

# Weeping for Zion

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Readers of the Book of Mormon are familiar with the morose conclusion to the Book of Jacob.

Marilyn Arnold cites the passage as evidence of Jacob's "unusually tender" nature,<sup>43</sup> and John Tanner uses it to exhibit "the sensitivity, vulnerability, and quiet eloquence" of this minor Book of Mormon prophet.<sup>44</sup> Hugh Nibley called Jacob's final words a "solemn dirge,"<sup>45</sup> Sidney Sperry wrote of the "sincere nature" of the farewell,<sup>46</sup> and Terry Warner has said that Jacob's conclusion betrays the "emotional and spiritual tribulation" that "never ended for Jacob."<sup>47</sup> In a creative "street-legal version" of the Book of Mormon, Michael Hicks has more recently reworded Jacob's farewell in part as follows: "We always talked about rejoicing but were mostly overserious and glum. We had this promised land, this New Canaan, but felt sad and put down and unfulfilled all the time. I hate to end this way. But it's true. Honest. Plain."<sup>48</sup> Few miss the opportunity, it seems, to highlight the almost depressive nature of Jacob's closing words.

In the following pages, however, I would like to propose a rather different reading of Jacob's farewell. He mourned, and he felt time's passage like a dream, but what might we learn if we were to read these as *normative* experiences—not as the peculiar feelings of a despairing individual, but as something Jacob as a prophet models and that we should strive to emulate? Might we outline a theology of mourning that recognizes the positive and the productive in Jacob's relation to the world? In line with certain early (and other not-so-early) Christian thinkers, I want to outline here a theology of what I will call *consecrated melancholy*. Or rather, borrowing from the language of a revelation to and about Joseph Smith, I want to begin to work out the meaning of *weeping for Zion*.<sup>49</sup>

I will proceed as follows. In the first section, I will investigate the basic structures that underlie Jacob 7:26. My aim in doing so is to reveal some of the complexity of the passage, but also and especially to bring out the possibility that the core of Jacob's farewell exhibits a kind of progression from one psychological diagnosis of the Nephite condition to another—the first presented only in a simile but the second presented as the actual psychological state of Jacob and his people. In a second section, I will then provide a detailed philosophical assessment of the two psychological conditions mentioned by Jacob. My intention will be to clarify the basic nature of melancholy and to spell out in a preliminary way what it might mean for melancholy to be consecrated. Finally, in a third section, I will draw out what I take to be the significance of the focus of Nephite mourning, according to Jacob. The point of this last section will be to develop as fully as possible the idea of consecrated melancholy and to bring out with real force the normative features of Jacob's and his people's morose spirit.

## 1. Some Questions of Structure

The words Jacob uses to bid his readers farewell are deeply familiar. Unfortunately, for all its apparent familiarity, the passage's complexity passes largely unnoticed by readers. It deserves quotation in full here, since we will be looking at it in great detail:

And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old, and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi—wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away, like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers cast out from Jerusalem, born in

tribulation in a wild wilderness, and hated of our brethren—which caused wars and contentions.

Wherefore, we did mourn out our days. (Jacob 7:26.)<sup>50</sup>

At first, perhaps, the passage reads as highly disorganized, a kind of haphazard concatenation of anxieties, so many serial witnesses to Jacob's poignant feelings. Closer investigation, however, shows that it follows a careful plan, and that a remarkably tight structure organizes the culminating "saying" toward which it works.

In broadest terms, a triple intention animates the passage. Three successive verbs organize this triple intention: "to conclude," "to declare," and "to say." Isolating the part of the passage in which these three verbs appear in rapid succession should help to clarify this point: "I *conclude* this record, *declaring* that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by *saying* that . . ." Each of these moments might be considered in turn. Jacob unsurprisingly states at the outset of this fragment that the point of his farewell is to accomplish *a gesture of conclusion*: "I conclude this record." But he then immediately qualifies this move by making *a solemn declaration* regarding the relationship between his personal knowledge and the record he aims to conclude: "declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge." And then, apparently because he recognizes the destabilizing effect of his declaration, he finally offers *a clarifying saying* intended to justify any disparity between "the best of [his] knowledge" and simple reality: "by saying that . . ." A gesture of conclusion, secured by a solemn declaration, which then requires a clarifying saying—these are the basic elements of the plan underlying Jacob 7:26.<sup>51</sup>

Of the three elements of this plan, the second is the simplest. This is because the first, the gesture of conclusion, arises with an odd introductory "wherefore" in the middle of what seems at first to be an interrupted thought, while the third element, the clarifying saying, has as its content the whole remainder of the verse with its own independent structure. Only the solemn declaration comes across as straightforward: the expression of an entirely understandable desire that readers recognize Jacob's sincerity and good faith. The other two elements therefore deserve closer scrutiny. I aim here, of course, primarily to investigate the theological force of the clarifying saying (the third element), since there Jacob outlines the Nephite experience of time's passing and the psychological conditions that attend it. Nonetheless, before turning directly to the saying and its fascinating structure, I would like to say a few words about the context of the gesture of conclusion that opens the verse. At the very least, an illuminating reading of that first element of the triple plan of Jacob 7:26 should help to motivate close and charitable reading when we turn to the saying meant to clarify the solemn declaration that accomplishes the gesture of conclusion.

Jacob's gesture of conclusion seems, at best, oddly introduced. Were the opening part of the passage to be lacking the incomplete thought regarding "the record . . . kept on the other plates of Nephi," it would read far more naturally: "And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old, . . . wherefore, I conclude this record." The difficulty, of course, is that Jacob inserts between his statement regarding death's approach and his gesture of conclusion a straying aside that appears never to be completed: "and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi . . ." This clause seems to be either unrelated to the rest of the verse or inexplicably but definitively abandoned before its relevance ever manifests itself. But a closer reading, one invested in questions of structure, points to apparent motivations for Jacob's inclusion of the odd clause. A triple contrast establishes a close relationship between the statement regarding the "other plates" and Jacob's gesture of conclusion.

Parallel to the phrase "the other plates" in the apparently stray clause is Jacob's reference to "this record" in the gesture of conclusion. A similar parallel exists between "this people" in the apparently stray clause and the first-personal "I" in the gesture of conclusion. Finally, the gerundive "being kept" of the apparently stray clause stands in

parallel to the conjugated “conclude” of the gesture of conclusion. It should be noted that these parallels follow one after another in rather strict order:

the record of [this people] [being kept] on [the other plates of Nephi]

- **[conclude] [this record]**

The strictness of these parallels suggests that they are to be read as intentional.

All of these parallels are contrastive in nature. Jacob seems intent on distinguishing himself, an individual prophet, from the undifferentiated mass of individuals making up “this people.” His gesture of conclusion (“I conclude”), moreover, stands in contrast to the ongoing work of keeping a national chronicle (“being kept”). And this, finally, underscores the essential difference between “this record,” Jacob’s and Nephi’s small plates with their overarching theological programs,<sup>52</sup> and “the other plates of Nephi,” the ever-proliferating annals of the Nephite people.<sup>53</sup> All these details make clear the close relationship between Jacob’s gesture of conclusion and the only-apparently-stray clause that immediately precedes it. Moreover, the nature of the overarching contrast between the individual prophet who concludes his programmatic record and the non-individualized people who keep their chronicle in an ongoing fashion marks the relevance of the still-earlier reference to Jacob’s approaching death. Individuals grow old and face death, but peoples do not (or do so only seldom, and then under extreme circumstances).<sup>54</sup> The contrastive parallels between the second and third clauses of the verse rest on the foundation of the death-announcement of the first clause of the verse.

Structural analysis of the opening lines of Jacob 7:26 exhibits remarkable explanatory power. What at first reads as sloppy and directionless ultimately reveals itself as complex and even sophisticated.<sup>55</sup> There is much already in the opening lines of Jacob 7:26 that can be clarified greatly by paying close attention to structure. This is all the truer when attention turns from Jacob’s gesture of conclusion to the clarifying saying that makes up the largest and most detailed part of the verse—the part of the verse to which we will give focused theological attention throughout the rest of this paper. I would like to turn to this clarifying saying now.

At the broadest level, it should be said that Jacob’s clarifying saying, meant to explain the possible disparity between his account and history itself, contains three simple parts: two distinct psychologically-fraught statements regarding time’s passing (first, “the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away, like as it were unto us a dream,” and second, “we did mourn out our days”), and one complex description of the Nephite worldview (“a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation in a wild wilderness, and hated of our brethren—which caused wars and contentions”). These are the basic parts of the saying. In terms of sequence, however, Jacob positions the description of the Nephite worldview between the two statements regarding time’s passing, using brief rhetorical gestures to mark transitions between parts:

[statement] The time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away, like as it were unto us a dream,

[transition] we being

[description] a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation in a wild wilderness, and hated of our brethren— which caused wars and contentions.

[transition] Wherefore,

[statement] we did mourn out our days.

This, then, provides the most basic structural organization of the saying. Much more, however, can and should be said about structure here.

First, it seems best to see Jacob's description of the Nephite worldview as dividing rather naturally into four parts: (1) "a lonesome and a solemn people," (2) "wanderers cast out from Jerusalem," (3) "born in tribulation in a wild wilderness," and (4) "hated of our brethren—which caused wars and contentions." A relatively clear logic organizes this fourfold sequence. Jacob follows (1) the basic character of the Nephite people of his day with (2) a word regarding their pre-history and (3) an explanation of their own beginnings, all this leading up to (4) their devastating ongoing condition: the unending conflict between Nephites and Lamanites. Jacob tells a kind of story here, that of a solemn people engaged in eternal warfare with their brothers in direct consequence of their having come into a world of conflict in exile. Jacob and his generation were born too late to see better days in Jerusalem, just as they were born too early to pass by the difficulties of travel and daily family conflict. The central description that lies at the heart of the clarifying saying of Jacob 7:26, then, provides what might be called the fourfold nature of Jacob's way of being, as well as that of his people—those of his peculiar generation.

This first further elaboration of the structure of Jacob's clarifying saying opens immediately onto a second. The transitional markers noted above clearly indicate a very specific relationship between this quadruply traumatic core of Nephite being and the Nephite experience of time's passing, described in the opening and closing statements of the saying. The "we being" that marks the transition from the first statement to the description of the Nephite worldview clearly serves to indicate that the traumas listed in the latter underlie the psychologically complex experience indicated in the former. Time passed like a dream for the Nephites precisely because they were a lonesome and a solemn people, and so on. Similarly, the "wherefore" that marks the transition from the description of the Nephite worldview to the second statement regarding time's passing indicates that the same traumas underlie the psychologically troubled experience laid out at the verse's end. The Nephites mourned out their days precisely because they were a lonesome and a solemn people, and so on. Thus Jacob clearly wants his readers to understand that the traumas reported in the description at the saying's heart ultimately lay behind his people's psychologically-fraught experience of time's passing—which is described in two parallel statements.

We might, in light of these comments, put a finer point or two on the overarching structure of Jacob's clarifying saying. The fourfold nature of Nephite trauma can be more fully articulated by lining up the several clauses of the description as sequential statements. Further, the transition markers might be presented as indicating the causal relationship between the traumatic condition of the Nephites of Jacob's generation and their psychologically complicated experience of time's passing, presented in two distinct statements. Further, the parallel presentation of those two statements might be productively marked. In all, then, the structure of Jacob 7:26 is as follows:

The time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away, like as it were unto us a dream,

we being

*causal relation*

*parallel statements regarding the Nephite experience of time's passing*

a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation in a wild wilderness,

and hated of our brethren—which caused wars and contentions.

*causal relation*

Wherefore,

we did mourn out our days.

This visual representation brings out much more of the complexity of Jacob's saying.

Now, so much structural investigation demands that an answer be given to a question too seldom asked (or too non-committedly asked) when attention focuses on structure: *What light do these structural features of Jacob's clarifying saying shed on its meaning?* Because the structure outlined above exhibits at least loosely chiasmic features, we must avoid the temptation to provide this question with what has become among Latter-day Saints a too-ready answer, an answer based on a rather popular understanding of chiasmic structure. One too readily claims that every chiasm privileges whatever lies at its center as somehow focal, the whole point of the use of structure. But examples abound of chiasms where the point of utilizing the textual structure seems to be otherwise: in some cases to emphasize a certain mirroring or intertwining of ideas (a good example is Isaiah 5:7: "for the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant"); in other cases to set up boundaries within a textual unit (as in the chiasmic framing of Alma 36, according to a reading I have defended elsewhere);<sup>56</sup> in still other cases to highlight the formal or even ritual flavor of what is said (for instance, in Nephi's oath to Zoram in 1 Nephi 4:32: "if he would hearken unto my words, as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life"); and in yet still other cases to trace a transformation or inversion of things (as in the common scriptural formula, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first"). If there is in fact reason to stress the loosely chiasmic structure of Jacob's clarifying saying—and this remains unsure—it has to be asked which of these purposes might underlie the structural features of the text.

It seems to me relatively clear that Jacob's way of structuring his clarifying saying has little to do with emphasizing or otherwise privileging what lies at its structural heart. The point of the saying in the first place is to help explain the existence of any possible discrepancy between actual history and what Jacob reports of history in his record. And this he accomplishes primarily in the opening and closing statements of the clarifying saying, not in the structurally central description of the Nephite worldview.

The context privileges Jacob's attempts at identifying the Nephites' psychological condition, not his identification of that condition's underlying cause. For this reason, it seems to me that the chief purpose for Jacob's structuring of his clarifying saying in a loosely chiasmic fashion is to trace a transformation or an inversion of sorts. I take it that the point is to see how the dream-simile of the saying's opening statement, after a careful rehearsal of the actual traumas underlying the Nephites' psychological condition, gives way to a more straightforward description of the Nephite experience of time's passing in terms of mourning. Jacob's saying, it seems to me, works its way from an approximate account of the symptoms to a more staid diagnosis of the actual condition of the Nephites.

A glance back at the fuller visual presentation of the structure of Jacob's saying might help to confirm this conclusion. Even as the fully articulated structure underscores the parallel nature of the opening and closing statements regarding the experience of time's passing, it marks an important lack of balance between them. The opening statement is longer and more complex. It twice attempts to state the Nephites' experience of time's passing, in subtly but significantly different ways ("the time passed away with us," and "our lives passed away"). One

cannot help but wonder whether Jacob is unsatisfied with his first attempt at describing the experience, but then also whether he ends up just as unsatisfied with his second attempt immediately thereafter. He goes on, of course, to compare this inadequately articulated experience to a dream-state, but he inserts between the appropriate preposition (“like”) and that to which he compares the experience (“a dream”) two hesitating qualifications of the simile: “as it were” and “unto us.” With the first of these, Jacob weakens the simile, marking its artificial character.

With the second, he subjectifies the simile, limiting its force to those undergoing the experience. All this complexity stands in stark contrast to the unapologetic “we did mourn out our days” that closes the verse. And the consequent imbalance of sorts between the opening and closing statements of the clarifying saying seems to me to highlight the fact that the structure marks the transformation of a hesitant and merely provisional attempt at clarification in the opening statement into a confident and conclusive diagnosis in the closing statement.

With this final point regarding structure, it is perhaps possible at last to leave these merely preliminary considerations to one side and turn to philosophical or theological reflection on Jacob’s clarifying saying. In the course of the saying, Jacob traces a shift from a comparison of the Nephite experience of time with having a dream to a straightforward equation of the Nephite experience of time with mourning. Perhaps the whole thing can be encapsulated in a formula of sorts: *From dreams to mourning, by way of an articulation of experienced trauma*. In the following sections, it is this summary formula, made visible thanks to close structural analysis, that will guide the following reflections above all.

## 2. On Matters Psychological

Interestingly, the formula of sorts with which I have concluded the above structural considerations describes not only the flow of Jacob’s clarifying saying in Jacob 7:26, but also the career of the twentieth century’s most influential (as well as most notorious) psychologist: Sigmund Freud. Freud’s revolution in psychotherapy began in earnest when, in 1900, he announced his discovery that the analysis of dreams provided the key to discovering the unconscious.<sup>57</sup> The project only came to real maturity, however, beginning in 1917, when Freud finally undertook to outline what he called his metapsychology, taking his orientation at that point in his career from the experience of mourning.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, what drove his work on the “talking cure” was of course, from start to finish, his careful attention to what people experiencing psychological suffering had to say about their traumatic experiences. *From dreams to mourning, by way of an articulation of experienced trauma*. Jacob’s attempt at diagnosing his own and his people’s condition follows, peculiarly, Freud’s attempt at fixing the nature of psychoanalysis.

Of course, these parallels only go so far. Nonetheless, I would like to take them as a basic motivation for using Freud’s thought to clarify at least some of the stakes of Jacob’s references to dreams and mourning. I want to be clear, however, that I do not do so uncritically. There have been a few attempts to critique Freud from a specifically Mormon perspective, and I take these attempts seriously.<sup>59</sup> And psychologists in the English-speaking world have, of course, been less and less inclined to take Freud’s work seriously in recent decades, something that cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the development of scientific distaste for Freud, along with attempts at critique from a specifically Mormon perspective, often (and perhaps understandably) fail to recognize the richness of Freud’s thought, allowing certain definitely problematic aspects of his work to get in the way of its more fruitful aspects—aspects that I think speak in particularly poignant ways to Mormon theology.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps if one reads Freud as a philosopher or as a thinker rather than as a scientist in the strict sense of the word, it is possible to allow his attempts at clarifying things like trauma, dreams, and mourning to inform careful reflection. It is as a philosopher that I use his work here, aware of both the danger and the promise of his thought.

To begin to assess what Jacob says about both dreams and mourning, let me first highlight again the contrast between the respective ways he refers to them. First he speaks of dreams, but only in a simile, which he further doubly qualifies. Jacob refers to dreams only to help his readers understand something that is *not* actually a dream, something that is only dream-*like*. And his qualifications of the simile (“as it were,” “unto us”) seem meant to underline the fact that the simile *is* just a simile. Jacob wishes his readers to understand something of the way he and his people experienced the passing of time, but he wishes just as much that his readers recognize that his illustrative images are *only* images. All this contrasts sharply with the way Jacob subsequently talks about mourning. There he leaves off similes for direct description. He and his people actually *did* mourn out their days. They *really* experienced time in terms of mourning. In this description, Jacob employs no image to help his readers grasp what he means to convey; he assumes they can understand the brute fact he reports to them.

The contrast here works because dreaming and mourning share certain features, even as they differ in important respects.<sup>61</sup> Their differences are, of course, much more obvious than their similarities.

Dreams occur while we sleep, when our conscious awareness of the world retreats and our unconscious desires make themselves manifest. The work of mourning, on the other hand, unfolds while we remain conscious—in fact, all *too* conscious, due to the depth of our loss; in mourning we are entirely aware of our desires, the intensity of which often keeps us awake at night. And this is only the first of several obvious differences. We experience mourning in a focused way, our loss providing everything in life with a kind of focal point, deeply painful. But we experience dreams as profoundly disjointed and non-linear, moving by metaphorical leaps and metonymical bounds.<sup>62</sup> Where mourning seldom gives us any reprieve from the mental effort it requires, keeping us focused on what has slipped from our grasp, dreams present us with uncanny associations and comforting discontinuities—or even abruptly conclude, allowing us to wake up when they become too horrific. Other obvious differences might be named too. It certainly must be said that mourning is a difficult and painful process, even if it eventually results in healing. Dreams, however, while they might at times take the shape of nightmares, are often enough pleasurable experiences, or at least entirely neutral, letting us forget most of them. Further, we might note that mourning usually comes to an end, while we go on dreaming throughout our lives.

All of these differences are important, but the network they form is woven also of crucial similarities. For instance, despite the obvious disjointedness of dreams, which seems to distance them absolutely from the focused experience of mourning, it must ultimately be said that a disguised coherence underpins every dream. All of a dream's metaphoric disruptions and metonymic concatenations organize themselves into a network whose center of gravity is some kind of trauma. Whether as simple and quotidian as a passing desire for something one lacks, or whether as complex and deep as horrified fascination with self-destruction, *some* kind of trauma serves as the principle—both causal and organizational—of every dream.<sup>63</sup> And it is this center of gravity in every experience of dreaming that links dreams to mourning. As dreams organize a whole network of (imagistic) associations around some kind of trauma, ostensibly in an attempt to help us cope with our frustrated or forbidden or frightening desires, the work of mourning undertakes to revise the network of our conscious associations around the experience of deep loss. Confronted with the frustration of intense desires to be with a loved one, working through the forbidden anger we feel toward the one who has abandoned us, and coming to recognize the frightening fragility of life as we know it, we mourn.<sup>64</sup> In essence, the work of dreaming is like the work of mourning because, in each case, we find ourselves maneuvering a landscape organized around what seems impossible to speak about—or, at least, what seems impossible to speak about without somehow committing an act of sacrilege. In dreaming as in mourning, we work out our relationship to what remains inaccessible to us.

Despite important differences in outward appearance, then, dreams and mourning share much that is essential. Jacob can make sense for his readers of his people's response to their traumatic circumstances in terms either of dreams or of mourning—although, as we have seen, it is quite clear that he means to claim that his people actually mourned, while their experience was only like dreaming.

That Jacob provides his readers with *both* the simile *and* the direct description, asking them to understand his people's experience in terms of *both* dreaming *and* mourning, is important, because it draws attention to the shared underlying structure of the two sorts of experience. Were Jacob only to speak of mourning, readers might too easily take him to mean just that his people grumbled about their less-than-perfect circumstances. But because he couples mourning with dreams, it becomes clear that his talk of mourning indeed bears psychological significance. His and his people's time was occupied by actual mourning, by the slow process of transformation that aims at eventually stabilizing one's affairs despite deep loss. For this reason, their experience was not *actually* that of dreaming, though it was apparently very much *like* dreaming.

Implicit in the preceding few paragraphs is what seems to be the major motivation for Jacob's nonetheless drawing a contrast between dreaming and mourning in attempting to describe his generation's experience. The very first point of difference we drew above between the two sorts of experience concerns the fact that dreaming is unconscious while mourning is conscious. This distinction, presumably, plays a particularly important role in the shift from mere simile to direct description in the clarifying saying of Jacob 7:26. Dreaming is, so to speak, automatic, something that happens on its own despite our conscious intentions. We might wish for dreamless sleep, but we have no guarantee that our wish will be granted. And after being rudely awakened, we might wish to return to a pleasant dream, but we are as likely as not to move on to other dreams when we return to sleep. Mourning is a different affair entirely, however. Although we seldom have control over the events that cause or motivate our mourning, the work of mourning unfolds in anything but an automatic or unconscious way. Not only are we only too aware of our desires and our consequent pain, but we work our way toward regained normalcy only by working consciously and intentionally on seeing the world in a new way. To say that the Nephite experience during Jacob's generation was only like dreaming but was actually a matter of mourning is, it would seem, to indicate that they had to focus conscious effort on grappling with what they experienced as deep loss.

Even as we make this major point of contrast explicit, however, we should note yet another feature of Jacob's clarifying saying that brings his talk of dreams and his talk of mourning into close continuity— another feature of the saying, that is, that seems to indicate why Jacob should wish to claim that his people's mourning was *like* dreaming and therefore was *unlike* mourning to some extent. The final point of difference we drew above between the two sorts of experience concerns the fact that mourning is a work that, generally speaking, comes to a kind of resolution. Mourning comes to an end when, although we remain fully aware of our loss, we have found a way of being oriented by it or to it that allows us to go on. Something like normalcy returns. Dreams, however, as products of the incorrigibly inconsistent unconscious, do not so much end as they are interrupted, always in the middle of things. We come back from our dreams to the normal world, but we do so only by leaving the world of our dreams behind. And the world of our dreams *never* achieves normalcy. Our unconscious states never work all the way through our traumas.

This marks a further point of contrast between dreams and mourning. And yet it must be said that Jacob describes his people's mourning in the closing statement of his clarifying saying in language suggestive of dreams. When he says that he and his people "did mourn out [their] days," he clearly indicates that his people's mourning never came to an end.<sup>65</sup> And this is quite strange. Although it is certainly possible for someone never to work all the way through the stages of mourning, and so never to achieve normalcy again, such cases are exceptional; they are,



precisely, cases that are out of the ordinary. The sort of deep loss that leads to mourning certainly traumatizes, but it does not usually traumatize so deeply that it cannot be overcome. Typically speaking, one *does not* mourn out one's days. One mourns for a time, works at reconfiguring one's world for a time, and then one lives on.<sup>66</sup> Jacob, however, seems clearly to say that his people *never ceased to mourn*. They worked, quite consciously it seems, at giving a new shape to their world, a new shape that would allow them to return to normalcy and routine. They worked, that is, at the possibility of being at last at their ease. But, apparently, they failed. They failed ever to live on, to breathe easily, to be consoled, to experience equilibrium. It would seem that their loss was too deep to allow them—or at least those of Jacob's generation—ever to rest.

At this point, then, it becomes necessary to ask exactly what it was that Jacob and his people lost. What was it that caused perpetual, unceasing mourning, preventing their coming to a point of rest or of normalcy? Actually, Jacob states the answer to this question quite straightforwardly in the course of his fourfold description of the traumatic experience that underlay his and his people's dream-like mourning. What Jacob and his people lost was *Jerusalem*. In fact, he informs us that he and his people had a particularly odd relationship to that loss, indicated by the essential incompatibility between two things Jacob says about his people's relationship to Jerusalem. In the course of his fourfold description of Nephite trauma, he says both that they were "born . . . in a wild wilderness" and that they were "cast out from Jerusalem." The combination of these two claims, of course, makes no sense. If one has been cast out of the city of her nativity, then she must have been born there—not in "a wild wilderness." Or if she has been born elsewhere and in fact has never been to the city in question, it makes little sense to say that she has been "cast out" from it. Yet Jacob combines these two incommensurable experiences into one traumatic whole, which underlies the Nephite psychological condition. His generation was at once born at a distance from Jerusalem, and yet they were always poignantly aware of their being in a kind of exile. It was thus that they "did mourn out [their] days."

I will come back to the significance of Jerusalem as the focus of Nephite loss in the final section of this paper. For the moment, it is enough just to recognize from Jacob's paradoxical description of the Nephite experience that they underwent a rather unique sort of mourning. Their mourning was not of the sort that comes to an end. Jacob and his people mourned a constitutive, irreparable loss. Helpfully, Freud has a name for this condition, or for something quite like it—a venerable name drawn, in fact, from Christian theology: *melancholia*.<sup>67</sup> Actually, the condition Jacob describes differs in at least one important respect from what Freud calls melancholia, since the latter emphasizes the unconscious nature of the condition as framed by psychoanalytic practice, while Jacob, with his talk of mourning, emphasizes the conscious nature of his people's experience. Perhaps precisely for this reason, it might be useful to examine melancholia from the perspective of one of Freud's more insightful critics: Giorgio Agamben. At its real heart, Agamben explains, "melancholy would be not so much the regressive reaction to the loss of the love object [described by Freud] as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost." The melancholic in effect "stages a simulation where what cannot be lost because it has never been possessed [nevertheless] *appears* as lost."<sup>68</sup> Put in other words, there lies at the heart of the melancholic experience a paradoxical transformation of the merely *inaccessible* into the actually *lost*. And this seems to me a remarkably apt characterization of the situation Jacob describes. Although he and his people had never actually seen Jerusalem, they related to it as if it had nonetheless once been theirs; they experienced it as constitutively, irreparably lost.

Not only does Agamben's slight-but-significant corrective to Freud's conception of melancholia point in the direction of Jacob 7:26, it also aims to sum up a longstanding Christian theological tradition. Agamben is explicit about the fact that the Christian tradition oddly and perhaps ironically lies behind Freud's attempt to think about

melancholia. Even more usefully, though, Agamben—unlike Freud—draws from that tradition to distinguish between two sorts of melancholy. There is on the one hand what early Christian thinkers called *tristitia mortifera*, deadly sadness, a kind of sickness unto death.<sup>69</sup> And there is on the other hand what early Christian thinkers called *tristitia salutifera*, saving sadness, akin in certain ways to what Latter-day Saints often call godly sorrow.<sup>70</sup> Focusing on the latter of these two sorts of melancholy, Agamben speaks of an “obscure wisdom according to which hope has been given only for the hopeless”—a formula very much resonant with my own recent attempt to lay out a Mormon theology of hope.<sup>71</sup> Like Sarah and Abraham, confronted with the genuinely objective impossibility of a child, but precisely *therefore* free to hope for a child from the God who covenants to undermine the objective order of the world, it is “they that mourn” whom Jesus calls “blessed,” because “they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).<sup>72</sup> Agamben rightly says of melancholic or ceaseless mourning, “the greatest disgrace is never to have had it.”<sup>73</sup> Or perhaps it would be most relevant to cite in this connection a formula Jacob first heard falling from the lips of his dying father, given in the form of a final blessing on the melancholic child: “In thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, . . . [but] thou knowest the greatness of God, and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2). From quite early in his life, Jacob knew of the possibility of a kind of *consecrated melancholy*.

How is one to distinguish between the two sorts of melancholy identified by the Christian tradition—between a sort of interminable mourning that results in the death of the soul and a sort of interminable mourning that somehow deserves commendation? What makes Joseph Smith’s “weeping for Zion” a good thing (D&C 21:8) and what Mormon calls “the sorrowing of the damned” a clearly bad thing (Mormon 2:13)? What differentiates the wandering “pilgrims” of Hebrews 11:13 from those condemned for having “loved to wander” in Jeremiah 14:10? Why should we not limit ourselves to speaking of the joy of the saints and the misery of the rebellious, avoiding the complexity implied by the fact that even the redeemed experience “sorrow . . . for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 28:9)—not to mention the even starker complexity implied by Enoch’s vision of “the God of heaven” who “looked upon the residue of the people, and . . . wept” (Moses 7:28)? How do we know whether our hearts broken because we see that we cannot reach on our own what we nonetheless rightly desire, and when are our hearts broken because we see the impossibility of having what we should not but cannot help but desire?

There are, I suspect, dozens of good and productive answers to these questions. Leaving their enumeration for another occasion, however, I wish to focus in on just one possible answer—the one implied by Jacob’s exclusive focus on what he and his people experienced as definitively lost: *Jerusalem*. It is well and good to speak of consecrated dream-like mourning, but what lies behind that consecrated dream-like mourning for Jacob is something quite specific. For the remainder of this theological investigation, I mean to ask what we might learn by turning our attention to what Jacob saw as forever lost.

### 3. Next Year in Zion

Everything we have said to this point makes clear that there are at least some reasons to think that Jacob’s sort of melancholy, famously on display in Jacob 7:26, is redemptive rather than lamentable. It is possible and even right to speak of consecrated melancholy, a sort of saving sadness or a mourning that aligns with God’s purposes. In Jacob’s own words, such mourning assumes the right shape when it takes as its object or its focus Jerusalem’s loss, the fact that Zion has not as yet been redeemed or rebuilt. And so, it seems, to go any farther in understanding what it might mean to take Jacob’s mournful spirit as a guiding spirit, it will be necessary to investigate the basic meaning of his and his people’s relationship to the city of Jerusalem, to the city they had never seen but nonetheless experienced as definitively lost. To do so—that is, to seek evidence concerning Jacob’s and his people’s

understandings of Jerusalem—we can have recourse only to Jacob’s words, since he is the only person from his unique generation whose words appear in the Book of Mormon. It will be necessary, then, to proceed with a survey of what Jacob has to say about the city whose inaccessibility he mourned all his life.

References to Jerusalem in the Book of Jacob are few. It is perhaps telling, nonetheless, that Jacob opens his record by situating its beginnings at the time when “fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem” (Jacob 1:1).<sup>74</sup> Even before Nephi’s death, but also and just as surely during the years following, it seems that the Nephites measured time itself in terms of Jerusalem’s loss. That is certainly significant, but it should be noted that Jacob’s formula does not, strictly speaking, refer to Jerusalem’s loss. Rather, it speaks of the time that Lehi *left* Jerusalem, the family abandoning the city rather than the city exiling the family. Despite the nostalgic tone of Jacob 7:26, Jacob 1:1 suggests something of Nephite disgust for the city left behind. And what follows throughout the Book of Jacob confirms this sense of antipathy for the city whose loss Jacob’s final words lament so touchingly. In Jacob 4, for instance, Jacob speaks with a kind of contempt for the people of the city his family had left behind before his birth: “Behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand” (Jacob 4:14). Jacob’s distaste, perhaps personal, for Jerusalem and its people is fully on display here.

Even more striking is the complex treatment of Jerusalem to be found in Jacob 2–3. There Jacob lays out less apparently personal (and therefore much more compelling) reasons for his family’s having been directed to leave Jerusalem. In the course of a sermon dedicated to berating the Nephites for nascent wickedness among them—wickedness displayed most egregiously in problematic conceptions of gender relations<sup>75</sup>—Jacob quotes the Lord as saying the following:

I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem by the power of mine arm that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. . . . I the Lord have seen the sorrow and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem—yea, and in all the lands of my people—because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me. (Jacob 2:25, 31–32.)

Here again the almost nostalgic feel of Jacob 7:26 is missing. Jerusalem is less something lost that should therefore be mourned than the very seat of wickedness, something that must be left behind to pursue true righteousness. In the place of Nephites mourning for a lost city, one finds in this text “the mourning of the daughters . . . of Jerusalem,” the unceasing sorrow of women who have lost confidence in “their husbands.” When Jacob confronts his people and their own wickedness, he sees Jerusalem primarily as the city of “David and Solomon,” whose examples he does not hesitate to call “abominable” (Jacob 2:24).

In none of these texts from earlier in the Book of Jacob does one find talk of the Lehtes being “cast out” from Jerusalem, as in Jacob 7. Instead, in these earlier texts, the Lehtes are “led out” of the abominable city—or, as in the time-measurement of the book’s opening verse, they simply “left” the city as they sought their own promised land. A holistic view of the Book of Jacob thus seems to complicate the deep sense of loss expressed at the book’s conclusion. From the references reviewed here, it seems unlikely that what is *really* at issue in Jacob’s mournful final words in Jacob 7:26 is just the fact that the Lehte peoples are no longer acquainted with Jerusalem. There is, it seems, something more complex at work in Jacob’s lament concerning his people’s being “wanderers cast out from Jerusalem.” The key to making better sense of this lies, I think, in a lengthy, well-known sermon delivered by Jacob but not included in his own book; it appears, rather, in 2 Nephi 6–10, gathered into the complex project of

Nephi's written record.<sup>76</sup> To get to the heart of what interests Jacob when it comes to Jerusalem and its fate, it is necessary to turn from the Book of Jacob to this sermon, even if its meaning has been channeled by Nephi's editorial interests.

The first reference to Jerusalem in the sermon of 2 Nephi 6–10 comes at the outset of a kind of commentary on a passage from Isaiah (specifically, Isaiah 49:22–23), a passage assigned to Jacob by Nephi as the text for his preaching. Describing the first of a series of events in Judah's history that Jacob understands to be relevant to the interpretation of the Isaiah text, he says: "The Lord hath shewn me that they which were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive" (2 Nephi 6:8). Two points seem especially salient here. First, Jacob cites as his source for this information regarding Jerusalem and its inhabitants a *vision*. Second, Jacob claims that the vision in question has given him to witness *Jerusalem's fall*, its loss in a much deeper sense than any we have mentioned to this point, which results in an exile of world-historical significance. Observant Jews to this day mourn *this* loss and experience *this* exile, symbolized most poignantly in the glass crushed at Jewish wedding ceremonies in memory of the destruction of Solomon's temple. As the psalmist sings of Jerusalem's destruction at Babylon's hands: "If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137:6).

Yet Jacob's visionary witness of Jerusalem's fall only sets up his interpretation of Isaiah, and he focuses that interpretation on subsequent events in Jewish history. Significantly, the next three of Jacob's references to Jerusalem come in a lengthy quotation (of Isaiah 50:1–52:2), which he uses to provide context for the briefer Isaiah passage (Isaiah 49:22–23) on which he means to comment in his sermon. The first of these Isaianic references to Jerusalem echoes Jacob's own talk of destruction and exile, even as it begins to point beyond it: "Awake! Awake!" Isaiah says to Judah. "Stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury!" (2 Nephi 8:17, quoting Isaiah 52:17). The other two references to Jerusalem come as a pair a few verses later in a reprise of these heartening words: "Awake! Awake! Put on thy strength, O Zion! Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean! Shake thyself from the dust! Arise, sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" (2 Nephi 8:24–25). Beyond loss and exile, Jacob sees the promise of Jerusalem's redemption. But of course, he sees such redemption only at a distance, envisioned as occurring at a time thousands of years in the future. And so there is much to mourn in the meanwhile.

Perhaps, then, this begins to explain Jacob's mourning. And yet there is more Jacob has to say in his sermon regarding Jerusalem. After concluding his long quotation from Isaiah and immediately before pursuing a long theological tangent regarding the nature of resurrection, Jacob refers to another event associated with Jerusalem that might give him reason to mourn. "In the body [God] shall shew himself unto they at Jerusalem, from whence we came," he explains (2 Nephi 9:5). The bad news he does not give in full until further along, however. It comes with these words: "Because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified. Wherefore, because of their iniquities, destructions, famines, pestilences, and bloodsheds shall come upon them. And they which shall not be destroyed shall be scattered among all nations" (2 Nephi 10:5–6). Unfortunately (and not without a style of language that makes twenty-first-century readers uncomfortable), Jacob sees in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ a major feature of Jerusalem's sacred history.<sup>77</sup> In *that* he finds reason to mourn as well. The alienation of Israel from their would-be deliverer causes him—as he explains later in his own book—a great deal of anxiety, what he even calls "overanxiety" (Jacob 4:18). It may be of real significance that such language is psychologically freighted like the language of Jacob 7:26.

Now, what is to be gathered from all these Jacobite references to Jerusalem's sad history? At the very least, it is necessary to countenance the possibility that what worried Jacob and his people was less *their own* distance from Jerusalem than the way their distance from Jerusalem *symbolized the city's loss in a much larger historical sense*. The exile of sorts experienced by Jacob's people was a constant reminder of the Exile they had barely missed by leaving Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign—the Exile that God nonetheless showed them in vision. At the very time Lehi and his family left Jerusalem for the New World, those whom they left behind left Jerusalem for lowly exile in Babylon. And of course *that* Exile was itself a symbol of a much larger history, in which Judah has been consistently homeless and traumatized, waiting for messianic redemption.<sup>78</sup> This the Nephite prophets of the first generation saw clearly in their visionary experiences, and they thereby knew all too keenly that redemption for Jerusalem and the covenant people lay only in an inaccessible future, too far off to find any real joy in it.<sup>79</sup> The best among Jacob's people apparently mourned out their days because they were attuned to the Abrahamic in the Christian gospel, because they saw that even the Messiah's arrival could only *start* the process of redeeming Israel, as well as the process of Israel's associated redemption of the world.<sup>80</sup> Fulfillment would be waiting a very long time.

There is a key theological term central to the story of Jacob's encounter with Sherem that is relevant to all this talk of the covenant and its delayed fulfillment, although the term hardly appears relevant at first sight. As the encounter with Sherem unfolds, Jacob eventually testifies that his knowledge was rooted in "the power of the Holy Ghost" (Jacob 7:12), and Sherem responds by asking for a sign executed by that same power (see Jacob 7:13). Close reading of the small plates suggests that these references to "the power of the Holy Ghost" have a quite specific meaning. The phrase appears in Nephi's writings in very strategic places and with highly specific associations. Although Latter-day Saints are accustomed to conflating the power of the Holy Ghost with the witness of the Spirit of God, Nephi—and presumably therefore Jacob as well—seems to have something narrower in mind when using these words, and that something has everything to do with Jerusalem and the Abrahamic covenant.

According to Nephi, the power of the Holy Ghost is specifically that by which one can "see and hear and know" of Israel's history. He effectively promises his readers that *everyone* can have an apocalyptic vision of the world's Abrahamic history so long as they "diligently seek" it. As he says, "the mysteries of God shall be unfolded to them by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:17). To deny this, according to Nephi, is to deny the Lord's "one eternal round" (1 Nephi 10:19), to deny that he is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (1 Nephi 10:18), working at one and the same massive historical project. The power of the Holy Ghost is thus not only the power by which Nephi *himself* witnesses in vision the whole of Israel's future; it is also a power relevant to the era in which the Book of Mormon would eventually circulate—that is, of course, *our own era*. In a vision of the "last days," Nephi says that "they which shall seek to bring forth [the Lord's] Zion at that day . . . shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 13:37). To be contrasted with such repentant people, according to Nephi, are those Christians who symptomatically fail to recognize that their "bible" came "from the Jews, [the Lord's] ancient covenant people" (2 Nephi 29:4). In exasperation, Nephi quotes the Lord:

And what thank they the Jews for the bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails and the labors and the pains of the Jews—and their diligence unto me—in bringing forth salvation unto the gentiles? O ye gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay, but ye have cursed them and have hated them and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads, for I the Lord hath not forgotten my people! (2 Nephi 29:4–5.)

While culturally-Christian Europe has hated and persecuted—and *massacred*—Jews, the power of the Holy Ghost, according to Nephi, has attempted to find its way into open hearts, seeking to restore a sense of the promises linked to a city now lost for thousands of years.

In closely related passages, Nephi excoriates the latter-day world, so deeply secular that even its Christians deny the power of the Holy Ghost. The symptom of this denial, Nephi says, is that they are “at ease in Zion,” crying, “All is well!” (2 Nephi 28:24–25). Failing to weep for Zion, failing to mourn out their days, they—if not *we*—ignore the very power by which one should be reminded of the Abrahamic underpinnings of the Christian gospel. Today, it would seem, the world is made up mostly of Sherems, skeptical of revelation or of any real power of the Holy Ghost. We satisfy ourselves that all is well in Zion—or, alternatively, that there is *much* to mourn in Zion while ignoring all things Abrahamic in favor of our own moral concerns, traditional or fashionable as the case may be. We continue to forget what God claims he cannot forget. And we thereby deny the very power that Jacob says lay behind his deepest theological and existential concerns. It would seem that it was always and only by that same power—the power of the Holy Ghost—that Jacob and his people mourned in a consecrated way.

To weep for Zion, or to mourn out our days as we think of Jerusalem’s loss—*this* is what, according to Jacob and Nephi, the power of the Holy Ghost would lead us to do. If they are right, then perhaps the woes they pronounced upon the last days are ones we should take most seriously. How many tears do we shed for the Zion envisaged in the Abrahamic covenant? Far too few. But perhaps, reading the small plates carefully, we might be led to shed a few more.

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## NOTES

43. Marilyn Arnold, “Unlocking the Sacred Text,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8.1 (1999): 52.

44. John S. Tanner, “Literary Reflections on Jacob and His Descendants,” in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1990), 267.

45. Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University 1988–1990*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1993), 1:409.

46. Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 267.

47. C. Terry Warner, “Jacob,” in *The Book of Mormon: “It Begins with a Family”* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 44.

48. Michael Hicks, *The Street-Legal Version of Mormon’s Book* (Provo, UT: Tame Olive Press, 2012), 105.

49. The passage is to be found in D&C 21:7–8: “For thus saith the Lord God: Him [Joseph Smith] have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard. Yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer; for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins, and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works.” For some helpful context regarding what “Zion” meant to the early Saints before the revelation concerning the actual building of a

New Jerusalem, see Kerry Muhlestein, “One Continuous Flow: Revelations Surrounding the ‘New Translation,’” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context, the 37th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2008), 40–65.

50. Throughout this essay, I use as a base text—but with my own punctuation—Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

51. Jacob shares with Moroni a sense of uncertainty when it comes to concluding his writings. Both seem to have concluded their respective contributions to the Nephite record three distinct times: Jacob at the end of Jacob 3, the end of Jacob 6, and the end of Jacob 7; and Moroni at the end of Mormon 9, the end of Ether 15, and the end of Moroni 10. It might be significant that both Jacob and Moroni write in a kind of supplementary fashion, very much in the shadow of a far more prolific and unquestionably primary author (respectively Nephi and Mormon). For an illuminating discussion of Moroni’s struggles to conclude his contribution to the Book of Mormon, see Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 248–67.

52. I have written extensively about the overarching theological program of Nephi’s and Jacob’s small plates. See Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 33–104.

53. Statements regarding the differences between the two Nephite records can be found in 1 Nephi 9:2–5 and 1 Nephi 19:1–5.

54. Jacob’s Nephites, of course, would eventually face extinction, at a point when they had grown “ripe,” as the text says (Helaman 13:14), but that time was in the distant future for Jacob—even if he had himself prophesied of it (see Jacob 3:3).

55. It seems to me possible to explain even the odd gerundive construction of the second clause’s “being kept” in light of these structural points. One most naturally takes such a construction to render the first of two clauses grammatically dependent on but explanatorily foundational for the second: “X being Y, Z must be the case.” The difficulty in Jacob’s farewell is, first, that the gerundive clause (“the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi”) reads as if it were dependent on some clause that is never stated and, second, that it seems to be in no way explanatorily foundational for the independent clause that follows it (“wherefore, I conclude this record”). The series of contrastive parallels already enumerated go some distance in alleviating these difficulties, but they do not seem to go far enough, since the rhetorical construction of the verse suggests a still-tighter connection. But the structural points highlighted above indicate the possibility of another interpretation. Annals and chronicles have no *one* keeper and no *identifiable* set of keepers (until the whole people have become fully extinct, anyway). Might it then be better to regard “being kept” not as a gerundive construction that marks the second clause as subordinate to the third (or to some other clause that never appears in the text), but rather as an oddly-but-meaningfully-constructed independent clause—one that deliberately removes the grammatical subject and then eliminates the verb’s indicative status by granting it instead an imperfect aspect (in the grammatical sense)?

56. See Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 2–7.

57. Freud put this point this way: “The interpretation of dreams is the *via regia* [the royal road] to a knowledge of the unconscious element in our psychic life.” A. A. Brill, ed., *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. A. A. Brill



(New York: Modern Library, 1995), 508.

58. The key paper marking this maturation in Freud's thought is Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers*, 5 vols., ed. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 4:152–70.

59. Most such attempts have been indirect, actually. Representative is the collection: Aaron P. Jackson, Lane Fischer, and Doris R. Dant, eds., *Turning Freud Upside Down: Gospel Perspectives on Psychotherapy's Fundamental Problems* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).

60. Although it comes with its own problems, the larger Lacanian attempt at rehabilitating Freud's work exemplifies the ability to extract the productive from the unproductive in Freud's extant writings. Perhaps more a propos, however, is the use of Freud by someone like Paul Ricoeur, who specifically investigates his relevance to philosophical reflection. See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). For a good introduction to the Lacanian project, see Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

61. The similarities between dreaming and mourning explicitly motivated Freud's investigation of the latter. See Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 152.

62. Freud used the technical terms "displacement" and "condensation" to describe the connections and disconnections that organize the experience of dreaming. Jacques Lacan has usefully shown that these two terms maps nicely onto the linguistic notions of metaphor and metonymy. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 412–41.

63. It is an open question whether the initially indiscernible coherence of a dream is a feature always already of the dream as originally and unconsciously experienced, or whether it is instead only a feature of the dream as reconstructed afterward and in a conscious state. This is, of course, an important distinction for the psychoanalyst, but it seems to me unnecessary to give it detailed attention here.

64. Freud's succinct description of the work of mourning is perhaps worth citing: "Each single one of the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-cathexed, and the detachment of the libido from it accomplished. . . . When the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again." Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 154. Another helpful description appears later in the same essay: "Reality passes its verdict—that the object no longer exists—upon each single one of the memories and hopes through which the libido was attached to the lost object, and the ego, confronted as it were with the decision whether it will share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of its narcissistic satisfactions in being alive to sever its attachment to the non-existent object." Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 166.

65. Time's passing shows up in Jacob's talk both of dreams and of mourning, but its formulation differs. Note that in the dream-simile, Jacob seems to struggle to articulate what he has in mind. He speaks first of "the time" that passed away, but then, before he introduces the dream-simile itself, he uses a different locution: "and also our lives passed away." The difference between "the time," abstract and in the singular, and "our lives," concrete and in the plural, is suggestive. Jacob seems at first unsure whether what passes should be regarded as something formal but accessible to all, or as something real but privately experienced. Whatever their differences, however, these two locutions share an important feature: objectivity. Both are sorts of things that can *pass away*. Jacob's formulation of time's passing in the statement that concludes his clarifying saying, however, operates in a non-objective way. In his direct description of the experience of mourning, Jacob seems to combine the dream-simile's two terms ("the



time” and “our days”) in a single term: “our days.” This term seems to indicate something that is shared like time in general and therefore irreducible to the privacy of a singular life, and yet that is unquestionably concrete and therefore irreducible to merely formal accessibility. Moreover, this conception of temporal experience makes time immanent to the work of mourning. It no longer passes one by, but rather is what one passes through in mourning. People “mourn out” their days. Despite these clear differences between the ways of talking about time in the opening and closing statements of Jacob’s clarifying saying, however, it seems perfectly clear that the processes described in each never come to an end. Nephite mourning is dream-like at least in the odd fact that it does not come to an end.

66. Freud notes that occasionally the “struggle” of mourning “can be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues.” Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 154.

67. See, again, Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia.” It may be significant that Jacob speaks of mourning rather than, strictly speaking, of melancholia. Freud emphasizes the strictly *unconscious* nature of melancholic suffering, but Jacob’s emphasis on mourning suggests the *conscious* nature of his and his people’s experience.

68. Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 20, italics added.

69. I borrow this last phrase from John 11:4, but also from Søren Kierkegaard’s book-length commentary on that passage. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 133–278.

70. This language comes, of course, from 2 Corinthians 7:10.

71. Agamben, *Stanzas*, 7.

72. The story of Sarah and Abraham I draw from Paul’s discussion in Romans 4. See my discussion of Paul’s analysis in Joseph M. Spencer, *For Zion: A Mormon Theology of Hope* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 15–23. 73. Agamben, *Stanzas*, 7. Also recommended is the treatment of melancholia in Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 132–38.

73.

74. Note that a similar formula appears in Nephi’s writings in 2 Nephi 5:28. The major difference between the two is, of course, that Jacob speaks of his father’s departure, while Nephi speaks of leaving Jerusalem in the plural first person.

75. For an analysis of these and related texts, see Joseph M. Spencer and Kimberly M. Berkey, “‘Great Cause to Mourn’: The Complexity of Gender and Race in the Book of Mormon,” forthcoming in *The Book of Mormon: Americanist Approaches*, ed. Jared Hickman and Elizabeth Fenton (Oxford University Press).

76. I have analyzed the structure of Nephi’s record, including the role played there by Jacob’s sermon, in Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 34–58. I might note that I would revise many aspects of that analysis today.

77. 2 Nephi 10:3–6 has often been labeled anti-Semitic in tone, especially because of the claim there that “the Jews” constitute “the more wicked part of the world,” a claim supposedly justified because “there is none other

nation on earth that would crucify their God.” Perhaps one could exonerate the Book of Mormon by noting that it goes on in the same passage to provide a further point of justification by using the language of the New Testament (such that its anti-Semitic spirit is borrowed rather than originary) or by insisting that the passage explicitly limits the “wicked” to those involved in “priestcrafts and iniquities” (presumably referring just to certain opportunistic leaders). But the point stands that Jacob’s language is troubling, and this should not be overlooked.

78. N. T. Wright has recently spelled out at length and quite beautifully the way the brief exile in Babylon took on larger historical meaning. See N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1:139–63.

79. On this point, see Spencer, *For Zion*, 71–78.

80. 3 Nephi 15:1–9 serves as a kind of commentary on the mismatch between the Messiah’s arrival and the longer history of Israel’s redemption. It is, in many ways, the interpretive key to the remainder of the Book of Mormon.