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Lehi's Theology of the Fall in Its Preexilic/Exilic Context

Bruce M. Pritchett, Jr.

Abstract: Some authors have claimed that Lehi's teachings on the fall of Adam are so similar to teachings prevalent in nineteenth-century America that they must be the source for 2 Nephi 2. However, this paper demonstrates that the bulk of well-recognized scholarly authority attributes teachings very similar to those in 2 Nephi 2 to preexilic and exilic biblical writers such as Hosea and Ezekiel. Thus, Lehi's teachings are more consistent with a preexilic/exilic Israelite context than a nineteenth-century American context.

Lehi is the first and main Book of Mormon prophet to discuss the fall of Adam. Since he states that he obtained his basic understanding of this event from "the things which [he had] read" on the plates of brass (2 Nephi 2:17; see also 1 Nephi 5:11), one wonders how much of Lehi's theology was based on the preexilic Israelite religion recorded on those plates and how much came as direct revelation to him. Certainly Lehi's explanation is a unique, plain, and precious revelation on the fall, free agency, and the atonement. But the main principles Lehi mentions in the clearest scriptural explanation of the human condition were in fact familiar topics for early Israelite writers.

Accordingly, this paper explores the preexilic and exilic texts that discuss or may relate to the fall of Adam. The primary sources are Genesis 2–3; Psalm 82:7; Hosea 6:7; Job 31:33; and Ezekiel 28:11–19. In each case, I will (1) survey the scholarly

commentaries on doctrines reflected in passages which show strong similarities to Lehi's theology, and (2) consider the evidence dating the passage to about the time of Lehi. I have limited this study to a survey of recognized non-Latter-day Saint experts on these Old Testament texts. The scholars chosen for this study are those noted for their emphasis on the Old Testament's preexilic teachings. Based on such analysis, I suggest that Old Testament prophets linked Adam's fall to the universal human condition and also provided commentaries on the fall. I also include an appendix listing thirty-six other Old Testament passages, which some commentators have, to a lesser degree, linked with the fall.

Any comparison between Lehi's teaching on the fall and its preexilic Israelite counterparts must rest on carefully examined foundations, and—given the nature of the sources—most conclusions about what the ancients thought must remain tentative. Comments made in an article by Blake Ostler and in Sunstone lectures by Mark Thomas,¹ however, seem to fall short in just such respects, being unclear, inadequately supported,² and overly conclusive. Ostler, in a private communication, has stated his regret that his *Dialogue* article "is not clear as to [his] position," partly for reasons beyond his control. As a result, however, many readers may have come away from that article with an unclear or erroneous impression about genuine Old Testament concepts of the fall of Adam. Although the following evidence is neither exhaustive nor conclusive, I hope that it will shed additional light on the topic.

¹ Blake Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20/1 (Spring 1987): 66–123, cf. Mark Thomas, "Lehi's Doctrine of Opposition in Its Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Contexts," *Sunstone* 13/1 (February 1989): 52.

² Ostler's article, for example, fails to cite the early Christian sources accurately in its discussion of the fall. The article cites Theophilus, *Ad Autolytus* II, 24–25, and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 16, and III, 10, 2, as examples of "very early Christian thought" expressing views on *felix culpa*, the fortunate fall. However, the Irenaeus passages mention nothing about any type of fall (they talk about Christ's being perfect God and perfect man), and the Theophilus passage describes only the beauty of Paradise and God's prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit, not *felix culpa*.

Ostler and, to a greater extent, Thomas have tended to focus on nineteenth-century concepts similar to Lehi's doctrine of the fall (and similar teachings undoubtedly existed), but they have drawn their conclusions with insufficient consideration of what well-recognized scholars have generally agreed that Lehi's contemporaries and predecessors (i.e., preexilic and exilic biblical writers) taught about the fall. Commenting on Lehi's doctrine, Ostler's article asserts that "there simply is *no pre-exilic interpretation* of the fall of Adam" and that "the fall of Adam was *never* linked with the human condition in pre-exilic works. . . . Human 'nature' was not considered inherently sinful in Israelite thought—if one can meaningfully speak about a Hebrew concept of 'human nature.'"³

Obviously, these bold conclusions⁴ are based on assumptions about what preexilic Jews believed. Some assumptions are unavoidable when comparing the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament, yet assumptions based upon an inadequate examination of the sources about ancient Judaism will unavoidably lead to faulty conclusions in any comparison with the Book of Mormon.

For example, should one limit one's inquiry to strictly preexilic works? Lehi was in a sense an exilic prophet, preaching in exile in the wilderness. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and thus may also be compared to them and, as I will demonstrate, not merely to earlier prophets such as Hosea, Isaiah, or Amos.

In particular, assumptions about the account in Genesis 3 must be examined closely. Some scholars have argued that because of its universalistic, etiological concerns it has very early origins,⁵

³ Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion," 82 (emphasis added).

⁴ Ostler, in private correspondence, explains that he only means to say that the extant documents in the Old Testament do not contain extended interpretative discussions of the meaning of the fall of Adam. Nevertheless, he still tends to conclude quite decidedly from his abbreviated survey and assessment of the ancient record that Israelite thought in fact lacked certain understandings about the fall.

⁵ Howard N. Wallace, in *The Eden Narrative*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 46–47; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 154; Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old*

while others view the same universalistic elements as evidence that it should be dated relatively late, presuming Hellenistic philosophy to be the only possible source of the Yahwist's universalism.⁶ The latter analysis assumes a linear theory of "doctrinal evolution," i.e., that doctrines of a later time were unknown earlier. Of course, such an assumption has been widely questioned. Ostler, however, asserts that no preexilic sources link the fall of Adam with the human condition. He bases this argument on the assumption that ancient Near Eastern cultures tended to be particularist rather than universalist, and that they saw literary characters' actions as isolated events rather than representing universal human conditions.

Samuel Noah Kramer, however, has shown that a Sumerian Joblike tale reveals that people in the ancient Near East held a very universalistic outlook as early as 2000 B.C.⁷ So also Yehezkel Kaufmann has shown that assuming universalism to be a characteristic only of later Judaism is an "error, . . . [a] failure to distinguish adequately between the various meanings of religious universalism";⁸ similarly, Francis Andersen criticizes "the idea of progressive evolution,"⁹ noting that "even outside Israel sensitive and reflective souls had been searching for an explanation of human misery from the dawn of literature. . . . [And it is] an ancient and persistent theme in Israel's historical writings."¹⁰ Yet the contention that preexilic biblical writers never linked Adam's fall to the universal condition of man rests on precisely such an assumption about doctrinal evolution and one's interpretation of Genesis 3.

Testament, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 161–66; P. E. S. Thompson, "The Yahwist Creation Story," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 203.

⁶ Nicolas Wyatt, "Interpreting the Creation and Fall Story in Genesis 2–3," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1981): 11; and Thompson, "The Yahwist Creation Story," 205.

⁷ Samuel N. Kramer, "Man and His God: A Sumerian Variation on the 'Job' Motif," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 170–71.

⁸ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (New York: Ktav, 1972), 127.

⁹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Liecester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

To see the resemblances between Lehi's theology and that of Israelite writers such as Hosea and Ezekiel, it is necessary to outline briefly Lehi's theology of the fall. Lehi taught that Adam's fall did not directly transmit sin but rather created circumstances within the world such as death, opposition, temptation, and choice, which all humanity inherited (2 Nephi 2:11–16; see also Alma 42:9, 16–17). In other words, Lehi saw Adam's fall as a transition from immortality to mortality, from an immortal realm to a mortal one. This topic, in particular, recurs in Old Testament literature. While Lehi believed that through the fall humanity was universally lost (2 Nephi 2:21, 26), his words show that he understood this in the sense that all humans had sinned (universal sinfulness) rather than in the sense that humans were wholly depraved (original sin). He also believed that the fall had its fortunate side: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). The particularly fortunate consequences Lehi noted were posterity (2 Nephi 2:23) and freedom forever to choose liberty and life through the great mediator (2 Nephi 2:27).

The main elements of Lehi's theology of the fall—(1) interpreting Adam's fall as a transition from mortality to immortality, (2) applying this interpretation to the universal human condition, and (3) mentioning the fall's fortunate as well as woeful aspects—were present among the doctrines taught to late preexilic and exilic Israel, and were even combined to certain extents by other preexilic and exilic biblical writers.

Preexilic/Exilic Interpretations of Adam's Fall

Recensions of the Fall Account Itself

Because some scholars consider Genesis 2–3 to be the only Old Testament text referring to Adam's fall, it is a primary key in discussing the biblical doctrine of the fall. Gerhard von Rad has written, "The contents of Gen., ch. 2, and especially ch. 3 are conspicuously isolated in the Old Testament. No prophet, psalm, or narrator makes any recognizable reference to the story of the

Fall.”¹¹ This assessment, however, is subject to criticism. While biblical writers never used the word *fall* to refer to Adam’s sin and expulsion, they did refer frequently to Adam and Eden in terms so laden with connotations of sin, punishment, and the descent from immortality to mortality that the direct relation to Genesis 3 is difficult to avoid.

Before discussing such scriptures (e.g., Psalm 82:6–7; Job 31:33; and Ezekiel 28:11–19), I would like to examine an aspect of Genesis that scholars often overlook when counting references to the fall. One of the most widely held theories about the Pentateuch, the Documentary Hypothesis, claims that in its final form the Pentateuch drew from and combined earlier documents (i.e., the Yahwist and Elohist sources). Though some recent studies have seriously challenged the specific applications of the Documentary Hypothesis,¹² it is still possible that there were versions (or recensions) of the Pentateuch (including the Paradise narrative) extant long before it reached its final form. If the text of the Paradise narrative was redacted one or more times, then *later recensions would have served as “interpretations” of the original fall account, while at the same time replacing it and, in effect, would have become part of a centuries-long commentary on Adam’s fall.*

In other words, there may actually have been several versions of the fall account which replaced each other in turn. The theory most scholars give for the development of the Paradise narrative includes three stages: (1) a traditional stage (predating the Yahwist, perhaps an adaptation from indigenous traditions when Israel entered Canaan), (2) a Yahwistic stage (dated around the tenth

¹¹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 102; cf. Louis F. Hartman, “Sin in Paradise,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20 (1958): 26; Frederick R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 97; Emil G. Hirsch, “Fall of Man,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 12 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1903), 5:334; Marvin H. Pope, “Adam,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 17 vols. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 2:234; contra, Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 1: From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 179; Robert Gordis, “The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957): 127.

¹² Such as Yehuda T. Raddy’s *Genesis: An Authorship Survey* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1985), especially 14 and 231.

century B.C.), and, finally, (3) the Priestly stage (dated during or shortly after the exile). Thus, Israelites at the time of the Conquest held one "interpretation" of the fall based on the traditional account, while tenth-century Israelites had another based on the Yahwistic document, and Israelites of the Exile had yet another based on the Priestly. In this manner, "interpretations" which might have been recorded elsewhere (as, for example, Lehi's interpretation in 2 Nephi 2) were instead incorporated into *revisions* of the original text.

Regarding the traditional stage, Cassuto and Wallace have made particularly important studies. Cassuto notes three important indications of a literary tradition of the fall, predating the Pentateuch: (1) there were Israelite epic poems about the fall in circulation before the Torah was ever written; (2) the definite articles used before certain words in Genesis 3 point to an earlier version, since the text mentions without prior introduction *the* tree of life and *the* sword-flame which turned every way, as if the audience were already quite familiar with the particular tree and sword-flame mentioned; and (3) Ezekiel 28:11–19 and 31:8–18 point to an earlier interpretation of Adam's fall which Ezekiel knew of, different from the Priestly interpretation of Genesis 3.¹³ Interestingly, Lehi's reinterpretation of the fall account can also be dated to roughly the time of Ezekiel. As we shall see below, new interpretations of old Israelite traditions were a hallmark of Lehi's and Ezekiel's time.

Wallace also concludes that distinct formulated traditions about the fall existed before the Pentateuch, but he suggests that they were probably oral rather than literary traditions.¹⁴ He notes that Israel's early oral traditions were probably large structures—cycles of several stories which illustrated general themes and focused less on actual phraseology.¹⁵ Concurring with the work of Frank M. Cross, he suggests the probability of an ancient "Israelite epic": "Israel, just as Homeric Greece, Ancient Canaan, and Mesopotamia, was capable of producing long poetic epics."¹⁶

¹³ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 72–74.

¹⁴ Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, 18–21.

¹⁵ Cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 93.

¹⁶ Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, 20.

On the Priestly stage, which *reinterpreted* the Yahwist's writings, Thompson's work is particularly instructive. He states:

The simple Yahwistic narrative had maintained and preserved in Israel the basic insights of the religion of Yahweh. This was its original function before it was made to serve other purposes; when it was later combined with the P account its original purpose was further obscured and instead it was made to illustrate the theme of man's persistent disobedience. . . . While originally as it [Gen. ii 4b–25] was adapted by J, it was a creation story emphasizing the basic insights of Yahwism, it is now merely a necessary introduction to the story of man's disobedience and the consequent modification of God's purposes in creation.¹⁷

Thompson emphasizes a basic point: The Yahwist creation account had a different interpretation of the Creation and of Eden than the Priestly account. Though we can never be certain what this original Yahwist interpretation was, we can assume that it probably existed in some form and that the Priestly form of Genesis modified that interpretation through the subtle means of juxtaposing the creation of man against his fall from Eden.

Thompson holds that this final, modified interpretation (which has retained the same textual form since the time of the Priestly redactor) taught that man had been rebellious against his God since the beginning.¹⁸ Though such a belief is not a doctrine of original sin, it is a doctrine of universal sinfulness—universal fall-*enness*—which is quite close to the doctrine that Lehi teaches in 2 Nephi 2. Cassuto makes the same point: “The answer that the Torah seeks to give . . . to the question of the existence of evil in the world flows from the continuity of the two sections [i.e., the accounts of man's creation and then his fall].”¹⁹ His theory of the Torah is that it culled the wheat from the chaff of earlier traditions, selecting those elements that properly illustrated the truth.²⁰ Thus, the Priestly redactor's juxtaposing of these two narratives

¹⁷ Thompson, “The Yahwist Creation Story,” 207.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁹ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 92.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

reveals the interpretation that “man’s transgressions were the cause of all manner of evils and troubles (iii 16–19).”²¹

These stages of interpretation demonstrate that concepts of Adam’s fall existed for centuries, undergoing modification as subsequent redactors gave somewhat different interpretations of Adam in Eden. Rather than explicitly stating their differences from formerly held interpretations, redactors adopted the less confrontational approach of restructuring the existing text to more clearly represent their views. Thus, the final redactors of the Pentateuch left only the version that conformed to their interpretations—as well as some seams and doublets that reveal their work.

This final Priestly interpretation of the fall (and indeed of the entire primeval history) probably existed at the time of Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem. Although some scholars disagree about when the Pentateuch reached its final form, David Noel Freedman concluded in 1983 that the consensus of scholars had for twenty years affirmed that the earliest version of the Bible was “organized and compiled, published and promulgated during the Babylonian Exile.”²² This earliest version of the Bible “contained the ‘Primary History,’ comprised of the Torah (Pentateuch) and the Former Prophets (Joshua–2 Kings) as well as the bulk of the prophetic works,” and he further notes that “no such postexilic additions or changes were apparently made in the Primary History or in the books of the major prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel; these works must have already been fixed.”²³ He brings the date of the final, fixed form several decades nearer to Lehi by saying, “The absence of data for the intervening years (586–561 [B.C.]) shows that the historical work effectively ended with the fall of Jerusalem.”²⁴ This gap between Jerusalem’s fall and Lehi’s flight in 597 B.C. is not large, and the changes the Pentateuch might have undergone in that short time were not likely very large. Thus, we may confidently conclude that what we read in Genesis today is very nearly the same as what Lehi read in 597 B.C.

²¹ Ibid., 92.

²² David Noel Freedman, “The Earliest Bible,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 22 (Summer 1983): 167.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 168.

References to Adam's Fall in Other Preexilic/Exilic Scriptures

Though there are numerous biblical passages that mention Adam, Eden, or various doctrinal points deriving from the Paradise narrative, four biblical passages refer to the fall account in ways that particularly illuminate Lehi's doctrine: Psalm 82:7, Hosea 6:7, Job 31:33, and Ezekiel 28:11–19.

As we shall see, three of these four scriptures (not Hosea 6:7) mention the fall of Adam in close connection with the fall of Satan. Lehi's discourse on the fall also notes this connection: "And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God . . . had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, . . . [and] he said unto Eve, . . . Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (2 Nephi 2:17–18). However, many translators have tended to downplay this connection and, indeed, any significance Adam's fall may have had in the Old Testament. That position, however, does not appear to be justified.

There may be more references to Adam in the Old Testament than are commonly noticed. Since, in Hebrew, *ʾādām* can mean either "man" or the proper noun *Adam*, depending on context, passages that may originally have had clear reference to Adam may have been translated as referring only to man. Robert Gordis, commenting on Psalm 82:7, noted,

It is inexplicable to us that modern interpreters have failed to recognize the proper noun in *ʾādām* in this Psalm. Similarly, Hosea (6:7) refers to his contemporaries as violating God's covenant *ke-ʾādām* "as did Adam," and Job (31:33) protests that he did not try to hide any of his transgressions *ke-ʾādām* "as did Adam." In view of the vast interest in Adam in post-biblical thought, we cannot understand the endeavor to ignore such references to him in the OT, particularly since the rendering "like men" in these passages is exegetically inferior.²⁵

²⁵ Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," 127 n. 16.

Although the four passages mentioned above are the only Old Testament passages outside of Genesis that attach any theological significance to the name ʾāḏām (other references to the proper noun *Adam*, such as 1 Chronicles 1:1, use it in a genealogical sense only), these passages associate Adam with the themes of the fall—sin, punishment, and the metamorphosis from immortality to mortality—frequently enough that other OT references addressing these same themes could have alluded to Adam without the explicit reference. Each of the four passages will be considered below.

Psalm 82:7. But ye shall die like men [*ke-ʾāḏām*],
and fall like one of the princes.

Many recent commentators have maintained that this passage speaks of mankind rather than of Adam (although in light of Genesis 3 it should be obvious that to “die like Adam” is by definition to die like mankind). Thus Dahood renders it as, “Yet you shall die as men do, and fall like any prince,”²⁶ and both Rogerson and Kidner prefer the *like men* translation, though giving the alternate reading *like Adam* in the footnotes.²⁷

Kidner reasons as follows: “This could be translated ‘like Adam,’ but the parallel expression, ‘like any prince’ is too general to make this likely.”²⁸ Dahood’s analysis follows similar lines:

Expressions such as UT, 51,vii:43, *umlk ublmlk* “either king or commoner,” or Phoenician Karatepe III:19–IV:1, *hmlk hʿ wʿyt ʿdm hʿ*, “that king or that man,” would suggest that the pair $\text{ʾāḏām} . . . \text{sārîm}$ forms a merism denoting “all mortals.”²⁹

Both reasonings, however, are quite brief, taking no time to explain other possible interpretations or why theirs are better.

²⁶ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 51–100* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965–70), 268.

²⁷ J. W. Rogerson, *Psalms 51–100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 163, and Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 299.

²⁸ Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 299 n. 1.

²⁹ Dahood, *Psalms 51–100*, 270 n. 7.

On the other hand, more thorough studies such as Morgenstern's "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82" and Mullen's *The Assembly of the Gods*, after taking into account other views, still find that Psalm 82:7 clearly refers to Adam. Morgenstern, basing his translation directly on literary parallels between the Hebrew words *môt tāmūt* in (very significantly) Genesis 2:17 and the word *tēmūtūn* in Psalm 82:7 (rather than the relatively distant Ugaritic and Phoenician similarities Dahood uses) translates the phrase thus: "and like mankind shall ye become mortal."³⁰ Although this translation does not use Adam's name directly, it does clearly refer to becoming "mortal"—the process of changing from immortality to mortality, rather than simply dying³¹—which is unquestionably to be associated with the process Adam underwent at the Fall.

Mullen actually uses the name Adam as the preferred translation here (as does Gordis, above). He bases his analysis on the Hebrew poetic principle of parallelism, a good assumption since almost all commentators and translators have acknowledged the parallel construction of verse 7:

The reading "man" (*'ādām*) does not form a good parallel with "Shining Ones" (*sārîm*) ["princes"] in 7b. . . . By reading *'ādām* as a reference to the primal revolt of the first man against God, an excellent parallel is given to the heavenly revolt leading to the gods' being cast into the Underworld.³²

What makes this such a persuasive parallelism is the context set by the rest of the psalm. Set in a council of the gods (Psalm 82:1: "God standeth in the congregation; . . . he judgeth among the gods"), the psalm describes God's judgment upon those who have judged unjustly and failed to defend the poor and fatherless.

³⁰ Julian Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 14 (1939): 74 n. 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³² E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods*, Frank Moore Cross, Jr., ed. (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980), 243–44.

Those under condemnation have been variously construed to be earthly judges,³³ pagan gods,³⁴ or a class of divine beings.³⁵

For our purposes we need not resolve this question. Whether those receiving judgment were gods or humans themselves, the important point is that Psalm 82 shows a belief that God's sentence involved losing immortality, which Psalm 82:7 illustrates with two parallel images: Adam's loss of immortality and the *sārîm*'s loss of immortality. Since this punishment comes as a result of sin (failure to judge righteously or defend the helpless, Psalm 82:2–4), it can be reasonably inferred that at the time of this psalm's writing, the ancient Israelites believed that Adam's loss of immortality, as the *sārîm*'s loss of immortality, resulted from some sin and, as suggested by the fact that many translators see here a reference to *mankind in general*, that mankind *universally inherited death from Adam*.

The psalm indicates the disobedience of those "said [to be] gods" (Psalm 82:6) by using, in parallelism, two mythological types of rebellion that run throughout the Old Testament—not only the fall of humans (Genesis 3), but the fall of certain divine beings as well (Genesis 6:1–4; cf. Isaiah 14:12–15). Interestingly enough, Lehi also mentions both these elements in his discourse on the fall (2 Nephi 2:17–27). Morgenstern, in his hundred-page analysis of Psalm 82, which to this day remains one of its most complete and persuasive analyses, notes that

the almost invariable translation [of Psalm 82:7b], "and as one of the princes shall (or 'do') ye fall," can not express the real meaning of the clause. . . . By the laws of Hebrew poetry the thought of v. 7b must be in parallelism of some kind with that of v. 7a. But to render the v., "But ye must die as men do, yea, even as one of the princes must ye fall," fails to bring out the real parallelism of the thought of the two parts of the v., since, as we have seen, while it is the inescapable fate of all men to die, it is by no means the same inescapable

³³ Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms* (New York: Alba House, 1974), 307.

³⁴ Dahood, *Psalms 51–100*, 268.

³⁵ Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods*, 244; Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 114–18.

fate of princes that they must fall, presumably in battle.³⁶

Thus, he concludes that the psalm speaks not of princes, but of divine beings who, being condemned by God, inevitably had to relinquish their immortality.

If this passage does reflect an ancient belief that Adam and the *sārîm* lost their immortal state by sinning, a belief Lehi shares (2 Nephi 2:17–18), then it is well to ask when Psalm 82 was written. Sabourin dates the psalm as preexilic,³⁷ and Dahood (following Ackerman) is even more specific about assigning it to the premonarchical period on the basis of the “archaic quality of the language.”³⁸ Morgenstern dates it at 500 B.C.,³⁹ but admits that the themes involved are much older. Thus, recent scholarly opinion generally holds this verse to be a complex preexilic reference to the fall of Adam, also linking that fall through parallelism to the fall of other divine beings.

Hosea 6:7. But they like men [*ke-ʿādām*] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

This scripture is difficult to interpret,⁴⁰ but the general tendency of scholars today is to read *ʿādām* as the name of a city on the Jordan River (cf. Joshua 3:16) rather than as Adam’s name.⁴¹ Of course, there are still some who maintain that the verse refers directly to Adam,⁴² but their views have been found generally less convincing.

The major problem with reading *ʿādām* as Adam’s name is the word immediately following *ʿādām*—*there*. *There* functions as a locative, identifying where the covenant transgression occurred. It

³⁶ Morgenstern, “The Mythological Background of Psalm 82,” 37.

³⁷ Sabourin, *The Psalms*, 24, 308–9.

³⁸ Dahood, *Psalms 51–100*, 269.

³⁹ Morgenstern, “The Mythological Background of Psalm 82,” 121.

⁴⁰ James L. Mays, *Hosea* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 99; F. I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 438.

⁴¹ Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea*, Gary Stansell, tr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 105; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 438; Mays, *Hosea*, 100.

⁴² Leon J. Wood, *Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 195; Nielsen quoted in Wolff, *Hosea*, 105.

does not seem likely that Hosea would have used *there* if he were talking about Adam. If he had meant to refer to Adam's sin, he could have said, "But they as at *Eden* have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me." This rendering would make more sense grammatically.

Furthermore, the context of Hosea 7 makes it fairly clear that he is condemning the house of Israel in his generation, prophesying the fall of the Northern Kingdom that occurred in 722 B.C. Certainly something more than Adam's sin must have been involved here to precipitate the fall of the Northern Kingdom, for Israel's punishment at that time would have been no different than at any other, had they been solely under the perpetual judgment resulting from original sin. But some particularly wicked events occurred at the time that Hosea prophesied (in the few decades prior to 722 B.C.) which made the Northern Kingdom especially vulnerable to God's judgment.

Andersen and Freedman's analysis in this regard is very convincing. They note that Hosea in this particular section (Hosea 6:7–7:2) is condemning Israel's priests for especially wicked conduct.⁴³ Wolff concurs that it is Israel's priests rather than the nation in general who are implicated here.⁴⁴ What was their great wickedness? The answer seems to be murder. Verse 9 seems to indicate that a band of priests similar to a gang of robbers committed murder on the road to Shechem.⁴⁵ Geographically, a city of Adam on the Jordan River would lie along this route, thus harmonizing the geographical details of the passage with the theme—namely, the condemnation of a grossly wicked act. Thus, contrary to Gordis's and Wood's interpretations, the best way to make sense of this passage is to translate *ʾādām* as a place name rather than as a reference to Adam in Eden.

Nevertheless, Hosea may have chosen to focus on an incident which associated the word *ʾādām* with gross wickedness (indeed, wickedness on the part of the priestly patriarchs of the community leading to the downfall of the entire kingdom) because of its allusion to the ancestral Adam and his transgression, which led to the downfall of all humanity. As Andersen and Freedman note, "the J

43 Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 463.

44 Wolff, *Hosea*, 100.

45 Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 463.

corpus had settled long before Hosea ever wrote," so Hosea was probably aware of the associations that would be conjured up in the minds of his hearers by his use of such a rare name from the Yahwist Paradise narrative. Hosea could have chosen any of a number of Israel's sins to describe; why did he choose to single out the events at a place named Adam in his prophecy? The gravity of the crime is one possibility. But another is the symbolic link between Adam's transgression in Eden and Israel's priests who acted wickedly at the place Adam.

Virtually all commentators agree that the text of Hosea can be dated as coming from the eighth-century prophet himself, based on evidence within the book which places him in the period "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, . . . king of Israel" (Hosea 1:1). Thus Lehi could easily have been aware of his teachings and language.

Job 31:33. If I covered my transgressions as Adam
[ke-ʔādām], by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.

Like Hosea, the book of Job presents many textual complexities which make it difficult to translate. However, the book of Job—more than any other book in the Bible—treats the issue of universal sinfulness and its relation to the human condition. This particular passage is one of the clearest references to Adam outside the book of Genesis.

The majority of recent commentators concur that this passage should be translated as an obvious reference to Adam.⁴⁶ No commentator gives much reason for that translation, except to say that Job's real innocence appears more clearly when contrasted with Adam's merely pretended innocence.⁴⁷ Rowley, by rejecting the Adam reading, holds a minority opinion.⁴⁸ He gives no reason for his opinion but notes that three earlier editors interpreted the

⁴⁶ Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), 238; Andersen, *Job*, 244; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 353; and Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 438.

⁴⁷ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, 438.

⁴⁸ Harold H. Rowley, ed., *Job* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1970), 258.

verse the same way he did. On the other hand, Andersen notes that the comparison to Adam seems “apparent,”⁴⁹ and Gordis reiterates his perplexity that modern interpreters ignore biblical references to Adam,⁵⁰ but neither goes further in explaining why his interpretation should be preferred. All in all, recent scholars appear not to require minute argument over this point, since they generally agree that the reference to Adam is obvious.

Furthermore, elements of the book of Job itself indicate that this passage refers to Adam. The context of the passage supports this interpretation. This chapter is Job’s “oath of clearance,” in which he disclaims guilt to any of a whole series of sins. Several commentators see in this verse Job’s disclaiming the particular sin of hypocrisy.⁵¹ Within the context of the chapter—namely, a disclaimer of individual sins—this seems reasonable. However, hypocrisy is the covering of other sins. So, quite significantly, this verse—as the culmination of chapter 31 and, indeed, of Job’s protestations throughout the entire book—emphasizes that Job is not hiding his sins as Adam did in Eden. Throughout the book, Job has insisted that he is guiltless. This passage, as the specific validation of his claim, does not imply that he bears even the smallest degree of guilt for Adam’s actions; rather, it sees Adam as an example of hypocrisy, sinning and then “hiding his guilt in his bosom.”

While it is true that Job himself does not believe that he is guilty because of any of Adam’s actions, it is equally true that Job makes this protest as an argument against his friends’ (particularly Eliphaz’s) criticisms, which are based on the fact that he is mortal, a descendant of Adam—and as such, unavoidably guilty (cf. Job 4:17; 15:14; 25:4). Thus, though the character Job does not believe he is guilty by virtue of his being mortal, the book of Job shows that a belief in universal sinfulness, represented by the accusations of his friends, existed when the book was written.

When, then, was the book of Job written? No one has said for certain. The book’s complete paucity of references to external events denies us concrete indicators; consequently, scholars have proposed dates ranging from the tenth to the third centuries B.C.

49 Andersen, *Job*, 244.

50 Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 353.

51 Rowley, *Job*, 258; Andersen, *Job*, 244.

Scholars such as Rowley have dated Job in the postexilic era for such reasons as its Aramaisms, the universalistic way it deals with human suffering, and the way it confronts a doctrine common to the Deuteronomistic school—that the wicked are invariably punished for their evil ways.⁵² Habel is more conservative, saying that while “nothing conclusive can be ascertained; . . . a date after 600 B.C. appears most probable because of the connections with Jeremiah.”⁵³ On the other hand, Andersen⁵⁴ and Pope⁵⁵ suggest preexilic dates. Both note that there is no way to reach a definite conclusion, but they bring up several persuasive points. First of all, Andersen notes a study (by Freedman) of Job’s orthographic peculiarities such as Aramaisms which makes “any date later than the seventh century hard to uphold”;⁵⁶ and second, Pope notes that the very element which makes it hard to date—its lack of nationalistic concerns and especially its choice of an Edomite for its hero—mitigate against its being written in the postexilic period. He notes,

If the author of Job had experienced the national tragedy, his reaction is strange for he betrays no nationalist concerns. Moreover, the choice of an Edomite as the hero of the story would have been an affront to nationalist sentiments for it was the Edomites in particular who rejoiced in the humiliation of Judah and took full advantage of their brothers’ misfortune.⁵⁷

Thus, Pope concludes that “the seventh century B.C. seems the best guess,”⁵⁸ and Andersen likewise pushes the date back to the time of Josiah.⁵⁹ Since Habel also allows that a date in either the

⁵² Rowley, *Job*, 22.

⁵³ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 10.

⁵⁴ Andersen, *Job*, 62–63.

⁵⁵ Pope, *Job*, xxxiv–xl.

⁵⁶ Andersen, *Job*, 62.

⁵⁷ Pope, *Job*, xxxv–xxxvi; cf. Habel, *The Book of Job*, 9.

⁵⁸ Pope, *Job*, xl.

⁵⁹ Andersen, *Job*, 63.

sixth or seventh centuries would be possible,⁶⁰ and, for the reasons Pope and Andersen give above, a reasonable date for Job is sometime in the seventh century.

One thing, however, is certain: there were ancient versions of Joblike stories circulating in Mesopotamia as early as 2,000 B.C. Kramer's discovery of a Sumerian version of the Job motif in an account called "Man and His God" gives conclusive evidence of this. Although there are considerable differences between the Sumerian and Israelite versions of Job, the phrase from the Sumerian version, "Never has a sinless child been born to its mother"⁶¹ bears striking resemblance to Job 15:14 ("What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?") and 25:4 ("how can he be clean that is born of a woman?"). Characteristics of the Israelite Job—those of sufferer and comforter—also appear in the Babylonian Theodicy, dated c. 1000 B.C.⁶² So, despite the significant differences between various versions of the story, they all seem to include the idea that mortals are inherently guilty. This particular aspect of the book of Job (and the aspect which has the most bearing on Lehi's doctrine of the fall) was thus extant in the region centuries before the Exile, and could very well have been known to Lehi.

It is also significant that Job 4:17–18 and 15:15, like Psalm 82, associate man's fallen and unworthy state with that of fallen divine beings. Eliphaz and Bildad both ask Job if he can consider himself innocent when God has charged his very angels with sin. The angels to whom they refer are most likely Satan and his angels (Isaiah 14:12–15) or the *benê hā-ēlōhîm* (sons of God; Genesis 6:1–4), as Morgenstern's analysis of Psalm 82:7 has justified in great detail.⁶³

Finally, it is very interesting that the book of Job shows that evil is part of God's plan. As Pope notes, "Satan does not figure in the Epilogue [of Job], which lays the responsibility for Job's misfortunes entirely on Yahweh (xlii 11)."⁶⁴ The book of Job

⁶⁰ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 10.

⁶¹ Kramer, "Man and His God," 179.

⁶² Pope, *Job*, xxxvii.

⁶³ Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 29–126.

⁶⁴ Pope, *Job*, xxxvii.

shows that Yahweh allowed Satan to afflict Job (Job 1:9–11) to test his righteousness. This idea that God allows affliction in order to test humanity is very similar to Lehi's teaching that there must be opposition in all things (2 Nephi 2:11–18, especially verse 16: "Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other [good and evil]"), and even the doctrine taught elsewhere in Mormon scripture that the primeval council decided, "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:25). In the book of Job, Job's righteousness appears through his suffering. Satan's premise, which God accepts, is that Job has not been sufficiently tested—therefore God allows Job's suffering. Likewise, Lehi's theology calls for opposition in order to make true righteousness possible.

Ezekiel 28:11–19, especially verses 13–15. Thou [king of Tyrus] hast been in Eden the garden of God . . . till iniquity was found in thee.

Nine passages in the Old Testament outside of Genesis make significant reference to the Garden of Eden. Five of these refer to Eden by name, while the other four (all in the Song of Solomon) are part of what some scholars consider to be a "midrash" on Genesis 2–3,⁶⁵ a parallel version of Paradise lost in which Paradise is regained.

The five passages that unmistakably refer to the Garden of Eden include:

1. Ezekiel 28:11–19 (quoted above).
2. Ezekiel 31:8–18, especially verses 9 and 11: "I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him. . . . I have driven him out for his wickedness."
3. Ezekiel 36:35: "And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited."

⁶⁵ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 208–9.

4. Isaiah 51:3: "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord."

5. Joel 2:3: "A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them."

Of these five the most significant is Ezekiel 28:11–19. This passage is probably the most widely recognized parallel to Genesis 2–3 in all the Bible. Walther Zimmerli, who in his 1983 commentary analyzed this passage more thoroughly than any other recent writer, concluded that

It can scarcely be overlooked that from a traditional-historical point of view this account [Ezekiel 28:11–19] has close connections with Genesis 2f, the Yahwistic paradise narrative, and that it reveals an independent form of the tradition which is at the basis of that narrative.⁶⁶

Gordis, Wallace, McKenzie, May, and Taylor all interpret Ezekiel's lament of Tyre's king as a Hebrew variant of Adam's fall.⁶⁷ Soggin and Ries also see Ezekiel 28 as a reference to Adam's fall, though they go into less detail.⁶⁸ Only a few predominantly Jewish sources such as Hirsch and Cohon dispute that Ezekiel refers to the fall.⁶⁹

The reasoning in support of the idea that Ezekiel here uses another version of the fall story (perhaps an earlier version with

⁶⁶ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, trans. James Martin, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 2:90.

⁶⁷ Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," 127; Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, 184; John L. McKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2–3," *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 541–72, quoted in Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, 184; and John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer's Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1969), 196.

⁶⁸ J. A. Soggin, *The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975), 105; Julien Ries, "The Fall," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, 16 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 5:265.

⁶⁹ Hirsch, "Fall of Man," 5:334, and Samuel S. Cohon, "Original Sin," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 21 (1948): 275–330.

which the Phoenicians would have been more familiar) is quite persuasive. It is fairly obvious that the passage states that the king of Tyre will fall from his position of power and blessedness because of his iniquity, just as the being found in Eden, the garden of God, fell from his blessed state because of sin. The comparison between the king of Tyre and some fallen being is practically undisputed.

But scholars have disagreed over what type of fallen being Ezekiel may have referred to. Ezekiel 28:14, "Thou *art* the anointed cherub" (according to the KJV) strongly suggests that this fallen being is a divine being whose fall is similar to Satan's fall in Isaiah 14:12–15. Morgenstern finds "decisive evidence" that Ezekiel 28 is a literary variant of Isaiah 14:12–15,⁷⁰ a view Enns shares.⁷¹ Both see the sin of pride (based on Ezekiel 28:2 and 17) and the being's association with a cherub as clear evidence that the passage refers to Satan in his prefallen state rather than to Adam in Eden. Cassuto also holds that the decisive difference between Ezekiel 28 and Genesis 2–3 is that the former depicts the fate of a cherub, while the latter depicts the fate of a man.⁷²

However, Zimmerli points out that "the identification of the creature addressed with this cherub, which is attempted by M, cannot be maintained on the basis of the critically emended text."⁷³ Thus, Zimmerli translates Ezekiel 28:14 as "I associated you with the guardian cherub," thus reinforcing the idea that the being expelled from the garden was Adam, not the cherub.⁷⁴ This interpretation also harmonizes with the unequivocal reference to Eden in Ezekiel 28:13. Adam was the being cast out of Eden, and the cherub was the guardian. Divine beings were never cast out of Eden, but were cast only out of heaven. It is more consistent to see the references to the guardian cherub as an association between Adam and the guardian cherub of Genesis 2–3 rather than to create a version of the myth unattested elsewhere. Even in the story of Satan's fall, Satan is not considered to be a guardian of

⁷⁰ Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 111.

⁷¹ Paul Enns, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 131.

⁷² Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 81.

⁷³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 2:90.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

anything, nor does he ever enter the Garden of Eden until after he is cast out of heaven.

Interestingly, the fact that scholars see in this passage references to both the fall of Adam (Genesis 2–3) and the fall of Satan (Isaiah 14) makes Ezekiel 28:12–18 one of the most powerful indications of what Jerusalem's people believed in the days of Lehi. Lehi uses both the Genesis 2–3 story and the Isaiah 14 story to explain evil in the world (2 Nephi 2). Since Ezekiel is the only prophet in the Bible to do likewise, this corroborates the point that **Lehi and Ezekiel were contemporaries.**

As noted above, Lehi's interpretation of the Fall is unique in the Book of Mormon. But it came at a time in Israel's history when several prophets were reinterpreting the old traditions of Israel. Von Rad notes,

In the view of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Israel has broken the covenant. Of course, Amos and Hosea could also have said this; but what does Jeremiah mean by giving the *torah* a central place in what he says on the subject (Jer. XXXI, 33)? The reason why we now find considerations of the Law which were absent in Amos, Isaiah, and Micah is, first of all, that as a result of the current tendencies to revive the past, this whole age had suddenly become interested in the ancient traditions. . . . We may sum it up thus: confronted with the eschatological situation, the prophets were set the task of taking the old regulations and making them the basis of an entirely new interpretation of Jahweh's current demands upon Israel.⁷⁵

Thus, **Lehi's interpretation in 2 Nephi 2 of the fall account** appears to be one strand in this "entirely new interpretation of Jahweh's current demands upon [his branch of] Israel." Since, as von Rad suggests, such reinterpretation was a hallmark of prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Lehi's contemporaries), Lehi's interpretation appears to fit quite naturally into the time period

⁷⁵ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962–65), 2:398–400.

immediately surrounding the Exile, as the Book of Mormon asserts.

The Biblical Doctrine of Human Nature

Several scholars have suggested that the early Israelites did not link the fall of Adam to human nature. Ostler goes further, claiming that they did not have a concept of human nature.⁷⁶ Samuel S. Cohon stated that

The name Garden of Eden, in Isa. 51.3 and Joel 2.3, the figure "tree of life" in Prov. 3.18; 11.30; 13.12, and the related "fountain of life" in Ps. 36.10 [9]; Prov. 10.11; 13.14; 14.27 are mere verbal elements coming from the same stock as the folk tale in Genesis. Similarly Job 34.15; Ps. 90.3; Eccl. 12.7, which speak of man's return to dust, and Isa. 65.25; Micah 7.17, which allude to the serpent's eating dust, express common beliefs and do not necessarily point to the Genesis story.⁷⁷

However, Cohon never gives any reason beyond mere assertion that these were common beliefs. Furthermore, just who held these beliefs? Pagan, gentile cultures? If so, then why did the compilers of the Old Testament (whose penchant for demythologizing and depaganizing is well known [cf. Soggin]) retain such a profusion of references to them? Cohon finds fourteen passages worth mentioning in the paragraph above. If they were common beliefs in Israel, why would the passages not have been genuine interpretations of Genesis 3 that found their way into scripture? Von Rad notes that the ancient Israelites as early as the Yahwistic period (1000–800 B.C.) viewed man in a universalistic, rather than a particularistic sense.

This, of course, does not mean that Israel never properly saw into the phenomenon of man. The very opposite is true, for in the primeval history (Gen. I–XI) which precedes the saving history, she expressed a real

⁷⁶ Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion," 82.

⁷⁷ Cohon, "Original Sin," 283 n. 11.

wealth of insights into the nature of man. Jahwism had, therefore, opened up a wide range of insights into man; . . . each of the Old Testament histories [both the primeval and the saving] shows in its specific way this man freely exercising all his potentialities. The picture of his relationship with God is fairly uniformly presented. Man is everywhere ready to oppose God and to fall away from him.⁷⁸

We find the earliest biblical reference to man's universal sinfulness in a very significant passage, Solomon's dedicatory prayer of the great temple (1 Kings 8:46): "For there is no man that sinneth not." This passage is important because it is definitely pre-exilic (Solomon's dedication of the temple was one of the most important events in Israel's history and appears to have been carefully recorded). It is also important because its parenthetical, almost offhand mention of man's sinfulness reveals it to be a doctrine that Solomon felt to be obvious enough that it required no further elaboration.

Oddly, scholars have usually ignored this obvious fact. Tennant, Cohon, and others note that no link is ever made between this doctrine of universal sinfulness and Adam, yet fail to take into account the significant fact that the very word for *man* in Hebrew is the same as Adam—^ʾ*ādām*. Tennant, while denying that there is any direct link between universal sinfulness and Adam, notes that "the narrative of the Fall . . . merely implies that the physical evils which he [Adam] brought upon himself as punishments were also visited upon his descendants."⁷⁹ Yet, the two most obvious physical evils Adam brought upon himself were death and separation from God. Any Israelite would have easily noticed that he, like Adam, was going to die and that he, like Adam, was no longer in the presence of God. It is this obviousness that Solomon implies in his brief reference that "there is no ^ʾ*ādām* that sinneth not."

Cohon next argues that the author of Psalm 51:7 suggests that "humans . . . are prone to sinfulness from the very womb" (cf. Isaiah 6:5; 43:27; 48:8; 57:3). That he does not imply that an ineradicable taint attaches to human nature is evident from the

⁷⁸ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:348.

⁷⁹ Tennant, *The Fall and Original Sin*, 100.

sequel in which he assumes "that man may enjoy the state of spotless purity."⁸⁰ However, all the examples that he gives of people enjoying spotless purity—Noah, Enoch, Abraham⁸¹—are people whom God saved through special covenant and not through their own righteousness. That their righteousness made them worthy to receive the covenant is certain, but that the covenant bestowed special blessings not given to universal humanity is equally certain. The taint may not be ineradicable, but it is universal, and its eradication requires covenant with God. Indeed, this is the thesis of Lehi's fall doctrine—that men are fallen and always will be unless they enter into covenant with their God that he will save them.

This doctrine seemed particularly important in Lehi's day. As von Rad notes: "While the earlier prophets had spoken of Israel's utter and complete failure *vis-a-vis* Jahweh, Jeremiah and Ezekiel reach the insight that she is inherently utterly unable to obey him."⁸² Kaufman also notes that the idea of universal sinfulness was a fundamental preexilic notion:

The idea of man's rebelliousness, by which Genesis explains the origins of the human condition, is a fundamental idea of biblical literature and of the Israelite religion in general; . . . these legends are not late creations, the product of scholastic speculation. They are primary, the very foundation stone of the biblical world.⁸³

In the book of Job, which, as we have seen, was probably extant in Lehi's day, the idea of man's **universal sinfulness** also recurs four times: 4:17; 14:4; 15:7–14; and 25:4. In these passages, Job's friends try to encourage him to cease his protestations of innocence because he, being mortal, cannot possibly be sinless before God. Though Job refuses to succumb, and though the Lord's visitation to Job validates Job's claim to sinlessness, the book reveals that the friends' interpretation of man's state was a popular belief of the day. Thus, it is clear that preexilic Israelites

⁸⁰ Cohon, "Original Sin," 283.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁸² Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:398.

⁸³ Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings*, 295.

believed something very similar to Lehi's words: "all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state" (1 Nephi 10:6).

The Fortunate Side of Adam's Fall

Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon make numerous references to mankind's universal sinfulness, but seldom do they refer to the more complex ideas of opposition and the fortunate fall. Second Nephi 2 stands alone among scriptural passages for the thorough analysis it gives the many implications of the fall. In addition to 2 Nephi 2, I have found roughly as many possible references to Adam's fall in the preexilic/exilic Old Testament (though they are generally not as lengthy) as in the Book of Mormon (see appendix).

The Book of Mormon never states that Adam's fall was completely fortunate. Indeed, Lehi talks about how Adam's fall caused all mankind to be lost, a negative aspect of the fall. But he does something virtually unique in the Book of Mormon—he declares the fortunate side of Adam's fall. However, it must be remembered that Lehi's teaching here is a unique synthesis of preexilic ideas and is repeated only once in the Book of Mormon (cf. Alma 42:5–8). This fortunate side contains at least two aspects: (1) freedom, which comes solely from opposition and redemption from the fall (never expressly articulated as spiritual growth, but stated in terms of freedom to choose life or death: 2 Nephi 2:27; cf. 2 Nephi 10:23; Deuteronomy 30:15, 19—as Ostler rightly says) and (2) posterity.

Of course, implicit in Lehi's doctrine of the fortunate side of the fall is that evil is part of God's plan. This is not a new result of "doctrinal evolution." Kramer notes that this idea of evil's being part of God's plan dates back at least as far as 2,000 B.C., when the Sumerians developed their world view of evil.⁸⁴ The scene in the Prologue of biblical Job, in which God allows Satan to go down and test Job's faithfulness, is also very close to Lehi's teaching that opposition is allowed by God in order to give men freedom to choose.

The idea of opposition's being necessary for the existence of choice is an old one. Deuteronomy 30:15–20, a text most scholars

⁸⁴ Kramer, "Man and His God," 171 n. 1.

believe to have been fixed before the reign of Josiah,⁸⁵ linked good and evil, life and death, as opposites that the Israelites had to choose between.⁸⁶ It also linked the choice for life with multiplying and with the Lord's promise to bless his children in the land, just as Lehi connects these ideas in the chapter immediately preceding his discourse on the fall (2 Nephi 1:20, "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land"). The opposing choices set before the Israelites were life and death, blessing and cursing, with the express purpose of *enabling* them to choose good. Perhaps Deuteronomy 30:15–20 was the text that influenced Lehi in his doctrine of opposition, for it contains many of the same elements.

In addition, Kaufman has discussed the role that freedom played in preexilic Jewish thought, saying that free will was a fundamental tenet of Israelite belief, for they believed that men were responsible for bringing upon themselves their own evils.⁸⁷

The book of Job also contains another idea closely resembling Lehi's belief about the fortunate side of the fall. As Andersen notes, the message of Job is that suffering may be for man's good as well as his punishment. Man does not notice this except in retrospect, when he finds that his trials have usually helped him. In Job's case, he was blessed more at the end of his trials than he was in the beginning.

Furthermore, the Prologue of Job shows that its author had a conception that opposition was necessary for true choice. When the Lord says to Satan, "Have you observed the faithfulness of my servant Job?" Satan replies that naturally Job is faithful: he has never experienced sore opposition. Then the Lord allows Satan to test Job's faithfulness not once, but twice. This testing through trial, or opposition, is key to the conflict of the book of Job. Interestingly, it is also central to Lehi's explanation of evil in the world.

⁸⁵ Freedman, "The Earliest Bible," 168–70.

⁸⁶ Martin Buber, *Good and Evil: Two Interpretations* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1953).

⁸⁷ Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings*, 76, 293; cf. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:272, 277, 418–21; Herold S. Stern, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," *Vetus Testamentum* 8 (1958): 409–10; and Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 113, 163.

Conclusion

Though the Old Testament never refers to Adam's sin by using the word *fall*, it does teach or reflect the following basic elements of this doctrine in various scriptures: (1) that Adam's sin resulted in a metamorphosis from immortality to mortality, (2) that mankind inherited its mortal state from Adam, (3) that all mankind has fallen into sin, and (4) that evil and suffering in the world could be for man's benefit as well as his punishment. These doctrines were brought together by the Prophet Lehi in one of the most complete discourses on the fall recorded.

- Genesis 11:1–9
 Cohon, "Original Sin," 281
 Ries, "The Fall," 5:265
 Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, 130–31
 von Rad, *Genesis*, 24
- Deuteronomy
 30:15–20
 Buber, *Good and Evil*, 119
 Ries, "The Fall," 5:265
 Gordis, *Job*, 55
- 1 Kings 8:46
 Cohon, "Original Sin," 282
 Jacobs, "Sin," 14:1589
 Tennant, *The Fall and Original Sin*, 101
 Sabourin, *The Psalms*, 106, 243
 Dahood, *Psalms 51–100*, 4
- 2 Chronicles 6:36
 Cohon, "Original Sin," 282
 Tennant, *The Fall and Original Sin*, 101
- Job 4:17
 Cohon, "Original Sin," 282
 Tennant, *The Fall and Original Sin*, 101
 Habel, *The Book of Job*, 24–25
 Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*,
 128–30
 Pope, *Job*, 37
 Gordis, *Job*, 50
- Job 5:6–7
 Habel, *The Book of Job*, 32
 Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*,
 131–32
 Rowley, *Job*, 61
 Pope, *Job*, 42–43
 Gordis, *Job*, 55

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