also to be found in a Canaanite myth found in Hittite tablets from Boghazköy (see Hoffner, *Revue hittite et asianique* 23, 1965, 5–16; cf. also the discussion of these materials in Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 1955, 51–52, and Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece*, 1967, 206, where they are connected with figures in Mycenaean-Greek myth and legend). The concept of God in heaven and on the earth is found in Gen. 1:1; JST Gen. 1:3; 2:6; Josh. 2:11; 1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 113:6; 135:6; Dan. 6:27; Joel 2:30; Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:16; Rev. 10:6; Mosiah 4:2, 9; Alma 18:28; 22:10; Morm. 9:17; Moses 2:1; 3:4–5.

God above all. "This designation [Most High] connotes a state of supreme exaltation in rank, power, and dignity; it indicates that each of these Gods is God above all. Obviously the Father is the Most High God in the literal sense for he is the God of the Son as well as the God of all men. (John 20:17.) The Son, however, is the Most High God in

the sense that by divine investiture of authority, he is endowed with the power and authority of the Father, speaks in his name as though he were the Father, and therefore (having the fulness of the Father) he thinks it 'not robbery to be equal with God' (Philip. 2:6)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1996, 516). See 2 Chron. 2:5; 1 Ne. 13:30.

EPILOGUE (MOSIAH 6:1-7)

^{6:1}And now, king Benjamin thought it was expedient, after having finished speaking to the people, that he should *take the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to *keep his commandments. ²And it came to pass that there was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ. ³And again, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of all these things, and had *consecrated his son Mosiah to be a *ruler and a *king over his people, and had given him *all the charges concerning the kingdom, and also had appointed *priests to teach the people, that thereby they might *hear and know the commandments of God, and to *stir them up in remembrance of *the oath which they had made, he dismissed the multitude, and they returned, every one, *according to their families, *to their own houses.

⁴And Mosiah began to reign *in his father's stead. And he began to reign in the *thirtieth year of his age, making in the whole, *about four hundred and seventy-six years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. ⁵And king Benjamin lived three years *and he died. ⁶And it came to pass that king *Mosiah did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe his *judgments and his statutes, and did keep his commandments in all things whatsoever he commanded him. ⁷And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should *till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might not become burdensome to his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things. And there was *no contention among all his people for the space of three years.

6:1 *take the names.* This correlates to the recording of names of covenanters in ancient Israel (T.49, 224). Censuses were taken in ancient Israel, and six are recorded in the OT: Moses' first census (Num. 1:46; 3:39; Ex. 38:26), Moses' second census (Num. 26:51), King David's first census (2 Sam. 24:9), King David's second census (1 Chron. 21:5), Solomon's census of foreigners (2 Chron. 2:17), and the census after the return from the Exile (Ezra 2:64-65). With the possible exception of Ezra's census and Solomon's census of foreigners, only men were numbered (Slattery, *Bible Review* 6/3, June 1992, 16). Stephen Pfann includes census taking, with oaths and immersions, as part of the initiation ceremony into the community at Qumran. 1QS III 11-12 reads, "In this way he will be admitted by means of atonement pleasing to God, and for him it will be the covenant of an everlasting Community." See also Josephus, *Wars* 2.139-42; notes on Mosiah 2:2, *he never doth vary*, above.

keep his commandments. See Deut. 28:45; 29:12 (29:9-14); 30:10; Ezek. 16:8; Neh. 10:29; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:47, 50; Mosiah 5:5; 18:10.

6:3 *consecrated his son . . . to be . . . a king.* See Judg. 9:8, 15; 1 Sam. 2:10; 15:1, 17; 26:16; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 3:39; 5:3, 17; 12:7; 22:51; 1 Kgs. 1:34, 39, 45; 5:1; 19:15-16; 2 Kgs. 9:3, 6, 12; 11:12; 23:30; 1 Chron. 11:3; 14:8; 29:22; 2 Chron. 23:11; Ps. 18:50; Jacob 1:9; Mosiah 2:11; Alma 2:9; Ether 6:22, 27; 9:4, 14-15; 10:10, 16. See also this volume, pp. 238-39, 247-50; and the notes on Mosiah 2:11, *consecrated*.

a ruler and a king. These words and similar forms often appear as a word pair. For example, in 1 Ne. 2:22, ruler: teacher; in 1 Ne 16:38 and Mosiah 2:11, ruler: king; in Jacob 1:9, Mosiah 1:10, 2:30, and 23:39, king: ruler. These

expressions seem to qualify or delimit the concept of kingship among the Nephites: “So far he will go in the traditional claim to divine rule, but no farther: he has been elected by acclamation of the people, as the king always must at the Great Assembly, and the Lord has ‘suffered’ him to be a ruler and a king. In all this part of his speech concerning his own status, Benjamin is plainly aware of the conventional claims of kingship, which he is consciously renouncing” (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 1988, 300–301).

king over his people. See Mosiah 2:4; 23:13; 1 Sam. 15:1, “anoint thee to be king over his people”; 1 Kgs. 1:35; 19:15; 2 Chron. 11:22; see also Lev. 16:32; Ex. 18:21; 1 Sam. 11:14–15; 12:13–16; 2 Sam. 3:17; 7:8; 1 Chron. 28:4; 2 Chron. 6:5; 7:18; 9:8; Acts 7:35; 13:22.

all the charges. In coronation ceremonies, the old king or some other authority typically charged the new king with responsibility for the affairs of the kingdom. David charged Solomon to discharge all his obligations as king (1 Kgs. 2:1–9).

priests to teach the people. See 2 Chron. 17:8–9, “And with them he sent Levites, . . . priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people”; see also Ezra 7:13–26; 1 Esdras (3 Ezra) 9:48–49, 53; 1 Ne. 12:8; 2 Ne. 5:26; 6:2; Jacob 1:18–19; Mosiah 2:4; 8:3; 25:19–21; 3 Ne. 13:25; 1Q22 I.

hear. Hearing the law implies a regular oral recitation of the law. See Deut. 31:10–13.

stir them up in remembrance. See the notes on Mosiah 1:16; 2:41; 4:11, 30; 5:12 on remembering.

the oath which they had made. Oaths would have been sworn in connection with the making of covenants.

according to their families. See Mosiah 2:5; Num. 4:49, “every one according to his service, and according to his burden”; Num. 15:12, “every one according to their number” (4:29, “number them after their families, by the house of their fathers”); 2 Kgs. 23:35, “every one according to his taxation”; Gen. 36:40; 47:12; Num. 26:50; Josh. 13:15.

to their own houses. The fact that the people returned to their houses is noteworthy. At the end of this assembly or coronation festival it was no longer necessary to dwell in tents.

6:4 *in his father’s stead.* A similar phrase is found in Lev. 16:32, “consecrate . . . in his father’s stead”; see also 2 Kgs. 23:30; 2 Chron. 36:1.

thirtieth year of his age. That is, twenty-nine years of age; see Jer. 1:2, “in the thirteenth year of his reign”; Mosiah 9:14.

about four hundred and seventy-six years. The date is imprecise. Apparently the Nephite chronologers were not sure exactly how many years had transpired between the time of Lehi and the time of Benjamin. Nevertheless, during this period, the Nephites were exceedingly strict in keeping the law of Moses, apparently including its calendrical requirements (Jarom 1:5). Later, they would know exactly how many years there were between King Benjamin and the coming of Christ, but it may have been necessary for them to use this approximate number in order to create a precise 600 years, consistent with the prophecies that Christ would come 600 years after Lehi had left Jerusalem.

6:5 *and he died.* Benjamin was possibly about seventy-five years old at his death. See this volume, p. 27.

6:6 *Mosiah did walk in the ways of the Lord.* The idea of walking in the Lord's way is a continual theme in the scriptures. See Deut. 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 13:5; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; Judg. 2:17, 22; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 11:33; 2 Kgs. 21:22; 2 Chron. 6:16; Ps. 86:11; 119:1; 128:1; Isa. 2:3; 42:24; Jer. 6:16; 7:23; 42:3; Hosea 14:9; Micah 4:2; Zech. 3:7; 2 Ne. 12:3; Mosiah 23:14; 29:43; Alma 7:9; 25:14; 41:8; Ether 10:2. Many references to this can also be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The fact that so many references come from Deuteronomy signals a heavy influence on Book of Mormon teachers and writers.

judgments; statutes; commandments. These three expressions occur frequently together in the OT, alluding to the idea that they are distinct; see Lev. 26:15; Deut. 5:31; 6:1; 7:11; 8:11; 11:1; 26:17; 30:16; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 6:12; 8:58; 2 Chron. 19:10; Neh. 1:7; 9:13; 10:29; 1 Ne. 17:22; 2 Ne. 5:10; Alma 8:17; 58:40; Hel. 3:20; 15:5. Again the large number of Deuteronomy references is significant. These three words probably correspond to the Hebrew *mishpatim*, *hugot*, and *mitzvot*. See Welch, *Reexploring*, pp. 62–65.

6:7 *till the earth.* The fact that the king needed to cause the people to return to farming may indicate the close of a sabbatical or jubilee year in which the land had lain fallow.

no contention. There being no contention in the land is a Book of Mormon phenomenon rarely chronicled, and is found in Mosiah 1:1; 6:7; Hel. 3:1–2; 4 Ne. 1:13, 15, 18.