

The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon

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The memory of Israel's exodus from Egypt runs so deeply and clearly in the Book of Mormon that it has naturally drawn the attention of modern students. A major focus of recent studies has fallen on the departure of Lehi's family from Jerusalem as a replication, almost a mirror image—even in small details—of the flight of the Hebrews.¹ Such interest is reasonable because Nephite teachers themselves drew comparisons between Lehi's colony and their Israelite forebears. For instance, in an important speech, King Limhi referred to Israel's escape from Egypt and immediately drew a parallel to Lehi's departure from Jerusalem (*Mosiah* 7:19–20). Alma, in remarks addressed to his son Helaman, also consciously linked the Exodus from Egypt with Lehi's journey (*Alma* 36:28–29). More than once a prophet or teacher who wanted to prove to others that divine assistance could be relied on appealed to God's acts on behalf of the enslaved Israelites. This replication was the technique used by Nephi, for example, in his attempt to convince his recalcitrant brothers that God was leading their father, Lehi (1 *Ne.* 17:23–35). Furthermore, it was teachers in the Book of Mormon who first saw that the Exodus—the most wondrous of all God's acts on behalf of any people—was to be transcended by the grandeur of the Atonement.² In what follows, I propose to sketch out some of the primary colors of the wonderfully variegated vista of the Exodus that is portrayed in the Book of Mormon.

LEHI'S FAMILY REENACTS THE EXODUS

There is no clear statement indicating that the members of Lehi's immediate family understood that their departure from Jerusalem was a reenactment of Israel's flight to freedom. It is necessary, therefore, to sift through the evidence piece by piece.

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In the one passage that might form the base of an argument for conscious reenactment, 1 Nephi 4:1–3, the comparisons are rather narrowly drawn.³ Chapter four opens with Nephi's brief address of encouragement to his brothers, who were understandably discouraged after their second unsuccessful attempt to obtain the plates of brass from Laban. Declaring that the Lord could overcome the strength of Laban and any fifty of his men, Nephi mentioned Moses and the miraculous crossing of the sea that led to deliverance for the Israelites and to death for “the armies of Pharaoh” (4:2). Nephi then tried to shore up his brothers' resolve by pointing out that they had also been instructed by an angel, then added that “the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians” (4:3). With these words, Nephi made clear his belief that the Lord would assist the efforts of his brothers and himself just as He had aided their Israelite forebears. But that is as far as Nephi pursued the analogy.⁴ Even so, commentators from Hugh Nibley⁵ to Tate and Szink have drawn together an impressive array of evidence that points to Lehi's exodus as a replication of that of the Israelites. But it was not Nephi or Jacob, members of Lehi's immediate family, who made this connection explicitly; instead, it was others who came five hundred years later.⁶ In the writings of Nephi and Jacob, however, allusions plainly abound,⁷ and I believe the case for conscious reenactment can be made by examining the total picture in a way that accurately represents the views of the founding generation as well as the views of later Nephite writers.

We can list an extended series of similarities and echoes between the experiences of the Israelites and those of Lehi's family: the call to the responsible leader through a revelation accompanied by fire (Ex. 3:2–4; 1 Ne. 1:6); the despoiling of the Egyptians and the taking of Laban's possessions (Ex. 12:35–36; 1 Ne. 4:38; 2 Ne. 5:12, 14); deliverance on the other side of a water barrier (Ex. 14:22–30; 1 Ne. 17:8; 18:8–23, in which the driving wind surely is divinely directed); an extended period of wandering (Ex. 16:35; Num. 14:33; 1 Ne. 17:4); complaints along the way (Ex. 15:24; 16:2–3; 17:2–3, etc.; 1 Ne. 2:11–12; 5:2–3; 16:20, 25, 35–38; 17:17–22); outright rebellion (Num. 16:1–35; 25:1–9; 1 Ne. 7:6–16; 18:9–21); and a new law that was to govern the Lord's people (Ex. 20:2–17; 1 Ne. 2:20–24; etc.). Of course, other similarities and allusions could also be listed.

However, in order to demonstrate decisively whether members of Lehi's family were aware of the high drama of their own exodus, several factors must be taken into account. Nephi wrote his two books on the small plates apparently within a fixed period of his life, some thirty years after departing from Jerusalem (2 Ne. 5:28–32).

As a result, the full account of 1 and 2 Nephi must be seen holistically, Nephi having benefited from many years of reflection and from writing in his other, more detailed account of the same incidents (2 Ne. 5:29, 33). Considering Nephi's knowledge as he wrote the narrative brings us to a tricky issue: was there a gradual or a sudden dawning in Nephi's consciousness that, in Tate's words, he and "his own family [would] replicate the Exodus?"⁸ We do find constant reminders of the Exodus throughout Nephi's narrative, both by direct reference, as Tate and Szink have shown, and through language and description that are at home in the biblical account.⁹ Nevertheless, since we possess no undeniably explicit statement from Nephi—or from Jacob his brother, for that matter—but do possess a substantial number of allusions and quotations connected to the exodus account, the case must be made cumulatively.

NEPHITE BONDAGE AND THE EXODUS

The exodus pattern occurs also in the account of the Nephite colony that left Zarahemla under the leadership of a man named Zeniff (Mosiah 7–24). The avowed purpose of the colonists was to return to the land of Nephi, where Nephite civilization had grown up, in order "to go up to possess the land" (Mosiah 9:3).¹⁰ In this account we read of the subsequent escape and return to Zarahemla of two different groups of colonists. One consisted of the people who followed Alma. They fled from the armies of King Noah (Mosiah 18:31–35; 23:1–5, 19) and later from Lamanite captors.¹¹ The second group was led by King Noah's son Limhi, who, with the aid of sixteen warriors from Zarahemla, also eluded their Lamanite overlords (Mosiah 22:1–13).¹² In each case, the text makes it clear that the Lord orchestrated events and maneuvered people in the period leading up to deliverance from bondage.¹³

This is precisely the way events in the Book of Exodus are to be read.¹⁴ For example, the Hebrew slaves in Egypt quickly learned that Pharaoh and his officers could not be trusted to maintain long-standing agreements.¹⁵ The Nephite colonists similarly viewed themselves as victims of capricious overlords. Limhi explicitly compares the Nephites to the captive Israelites in his impassioned speech at the temple in the city of Lehi-Nephi where he rehearses what God has done for His two peoples in the past, referring first to the events of the Exodus from Egypt and then to the events of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem:

Lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God, in that God who was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and also, that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and

caused that they should walk through the Red Sea on dry ground, and fed them with manna that they might not perish in the wilderness; and many more things did he do for them. And again, that same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now.¹⁶

Turning next to the situation of his own people, Limhi notes that the Lamanite king had entered into an agreement with his own grandfather “for the sole purpose of bringing this people into subjection or into bondage” (Mosiah 7:22). Limhi clearly saw the parallels between the difficulties that the people of his colony faced in their bondage and those that both the earlier Israelites and the family of Lehi had faced. Of course Limhi knew the reason for the suffering of his people. He laid it squarely at the feet of his father and the earlier generation’s rejection of the word of the Lord brought by the prophet Abinadi (Mosiah 7:25–28).¹⁷ Even so, King Limhi was determined to escape, and he was given hope by the successes of his forebears (Mosiah 7:33).

Several similarities between the Israelite exodus and that of the two Nephite colonies are immediately obvious. In all instances the captives escaped into the wilderness with flocks and herds (Ex. 12:32, 38; Mosiah 22:10–11; 23:1; 24:18). Escaping with their livestock was no small matter, for according to David Daube, taking one’s possessions was one of the rights of a slave when freed.¹⁸ In addition, according to Psalm 105:37, there was not a feeble person among the departing Hebrew slaves, a clear indication of God’s care and protective guidance.¹⁹ The same is plainly implied about the flight of everyone in the two Nephite groups. Furthermore, the Lord softened the hearts of those who stood in the way of the captives’ departure, and the Lamanite overseers and guards treated their captives more gently and kindly (Ex. 11:3; 12:36; Mosiah 21:15; 23:29). Finally, and perhaps most important, in each instance the events prior to departure were orchestrated by the Lord on his terms, a clear feature of the exodus narrative. For instance, even when sixteen soldiers arrived from Zarahemla, Limhi was quick to recognize in his speech at the temple that the way out was not with the aid of swords or armor. As a matter of fact, he instructed his people to “put your trust in God, . . . that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt” (Mosiah 7:19).

It is possible, indeed, to see Alma the elder as a type of Moses. While I do not wish to press this point too far, the parallels are intriguing. Each was a member of a royal court and was forced to flee because of an injustice. Each led his people from the clutches of enslaving overlords. Each led them through the wilderness to the land from which their ancestors had originated. Moreover, each

gave the law to his people and placed them under covenant to obey the Lord.²⁰ In addition, because of his unusual spiritual gifts, Alma was commissioned by King Mosiah, whom he had never met prior to his arrival in Zarahemla, to lead and direct the affairs of the church there, even superseding in position and authority those priests who surrounded Mosiah and were obviously in positions to influence and make policy.²¹ Moses, too, was placed by the Lord at the head of his people who had been served by other priests.

One of the most important Book of Mormon passages consists of the Lord's assurances to a troubled Alma. This passage further underscores the connection with Moses. In this case, Alma was seeking to know what to do with members of the church who had gone astray and forsaken their covenants. Even though by this time Alma and his people had been delivered from physical bondage years before, in his reply to Alma's prayers the Lord makes certain kinds of promises for those who are willing to bear his name and remain faithful to their covenants. And these promises are guaranteed in a particular way: by the Lord using his name "the Lord" as the ultimate assurance that he could be trusted (Mosiah 26:26).²² Beginning in verse 17 of chapter 26 and continuing to the end of the Lord's revelation in verse 32, there is a consistent pattern of the pronouns *I*, *my*, and *mine*, which stand out in this part of the account. A similar phenomenon occurs in the sixth chapter of Exodus, beginning with verse 1 and ending with verse 8. Here, too, a prophet—Moses—has come before the Lord with a troubled heart. To be sure, the occasion of his appeal to God is different, for in this instance he is simply seeking to learn why Pharaoh has succeeded not only in rejecting and rebuffing him but also in making life more difficult for the Hebrew slaves. From Moses' query (Ex. 5:22–23), it is evident that he had initially thought that he would have an easier time overcoming Pharaoh's intransigence. In the Lord's answer to Moses, there is a striking series of pronouns in the first person, a divine response richly clothed with references to *I* and *my*. Perhaps most importantly, as a signal both to Moses and to Alma, the Lord identifies himself by saying, "I am the Lord," the ultimate assurance to the hearer that God is to be trusted and relied upon.²³

Thus there are a number of strands running through these chapters of Mosiah that not only chronicle the stories of a Nephite colony in the land of Nephi, but that also lead the reader to understand that the colonists' escape and deliverance from bondage are to be understood as something of a reenactment—and thus a reassurance—of an earlier age, an earlier people, an earlier series of acts by a kind God towards a downtrodden people. Doubtless Mormon, the editor of these reports, saw an important purpose in

narrating them. He himself may have taken comfort from their content, seeing as he did his own people charging toward the abyss of extinction (*Morm. 5:1–5; 6:17–22*). In these accounts, he must have seen a story of hope for those who stand in need of divine deliverance.

EXODUS AS PROOF OF GOD'S POWER

Nephite teachers and prophets also cited the exodus account as a proof of God's ability to fulfill his promises. God's faithfulness is apparent in Nephi's remarks of encouragement to his despairing brothers (*1 Ne. 4:1–3*) and in several other passages. For example *1 Nephi 17* chronicles the arrival of Lehi's family at the seashore, the Lord's command to Nephi to build a ship, and the brothers' belligerent reaction to this news. Nephi's rather long response offers the exodus experience as his first and chief proof of "the power of God" and the power of "his word" (vv. 23–51). Again in *2 Nephi 25:20*, Nephi refers to elements of the exodus experience—specifically the healing of those bitten by the poisonous serpents that had invaded Israel's camp (*Num. 21:6–9*)²⁴ and the miraculous flow of water from the rock struck by Moses—as surety of God's unerring power.²⁵

Nephi, son of Helaman, also draws upon the exodus tradition in words spoken while he was upon the tower in his garden. His audience consisted largely of passersby (*Hel. 7:11–12*) and included "men who were judges, who also belonged to the secret band of Gadianton" (*Hel. 8:1*). After he had warned his hearers that, because of their sins, they could expect destruction (7:22–28)—a fact he knew by revelation (7:29)—he was rebutted by those who claimed "that this is impossible, for behold, we are powerful, and our cities great, therefore our enemies can have no power over us" (*Hel. 8:5–6*). In his response to these notions, Nephi unfolded a series of proofs, all drawn from scripture, to the effect that God has power to fulfill his word.²⁶ His chief example consisted of the exodus account, specifically the miracle at the sea:

Behold, my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses, to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea, and they parted hither and thither, insomuch that the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up? (*Hel. 8:11*)

Thus far, Nephi had only drawn attention to this single incident to demonstrate God's marvelous power over nature and people. But for his immediate purposes, he carried it one step further: "And now behold, if God gave unto this man such power, then why should ye dispute among yourselves, and say that he hath given unto me no

power whereby I may know concerning the judgments that shall come upon you except ye repent?" (Hel. 8:12). With this comment, Nephi makes it clear that the acceptance of God's power as manifested at the Red Sea also leads to acceptance of his ability to reveal or make known "the judgments that shall come." In other words, it is the same divine power that brings about both the miracles and the revelations of what is yet future. Nephi subsequently points out another event associated with the Exodus, the raising of the "brazen serpent in the wilderness," that points prophetically to the coming Son of God (Hel. 8:14–15). Most important for our discussion, once again, is the centrality of the Exodus as a proof.

The final passage I shall review in this light appears in the instructions of Alma the younger to his son Helaman (Alma 36).²⁷ This passage has been examined by others, though with a different set of questions.²⁸ The first and last verses in this chapter restate the promise that "inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land." The last verse adds, "And ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence" (Alma 36:30). These scriptures summarizing the teachings of Alma concerning promises and penalties find a detailed counterpart in Moses' last instructions to his people in the book of Deuteronomy. Significantly, the Israelites were about to take possession of a promised land, and Moses' words were not only full of promises to those who would obey the Lord, but also bristling with penalties for those who might disobey.²⁹ Thus even the words that open and close Alma 36 are linked to the larger exodus experience. Moreover, verses 1 and 2, along with verses 27 and 29 at the chapter's end, all speak of God's marvelous power to deliver and support those in bondage and afflictions. The key terms are words such as *bondage*, *captivity*, and *afflictions* on the one hand, and *trust*, *power*, and *deliverance* on the other. At the heart of this chapter, of course, lies the remarkable story of Alma's dramatic conversion, in which he was "born of God." And this story, as Alma recounts it, includes reminiscences of the Exodus. For instance, he testifies that trusting in the Lord leads to divine support and deliverance (vv. 3, 27).³⁰ Further, Alma's early life was characterized by rebellion, certainly a dimension of Israel's experience. In addition, the matter at issue in the Lord's intervention with Alma was not His own worthiness. The same must be said of the Israelites. Finally, the entire chapter consists of Alma's recitation of his own story; it therefore resembles in a general sense the memorized recitations learned by Israelites of God's wondrous acts performed on their behalf during the Exodus.³¹

EXODUS AND THE ATONEMENT

A review of Alma 36 leads naturally to the observation that the Exodus was linked typologically to the effects of Jesus' atonement. Alma's autobiographical recitation of his experience here, joined with the biographical account narrated in Mosiah 27, forms a transparent example.³² As I have noted, Alma's rehearsal of his remarkable experience of being born of God (Alma 36) is bracketed by both the mention of the Deuteronomic promise of prosperity (vv. 1, 30) and the appeal to his son Helaman to remember "the captivity of our fathers" (vv. 2, 28).³³ Between these brackets, Alma recalls his experience in a way that not only demonstrates the effectiveness of the Atonement before Jesus worked it out but also links his deliverance from the bonds of sin to Israel's deliverance from the bondage of slavery.³⁴

As far as I can determine, Jacob, son of Lehi, was the first writer to link exodus language with the Atonement. Although any discussion is limited to the texts selected and edited for the Book of Mormon record, and although it is possible that someone else in Jacob's family—such as his father or elder brother Nephi—saw the connection initially, the texts at hand point directly to Jacob.

The tie between the two concepts is made in Jacob's long speech in 2 Nephi 6–10. In this address, Jacob quotes Isaiah 50–52:2, a passage that speaks of Israel's new exodus or gathering when "the Messiah will set himself again the second time to recover" the house of Israel (2 Ne. 6:14). These particular verses of Isaiah brim with allusions to the Exodus even as they speak of the gathering. After quoting this extensive segment from Isaiah, Jacob turns to "things to come" (9:4), first reviewing the implications of the Fall (vv. 6–9) before he turns to address the broader picture that includes the "power of resurrection" (v. 6) and the "infinite atonement" (v. 7): "O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit" (2 Ne. 9:10). The notion of "our escape," while not mirroring specific vocabulary associated with the Exodus, certainly evinces the image of Israel's flight from Egypt. And Jacob's use of the phrase *I call* plainly indicates that this association of the second exodus, spoken of in the prior two chapters, with the Atonement is an interpretation that he has arrived at independently of others. At this moment Jacob chooses to illustrate how closely these ideas are linked together:

And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall

deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall *deliver* up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must *deliver* up their dead, and hell must *deliver* up its *captive* spirits, and the grave must *deliver* up its *captive* bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be *restored* one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel. (2 Ne. 9:11–12; italics added)

The first word that catches the eye in this passage is *deliverance*, a term whose verbal root is fully at home in the exodus narrative. An apparently related verbal form then appears four times as “deliver up” in the next few lines.³⁵ Moreover, the adjective *captive* obviously echoes Israel’s bondage. Even though this term does not appear in the exodus narrative per se, it is used in Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the new exodus (Isa. 51:14), which Jacob has just quoted (2 Ne. 8:14). In addition, the notion of being “restored,” while again not reflecting specific vocabulary associated with the Exodus, is certainly the central notion lying behind the concept of a new exodus or gathering back to former lands. Indeed, Jacob plainly understands the issue in this way because he observes that those “carried away captive” from Jerusalem “should return again” (2 Ne. 6:8–9) and that “the Messiah will set himself again the second time to recover them” (6:14).

It is worth noting that the whole of Jacob’s address is laced with allusions to and echoes of the Exodus. At the outset, he states that he will speak “concerning things which are, and which are to come” (6:4) as well as “concerning all the house of Israel” (6:5). It is to achieve the latter purpose that he quotes a long segment from Isaiah. Of at least thirty-three allusions to the Exodus that appear in Jacob’s words (2 Ne. 6, 9–10) and in Isaiah 50:1–52:2 (2 Ne. 7–8), the following are especially significant:

1. Israel is to “return again” (2 Ne. 6:9).
2. The Lord God is to “manifest himself,” a self-disclosure that recalls the self-disclosures on the holy mount (6:9).
3. The scattered of Israel are to “come to the knowledge of their Redeemer” (6:11, 15, 18).
4. They will return “to the lands of their inheritance” (6:11, 10:7–8).
5. The Lord is to “be merciful” to his people (6:11).
6. The Messiah is “to recover them” a second time (6:14).
7. Pestilence is mentioned, recalling the plagues (6:15).

8. The phrase added to Isaiah 49:25 that appears in 2 Nephi 6:17 clearly points to the Exodus: “the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people.”
9. The Lord is able to redeem (7:2), and “the redeemed of the Lord shall return” (8:11).
10. The Lord is able to deliver (7:2; 9:11–13, 26).
11. The Lord is able to dry up “the sea,” “rivers,” and “waters” (7:2; more explicit in 8:10; compare “waves” in 8:15).

For the believers among the Nephite and Lamanite peoples, the one event that transcended all others—including the Exodus—was the Atonement, revealed as a surety in the risen Jesus’ visit to the temple in the land of Bountiful. An intriguing feature in the report of this event is the rich set of allusions to the Exodus,³⁶ beginning with the widespread destruction that formed a prelude to Jesus’ arrival in the Americas. Though Mormon does not include an evaluation of the devastation to food supplies for both humans and animals, the account can legitimately be read as pointing to such disruption since “the whole face of the land was changed” and “the face of the whole earth became deformed” (3 Ne. 8:12, 17). Further, the entire infrastructure was ruined: “the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough . . . and the places were left desolate” (8:13, 14). The plagues that were a prelude to the Exodus also resulted in at least the interruption of normal living and in some cases destruction among all forms of life. The plague of hail was especially ruinous, decimating “all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field” (Ex. 9:25). The locusts that followed “did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left,” completing the devastation of crops necessary to sustain both human and animal life (Ex. 10:15).

Jesus’ quotations from the Old Testament, particularly the work of Isaiah, also include allusions to the Exodus.³⁷ In 3 Nephi 16, which rehearses the Father’s plans for both Gentiles and Israel, the ancient covenant people, the conclusion of Jesus’ sayings—as well as those attributed to the Father (vv. 7–15)—consists of a quotation of Isaiah 52:8–10. In Isaiah this passage stands in a context that refers to the Exodus on the one hand (Isa. 52:2–4, 11–12) and on the other to the coming Servant of the Lord, the Messiah-king (Isa. 52:13–53:12). General themes include the redemption of Zion “without money” (52:3) and the departure of God’s people from the unclean to the clean (v. 11). Besides mentioning Egypt as the place

of Israel's sojourning (v. 4), the Lord affirms that he "will go before you [redeemed of Israel]; and the God of Israel will be your rereward" (v. 12), a clear reference to the divine protection the Israelite camp received during the Exodus. Moreover, in the new redemption two features of the former exodus are to be reversed: "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight" (v. 12).

An allusion to the Exodus also occurs in Jesus' miraculous provision of bread and wine on the second day of his visit to the Nephites and Lamanites. While the analogy between this act and Jehovah's provision of water and manna to the children of Israel in the wilderness has already received some attention,³⁸ I propose to follow additional dimensions of the account as it is narrated in 3 Nephi 20. The gifts of water and manna in the desert brought life to the fleeing Hebrews. In the case of Jesus' gifts, although the bread and wine in a sense commemorate his death, more importantly they celebrate his life with the accompanying promise that the partakers will "be filled" (20:8) and thus nourished. And they were indeed filled, for on both the first and second day the whole multitude ate and drank until their hunger and thirst had been satisfied.³⁹ It was in an effort to provide for Israel's physical needs that the Lord made the water and manna available, with obvious accompanying spiritual blessings. The miracle of Jesus' producing bread and wine (20:3–7) recalls the manna and water in the wilderness all the more emphatically when we note that on the first day of his visit he had asked for bread and wine to be brought (3 Ne. 18:1–3). Indeed, the reader is left with the impression that bread would also have been available on day two—unless it were the Sabbath—and therefore Jesus went out of his way to make his point when providing the elements of the sacrament.

The final distinctive similarity that I wish to explore arises from the legal customs associated with recovering a person enslaved abroad.⁴⁰ In such cases, one or more envoys were supplied with credentials that they were to present as representatives of the one seeking recovery. The envoys were sent by the protector at home to entreat with the captor. Moses returned to Egypt as one empowered to recover those enslaved: "That God, himself outside Egypt, at the burning bush, should send Moses accords with the normal procedure in these affairs."⁴¹ Significantly, Jesus came to the gathering in the land of Bountiful as a Moses, an observation that he emphatically underscores in 3 Nephi 20:23, where he applies to himself the prophecy of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15, with slight variation: "Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, *like unto me*" (italics added).

In the exodus account, Moses and Aaron are sent as envoys (Ex. 3:10; 4:10–16) and, in unusual fashion, present to Pharaoh the “credentials” that demonstrate they represent the Lord (Ex. 7:8–12). In a related vein, it was sometimes necessary to convince the prisoner himself of the representative’s authority. In Moses’ case, Moses had anticipated the need to win over the Hebrew slaves and consequently had been equipped by the Lord with tokens that the Israelites would recognize as coming from their God, including knowledge of God’s name and power to perform three signs.⁴² When we turn to 3 Nephi, the need and the effort to recover those who are captives of sin become clear.⁴³ The principal differences, of course, are that the risen Jesus, the one who seeks the recovery, comes in person rather than sending a messenger and there is no captor to whom he needs to present his credentials.⁴⁴ Important features of Jesus’ visit grow out of the scene in which he presents his “credentials” and the tokens of his mission to those whom he seeks to rescue. Note the overtones in the wonderful moments just after his arrival: “Behold, *I am* Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, *I am* the light and the life of the world” (3 Ne. 11:10–11; italics added). The similarities with Moses’ situation are obvious. Jesus identifies himself as the one whom the gathered crowd has been expecting. Moses, too, had to identify himself as the envoy of Israel’s God (Ex. 4:29–31). Further, Jesus announces himself specifically by using the divine name I AM, the same name Moses carried from his interview on the holy mount (Ex. 3:14).⁴⁵ Additionally, as Moses had carried at least one token of his commission in the form of a physical malady—his arm that could be made leprous (Ex. 4:6–8)—so Jesus bears the tokens of his crucifixion in his person. Moreover, to demonstrate the validity of his wounds, Jesus asks the entire crowd of twenty-five hundred people (3 Ne. 17:25) to come forward so that “ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet” (11:14). Finally, as the children of Israel had “believed” Moses and had then “bowed their heads and worshipped” (Ex. 4:31), so the people in Bountiful, after “going forth one by one . . . did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come” (3 Ne. 11:15). They, too, “did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (11:17).

Even though this study has not pushed into all the corners and byways of the Book of Mormon text, I believe that I have explored enough to show that the theme of God’s mighty acts in the Exodus, performed on behalf of ancient Israel, colors many accounts in the Nephite record. Not only do certain expressions and words suggest

that the family of Lehi and Sariah—particularly Nephi—saw connections between their experiences and those of their ancient forebears, it is apparent that the Exodus came to be seen as the paradigm for God’s deliverance of Nephite peoples whenever they found themselves in bondage. The events of the Exodus were regularly appealed to by prophets and teachers as the proof *par excellence* that God is capable of seeing his own purposes to their divinely appointed ends. The Book of Mormon makes clear that the Exodus is surpassed by the Atonement of Jesus as the most momentous event in the history of salvation. Yet, the descriptions of the Atonement and its significance are woven into tapestries of awe-inspiring hues by using threads and strands which also formed the warp and weft of the exodus account. Once again, we see the Book of Mormon as the repository of an extraordinarily rich tradition with ancient roots, a work of stunning complexity and nuanced subtlety.

NOTES

¹Notable are George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert, Religious Studies Monograph Series, vol. 5 (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 245–62; a summary of work by George S. Tate, John W. Welch, and Avraham Gileadi in “Research and Perspectives: Nephi and the Exodus,” *Ensign* 17 (April 1987): 64–65; Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27 (Fall 1987), particularly the Moses-Nephi typology on 22, 24, 29, 33; Terrence L. Szink, “To a Land of Promise (1 Nephi 16–18)” in *Studies in Scripture: Volume Seven, 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987), 60–72.

²Tate, “Typology,” 254–59, has drawn attention to Christ’s fulfillment of the exodus pattern in the Book of Mormon.

³Reynolds has suggested that at this point “Nephi practically likens himself to Moses” (“Political Dimension,” 22, 24). Compare Tate’s observations: “Though the correspondences between the exodus of the Israelites and this exodus are compelling, Nephi’s conscious sense of reenacting the pattern is even more striking. . . . But at this point [1 Ne. 4:2] he cannot have known how apt the allusion (to the Red Sea incident) really is. . . . As his awareness grows, he alludes with increasing frequency to the Exodus” (“Typology,” 250). In my view, the notion of a conscious reenactment is difficult to maintain since Nephi’s principal interest here is to cite Moses’ experience as proof that the Lord can and will aid him and his demoralized brothers. However, in other passages to which Reynolds has drawn attention (“Political Dimension,” 29, 33), the possible comparisons—consciously noted by Nephi—between himself and Moses are stronger.

⁴The issue turns additionally on the understanding of the word “also” in 1 Nephi 5:15, hardly a feature upon which to erect a thesis. If Nephi means that the Israelite slaves had been led by God, as his family had, then it would be possible to conclude that the first generation or two plainly saw the family’s departure to a promised land as a replication of the earlier exodus. But the passage can readily be understood in other ways. Compare also 1 Nephi 17:13–14, 37.

⁵Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3d ed., vol. 6 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Co. and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988), 135–44.

⁶Note the words of King Limhi, Mosiah 7:19–20, and the words of Alma the younger, Alma 36:28–29.

⁷Tate notes twelve exodus features that are touched on or replicated in 1 Nephi; of these, fully nine are linked more or less closely with chapter 17 (see column 3 of his chart, “Typology,” 258–59).

⁸Tate, “Typology,” 250.

⁹Szink's observation, for example, on the use of the verb *to murmur* is compelling ("Land of Promise," 64–65).

¹⁰The first region settled by Lehi's family was called both the land of Nephi (2 Ne. 5:8; Omni 1:27) and the land of Lehi-Nephi (Mosiah 7:1; 9:6). After approximately four hundred years, Nephite inhabitants were forced to abandon this region because of military pressures (Omni 1:12–13).

¹¹In Mosiah 24:10–25 the vocabulary alone echoes that of the Israelite exodus: they *cried* to the Lord (vv. 10–11; compare 23:28 and Ex. 3:7, 9) because of their *bondage* (vv. 13, 16, 17, 21; compare Ex. 1:14; 2:23; 6:5–6; etc.); and he set about to *deliver* them (vv. 13, 16–17, 21; compare 23:23–24, 27, and Ex. 3:8).

¹²In this case, too, certain key terms recall Israel's exodus: *bondage* (22:1–4), *cry* (21:14–15), and *deliver* (22:1–2; compare 21:5, 14, 36).

¹³For Limhi's situation, see Mosiah 21:5, 14–15; for Alma's, see Mosiah 23:23–24; 24:13, 16–17. The difference in the relative prominence of the Lord's involvement in the deliverance of the two peoples may be due to the fact that Alma's group was blessed with a prophet and Limhi's people were not. Note King Mosiah's views on the matter in his public letter (Mosiah 29:19–20).

¹⁴See J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus: Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick and others, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 1:854, 856–57, 895, 900; and S. Kent Brown, "Trust in the Lord: Exodus and Faith," in *The Old Testament and the Latter-Day Saints*, Sperry Symposium 1986 ([Salt Lake City]: Randall Book Co., 1986), 85–94.

¹⁵Exodus 5:6–19; see Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," 886–87.

¹⁶Mosiah 7:19–20. In Mosiah 8:1, Mormon notes that Limhi had said a good deal more on this occasion.

¹⁷Incidentally, Limhi immediately quotes in succession three sayings of the Lord that are not part of Abinadi's recorded preaching, nor do they come from any known source (vv. 29–31). Furthermore, the three passages all share a concern for "my people," a term familiar from the exodus narrative that also denotes a covenant relationship (see Ex. 6:7; 8:20–21, 23; 9:13; 10:3–4; etc.).

¹⁸David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 48–61. Deuteronomy 15:16 makes it clear that the slave should have been happy under the master's rule. Because the Lamanites were harsh, in the view of the Mosaic code this aspect of the relationship was ruptured as well, justifying the Nephites' desertion.

¹⁹See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 55.

²⁰The terms of the covenant are rehearsed in Mosiah 18:8–10; the sign of the covenant consisted of baptism (18:12–16); the name of the covenant people was "the church of God, or the church of Christ" (18:17); and the terms of the new law, including the priesthood offices, are outlined in 18:18–28.

²¹See reference to such priests with whom Mosiah consulted regularly on touchy religious matters in Mosiah 27:1.

²²The passage reads: "And then shall they *know that I am the Lord* their God, that I am their Redeemer." The parallel words to Moses in Exodus 6:7 are "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall *know that I am the Lord* your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (italics added). In addition, this seems to be the principal objective in both the Exodus of the Israelites and that of Lehi's family; compare 1 Nephi 17:14 with Exodus 7:5; 8:22; 9:29; 14:4, 18 (the Egyptians, too, were to know that the Lord is God); 16:12; 20:1–2; 29:45–46; Leviticus 25:38; 26:13; Numbers 15:41; Deuteronomy 4:35; etc.

²³In giving the law to Moses, after the covenant made at Sinai, the Lord consistently uses the phrase *I am the Lord* as the ultimate authority for the various legal and religious requirements that his people, now reclaimed, are to follow in order to retain their favored status; see, for example, Leviticus 18:1–6; 19:3–4, etc.

²⁴See also 1 Nephi 17:41. Interestingly, it is not Nephi but Alma the younger who, as far as I know, makes the connection between Moses' raising the serpent on the pole, which if looked upon brought healing, and the Messiah's mission "to redeem his people" and "atone for their sins" (Alma 33:19–22); see also the words of Nephi, son of Helaman, in Helaman 8:14–15 as well as John 3:14–15, where the remarks have a different focus.

²⁵According to the biblical text, Moses struck a rock and water flowed out on two occasions, once at the holy mount (Ex. 17:5–6) and once at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin (Num. 20:1–11). It is obviously to one of these that Nephi refers in 1 Nephi 17:29. The biblical sequence of the incident at the rock and of the report of the serpents is maintained only in 1 Nephi 17:29, 41, whereas 2 Nephi 25:20 reverses them. Clearly, the context of 2 Nephi 25:20 is that of oath-making to prove a point, while Nephi's recital of God's acts in 1 Nephi 17 follows the main points of the story of the Exodus as well as of the conquest. In fact, this latter passage seems steeped in the (memorized) Israelite recitations summarizing God's actions on behalf of his people when he rescued them from slavery (see Deut. 6:21–24; 26:5–9; Josh. 24:2–8).

²⁶The order of the proofs is interesting, for the first and principal proof—the Exodus—is out of chronological order, underscoring its importance: (1) Moses and the Exodus (vv. 11–15); (2) Abraham (vv. 16–17); (3) those who preceded Abraham (v. 18); (4) those who followed Abraham, including Zenos, Zenock, and others (vv. 19–20); (5) the forebear Mulek who escaped Jerusalem's destruction, an event prophesied (v. 21); and (6) Lehi, his son Nephi, and the Nephite prophets (v. 22). Except for Jeremiah, who

prophesied of Jerusalem's fall (v. 20) and was vindicated by the testimony of Mulek, son of Zedekiah (v. 21), all of the persons mentioned in this passage are affirmed by Nephi to have known of the coming Messiah (v. 23). The list of proofs, in this order, raises the interesting question whether the Nephite believers had developed catalogs of such topics taken from scripture.

²⁷ Alma's instructions to his sons (Alma 36–42), as well as Lehi's last words to his children (2 Ne. 1–4:11), fit the genre known as testament literature, which consists of accounts of various patriarchs giving their last instructions and blessings to their children. These passages invite careful examination in light of what is now known about this literary genre.

²⁸ See, for example, John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds, Religious Studies Monograph Series vol. 7 (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 49–50; and Tate, "Typology," 254–55, where a number of typological connections between the conversion of Alma the younger and the exodus pattern are reviewed.

²⁹ While the results of obeying and disobeying are spelled out in various passages of Deuteronomy, the list of promised blessings is collected together in Deuteronomy 28:1–14 and the curses or penalties for disobedience appear conveniently in Deuteronomy 28:15–68. To these latter are added the curses that were to be recited by the Levites (Deut. 27:14–26). The entire issue of the Deuteronomic flavor of the Book of Mormon is yet to be tested, especially in light of the fact that the book of the law discovered in the temple in 621 B.C. (2 Kgs. 22:8–23:3), which led to a major religious reform (2 Kgs. 23:4–24), was likely Deuteronomy or an abbreviated version of it; and would have been known to Lehi and recently included with the plates of brass (implied in 1 Ne. 5:11).

³⁰ The theme of deliverance is woven tightly into the story of the Exodus. In Alma 36, the verb *to deliver* appears three times in the verses that summarize Israel's exodus (vv. 2, 28). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew root translated "to deliver" (*natsal*) occurs regularly in the exodus narrative (Ex. 3:8; 12:27; 18:8–10; Deut. 23:14; compare Ps. 18:48; 34:7, 17, 19; 97:10).

³¹ See Deuteronomy 6:21–24; 26:5–9; Joshua 24:2–14; compare Amos 2:9–10; 3:1–2.

³² Tate has drawn attention to these reports ("Typology," 254–55).

³³ The phrase comes from verse 2 where the forceful emphasis is on the absolute inability of Israel to deliver herself: "For they were in bondage, and *none could deliver* them except it was the God of Abraham, . . . and *he surely did deliver them* in their afflictions" (italics added). The other bracketing passage, verses 28–29, emphasizes the Lord's continual and continuing care both for individuals, such as Alma, and for his people as a whole, whoever they are: "And I know that he will raise me up at the last day . . . for he has brought *our fathers* out of Egypt . . . by his power . . . yea, and he has delivered *them* out of bondage and captivity *from time to time*. Yea, and he has also brought *our fathers* [Lehi's family] out of the land of Jerusalem; and he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered *them* out of bondage and captivity, *from time to time even down to the present day*" (italics added).

³⁴ The biographical account in Mosiah 27 exhibits allusions to the Exodus that are in some ways even more impressive than those in the first-hand report of Alma 36. While we must bear in mind that Alma's experience included only himself and his four friends while an entire people was involved with Moses, the similarities are nevertheless rather impressive. The description of the apparition of the angel bears stronger resemblances to the experience of the Israelites at Sinai than to other similar experiences such as the Lord's call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1), Isaiah (Isa. 6), Lehi (1 Ne. 1), or even to Ezekiel (Ezek. 1–3). For instance, the angel who confronts the five young men "descended" to meet them (Mosiah 27:11); in a similar way, "the Lord *came down* upon mount Sinai" (Ex. 19:20; italics added). Second, the angel appears to the youths "as it were in a *cloud*" (v. 11; italics added), the same way the Lord had come both to Moses and before the people. Third, the angel speaks as if "with a *voice of thunder*, which caused the earth to *shake*" (Mosiah 27:11; italics added). Similarly, the voice of the trumpet from the holy mount was "exceeding loud" and "sounded long, and waxed louder and louder" (Ex. 19:16, 19; also 20:18). At the sound of God's voice (Ex. 19:19), all of the Israelites grew afraid and trembled; and they "stood afar off," requesting that God not speak to them "lest we die" (Ex. 20:18, 19). Further, at God's presence on the mount, "there were thunders and lightnings" (Ex. 19:16; also 20:18) and "the whole mount quaked greatly" (Ex. 19:18). Fourth, the angel mentions specifically the "bondage" of Alma's forebears (Mosiah 27:16), a clear recollection of terms used to describe the plight of the Israelite slaves. This very point raises one of the clearest links between the Exodus and the Atonement. All of the words describing Israel's bondage derive from the root '*bd*'. A noun from this same root is translated "servant" in Isaiah 53, which Abinadi quotes at length and then immediately links to Jesus' ministry. It is clear here that Jesus is the expected servant ('*ebed*') who, by paying the price of redemption, frees all those who will follow him from bondage ('*abodah*'), the very term used in the exodus account. There are, of course, further echoes of exodus themes, but space and time do not allow a full review.

³⁵ *Deliver up* also appears twice in the following verse (2 Ne. 9:13) and is used to refer to the new exodus in Isaiah 50:2 (2 Ne. 7:2).

³⁶ Taking his lead from others, Tate has drawn attention to the echoes of exodus not only in the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry but also in the recitation of his visit to the people in Bountiful ("Typology," 255–57, and columns 2 and 7 of the chart, 258–59).

³⁷ I sense that the entire body of Jesus' quotations from Old Testament sources, when properly reviewed, will reveal that the passages cited point consistently to the period of either the new exodus or

the end time. For example, all of the following passages—taken in the order in which they are quoted by the Savior—have to do with the new exodus: Isaiah 52:8–10 (3 Ne. 16:18–20); Micah 5:8–9 (3 Ne. 20:16–17); Micah 4:12–13 (3 Ne. 20:18–19); Isaiah 52:9–10 (3 Ne. 20:34–35); Isaiah 52:1–3 (3 Ne. 20:36–38); Isaiah 52:7 (3 Ne. 20:40); Isaiah 52:11–15 (3 Ne. 20:41–45); Isaiah 52:15 (3 Ne. 21:8); Isaiah 52:14 (3 Ne. 21:10); Micah 5:8–14 (3 Ne. 21:12–18); and Isaiah 52:12 (3 Ne. 21:29). Chapters 3 and 4 of Malachi, quoted by Jesus in 3 Nephi 24–25, can also be understood as anticipating the new exodus. For instance, reference to the way prepared by the expected messenger (Mal. 3:1; 3 Ne. 24:1) can be seen as an allusion to “the way of the Lord” to be prepared in the desert, which is mentioned in Isaiah 40:3. Further, the reference to purifying “the sons of Levi” as a preparatory step before they “offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” finds clear echoes in the selection and setting apart of the Levites in the desert (Num. 3:41, 45; 8:6–22).

³⁸ See Tate, “Typology,” 257.

³⁹ During the second day, we are told only that “the multitude had all eaten and drunk” and were thereafter “filled with the spirit” (20:9). But the text seems clear enough. In the case of the first day, the statement is clearer still. The disciples were the first to partake of the bread and be filled, afterwards giving the bread to the multitude of twenty-five hundred people until they were filled (3 Ne. 18:3–5). The wine was similarly abundant (18:8–9). We must bear in mind that by this point in the day the crowd had been without food for several hours, having gone forward “one by one” and felt Jesus’ wounds (11:15), listened to his “sermon on the mount” address (chapters 12–14) and to his further words (15–16), seen him heal the infirm among them (17:5–10), and witnessed him blessing their children (17:11–24). Hence, when the record says that the multitude was “filled”—whether on day one or day two—by partaking of the bread and wine, it is to be understood at least in terms of satisfying their hunger and thirst.

⁴⁰ The whole issue of slavery abroad is reviewed in Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 39–41. One important dimension that still must be explored in the Book of Mormon concerns the social and legal bases for the Lord’s acts of deliverance. Such links are clearly visible in the exodus account, as Daube has pointed out: “God was seen as intervening, not like a despot, but in the faithful exercise of a recognized privilege—which would, in turn, impose lasting obligations on those on whose behalf he intervened” (13). One example of a direction to pursue this sort of tie between the Lord and all the descendants of Lehi would be to investigate the notion that they were *the Lord’s people* whose relationship was rooted in covenant (Mosiah 24:13). Other passages that exhibit this feature and are also connected to the exodus theme include 2 Nephi 8:4 (Isa. 51:4) and Mosiah 7:29–31; see also Mosiah 11:22; 12:1, 4; 14:8; 24:13–14; 26:17–18, 30, 32; Alma 5:57; 10:21; compare Exodus 6:7.

⁴¹ Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 40. Even the ages of Moses and Aaron, eighty and eighty-three respectively, may have been an important factor, for as Daube writes, “Envoys were . . . carefully selected for their distinction and fitness for the task. . . . A minimum age was sometimes required.”

⁴² Moses learned that God’s name was I AM (Ex. 3:13–14) and also bore three signs: the rod that would turn into a serpent, his hand that could be made leprous, and the power to turn water to blood (Ex. 4:1–9). See the relevant remarks in Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 40.

⁴³ See 3 Nephi 9:21, where the “voice heard . . . upon all the face of this land” (9:1) says: “Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.” Samuel the Lamanite’s words serve to underscore the point: “Behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind . . . and *bringeth* them *back* into the presence of the Lord” (Hel. 14:17; italics added). It is important to note that the verb *to bring back* or its counterpart *to bring out* often appears describing God’s actions in the Exodus (see Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 32–33). Especially the verb *to bring out* is used in the Book of Mormon to summarize the Exodus (1 Ne. 17:25, 40; 2 Ne. 25:20; Mosiah 7:19; etc.), to outline Lehi’s departure (1 Ne. 17:14; 2 Ne. 1:30; Mosiah 2:4; etc.), and to describe the Atonement (3 Ne. 28:29). Compare Jesus’ impassioned words to the survivors in 3 Nephi 10:4–6.

⁴⁴ Even though no captor is mentioned, except perhaps the devil and his angels (3 Ne. 9:2), Jesus quotes a key passage from Isaiah that bears on the issue: “For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money” (3 Ne. 20:38; Isa. 52:3), a passage that is surrounded by Isaiah’s prophecies of the second exodus. Plainly, there was no captor to whom Jesus could come. Even so, Jesus presents himself to the survivors almost as if he were presenting his credentials to one with whom he must negotiate for the release of captives (see 3 Ne. 9:15–18; compare 11:14–16). Speaking of Jesus during his earthly ministry, Daube observes, “From Jesus sent by God to save mankind, from his legitimization, or refusal to furnish legitimization, before adversaries and followers, from the insistence on the necessity of belief in him, one line of many . . . leads back across the centuries to the practices of international commerce in the matter of prisoners of war” (*Exodus Pattern*, 41).

⁴⁵ Some may object to this interpretation, but it is in keeping with the general consensus of New Testament scholarship that when Jesus is quoted—particularly in John’s gospel—using the phrase *I am*, he is employing the name revealed to Moses on the holy mount (John 4:26 [the KJV obscures this]; 6:35, 48, 51; 8:12; etc.). To hold that the mortal Jesus used the phrase in clear reference to the divine name and then, when he visited the Americas as resurrected Lord and King, used the phrase only in the sense of a grammatical copula, seems to strain one of the plain senses of the text. For Jesus’ words to the survivors resemble the language of the gospel of John more than that of the Synoptics (3 Ne. 9:13–22; only the sayings in 3 Nephi 10:4–7 are clearly stamped as being from the Synoptic gospels). In addition, his opening words to those in Bountiful clearly resemble the vocabulary of the Gospel of John (3 Ne. 11:10–11).