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Editorial Techniques

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Chapter 18

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And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands. (Words of Mormon 3)

Like the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon contains considerable evidence for editorial activity. Beginning with the title page, readers of the Book of Mormon are introduced to the concept of abridgment:

The Book of Mormon: an account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi and also of the Lamanites . . . An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also.

The Book of Mormon contains a complicated history, far too complex for the imagination of a nineteenth-century farm boy from upstate New York. Yet this elaborate history clearly indicates that the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament share a common literary background.

Since the nineteenth century, biblical scholars have devoted significant attention to editorial activity in the Old Testament. Currently, the standard perception held by most biblical scholars concerning the

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development of the Old Testament is similar to that depicted in the Book of Mormon. Like the books of the Book of Mormon, the books of the Old Testament have literally been “abridged” from a variety of ancient sources.

Research into this area has led to the identification of several editorial techniques used by biblical authors. As will be shown, some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that an actual school existed that trained Hebrew scribes in the use of these literary techniques. Since the Book of Mormon also claims to be compiled from various sources under the direction of Israelite authors, it should come as no surprise that the Book of Mormon contains examples of these same editorial techniques.¹

COLOPHONS AND SUPERSCRIPTS

One of the most common editorial techniques found throughout the Book of Mormon is the use of colophons and superscripts.² In ancient texts, editors often added information to the beginning and end of an account. A superscript is an editorial comment at the beginning of a text, while a colophon refers to an editorial addition at the conclusion of a document. These literary devices took the place of paragraphs, punctuation, and other modern writing tools not used in antiquity. In ancient documents,

¹ For a discussion of abridgment in ancient times, see chapters 1 (“I Make This Small Abridgement”) and 2 (“Mormon as an Abridger of Ancient Records”) in John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 1–21.

² For previous discussions of this topic, see Thomas W. Mackay, “Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 90–109; John A. Tvedtnes, “Colophons in the Book of Mormon,” *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret and FARMS, 1991), 32–37.

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editorial insertions served as natural divisions or markers in a text. Both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon contain many examples of superscriptions and colophons. At the beginning of his narrative, Nephi provided his readers with a preface marking the parameters of his account:

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days' journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.

Produced some thirty years after the actual events took place, Nephi's record commences with a superscription that reads in many ways like a modern-day table of contents. Though not nearly as exhaustive, a similar superscription is found at the beginning of the book of Jeremiah:

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The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. (Jeremiah 1:1–3)

Like Nephi's superscription, this editorial introduction adds information regarding the prophet's personal background to the beginning of the book. Many of the prophetic writings commence with this same editorial technique:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Isaiah 1:1)

The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. (Amos 1:1)

The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (Micah 1:1)

The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of

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Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. (Zephaniah 1:1)

Some of the texts from the Old Testament contain a superscription at the beginning of a document and a colophon at the conclusion. In this way, these literary devices served as markers identifying the original parameters of the text. An important example of this editorial technique appears in Habakkuk chapter 3. With its superscription and colophon, this chapter of Habakkuk contains three distinct sections:

Superscription: “A Prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth” (v. 1)

The Psalm of Habakkuk (v. 2-19a)

Colophon: “To the chief singer on my stringed instruments” (v. 19b)

The superscription in Habakkuk chapter 3 reveals information regarding the psalm’s authorship and literary genre while the colophon provides additional insights pertaining to the psalm’s original context. These editorial comments provide a literary frame surrounding the original document.

The use of superscriptions and colophons was an important part of the editing process of the Old Testament. For example, Leviticus 11:46–47 serves as a colophon for the legal material presented in vv. 1–45:

This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth. To make a difference between the unclean and the

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clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

This editorial postscript provides a summary of Leviticus's complicated food laws. The editor introduced this colophon with the explanatory phrase, "this is the law." A similar technique appears in Leviticus 15:32–33:

This is the law of him that hath an issue, and of him whose seed goeth from him, and is defiled therewith and of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that is unclean.

As colophons, these statements provide editorial markers summarizing the content of the prior material. Colophons and superscriptions also appear in the book of Psalms, which was arranged by biblical editors to contain a five-fold division.³ Judaism has always revered the Torah or the first five books of Moses. By intentionally shaping the book of Psalms to contain five divisions, biblical editors made this book of Hebrew poetry appear as Torahlike literature:

Book One. Psalms 1–41 concluded with "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen" (Psalm 41:13).

Book Two. Psalms 42–72 concluded with "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his

³ For a discussion, see John A. Tvedtnes, "Ancient Israelite Psalters," *Covenants, Prophecies, and Hymns of the Old Testament*, ed. Victor L. Ludlow (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 240–49.

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glorious name for ever and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (Psalm 72:18–20).

Book Three. Psalms 73–89 concluded with “Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen” (Psalm 89:52).

Book Four. Psalms 90–106 concluded with “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen, Praise ye the Lord” (Psalm 106:48).

Book Five. Psalms 107–150 concluded with a psalm of praise (Psalm 150).

In this example of biblical editing, “the colophons and colophonic blessings indicate the conclusion of a specific literary limit or corpus, and reflect established scribal conventions.”⁴ Indeed, in ancient Israel, the use of colophons as an editorial technique was a well-established tradition.

In reference to colophons in the Old Testament, biblical scholar Michael Fishbane has suggested that “such annotations and collections . . . only make sense as formal conventions of an established scribal tradition.”⁵ Based upon the complexity of colophons and superscriptions, it appears that Hebrew scribes were in some way specifically trained to use these techniques. One passage that seems to support Fishbane’s hypothesis

⁴ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27

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is the colophon at the conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes:

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he . . . set in order (or edited) many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words (choice sayings) and that which was written was upright, even words of truth . . . and further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making (or compiling) many books there is no end. (Ecclesiastes 12:9–12)

These verses present an addendum attached by an editor to the book of Ecclesiastes.⁶ The primary text of Ecclesiastes contains an *inclusio* that marks the parameters of the original work. Chapter one verse 2 and chapter 12 verse 8 serve as the boundaries of the original literary unit:

vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity or vanities; all is vanity. (1:2)

vanity or vanities, saith the preacher; all is vain. (12:8)

Since this *inclusio* identifies Ecclesiastes 1:1-12:8 as the original book, Ecclesiastes 12:9–12 seems to represent an editorial insertion.⁷ This colophon, beginning with the editorial phrase “and moreover,” provides an excellent example of an explanatory

⁶ Ibid., 30

⁷ In the words of Fishbane, this technique “provides a syntactical transition to the ensuing summary of the scribal activities which Qohelet [the preacher] is engaged in, and identifies this [vv. 9-12] as a supplement.” Ibid., 30.

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postscript marked by an inclusio. If Fishbane's suggestion is correct that an actual scribal school functioned in ancient Israel, then the editorial techniques witnessed in the Old Testament would represent a well-established literary tradition. It should come as no surprise therefore to find colophons and superscriptions throughout the Book of Mormon.

As readers of the Book of Mormon, we encounter the first example of a colophon in the title page itself. Though the title page now appears at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Joseph provided the following information concerning this ancient document:

The title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, *taken from the very last leaf*, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation.⁸

Significantly, Joseph's description of the title page proves consistent with the general pattern for Near Eastern texts. As an editorial *conclusion* to the Book of Mormon, the title page serves as a remarkable example of a colophon. This ancient summary presents information pertaining to the compilation and authorship of the Book of Mormon in a manner consistent with other colophons found throughout the ancient Near East.

⁸ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,), 1:71.

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A careful analysis of the Book of Mormon reveals many examples of similar editorial insertions. Oftentimes these statements appear as clearly marked superscriptions or colophons. For example, in 1 Nephi 9, the author used a colophon like those found in the book of Leviticus to summarize the first portion of his narrative:

And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel, and also a great many more things, which cannot be written upon these plates . . . and thus it is. Amen. (1 Nephi 9:1–6)

In this example of a Book of Mormon colophon, the phrase “thus it is” relates semantically to the editorial conclusion found in Jeremiah 48:47: “*thus far* is the judgment of Moab.” Significantly, the statement “thus far” appears in the colophon marking the end of Jeremiah’s oracles against the nation of Moab. This biblical colophon appears directly following the customary closure attested in the initial line of verse 47: “yet I will *bring again the captivity* of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord” (compare Jeremiah 49:6, 39).

Nephi employed the same editorial technique at the conclusion of 1 Nephi chapter 15, “and *thus I spake* unto my brethren. Amen” (v. 36). Upon returning to his account, Nephi used another editorial device known as repetitive resumption to return to his text: “And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of *speaking to my brethren*” (1 Nephi 16:1).⁹ At the conclusion of his first book, Nephi finished his record with the colophonic statement “and *thus it is*. Amen” (1 Nephi 22:31). By concluding these colophons with the

⁹ For an explanation of repetitive resumption see below.

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word *amen*, Nephi used the same literary convention witnessed in the editorial postscripts found in such biblical passages as Psalms 41, 72, and 89, all of which specifically conclude with the Hebrew term *amen*.

THUS ENDED

Book of Mormon colophons are often concluded with the word *ended*. For example, in an editorial comment apparently inserted by Mormon we read, “thus *ended* the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son” (Alma 63:17). In a similar colophon from the Book of Mormon we read, “and thus *endeth* the days of Amalickiah” (Alma 51:37). This popular Book of Mormon technique proves especially significant in light of recent textual discoveries. In Akkadian (the language of Babylon and Assyria, distantly related to Hebrew), the scribal word *qati*, “ended or completed” appears as a standard literary term at the conclusion of colophons written in cuneiform.¹⁰ Therefore, these Book of Mormon statements provide a conclusion similar to Mesopotamian documents that terminate with the colophonic expression “ended or completed.”

This popular editorial technique also appears throughout the Old Testament. As we have already seen, a deliberate editorial insertion concludes Psalm 72 with the comment, “the prayers of David the son of Jesse are *ended*” (Psalm 72:20).¹¹ Some biblical scholars have even suggested a direct correlation exists between the Hebrew

¹⁰ See H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Neukirchen: Butzon and Bercker Kevelaer, 1968), 15.1, 19.1, 43.4, 109, 1.

¹¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Songs of the Heart: An Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (New York: Schocken, 1993), 15–19.

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word in this passage and the Akkadian term *qati*.¹² This editorial statement combines Psalms 42–72 as a distinct literary unit. A similar technique also appears in the book of Job where the word *tamam* or “ended” in Job 31:40 concludes the cycle of dialogues: “the words of Job are *ended*.” These examples demonstrate the traditional use of the term *ended* as a colophonic expression in both the eastern and western spheres of Semitic influence.

Significantly, Book of Mormon editors, like their Near Eastern counterparts, extensively incorporated the term *ended* into the conclusion of their postscripts. Editorial comments similar to that attested in Mosiah 28:47, “and thus *ended* the reign of the kings” appear frequently in Book of Mormon colophons. Hence, these expression in editorial examples of colophons provides evidence for literary ties between the Book of Mormon and the ancient Near East.

THE REPETITIVE RESUMPTION

Another important editorial technique now recognized in the Old Testament is the use of the repetitive resumption.¹³ When working with a document, biblical editors often framed their textual insertions between two parallel statements. “The repetition in question need not be verbatim,” observes biblical scholar Bernard Levinson, “more often it is approximate and may

¹² See, for example, Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 28.

¹³ The identification of the repetitive resumption as evidence of textual revision is a recent phenomenon in biblical scholarship. For a full discussion and bibliography of this device see Bernard M. Levinson, *Hermeneutics of Innovation: The Impact of Centralization upon the Structure, Sequence, and Reformulation of Legal Material in Deuteronomy* (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1991), 142-150.

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abridge the earlier unit.”¹⁴ Therefore, the literary elements in a biblical passage influenced by editorial activity often progress according to the following diagram:

A
B
[the disruptive form followed by the
reinsertion of elements]
A
B

As demonstrated in this outline, a biblical editor would often mark his insertion by restating several key elements that occurred prior to the editorial interruption. Following this resumption, the original account would then continue by supplying the primary literary elements C, D, and E. This editorial technique, where Hebrew authors bracket their insertion with parallel phrases is known as the repetitive resumption. While the attestation of the repetitive resumption need not always signify the existence of editorial activity, its occurrence in a passage strongly supports the possibility of revisionary efforts.¹⁵

¹⁴ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18.

¹⁵ Not every example of the repetitive resumption results from editorial activity. When used as a literary device this technique is sometimes referred to as *epanalepis*. See Larry Childs, “Epanalepis in the Book of Mormon,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 165–166. When the bracketed information seems to signify either a significant break from the original narrative or an attempt to reconstruct the overriding message of the primary text, most scholars interpret resumption as evidence of editorial activity. See Shemaryahy Talmon, “The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative,” in *Studies in Hebrew Narrative Art throughout the Ages*, ed. J. Heinemann and S. Werses, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 9–26.

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Many examples of the repetitive resumption in connection with editorial activity have been identified in the Old Testament including Joshua 1:7–9:

Only be (A) strong and very (B) courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. **[This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall mediate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make you way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.]** I hereby command you: Be (A) strong and (B) courageous.

Most biblical scholars believe this reference provides a clear example of an editorial insertion. Through the use of the repetitive resumption, the biblical editor shaped the present form of the introduction to the book of Joshua in order to emphasize the importance of God's Law. Through this insertion, the editor seems to have transformed this original military account into Torah-like literature (in much the same way that editors shaped the book of Psalms into five separate sections).

Another example of the repetitive resumption in the Bible occurs in Leviticus 23:2–4. In this passage, Moses receives the following commandment from God:

Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of the Lord that (A) you shall proclaim as (B) holy convocations, (C) my appointed festivals. **[Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of**

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complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the Lord throughout your settlements.] These are the (C) appointed festivals of the Lord (B) the holy convocations, which (A) you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

According to the theory behind this editorial insertion, the original text did not contain a reference to the Sabbath day as one of God's holy festivals. This does not suggest that the commandment to sanctify the Sabbath day was not always included in the Mosaic inscriptions, but rather that a reference to the Sabbath day in this particular context was not an original component of Leviticus 23:2–4. The appointed festivals dealt with yearly feasts, not the Sabbath day. However, a reference to the Sabbath day was added to this passage through the use of the repetitive resumption by a biblical editor who felt a need to reemphasize the importance of observing the weekly Sabbath.

One further point pertaining to Leviticus 23:2–4 is that the text not only contains the repetitive resumption but also the operation of Seidel's law. According to the tenets of Seidel's law, an ancient author would often reverse the elements of his citation to frame his insertion in a similar manner to the way quotation marks function today.¹⁶ A careful reading of Leviticus 23 shows that the repeated elements appear in reverse order from their original sequence, thus creating a chiasmic flow. This technique is named after the Israeli scholar who first addressed this issue in a comparative analysis of similar passages in Isaiah and the Psalms.

¹⁶ For a discussion of Seidel's Law see chapter 10.

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As an additional illustration of the manner in which biblical editors used the repetitive resumption, we will now turn our focus to the introductory section of 1 Kings. The first two chapters of 1 Kings tell the story of Solomon's ascension to the Davidic throne. In 2:12, the text reads, "and his [Solomon's] kingdom was established greatly." The same concept is then restated by the biblical editor in the concluding section of the literary unit: "and the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (1 Kings 2:46). Additional evidence for editorial activity is attested in a comparison of 1 Kings 3:1-2 with 1 Kings 9:24-25.¹⁷ First Kings 3:1-2 tells the story of Solomon's building projects, his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, and ancient Israelite worship:

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord, until those days.

In 1 Kings 9:24-25, the biblical editor returned to the major themes presented in 1 Kings 3:1-2. He included information concerning Pharaoh's daughter's new house, a secular building project, and proper worship at the recently completed Jerusalem temple. Hence, the editor of

¹⁷ See B. Porten. "The Structure and Theme of the Solomon Narrative (1 Kings 3-11)" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 38 (1967): 98-99.

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Solomon's story in the Bible used identical vocabulary in these two separate sections:

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took **Pharaoh's daughter**, and brought her into the **city of David**, until he had made an end of **building his own house**, and the **house** of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no **house built** unto the name of the Lord, until those days. (1 Kings 3:1–2)

But **Pharaoh's daughter** came up out of the **city of David** unto her house which Solomon had **built** for her: then did he **build** Millo. And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he **built** unto the Lord, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the Lord. So he finished the **house**. (1 Kings 9:24–25)

In 1 Kings 9:24–25, the references to the house for Pharaoh's daughter and the temple appear out of context. The details concerning the completion of Pharaoh's daughter's house appear prior to these passages in 1 Kings 7:8, while information regarding the completion of the Jerusalem temple was already provided in chapters 7 and 8.

The unnecessary repetition attested in 1 Kings 9:24–25, therefore, serves as an editorial resumption. As biblical scholar Marc Brettler has observed, “this repetition suggests that 9:24–25 were placed where they currently stand for structural reasons, in order to define the previous and following material, 3:3–9:23 and 9:26–

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11:10 as separate units.”¹⁸ Brettler has shown that in 3:3–9:23 Solomon appears in a positive light while in 9:26–11:10 Solomon violates the standards of biblical law.¹⁹ Therefore, this example of resumption in 1 Kings demonstrates the significance of this literary technique for identifying editorial activity in the Bible.

Just as a careful analysis of the Old Testament reveals examples of repetitive resumption as a sign of editorial activity, so a survey of the Book of Mormon suggests the major use of repetitive resumption for the organization of the Nephite account. A clear example of this technique from the Book of Mormon appears in Alma 10–11. These Book of Mormon chapters demonstrate that oftentimes editorial insertions provide additional information that a compiler felt elucidated key elements in a story.

The story of wicked Zeezrom in the Book of Mormon begins with the statement, “now the object of these lawyers was to (A) get gain; and they got gain (B) according to their employ” (Alma 10:32). Following this passage, the text contains an editorial insertion that explains the logistics of the Nephite monetary system. This excursus runs from verses 1 to 19 in Alma chapter 11. Following this digression, Mormon apparently returns to the original story in verse twenty through the use of the repetitive resumption: “Now, it was for the sole purpose to (A) get gain, because they received their wages (B) according to their employ” (Alma 11:20).

The Book of Mormon contains many examples of repetitive resumption. Mosiah 28:11 reads, “Therefore he took the records which were engraven on (A) the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and (B) all things

¹⁸ Marc Brettler, “The Structure of 1 Kings 1-11,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 49 (1991): 90

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God.” Following this statement, Mormon seems to break up the original account by supplying supplementary details pertaining to both the Urim and Thummim and the book of Ether. Mormon then returns to the original account in verse 20 with the following statement: “and now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took (A) the plates of brass, and (B) all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma.”

Another important example of the repetitive resumption in the Book of Mormon appears in Helaman 5:5–14. In this section, the compiler of the book of Helaman inserted a direct report of the prophet’s discourse given to his sons Nephi and Lehi (v. 6–12). This insertion is intentionally prefaced with the editorial introduction, “for they remembered the words which their father Helaman spake unto them” (Helaman 5:5). The compiler’s choice of words in this passage proves especially significant.

“Remember” serves as the Leitwort or theme word emphasized throughout Helaman’s discourse.²⁰ In these few short verses, Helaman intentionally repeated the word *remember* twelve times. With great editorial skill therefore, the compiler of this account used the repetitive resumption to bracket Helaman’s discourse with a return to the original introduction, “and they did remember his words” (v. 14).

Further examples of the repetitive resumption as a possible sign of editorial activity in the Book of Mormon include the following (the editorial activity is here set off in parentheses):

²⁰ As discussed in chapter 15, a Leitwort is a word that is intentionally repeated in a story or a poem.

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And it came to pass that the Nephites who were not slain by the weapons of war, **after having buried those who had been slain** (now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number) **after they had finished burying their dead** they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children. (Alma 3:1)

And he [Alma] **came to a city which was called Ammonihah**. (Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.) And it came to pass that when Alma had **come to the city of Ammonihah** he began to preach the word of God unto them. (Alma 8:6–8)

And it came to pass that **Alma and Amulek**, (Amulek having forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God, he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred; Therefore, after Alma having established the church at Sidon, seeing a great check, yea, seeing that the people were checked as to the pride of their hearts . . .) Now as I said, **Alma** having seen all these things, therefore **he took Amulek** and came over to the land of Zarahemla). (Alma 15:16–18)

And after he had been in the service of the king three days, as **he was with the Lamanitish**

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servants going forth with their flocks to the place of water, (which was called the water of Sebus, and all the Lamanites drive their flocks hither, that they may have water) Therefore, as **Ammon and the servants of the king were driving forth their flocks to this place of water,** behold, a certain number of the Lamanties, who had been with their flocks to water, stood and scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king, and they scattered them insomuch that they fled many ways. (Alma 17:26–27)

And as sure as **the Lord liveth,** so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the **knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren,** (according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them) yea, I say unto you, as **the Lord liveth,** as many of the **Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord,** never did fall away. (Alma 23:6)

Now **when the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword,** (neither would they turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword.) Now **when the Lamanites saw this** they did forbear from slaying them. (Alma 24:23–24)

Now **when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction** (among those whom they so dearly beloved, and among those who had so

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dearly beloved them— for they were treated as through they were angels sent from God to save them from everlasting destruction) therefore, **when Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction**, they were moved with compassion, and they said unto the king: (Alma 27:4)

And it came to pass **as he was thus pondering** (being much cast down because of the wickedness of the people of the Nephites, their secret works of darkness, and their murderings, and their plunderings, and all manner of iniquities) and it came to pass **as he was thus pondering in his heart**, behold, a voice came unto him saying. (Helaman 10:3)

Though, as these Book of Mormon passages indicate, editorial activity at times simply contributed additional information, some examples of repetitive resumption, like that witnessed in the introduction to the book of Joshua and Leviticus 23:2–4, reveal a particular religious sentiment that the editor wanted his readers to draw from the text. This same attempt at adding an intentional religious perspective to a text through the use of the repetitive resumption appears in Alma 19: 35–37:

And it came to pass that there were many that did believe in their words; and as many as did believe were baptized; and they became a righteous people, and **they did establish a church among them**. (And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will

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repent and believe on his name.) And it came to pass that **when they had established a church in that land**, that king Lamoni desired that Ammon should go with him to the land of Nephi, that he might show him unto his father.

This example of the repetitive resumption seems to frame Mormon's editorial insertion. Therefore, we witness in this passage one of the major doctrines Mormon sought to emphasize. With this statement, Mormon taught that the atonement of Jesus Christ is available to all people who will embrace correct gospel principles.

Mormon's editorial insertion in this passage perfectly reflects the information presented in the title page that identifies the entire purpose for the Book of Mormon:

to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.

No wonder Mormon chose to emphasize the fact in Alma 19:35–37 that God poured out his spirit amongst the righteous Lamanites and that mercy is available to all people through the atonement of Jesus Christ. These observations support the thesis of the entire book as revealed through the title page or final Book of Mormon colophon.

An analysis of Alma 30:59–31:1 suggests that Mormon might have employed the same convention in a

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story that he felt served as the antithesis to his message of salvation in Christ:

And it came to pass that **as he [Korihor] went forth among the people**, (yea, among a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram) **and as he went forth amongst them, behold, he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead**, (And thus we see the end of him who perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.) Now it came to pass that **after the end of Korihor**, Alma having received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord, and that Zoram, who was their leader, was leading the hearts of the people to bow down to dumb idols, his heart again began to sicken because of the iniquity of the people.

Yet Mormon's efforts are not the only passages in the Book of Mormon that reflect this procedure. A careful reading of the book of Ether suggests that Moroni may have used the repetitive resumption to reiterate his father's message in a manner reminiscent of Alma 30:59. Ether 14:24 reads:

Nevertheless, **Shiz did not cease to pursue Coriantumr**; (for he had sworn to avenge himself upon Coriantumr of the blood of his brother, who had been slain, and the word of the Lord which came to Ether that Coriantumr should not fall by the sword. And thus we see that the Lord did visit

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them in the fulness of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction.) And it came to pass that **Shiz did pursue Coriantumr** eastward, even to the borders by the seashore, and there he gave battle unto Shiz for the space of three days.

Many more examples of repetitive resumption in the Book of Mormon could be cited. The above passages, however, suffice in illustrating not only its appearance, but also the manner in which Book of Mormon editors organized their texts to convey a message concerning the spiritual blessings available through the gospel of Christ. As a final note, the existence of both the repetitive resumption and Seidel's law appears in 3 Nephi 11:5–8. As indicated above, when Seidel's law occurs in an ancient text, it functions in a similar manner to quotation marks by bracketing a meaningful citation in a chiasmic refrain. This same convention seems to occur in 3 Nephi 11:5–8:

And their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and (A) *they did look steadfastly towards heaven*, from whence the sound came. And behold, the third time (B) *they did understand* the voice when they heard; and it said unto them: **Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.** And it came to pass, (B) *as they understood* (A) *they cast they eyes up again towards heaven*, and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven.

This reversal intentionally frames one of the most important quotations in all of scripture. Here the Father testifies that Jesus is his beloved son and that all mankind

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should pay strict heed to his teachings. Yet whether the reversal in this passage proves intentional or not, Seidel's law does appear with repetitive resumption in a manner that heightens the literary drama of this crucial scene. Indeed, as they do in the Old Testament, the examples of repetitive resumption in the Book of Mormon reveal important information concerning the spiritual messages conveyed by ancient Israelite editors.

At the time of its original publication, the Book of Mormon seemed to contain a bizarre history. As a compilation of diverse religious texts, the Book of Mormon claimed to be the work of inspired Israelite editors. Since 1830, the standard scholarly view concerning the development of the Old Testament has been one of abridgment. Both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon show major signs of editorial revisions. Many of the editorial efforts witnessed in the Book of Mormon parallel the literary techniques now known to have been used by Israelite authors in the Old Testament.