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### The Israelite Background of Moses Typology in the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** Nephi tells the story of the founding events of the Nephite people in such a way that his readers will see him as a second Moses. Although Nephi's use of the Moses typology has been previously noted, what has not been noticed before is that his father, Lehi, also employs this same typology in his farewell address in 2 Nephi 1-4 in order to persuade his descendants of his own divine calling and of their new covenant relationship to the same God who had given the promised land to ancient Israel. The fact that Nephi and Lehi both saw themselves as Moses figures demonstrates their awareness of a recognizable feature of preexilic Israelite literature that has only recently been explicated by Bible scholars.



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Courtesy BYU Museum of Art

Nephi and Lehi drew upon the experiences of Moses and alluded to his exodus experience as a pattern of their own situation. Their knowledge of Hebraic literary traditions made it natural for them to introduce themselves as types of Moses. *Moses Among Roman Ruins*, by Lambert Suavius (Zutman). Engraving, 8" x 4", about 1550.

# The Israelite Background of Moses Typology in the Book of Mormon

*Noel B. Reynolds*

Nephi tells the story of the founding events of the Nephite people in such a way that his readers will see him as a second Moses. Although Nephi's use of the Moses typology has been previously noted, what has not been noticed before is that his father, Lehi, also employs this same typology in his farewell address in 2 Nephi 1–4 in order to persuade his descendants of his own divine calling and of their new covenant relationship to the same God who had given the promised land to ancient Israel.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Nephi and Lehi both saw themselves as Moses figures demonstrates their awareness of a recognizable feature of preexilic Israelite literature that has only recently been explicated by Bible scholars.

When Nephi wrote his second record (the small plates), portraying himself as a Moses figure, he followed the pattern set almost three decades earlier by his father Lehi. While there is no reason to think that Lehi or Nephi set out with an ambition to be a Moses type, the circumstances into which the Lord called them were very much like Moses' transitional situation. And these connections were not lost on them. Further, the Hebraic literary tradition that we find in the Old Testament almost demanded that they presented themselves as antitypes for Moses. More than almost any of the Moses antitypes of the Old Testament, the lives of Lehi and Nephi naturally fit the Moses typology. It would make sense to criticize the Book of Mormon had it not made these kinds of strong, natural comparisons. Nephi wove into his record an essential literary feature of ancient Israelite texts, the necessity of which was not fully recognized until the late twentieth century. In fact, had Joseph Smith undertaken to develop Moses typologies on the basis of the scholarly understanding available in the 1820s, he probably would have gotten it wrong. Further, even though the Moses

**Noel B. Reynolds**

Noel Reynolds, an astute student and longtime author of important studies on the Book of Mormon, has turned his energies and skills to asking why Lehi draws attention—openly and subtly—to Moses as a precursor of himself. Rather than an effort to inflate himself in the eyes of his family members, especially his unbelieving sons and their families, Lehi’s comparison follows a time-honored pattern of one prophet modeling his ministry on that of another, earlier



prophet, thus gaining respect for his own work and demonstrating that he stands firmly within the stream of God’s sacred purposes. In this carefully aimed study, Reynolds has uncovered one of the most important dimensions of Lehi’s last words to his family: Lehi shows that in his time and place he was the new Moses. Hence, his actions, his words, his efforts are to be seen by his children and their children as a continuation of the words and acts of Israel’s founding prophet, particularly as Moses’ mission is framed in the book of Deuteronomy.

Reynolds generously informs us about recent studies that solidify this sort of point about the influence of Moses on succeeding generations of prophets, most notably those of Dale C. Allison Jr. and Robert Alter. In addition to these studies, for a broad look at how Moses and the Exodus influenced the legal and social norms of later Israelites, a person could profitably examine David Daube’s *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (1963) wherein Daube makes dozens of points about the Bible that apply more or less directly to the Book of Mormon.

—S. Kent Brown, Brigham Young University

For further study on Moses typology that appears in the risen Savior’s visit, see S. Kent Brown, “Moses and Jesus: The Old Adorns the New,” in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, edited by M. S. Nyman and C. D. Tate, Jr. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1993), 89–100.

typologies employed in the Book of Mormon are sufficiently subtle to have evaded discovery until recently, they are in fact much more clearly and extensively developed than any of the comparable Old Testament precedents.

### Nephi as Moses

Like Moses, Nephi fled into the wilderness after slaying an official of an oppressive regime, and he then led his people through that wilderness, over the water, and to the promised land. Like Moses, he constantly had to overcome the murmuring and faithlessness of his people. Like Moses, he secured divine assistance to feed his people in the wilderness. And like Moses, he was caught up into a mountain to receive the word of God. Further, on two occasions Nephi explicitly invoked the historical model of Moses laboring with the murmuring Israelites as a device to persuade his own murmuring brothers to help him in the tasks the Lord had given to him: obtaining the brass plates (1 Nephi 4:1–3) and building the ship (1 Nephi 17:23–32). By portraying himself as a Moses figure, Nephi was following a model invoked dramatically at least two decades earlier by his own father, when Lehi gave his final teachings and blessings to his family.<sup>2</sup> Lehi, in turn, was following a pattern established earlier by a series of Old Testament authors.<sup>3</sup>

The following chart demonstrates twenty-one points of comparison between Nephi and Moses:

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Killing and fleeing	Ex. 2:11–15 1 Ne. 4:18, 38	Both Moses and Nephi fled into the wilderness after killing a repressive public figure; their flight prevented their being detected.
An exceedingly high mountain	Moses 1:1 1 Ne. 11:1	Both were caught up to a mountain where they received comprehensive revelation to ground and guide them as prophets.
Scattering and gathering	Deut. 4:26–31 1 Ne. 12:19–23; 13:30, 34–42	Both saw and prophesied a future scattering and destruction of their people because of wickedness as well as a latter-day restoration.

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Speaking with God	Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:8; Moses 1:2, 31  1 Ne. 11:1, 12, 21; 2 Ne. 11:2; 31:4–15; 33:6	Both Moses and Nephi saw and spoke with the Lord.
An unexpected calling	Moses 1:6, 26; Ex. 3:1  1 Ne. 2:19–24	Neither Moses nor Nephi were of high birth, office, or other social or natural distinction at the time of their prophetic calling. Moses was a refugee from Egypt and a shepherd in Midian; Nephi was the fourth son of Lehi and a refugee from Jerusalem.
Vision of nations	Moses 1:8, 27–30  1 Ne. 11–14	Both were shown the future peoples of the world and the Lord’s purposes for them.
Leadership	Ex. 3:10; 12:51  1 Ne. 2; 17:43	Both were major figures in leading people out of wicked places.
Power over the elements	Ex. 14:13–22  1 Ne. 17–18	Moses parted the Red Sea by the power of God; Nephi calmed the storm and made the Liahona to function “according to [his] desires.”
Promised land	Num. 13; Deut. 1  1 Ne. 2:20	Both led their people safely to the promised land, though Moses was not permitted to enter his.
Travel through the wilderness	Ex. 14:12  1 Ne. 17:20	Both entailed years of difficult desert conditions, murmuring by the people, longing among the people for the lives they left behind.
Rebellion and plots	Ex. 17:4; Num. 14:5–10  1 Ne. 16:37; 17:48; 2 Ne. 5:3	Murmuring got to the point that there were attempts made on the lives of both Moses and Nephi.
Reconciliation	Ex. 17:1–7; Num. 14–16; 20:1–13; 21:5–9; 23  1 Ne. 3:28–31; 7:6–22; 17–18	Following divine manifestations of power, accounts of murmuring often ended in reconciliation between God and the murmurers.

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Charges of usurpation	Ex. 2:13–14; Num. 16:3, 13  1 Ne. 16:38	Both Moses and Nephi were accused of usurping leadership and being driven by thoughts of self-promoted grandeur.
Divine guidance in the wilderness	Ex. 13:21–22  1 Ne. 16:10, 16, 28–31; 18:21–22	For ancient Israel there was a cloud by day and pillar of light by night; for Lehi’s party it was the Liahona.
Threat of starvation	Ex. 16:2–16  1 Ne. 16:19, 30–31	Both accounts tell how starvation was averted when food was provided through divine intervention.
Filled with the power of God	Ex. 34:29–30  1 Ne. 17:48, 52–55	The people were afraid of Moses when he came down from Sinai; Nephi’s brothers at one point were afraid to touch him “for the space of many days.”
Founding texts	Genesis–Deuteronomy  Large and small plates	These texts provided religious and prophetic guidance for centuries and established a record-keeping tradition.
Building sanctuaries	Ex. 25–27; 36–9  2 Ne. 5:16	Moses built the tabernacle, which was the pattern for Solomon’s temple, which was in turn the pattern for Nephi’s temple.
Consecrating priests	Ex. 28–29; Lev. 8; Num. 8  2 Ne. 5:26	Moses and Nephi consecrated priests with authority to administer religious matters; in both cases, they were brothers to the prophet.
Religious law	Ex. 20:2–17  2 Ne. 5:10; 11:4; 25:24–27	Moses gave the Ten Commandments, Nephi the doctrine of Christ (though the Nephites also kept the law of Moses until it was fulfilled).
Appointment of a successor	Deut. 34:9  Jacob 1:9, 18	Moses “laid his hands” on Joshua to be Israel’s leader; Nephi appointed a man to be king and ruler and his brothers Jacob and Joseph to carry on his spiritual role.

## Lehi as Moses

The following research shows that before Nephi composed the small plates account, Lehi also had used this literary device in an attempt to help his descendants understand their true situation, obligations, and opportunities. While we do not have Lehi's account of the events reported in the small plates,<sup>4</sup> we know that Nephi and Lehi shared leadership of their small clan. In the beginning, Lehi's role was preeminent, but Nephi's responsibility surfaced quickly in the brass plates episode and repeatedly thereafter at crucial junctures. As with Nephi, the actual sequence of historical events made it easy for Lehi to portray himself as a Moses figure.<sup>5</sup> As with Moses, Lehi received commandments in visions from God, led his people out of a wicked land, through a wilderness, across a sea, and to a promised land. Then, after delivering a farewell address, he died, leaving it to younger leadership to establish a newly covenanted people in the promised land.

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*This version of Deuteronomy was without doubt the manuscript find of the century in ancient Israel.*

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Historical evidence gives indication that Lehi was especially familiar with the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>6</sup> Two decades before Lehi led his family into the wilderness, a manuscript now generally believed to have included all or part of the book of Deuteronomy had been discovered in the Temple in Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of his reign (approximately 621 BC), King Josiah

made this discovery and then went up to the Temple with all the people of Jerusalem, from the least to the greatest. There he stood by a pillar and read them the book, renewing the covenant contained therein, and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant (2 Kings 22–23, especially 23:1–3; see also 2 Chronicles 34–35). The book and this event then provided the basis for Josiah's reforms by which he overthrew idol worship and then centralized worship of Jehovah at the Jerusalem Temple.

This version of Deuteronomy was without doubt the manuscript find of the century in ancient Israel. The discovery occurred while Lehi, an exceptionally literate and learned man in the prime of his life, lived in or near Jerusalem. It may be that Lehi's own covenantal self-understanding was shaped by that event. It is even possible that the discovery of this text provided the motivation for creation of the brass plates as an enlarged and corrected version of the Josephite scriptural record.<sup>7</sup> The apparent fact that the brass plates included Deuteronomy (see 1 Nephi 5:11) suggests that the plates of brass were manufactured after 621 BC. Deuteronomy consists mainly of the final three addresses of Moses given to the people of Israel



before they left him behind and crossed over the Jordan River into their promised land. As the analysis below will show, Lehi's own final address reflects an intimate knowledge of the text of Deuteronomy. Lehi alludes to it at every turn of his own discourse, without letting the references distort or detract in any way from his own message. He makes Deuteronomy a powerful—though unmentioned—foundation for his own message to all his readers, especially for those who might know that version of Moses' last words.

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*Lehi's own final address reflects an intimate knowledge of the text of Deuteronomy.*

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It may be difficult for modern readers to understand why a prophet like Lehi would find it appropriate to compare himself to Israel's great prophet-deliverer. But because Lehi and his people understood their own experience in terms of types and shadows of previous times (see Mosiah 3:15), the comparison was probably quite natural. By way of comparison, Lehi really had no better choice than Moses. If human history is, as Lehi and Nephi clearly understood it and as their own visions consistently reemphasized, a continuing and repeating revelation of God's covenant with his people, then God's leading of Lehi and his group out of Jerusalem and reinstating his covenant with them in a new promised land can well be understood in the terms of Israel's previous exodus from Egypt. Thus, the roles of Lehi and Nephi fall into place as counterparts to the leadership of Moses.<sup>8</sup>

Contextually, Lehi evidently saw himself in the same awkward position as Moses at the end of his life. After years of leading his family through a difficult wilderness journey beset with almost impossible obstacles that were overcome only through rather obvious divine interventions, Lehi's two older sons still murmured and possessed a spirit of rebellion. Lehi knew from his visions that these sons would not have a lasting and sincere change of heart and that they would soon depart from the ways and covenants he had taught. But his time was over. Like Moses, he knew his mortal ministry was drawing to an end. All he could do now was leave a blessing and a set of teachings for future generations who would hopefully be more receptive to his true message and to the revelations on which it is based. Like Moses, he concluded his long sojourn on earth in a farewell address to his people, warning them of the dangers of disobedience to God and powerfully reminding them of the great blessings God has in store for those who remember their covenants and obey his commandments.

Lehi used Deuteronomy only as a parallel and not as a foundation for his teaching and blessing. He had experienced the same kinds of visions and revelations that Moses had received. In a vision, God showed Lehi the

mixed future of his people and the salvation of all mankind. He had beheld the future birth and ministry of the Messiah, the Son of God. He had seen the triumph of God and his people in the last days, and he had beheld God himself on his throne. The last thing Lehi would have wanted to communicate was that Moses' writings were the sole source of his understanding. Lehi's visions stood as the full and sufficient basis of his independent witness and authority to prophesy to his children. If all his people had been capable of recognizing the Spirit that bears witness of his revelations, he would have had little need for a rhetorical appeal to Moses as a second witness. But he knew that his rebellious older sons specifically rejected his visions, calling him a visionary man (1 Nephi 2:11), and he therefore took advantage of Moses as support. Thus Lehi phrased his message in terms that should have repeatedly reminded his hearers of Moses' similar message delivered on a similar occasion.<sup>9</sup>

The following chart summarizes fourteen themes Lehi invoked that are also found in Deuteronomy. Though his farewell address has no explicit reference to Moses, the themes provide ample evidence that Lehi consciously saw Moses as his prototype.<sup>10</sup>

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Rehearsal of blessings	Deut. 4:9–13, 32–38 2 Ne. 1:1, 3, 10	Both Moses and Lehi wanted their people to remember what good the Lord had done for them.
Appointment of a successor	Deut. 1:38; 3:28; 31:3, 7, 14, 23; 34:9 2 Ne. 1:28	Moses appointed Joshua explicitly, Lehi appointed Nephi indirectly.
A prophet's last words	Deut. 4:21–22 2 Ne. 1:13–15	Both Lehi and Moses knew that they would soon be gone; they both wanted to issue a final warning that their people must obey the commandments or suffer both temporally and spiritually.
Apostates will be cursed, scattered, and smitten	Deut. 4:25–27; 7:4; 8:19–20; 11:16–17, 26–28; 28:15–20; 30:18 2 Ne. 1:10–11, 17–18, 21–22	Both the Israelites and the Lehites were led to lands of promise by the Lord on the condition that once there they would keep the commandments or be swept off.

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Remember the statutes and judgments	Deut. 4:1, 5, 8, 14, 40, 45; 5:1  2 Ne. 1:16	Here is Lehi's most direct and obvious invocation of a dominant theme of Deuteronomy. The need of both peoples to keep the statutes and judgments of the Lord in order to avoid disaster.
Keep the commandments and prosper in the land	Deut. 28:15; 29:9  2 Ne. 1:20; 4:4	If obedient, each people would be blessed and prospered in their land of promise. Lehi goes beyond Moses to provide a succinct statement of the promise that is repeated nearly twenty times in the Book of Mormon.
A rebellious people	Deut. 9:6–8, 13  2 Ne. 1:2, 24–26	Both Lehi and Moses were dealing with a gainsaying and rebellious people, and they pointed this out.
A choice land	Deut. 5:16; 8:1, 7–10  2 Ne. 1:5–9	The lands of promise were specifically chosen and prepared by the Lord.
The covenant people and their land	Deut. 4:13, 31; 5:3; 7:9; 29:24–28  2 Ne. 1:5	Connected with the land is a promise that it will be an eternal inheritance to righteous posterity.
A choice and favored people	Deut. 4:20, 37; 7:6, 14; 26:18–19; 28:1, 9  2 Ne. 1:19	Notwithstanding their rebellions, both people were choice and favored of the Lord because of the covenant with their fathers.
The goodness and mercy of the Lord	Deut. 7:9, 12  2 Ne. 1:3, 10	In addition to setting forth the more immediate blessings of land and substance, Lehi and Moses expound on the plan of salvation and the goodness of God manifested therein.
Choosing between good and evil, life and death	Deut. 30:15, 19  2 Ne. 2:18, 26, 27, 30	Moses as well as Lehi explicitly place a choice before their people by explaining the commandments and consequences for disobedience.

Theme	Documentation	Similarities
Acquittal before God	Deut. 4:14–15 2 Ne. 1:15–17, 21–22	They absolve themselves of responsibility for their people’s future transgressions by declaring that they have taught correct principles and that it would now be up to their people to govern themselves.
Address to future generations	Deut. 4:9–10; 7:9 2 Ne. 1:7, 18	The promises and counsel applied to many generations, not just to those to whom the discourses were given.

### Typology in Ancient Israelite Literature

We need not view these comparisons by the first Nephite prophets as either original or audacious. The Nephites were familiar with the notion of types and shadows in the workings of God among his people (see Mosiah 3:15). But what was the source of this Nephite perception? Recent scholarly analyses of the Old Testament show that ancient Israelites expected true prophets to draw such comparisons, at least implicitly. Beginning with the book of Joshua, Old Testament texts consciously portrayed great prophets and heroes in ways that would highlight their similarities with Moses, the prophetic predecessor whose divine calling and powers were not questioned. Ironically, after he was safely out of the way and unable to interfere with any sinner’s life, Moses was revered by the rebellious and the obedient alike, making him a powerful icon that successive prophets could invoke in their attempts to influence their own contemporaries to be obedient and faithful.

Although his history of typological interpretations focuses principally on the New Testament, Dale C. Allison has recently demonstrated persuasively that the Moses typology was originally an Old Testament tradition, and that it is pervasive in its many books and in the later rabbinic literature. As Moses led Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea on dry ground, and eventually to the promised land, so Joshua led the people out of the wilderness, across the River Jordan on dry ground, and into the promised land. On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; they stood in awe of him, as they had previously stood in awe of Moses (Joshua 4:14). Allison collects from the scholarly and interpretive literature

impressive examples of well-developed Moses typologies in the biblical accounts of Gideon, Samuel, David, Elijah, Josiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Ezra, Baruch, the Messiah, the suffering servant, and even in the rabbinic tradition of Hillel.<sup>11</sup> More generally, these typologies are only one manifestation of what Robert Alter has called a “general biblical predisposition to see history as a chain of duplicating [or replicating] patterns.”<sup>12</sup>

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Three assumptions seem to guide Old Testament authors in their use of typologies. First, the repeating chain of duplicated patterns in history testifies that the one true God is behind it all. Second, written accounts of recent events and people are best filled with religious meaning through silent allusions to earlier events and people. And third, because recent events parallel the events of holy history, they are extensions of that same history.

Many kinds of typologies can be constructed from a variety of materials. From his study, Allison extracted a list of six ways in which the account of one person or event (the antitype) can be constructed to allude to a prior person or event as a type. No two historical figures are identical, nor do they live identical lives. For any two such figures, the story of their lives could be told in such a way as to avoid any suggestion of similarity. Alternatively, selected facts can also be used to emphasize common features. By constructing the account of a second figure to evoke the readers’ memories of a prominent earlier figure, a writer can suggest strongly to the readers that the later person plays a similar role in God’s theater, as did the first. Robert Alter may only be pointing to the obvious when he notes that readers in traditional societies with a fixed literary canon were in a much stronger position to identify literary allusions because “the whole system of signaling depends . . . on a high degree of cultural literacy.”<sup>13</sup> The ways in which a writer can make this suggestion include (1) explicit statement or reference, (2) silent borrowing of textual elements, (3) silent pointing to a similarity of circumstances, (4) borrowing of key words and phrases, (5) following a similar narrative structure, and (6) imitating patterns of words and syllables.<sup>14</sup> Lehi’s farewell address appears to use all but the first and the last of these six methods in signaling to his auditors that he has been called and directed of God, as was Moses of old, to lead a branch of Israel into a new land and a new dispensation.

Because of the long history of exaggeration or abuse of typological methods of interpretation, Allison has also assembled several guidelines abstracted from Old Testament usage that will help interpreters be

objective and restrained in identifying and defending solid and substantial typologies of the kind we might reasonably infer were intended by their authors. He advises that (1) the text must allude to another that already existed at the time it was written (Lehi alluded to texts from Deuteronomy), (2) the type and its textual source must have been important to the author of the text which makes the allusion (Lehi valued and embraced his predecessor Moses), (3) combinations of different devices of allusion make it much less likely the similarities are accidental (Lehi combined four of these devices), (4) the type alluded to must be sufficiently prominent so that the allusions will be evident to most qualified readers (Moses is the most prominent type available to Lehi and his people), (5) typologies that are known and appreciated are more convincing when invoked anew (Moses was well known to Lehi and his family), and (6) “two texts are more plausibly related if what they share is out of the ordinary” (the experience of Lehi’s people was certainly extraordinary, as had been Israel’s deliverance from Egypt).<sup>15</sup> The typology of Lehi’s farewell address, which positions Lehi as antitype and the Moses of Deuteronomy as type, is exceptionally strong and adheres to all six of these guidelines.

In their analyses of the Moses typology in the Old Testament, both Michael A. Fishbane and Allison are perfectly clear that the principal engine driving the typologies is simple literary allusion, which is helpfully explained by Robert Alter as “the evocation—through a wide spectrum of formal means—in one text of an antecedent literary text.”<sup>16</sup> “Allusion occurs when a writer, recognizing the general necessity of making a literary work by building on the foundations of antecedent literature, deliberately exploits this predicament in explicitly activating an earlier text as part of the new system of meaning and aesthetic value of his own text.”<sup>17</sup> Typologies work by describing one set of persons and events in a way that alludes to some previous and well-known set. The allusion calls on readers to be alert to the similarities between the two and to the possible religious meaning of such similarities.

Robert Alter analyzes literary allusions in terms of three important variables: form, function, and relation to previous text. The formal elements of the Moses typology in Lehi’s farewell address include embedded text where Lehi uses phrases or paraphrases of Deuteronomic themes and situational similarity, as described above. The function of the Moses typology is, in Alter’s terms, to “provide the whole ground plan” of the composition,<sup>18</sup> as Lehi borrows fourteen prominent themes from Deuteronomy in his much shorter address. While Alter identifies subtle intertextual allusions where the relation between texts may be part-to-part or part-to-whole, 2 Nephi 1 clearly constitutes a case of whole-to-whole allusion,

in which the author wants readers to see both the contexts and the full texts as similar in an obvious and forceful way that will provide compelling reason for readers to reach strong religious conclusions that would motivate lifelong changes. Alter calls this kind of allusion metonymic “because there is extensive contiguity between the worlds of the alluding text and the evoked one, in contradistinction to other kinds of allusion, where the two texts are linked by some perception of similarity between them, the connection thus being ‘metaphoric.’”<sup>19</sup> Alter goes on to argue that such large scale, whole-to-whole allusions have a strong relationship to rabbinic midrash. In a concluding insight, Alter uses an example from English poetry to demonstrate how “the articulation of a strong individual voice, resonant with the writer’s unique experience and temper, is achieved at least in part by the evocation and transformation of a voice, or voices, from the literary past.”<sup>20</sup> Both Nephi in the small plates and Lehi in his farewell address appear to accomplish this evocation through their use of the Moses typology.

Allison has noted further that the Moses typology was used most effectively in the Bible with transitional figures like Samuel, who had been “raised up at a decisive time in Israel’s history” to close “one era and usher in another.” Samuel “broke the Egyptian bondage,” oversaw “the transition from a theocracy with judges to a kingdom with monarchs,” and “inaugurated the age of Torah.” The transition under Moses became “paradigmatic: it was the prime example of history changing course, of one dispensation giving way to another. So just as it was natural to comprehend any great historical transition as another exodus,” it was also natural to see a Moses figure in men who “altered the seasons and straddled epochs.”<sup>21</sup> With this insight, it becomes almost a requirement that Lehi and Nephi be seen by their descendants as antitypes for Moses. The exemplary transitional roles played by Joshua and Samuel are still less dramatic than those of Lehi or Nephi as described in 1 Nephi.

The most direct evidence that Lehi compared himself to Moses comes in the first chapter of Lehi’s final speech to his people, reported in 2 Nephi 1. Lehi needed to bolster his case, for, as his rebellious older sons clearly saw, their father had led them out of Jerusalem, not Egypt. The analogy between a thriving and prosperous Jerusalem and an oppressive Egypt was not easy for them to accept (1 Nephi 17:21–22). It was hard for them to believe that the kingdom of Judah was wicked and soon to be destroyed as their father described from his visions. So, in his final words to them, Lehi invoked the very phrases and themes emphasized by Moses in his farewell address to the Israelites as recorded in Deuteronomy. In so doing, Lehi cast himself in a role similar to that of Moses in an eloquent attempt to bring

his murmuring sons into obedience and acceptance of the successor the Lord had chosen. It was a noble, although futile, attempt, and its inevitable failure may have been presaged in what some have called the awkward logic of the blessings Lehi gave to his sons.<sup>22</sup> Even so, recorded and perpetuated forever in the family records, Lehi's words stand for all time, like Deuteronomy for the Israelites, as a witness to his descendants of what the Lord expected them to do.<sup>23</sup>

### Moses Typology in the New Testament

The word *type* comes from the New Testament Greek *typos*, meaning “a blow” or “a mark left by a blow,” as a die is used to imprint a pattern on a hard surface. With Moses as the type or pattern, Christ becomes the anti-

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type, that in this case fulfills the earlier type which foreshadowed him and his mission. Scholarly discussion of the Moses typology has been dominated largely by the New Testament allusions to Moses as the precursor of Christ, or to Christ as a “new Moses.” Indeed, the problem scholars have always had with interpretive emphases on typolo-

gies is that these emphases have generally been used to prove the truth of the New Testament claims to the divinity of Christ. The logic would follow that if an ancient biblical type is reproduced in a later antitype, one should conclude that this is evidence of the same God working through history, and that the salvation brought about by Christ on behalf of all men is therefore intentionally prefigured in the Old Testament types.

Paul, Matthew, and John all find types in the Old Testament that, like prophecies, are fulfilled in Christ and the new covenant. The Flood is a type for the antitype baptism (1 Peter 3:20–21), and Adam, along with Moses, is a type of Christ (Romans 5:12–21). Interpreting the Old Testament typologically assumes that the same God brought forth both Moses and Jesus, and that he is in charge of history. In general, the types of the Old Testament were understood to prefigure the antitypes of the New Testament. This approach “presupposes the unity of the Old Testament and New Testament and that the active involvement of God to save and deliver people in history is consistent. It presupposes, therefore, that the meaning of the Old Testament is finally unclear without the New Testament, as is that of the New Testament without the Old Testament.”<sup>24</sup>

Typological interpretations have been faddish at different times in Christian history, and, being merged with unconstrained allegory by



patristic writers, persisted in a distorted form up to the time of the Reformation, when literal interpretation of scriptural texts returned to fashion, and typologies were again assumed to report historical fact. The damage was done, however, and the excess of analogical interpretation became confused with and brought disrepute on the typological method, becoming especially repugnant to nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, who were not uniformly committed to the underlying religious assumptions. However, within the last decade it has become very clear that typological interpretations were incorporated almost routinely throughout the text of the Old Testament itself, and that the New Testament authors who used these mostly implicit typologies were only trying to depict their prophet-heroes as proper successors to Moses—and, therefore, spokesmen and instruments of Moses' God. What this also suggests is that Israelites steeped in the Old Testament would have actually expected the prophetic claims of new prophets to be bolstered by adaptations of the Moses typology to their particular circumstances. Such similarities might even have been understood as one demonstration of genuine prophetic calling. The Book of Mormon merely caters to this literary expectation of its original, culturally-Jewish audience.

## **Conclusions**

Both in Nephi's small plates generally and in Lehi's farewell address specifically, implicit allusions are made to Moses as a type for both Nephi and Lehi as antitypes. Like Moses, both are important transitional prophet figures. They have seen the future of their own people in vision, and they know in advance that these people will look back on them as founders of their branch of Israel with a new covenant in a new promised land, just as old Israel looked back to Moses. But as on the numerous occasions in the Old Testament where such typologies are drawn, neither Nephi nor Lehi make many of these comparisons with Moses explicit. Dale Allison laments the difficulty that modern readers, like "bad readers with poor memories," have in detecting these silent allusions to important earlier writings and in appreciating the wealth of additional meaning that such references bring. The Jewish writers tended "to assume a far-reaching knowledge of Scripture or tradition and so leave it to us to descry the implicit:" the Jewish writers rarely give "exhibition of the obvious."<sup>25</sup> As another commentator has observed, Isaiah in particular seems to take for granted that his hearers know the traditions as well as he did.<sup>26</sup> And so it is that, in "ancient Jewish narratives typology consists, as a general rule, of references that are almost always implicit."<sup>27</sup> Nephi's incorporation of this

Hebrew literary device may partially illustrate what he had in mind when he referred to his own training in “the learning of [his] father” and “the manner of prophesying among the Jews.”<sup>28</sup>

Lehi’s last address to his people appears to invoke at least fourteen important themes and verbal formulations from the final addresses of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy, a text that was well known to and revered by his people. When these are added to the numerous similarities of historical circumstance, Lehi’s intention to invoke Moses as a type for himself is placed beyond doubt. As with the presentation of Elijah as an antitype of Moses, so does Lehi’s farewell address argue that Lehi was in the line of prophets-like-Moses.<sup>29</sup> In so doing, Lehi adds the weight of Moses’ testimony and all the successive prophets to his own. This is especially important because, as is often the case with the living prophet, his people were fully accepting of the teachings of the long-dead Moses and his successors, but were rebelling continuously against Lehi and his chosen successor, Nephi. Though Lehi’s appeal is successful with only part of the people in the short run, it provides a beacon and a witness to his descendants for centuries, giving them clear guidance whenever they were disposed to conduct themselves according to the will of the Lord.

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1. For an account of these political aspects of Nephi’s small plates, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27 no. 4 (1987): 15–37. See Noel B. Reynolds, “A Nephite Kingship Reconsidered,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 172–77, for a list of twenty-one points of comparison between Nephi and Moses. George S. Tate has demonstrated a pervasive dependence on exodus typology by many Book of Mormon writers. See Tate’s “The Typology of the

Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1981), 245–62. Other writers who have documented extensive connections between the exodus of Israel and its leaders with the Lehite exodus recorded in the Book of Mormon include Terrence L. Szink, “Nephi and the Exodus,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo and Salt Lake City: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1991), 38–51. In the same volume, see also Alan Goff, “Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom,” 92–99. Stephen D. Ricks and others have made related observations about Benjamin. See Ricks’s “King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 209–19, and John W. Welch, “Benjamin’s Speech: A Classic Ancient Farewell Address,” FARMS Update, June 1987.

2. Nephi’s small plates were probably written twenty to thirty years after Lehi’s final teachings were given to his family. See 2 Nephi 5:28, 34; John W. Welch, “When Did Nephi Write the Small Plates?” *Insights* (March 1999), originally published as a FARMS Update in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 75–77.

3. This must be qualified by the recognition that the events recorded in 1 Nephi 4 and 17 make it clear that the similarity between the experience of Lehi’s family and that of the Israelites in the wilderness was obvious to Nephi at the time of their occurrence.

4. See S. Kent Brown, “Lehi’s Personal Record: Quest for a Missing Source,” *BYU Studies* 24 (Winter 1984): 19–42, for a good discussion of Lehi’s record.

5. See Reynolds, “Kingship,” 177.

6. See Dan Packard, “The Influence of Deuteronomy in Lehi’s Farewell Address,” April 18, 1994, 1–3, 4–6, unpublished ms. on file in the BYU Law Library. In this class paper written under the direction of Professor John W. Welch, Packard explores some interesting elements of 2 Nephi 1 that correspond to the pattern of “vassal/king treaties that were common in ancient Near Eastern coronation speeches.” Another of Welch’s student papers addresses the larger question of Deuteronomy’s impact on the Book of Mormon as a whole. See Julie Stevenson, “Deuteronomy and the Book of Mormon,” November 25, 1980, unpublished ms. on file in the BYU Law Library. Although I am exploring a different rhetorical dimension of Lehi’s speech, these student papers have been helpful to me.

7. For a discussion of when the plates of brass may have been written, see John W. Welch, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon,” in Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 430–32.

8. I owe this clarification initially to James E. Faulconer. Dale Allison’s scholarship (see note 11 below) has confirmed it in even greater detail.

9. Packard has also compared Lehi’s farewell address to the recurring elements identified in twenty-two biblical and classical farewell addresses as analyzed by William S. Kurz, “Luke 22:14–38 and Greco-Roman and Biblical Farewell Addresses,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 104, no. 2 (1985): 251–62, with particular attention to Moses’ farewell addresses in Deuteronomy. About eight of the twenty points of comparison Packard makes with ancient farewell addresses could be matched to one or more of the following themes. For purposes of my argument about the rhetorical impact of Lehi’s address, I want to emphasize how Lehi depends on his audience’s awareness of Moses’ themes in Deuteronomy.

In the drafting of this paper I was generously assisted by Drew Briney, who gave me access to his comprehensive analysis of Deuteronomic terminology that shows up anywhere in the Book of Mormon. His lists demonstrate that later Book of Mormon prophets used Deuteronomy frequently as well.

I hope it is clear to readers that I am not claiming an isomorphism between Deuteronomy and 2 Nephi. The two texts have far more differences than similarities. Nor do I claim that Deuteronomy is the only possible Biblical source for the Deuteronomic themes of 2 Nephi. All I am claiming is that Lehi's invocation of so many of the themes we find concentrated and repeated in Deuteronomy, combined with the extensive similarity of his life situation to that of Moses at the time of his final speeches to his people, would have provided a powerful connection and rhetorical leverage for Lehi's immediate audience.

10. The identification and interpretation of these themes in Deuteronomy and in 2 Nephi is explained in detail in a prior publication. See note 1.

11. Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 23–90. An especially strong analysis of the Moses typology in Ezekiel was published recently by Risa Levitt Kohn, "A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 358 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002): 107–10. Allison, like other recent students of typologies, draws heavily on the work of Michael Fishbane. See Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), especially pages 350–79, which constitute a rejection and reformation of most of the earlier approaches to the topic. Fishbane identifies typology as one of the developed interpretive techniques used by Old Testament writers, and not as a New Testament invention as has often been thought, and provides extensive documentation of examples. Because of Allison's focus on Moses typologies, I will refer directly to him and not to Fishbane or other students of the full range of typologies used in the Bible.

An explicitly Latter-day Saint study of Allison's *New Moses* that links it to LDS scriptures and teachings was submitted by Frank F. Judd Jr. as a masters thesis in 1995. See his *Jesus as the New Moses in the Gospel of Matthew* on file in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. However, this study does not include any discussion of 2 Nephi 1.

12. Robert Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 117.

13. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 119.

14. Allison, *The New Moses*, 19–23.

15. Allison, *The New Moses*, 21–23. Compare with the study of allusion in Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 119–40.

16. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 112.

17. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 116.

18. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 128.

19. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 132.

20. Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading*, 140.

21. Allison, *The New Moses*, 35.

22. The older brothers are to receive the first blessing only if they accept the leadership of the younger brother. For more detailed analyses of the awkward logic of Nephi's appointment, see Reynolds, "A Nephite Kingship," 163; and

Reynolds, "Political Dimension," 32. For a legal analysis of Lehi's language, see John W. Welch, "Lehi's Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1989), 70–79.

23. Moses calls "heaven and earth to witness against [Israel] this day" that they have been instructed in what they should do (Deut. 4:26; see also verses 1–31). See Packard, "Influence," 6.

24. John E. Alsup, "Typology," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6:683. John Lierman, in his *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 2004, presents a significantly expanded appreciation of the role of the intertestamental understanding of Moses for the first Christians.

25. Allison, *The New Moses*, 92.

26. G. A. F. Knight, *Isaiah 40–55* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), 12, as quoted by Allison, 92.

27. Allison, *The New Moses*, 93.

28. See 1 Nephi 1:1 and 2 Nephi 25:1.

29. Allison, *The New Moses*, 45. Allison goes on to observe in footnote 101 that when people were later compared to Elijah, it was usually to support their prophetic status; compare Mark 8:28; Luke 9:8, 19.