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Abish, Theophanies, and the First Lamanite Restoration

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Abish and her secret conversion to the Lord “on account of a remarkable vision of her father” “many years” before the conversion of Lamoni’s household (Alma 19:16–17) emerge at a crucial moment in the Lamanite conversion narratives (Alma 17–27). In terms of a timeline of events, this “remarkable vision” stands first in a sequence of visions that result in the conversion of numerous Lamanites. Moreover, these visions, and the mass conversions that follow, precipitate seismic events on the landscape of Lamanite-Nephi history as Mormon recounts it.¹ He mentions Abish’s name, gives a brief biography, and references the “remarkable vision of her father” amidst his description of the theophanic² visions seen by King Lamoni, Lamoni’s wife, and members of their royal court (Alma 19). Mormon later describes a similar ecstatic³ theophany experienced by Lamoni’s father, king of all the Lamanites, in his own palace (Alma 22:15–23). These theophanies all occurred within royal court settings, and the Lamanites who witnessed these events nearly misinterpreted them with potentially tragic results.

The initial “remarkable vision of her father” received years previously (Alma 19:16) prepared Abish, a court servant, to play the initial pivotal role

of gathering the Lamanites to Lamoni's royal palace to witness the effects of these visions (Alma 19:16–19). Abish's actions—running from house to house, raising the queen from the ground, and so forth—suggest that she had a correct knowledge of the nature and meaning of the visions experienced by those in Lamoni's court. In other words, Abish knew “that it was the power of God” and that Lamoni and others were, as Ammon phrased it, “sleep[ing] in God”;⁴ or, as Mormon put it, “carried away in God.”⁵

On one hand, Abish's knowledgeable response could point to her having witnessed her earthly father having an ecstatic vision—the traditional reading of this event. Indeed, if she had seen her father undergoing an ecstatic vision on one or more previous occasions, then she would have been familiar with the type of theophanies experienced in Lamoni's court and would have known to remain calm through events similar to those that she had previously witnessed. Perhaps her own father had been “raised” (cf. Alma 19:29) from a prone or “prostrate”⁶ position and had, at that very moment, taught his family the things which he had seen (like Lehi had done in 1 Nephi 8).

On the other hand, her knowledgeable response could indicate that the much-earlier conversionary vision mentioned in Alma 19:16 constituted her own vision (i.e., *she saw* “her father”) rather than a vision which her father saw.⁷ Abish's previous firsthand participation in such visionary experiences—perhaps even more than once—would plausibly explain her inspired response to the events at Lamoni's court. If so, it was her own firsthand knowledge and awareness of the theophanic nature of these visions that ensured that they were not misinterpreted by other less-discerning members of Lamoni's royal court. In any case, her actions preserved the lives of Ammon, Lamoni, Lamoni's wife, and the other servants and handmaids who saw visions of the Redeemer and angels, thus facilitating the conversion of many more Lamanites (see Alma 19:24–36).

Building on a previous study,⁸ I propose that Mormon's mention of the “remarkable vision of her father” that converted Abish—whether seen by Abish herself or her father—serves several narrative functions within Mormon's account of the Lamanite conversions (Alma 17–19), especially the dramatic events of Alma 18–19. First, Mormon preserves a wordplay on the name Abish that emphasizes the previously lost understanding of Lehi's vision of the tree of life; the tree's meaning—that is, “the love of God” represented in the incarnation of Christ, “the very eternal *Father* [*āb*]”⁹ as “man [*ʾāb*]”¹⁰—was restored to the Lamanites as had been prophesied.¹⁰ Second,

Mormon sets the aforementioned “remarkable vision” as *chronologically* first in a series of theophanies that helped “convert” or “restore” the Lamanites “to the true faith” (i.e., to the covenant). In other words, the “remarkable vision” (Abish’s or her father’s) established an important precedent for the later conversionary visions detailed in Alma 19 and 22 and helps us better understand the nature and function of revelation in general. Third, Mormon uses this event to show that the Lamanite restoration came in fulfillment of the Lord’s earlier covenants and promises to Enos and others (Enos 1:16–18). Fourth, Mormon emphasizes that Abish fulfilled a unique role. Her instruction—as one born of a father who was, like Enos’s father, Jacob, a just man (cf. Enos 1:1)—prepared her to become an instrument in “br[inging]” the Lamanites “to salvation” and “restor[ing them] to a knowledge of *their fathers*” (2 Nephi 30:5; cf. 3:12), as had been promised to Enos (Enos 1:15–16). She helped restore her people to the knowledge that Jesus Christ is “the Eternal God,”¹¹ “the eternal *Father*” (1 Nephi 11:21, printer’s manuscript),¹² and “the *Father* of heaven and earth”¹³ and, as the “father” of human salvation, would be “born of a woman” and “go forth” as a “man.”¹⁴

The “Remarkable Visions of Her Father[s]”

When Mormon names “one of the Lamanitish *women*” in Lamoni’s court as “*Abish*, she having been converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of *her father*” (Alma 19:16), he creates or preserves a Hebraistic pun on her name which suggests the meaning “Father is a man,” *āb* (“father”) + *īš* (“man”).¹⁵ The immediate context of the mention of “Abish” and “a remarkable vision of her father” takes place during Lamoni’s exclamation “I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name” (Alma 19:13). Thus, this wordplay on *Abish* appears to articulate or emphasize important theological and Christological ideas consistent with earlier visions of Lehi and Nephi: “The eternal father” would “condescend” as “a man” to perform the Atonement and “redeem” the human family (cf. 1 Nephi 11; Mosiah 3:5–10; Mosiah 13–16).

Abish’s Father’s Vision?

Before exploring the broader theological and Christological implications of the Lamanite theophanies, we should recognize that the genitival construction “vision of her father” (in the phrase “remarkable vision of her father”) is

formally ambiguous and yields several interpretive possibilities. One can read the construction as a subjective genitive (Abish's father's vision; i.e., Abish's father had the vision) or as an objective genitive (e.g., Abish saw her "father" in vision).¹⁶ Readers have often simply assumed that Mormon has reference to Abish's unnamed earthly father, who had seen a remarkable vision, which in turn led to his immediate family's (including Abish's) secret conversion to the Lord. One reason the foregoing has constituted the traditional reading is that the Book of Mormon text names so few women (six)¹⁷ and mentions even fewer women as the recipients of visions (e.g., Lamoni's wife, Alma 19:13). However, one need not default to this interpretation.

Abish's Own "Remarkable Vision"?

Readers less commonly interpret the phrase "remarkable vision of her father" as an objective genitive. Read thus, the phrase "her father" would amount to a description of the contents of Abish's own "remarkable vision." Inevitable questions follow this line of interpretation: Did Abish's earthly father appear to her sometime after his own decease? If so, did he bring a personalized message, as in many angelic ministrations? What aspects of this vision "converted" Abish? If Abish saw a vision of her own earthly father, it would constitute the only vision of a postmortal parent or ancestor in the Book of Mormon and thus also a narrative surprise. But this might explain why Mormon distinguished this vision with the adjective "remarkable." Several narrative details suggest that Mormon intended to surprise the reader.

If the vision belonged to Abish, she, along with Lamoni's wife, would have become one of the few women reported in the Book of Mormon to have experienced a theophany or have a vision. Nephite writers rarely mention women or servants by name in the Book of Mormon.¹⁸ Mormon's mention of Abish's name should therefore be seen as a point of narratological interest and emphasis. Mormon never mentions Abish's father's name. He never even mentions Lamoni's father's name, even though the latter plays one of the most important roles in the Book of Alma and his conversion affects the dynamics of the Lamanite-Nephite interrelationship for generations. While the fact that Abish would be one of only a few women in the Book of Mormon to have a vision recorded in the text has tended to point many readers toward the traditional interpretation, it is perhaps just as likely that Mormon uses that possibility, along with the dramatic mention of Abish's name, to catch

the reader's attention. The few but surprising biographical details Mormon gives us about Abish extol her and her knowledge of spiritual things.

Since appearances of a postmortal parent would be otherwise unattested in the Book of Mormon, reading "her father" as the objective genitive of "vision" raises other surprising interpretive possibilities and questions. Could Abish's "father" (*ʾāb*) here constitute a divine or Christological reference? If so, the "remarkable" nature of Abish's vision would consist in her having seen "the Lamb of God, yea even the eternal father" (1 Nephi 11:21, printer's manuscript)¹⁹ condescending²⁰ to the earth to be incarnate as a "man," just as Lamoni and others saw in Lamoni's court—the very context in which the "remarkable vision of her father" is mentioned.

In either case, something of the content of the "remarkable vision" that "converted"²¹ Abish, as mentioned in Alma 19:16, is suggested already in Lamoni's declaration: "For as sure as thou livest, behold, *I have seen my Redeemer*; and he shall *come forth*, and *be born of a woman* [i.e., from an *ʾissā*], and *he shall redeem all mankind* who believe on his name" (Alma 19:13). Abish's—or her father's—"remarkable vision," if not the same vision as Lamoni's and that of those in Lamoni's court, must have conveyed similar truths sufficient to "convert" her to the Lord in the same way that Lamoni, his wife, his father, their households, and their people are "converted unto the Lord" (see more on this topic below). One cannot, after all, become "converted [un]to" or "restored to the knowledge" of a deity regarding whom one has received no instruction.

Lamoni's use of the phrase "I have seen my Redeemer" deserves additional attention here and may provide a helpful analog to the phrase "a remarkable vision of her father." Both phrases describe kinship relationships. The Hebrew term *gō'ēl* meant not only "redeemer" but a "kinsman redeemer," implying kinship with the redeemed.²² "The *gō'ēl*'s main tasks," writes Robert L. Hubbard, "were to restore ownership of alienated clan property through redemption and to free fellow clansmen from poverty-induced slavery."²³ Yahweh was "the redeemer of Israel."²⁴ Hubbard continues, "If one assumes that the picture of Yahweh as *gō'ēl* reflects Israelite legal customs, the *gō'ēl* also was an advocate who stood up for vulnerable family members and took responsibility for unfortunate relatives."²⁵ Since "my Redeemer"²⁶ as used by Lamoni in Alma 19:13 represents a Christological kinship term, it is possible that "her father" functions in a similar way in Alma 19:16, where we

have other terminological parallels (“saw”/ “vision,” “woman”/“women,” “his name”/ “name of the Lord,” “mankind”/- *ʾiṣ* [in Abish]).

The Ambiguity of ʾāb (“Father”)

The Hebrew word for “father” that appears to constitute a part of Abish’s name, ʾāb, is more ambiguous than our English term. Consequently, in the narrative context of the visions in Lamoni’s court that precipitated the mass Lamanite conversions, the words “remarkable vision of her father” take on a kind of double meaning. This phrase recalls or evokes earlier notable visions seen by, and involving, her distant “father” or ancestor (Hebrew ʾāb) Lehi. Abish’s “fathers” (ancestors) Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael had failed to understand Lehi’s visions—especially his tree-of-life vision—and had failed to seek these visions or any revelation for themselves (1 Nephi 15:1–11). This phrase thus also harks back to the earliest events recorded on the small plates and to the visions of Lehi²⁷ and Nephi.²⁸ Their visions not only anticipated the Lamanite’s “dwindl[ing] in unbelief” but became a major basis for Laman and Lemuel’s resentment.²⁹ This, in turn, gave rise to Lamanite cultural enmity toward the Nephites.³⁰

Thus, again taking ʾāb as a Christological reference, “the remarkable vision of her father” and the other visions that precipitated the mass Lamanite conversion—i.e., Lamoni’s vision, Lamoni’s wife’s vision, their servants’ visions, Lamoni’s father’s vision—would share a paramount truth with Lehi and Nephi’s vision of the tree of life: that the “eternal *Father*” (1 Nephi 11:21, printer’s manuscript)—Yahweh—condescended and became as a “man.”³¹ This truth represents a key part of the “knowledge” to which Nephi, Jacob, Enos, and many of their contemporaries “labored diligently” to restore to the Lamanites.³² The Lamanite conception of God as “Great Spirit” lacked this truth, as did the Zoramite conception of God (Alma 33:14–16). The Nephites believed in a God that could not only be seen but would be “born of a woman” and “go forth” as a “man.”³³ That belief, as a boundary marker or “middle wall of partition” between the Lamanites and Nephites was about to be “broken down” (cf. Ephesians 2:14).

“Desiring,” “Believing,” and “Inquiring” as Prerequisites for “Knowing” the Lord in a Covenant Sense

Mormon takes care to show that the theophanies experienced by Lamoni and his wife, servants, and father followed professions of “faith” or “belief”³⁴ by

“cry[ing] unto” the Lord or “calling on [the Lord’s] name in faith, believing that [they would] receive.”³⁵ Thus, the Lamanite conversions conform to the doctrine of Christ to which Mormon, Nephi, and other writers so often call attention.³⁶ Divine revelation almost always follows faith. Abish’s own faithfulness becomes evident amidst these theophanies (i.e., running from house to house, etc.; see Alma 19:17, 28–29). This faith and faithfulness stands in stark contrast to Nephi’s much earlier description of their ancestors Laman and Lemuel and their lack of faith to “inquire of the Lord” for knowledge (see 1 Nephi 15:6–11).

Lehi’s first visions, formative events in his becoming a prophet and seer, began with heartfelt prayer (see 1 Nephi 1:5–6). So too did Nephi’s vision. He said, “[I had] great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers” (1 Nephi 2:16). Nephi’s “great desires,” coupled with this first great revelation, paved the way for subsequent revelations as Nephi himself became a prophet and seer. Latter-day Saints will recognize this pattern in the lives of Abraham (Abraham 1:1–4) and the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20).

Because of their faith, faithful desires, and willingness to inquire of the Lord in faith, Lehi and Nephi came to know God in the same way that Abraham came to know him (see especially Abraham 1:1–4), and they received similar promises regarding their posterity.³⁷ They came to know the true nature of the divine Redeemer, as well as to “know” him in a covenant sense.³⁸ Nephi records that Lehi’s dream or vision began with a theophany: “And it came to pass that *I saw a man* [i.e., an *ʾis*], and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me *follow him*” (1 Nephi 8:5–6). Although the “man” that Lehi sees in vision is not named, this description recalls “One descending out of the midst of heaven” with “twelve others *following him*.” Lehi “saw” this man in one of his first visions (1 Nephi 1:9–10); namely, it was the Lord himself. This is further supported by Jesus’s insistence, as recorded by Nephi, that he (Jesus) is the one to be “followed” in every act (“*follow thou me*,” 2 Nephi 31:10–13, 16)³⁹ by anyone wishing to enter into and maintain the covenant of salvation “to the end” (“endure to the end”)⁴⁰ and thus “know” him.⁴¹

Nephi greatly abridged his father's account of his dream/vision (1 Nephi 8:29–30), perhaps because he planned to supply many of the details in his subsequent longer account of his own vision (1 Nephi 11–14). The tree which is a “representation” of the tree of life is, of course, central to Lehi's dream/vision and Nephi's vision. Nephi did not “know” the “condescension of God” until he knew the “meaning” of the tree of life:

And he [the angelic guide] said unto me: *Knowest* thou the condescension of God?

And I said unto him: *I know* that he loveth his children; nevertheless, *I do not know the meaning of all things.*

And he said unto me: Behold, *the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of God⁴² after the manner of the flesh.*

And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, *even the Eternal Father!*⁴³ *Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?*

And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.

And after he had said these words, he said unto me: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God *going forth* [cf. Isaiah 42:13] among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. (1 Nephi 11:16–24)

One of the most important lessons to be taken from this account is that Nephi's “knowledge” of the reality and nature of the Lord came through personal experience on account of his “desires” (1 Nephi 2:16; 10:17–19). Nephi's covenant “knowledge” of Christ and the process of entry into the covenant that he describes in 2 Nephi 31–32 (the doctrine of Christ) are intimately connected with the aforementioned revelation: Nephi saw the divine Redeemer being born then later baptized, and learned what men and women must do to be born again and thus “speak with the tongue of angels” (2 Nephi 31:13–14; 32:2–4).

Nephi could scarcely emphasize this point more: he “desired” to “see” (1 Nephi 10:17; 11:2–3, 10–11) and “saw” the vision of the tree of life that his father saw (1 Nephi 11–14). He specifically desired to “to know the interpretation thereof” (11:11)—that is, the meaning of the tree (11:21). That “interpretation” or “meaning” was the “love of God”⁴⁴ manifest in the incarnation of “the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father,” which Nephi, and evidently Lehi (1 Nephi 10:2–11), also saw. In other words, Lehi and Nephi's

tree-of-life visions, at their core, constituted visions of Christ, the divine *ʾāb* (“Father”), “going forth” as a man (*ʾīš*) among the children of men, atoning for their sins, and redeeming them (1 Nephi 11:21–24, printer’s manuscript).

That vision and the resultant knowledge could have—and *should* have—belonged to Laman and Lemuel and their posterity, but they, for many generations afterward, “would not come” to the tree life—the tree of the knowledge of God. The course that Laman and Lemuel charted for their posterity through their unwillingness to seek revelation and the knowledge of God only changed when their descendants’ “desires” changed (Alma 18:10–21; 19:33).

The Cause of the Great Lamanite Apostasy: Refusal to “Inquire of the Lord”

Laman and Lemuel had at least one vision—a vision of an angel of the Lord who spoke directly to them (1 Nephi 1:29–30), an event to which Nephi appealed when exhorting his brothers to faithfulness and reminding them of their duty to God (1 Nephi 7:10; 17:45). They had “heard” the voice of the Lord “from time to time” and even heard him speaking in “the voice of thunder” (1 Nephi 17:45). However, none of these revelatory experiences came to Laman and Lemuel, on account of their *un*faithfulness. They lacked both the necessary faith and desire.

Nephi emphasizes that his brothers Laman and Lemuel refused to “inquire” or “ask” of the Lord for their own revelation regarding their father’s “remarkable” vision (1 Nephi 15:1–11). They “ask[ed] not, neither [did they] knock”; therefore, “[they were] not brought into the light” (2 Nephi 32:4). Nephi’s clear implication is that they might have otherwise enjoyed this privilege (“If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you,” 1 Nephi 15:11; cf. Psalm 95:7–11). This event, one of several that contrast Laman’s and Lemuel’s lack of faith and faithfulness with Nephi’s faith,⁴⁵ portends the later issue of Lamanite “unbelief” (cf. the Hebrew expression *lō - ʿemun* [*l - mn*] “no faith” [Deuteronomy 32:20], which may have become the basis of a pejorative Nephite pun on “Lamanites” as those who dwindle in “unbelief”—i.e., the “unfaithful,” see especially 1 Nephi 12:22–23).⁴⁶

Nephi records that Lehi saw in his dream that Laman and Lemuel “*would not come unto* [him] and partake of the fruit” (1 Nephi 8:18)—that is, “they

did not want to come”⁴⁷ and partake of the blessings of Christ’s incarnation and Atonement. What was true of Laman and Lemuel becomes true of their posterity as their posterity fail to activate the doctrine of Christ in their lives. Nephi mentions his and his people’s “labor[ing] diligently to write, to persuade [their] children, *and also [their] brethren, to believe in Christ*, and to be reconciled to God” (2 Nephi 25:23). Jacob similarly wrote, “We labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, *hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts . . . that they may know that we knew of Christ*, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming” (Jacob 4:3–4). Toward the end of his life, Jacob reiterates, “Many means were devised *to reclaim and restore the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth*; but it all was vain, for they delighted in wars and bloodshed, and they had an eternal hatred against us, their brethren. And they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually” (Jacob 7:24).

A generation or so later, Enos laments, “At the present our strugglings were vain in *restoring them to the true faith*. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of *our fathers*” (Enos 1:14). Near the end of his life, he reiterates, “And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to *restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God*. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness” (Enos 1:20). Zeniff, evidently familiar with these descriptions on the small plates,⁴⁸ reports that this same situation existed over four hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem: “And thus they have taught their children that they should hate them, and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them, and do all they could to destroy them; therefore they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi” (Mosiah 10:17). In other words, the Lamanites “would not come unto [the Nephites] and partake of the fruit” of the tree of life, just as Laman and Lemuel did not want to come unto Lehi and partake of the fruit (1 Nephi 8:18). As Moroni states, “If there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, *he showed not himself until after their faith*” (Ether 12:12). Both Ammon and Abish played critical roles in establishing the requisite faith among the Lamanites.



The “joy” experienced by Lamoni is subsequently experienced by his wife. Ammon commends her faith: “Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.”

“Such Great Joy”: The Lamanite Restoration

Lamanite “unbelief” dramatically changes to “belief” with the Lamanite visions of Alma 18–19 and 22, Abish’s or her father’s “remarkable vision” being the first. In Nephi’s report of Lehi’s vision, Lehi states that he “beheld a tree, whose fruit was *desirable to make one happy*” (1 Nephi 8:10). Moreover, Lehi says that when he came forth and partook of the fruit, he “beheld that it was most sweet, above all that [he] ever before tasted” (1 Nephi 8:11) and that “it filled [his] soul with *exceedingly great joy*” (1 Nephi 8:12). When Mormon describes Lamoni’s vision, he uses images that recall Lehi’s (and Nephi’s) vision of the tree of life, especially the joy of the vision:

Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew *that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind*, and the light which did light up his mind, which was *the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness*—yea, this light had *infused such joy into his soul*, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that *the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul*, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God. (Alma 19:6; cf. 2 Nephi 32:4)

Just as his “father” (ancestor) Lehi had journeyed in darkness before seeing the tree of life and just as the Nephites and Lamanites later endured “mist[s] of darkness” before experiencing the resurrected Jesus in the flesh, Lamoni emerges from the “dark veil of unbelief” into the glorious light of God and experiences the “marvelous light of his goodness,” which matches a pattern that Daniel Belnap has identified in his comparison of Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision.⁴⁹ Here, the “light of the glory of God” and “marvelous light of his goodness” correspond to Lehi’s seeing the tree of life and Nephi’s seeing the tree and the incarnation of Jesus. This is confirmed subsequently in the narrative when Lamoni himself describes the “joy” that he felt on seeing the incarnation of the Redeemer in language that recalls Nephi’s vision recorded in 1 Nephi 11: “For as sure as thou livest, behold, *I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman*, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name. Now, when he had said these words, his heart was swollen within him, and he sunk again with *joy*; and the queen also sunk down, being overpowered by the Spirit” (Alma 19:13; cf. especially 1 Nephi 11:20–24). The “joy” experienced by Lamoni is subsequently experienced by his wife, who has her own vision of Jesus that recalls details of Lehi’s and Nephi’s vision of the tree of life.

Nephi’s angelic guide had asked him, “Believest thou that thy father saw the tree of which he hath spoken?” (1 Nephi 11:4), and Nephi responded in faith: “Yea, thou knowest that I believe all the words of my Father (1 Nephi 11:5). The angel commends Nephi’s faith: “Blessed art thou, Nephi, *because thou believest* in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired” (1 Nephi 11:6). Like Nephi’s angelic guide, Ammon acts as a kind of *mystagogue*,⁵⁰ *psychopomp*,⁵¹ or “angelic” docent⁵² for Lamoni and his wife (cf. Alma 27:4). In Alma 18:24, 26, and 28, Ammon asks Lamoni three “believest thou” questions, and Lamoni affirms, “*I believe* all these things which thou hast spoken” (Alma 18:33).

When Ammon teaches Lamoni’s wife that Lamoni “sleepeth in God” (cf. Lehi’s “dream”), he asks her, “Believest thou this?” To which she responds, “I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said” (Alma 19:9). Just as Nephi’s angelic guide commends Nephi’s faith, Ammon commends Lamoni’s wife’s faith: “Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, *there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites*” (19:10). Just as Lehi’s faithful prayer and Nephi’s “believing” testimony were met with a vision of the tree of life, Lamoni and his wife, after professing their

“belief” or “faith,” see visions of the Redeemer’s incarnation—the meaning of the tree of life. They “ask” and “knock” and thus “*are . . . brought into the light*” (2 Nephi 32:4); “wherefore, he showed . . . himself [to them] after their faith” (Ether 12:12). Their faith activated the doctrine of Christ and the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Here, as with Lamoni, Mormon emphasizes the “joy” that “filled” Lamoni’s wife as though she had partaken of the fruit of the tree of life:

And it came to pass that she [Abish] went and took the queen by the hand, that perhaps she might raise her from the ground; and as soon as she touched her hand she arose and stood upon her feet, and cried with a loud voice, saying: O blessed *Jesus*, who *has saved* me from an *awful hell!* O blessed God, have mercy on this people!

And when she had said this, *she clasped her hands, being filled with joy*, speaking many words which were not understood; and when she had done this, she took the king, Lamoni, by the hand, and behold he arose and stood upon his feet. (Alma 19:29–30)

Lamoni’s wife sees a vision which apparently reveals the same “knowledge” the dream-vision(s) of the tree of life revealed to Lehi and Nephi. Language connected with Lehi’s and Nephi’s vision is again evident. The expression “awful hell” is used previously⁵³ only by Nephi (1 Nephi 15:29, 35) in connection with his vision of the tree of life, identifying the river of filthy water (also identified as an “awful gulf,” 15:28). The Lamanite queen seems to have some of the same things that Lehi and Nephi saw, perhaps including the tree of life. Like Lehi, Nephi, and her husband, Lamoni, her vision “filled” her “with joy.” She too had tasted of the “love of god,” which Nephi learned from his angelic guide was “most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:23). Mormon emphasizes that these theophanic, tree-of-life-like visions were not limited to Lamoni and his wife, but “many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels and had conversed with them; and thus *they had told them things of God, and of his righteousness*” (Alma 19:34)—i.e., they received covenant “knowledge.”

Mormon recalls this scene again in Alma 22, when Aaron teaches Lamoni’s father. This time Aaron is the mystagogue. Aaron asks him two “believest thou” questions (Alma 22:7, 10), to which the king responds with a profession of faith: “Behold, I will believe” (22:7) and “I will believe thy words” (22:11). Aaron, seeing the king’s faith, teaches him from the contents of the brass plates and the small plates (22:12–24), just as Ammon had taught Lamoni. The king then asks to have “eternal life” and to be “filled with joy”—Aaron had read to him the account of Lehi’s and Nephi’s vision of the tree of life:

And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: *What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.* (Alma 22:15)

Lamoni, Lamoni's wife, Lamoni's father, and their servants no longer embraced the attitudes, traditions, unbelief, and hardheartedness of Laman and Lemuel, who were unwilling to come to their father, Lehi, who beckoned them to come to the tree of life. They were now the very faithful that Lehi saw and to which Mormon alludes when he states, "[They] were converted unto the Lord [and] never did fall away" (Alma 23:6). These Lamanites "came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:30) as their posterity would later (3 Nephi 11:12–19; 17:9–10).⁵⁴

These descendants of Laman and Lemuel, unlike their forefathers, were willing to come unto their ancestor (*āb*) Lehi, who still stood at the tree of life, beckoning, so to speak. Thus, they received the great joy described in Father Lehi's tree-of-life vision—knowing that the divine Redeemer, the Eternal Father of heaven and earth, would come and redeem them from their sins, the vision that Laman and Lemuel had refused. The doctrine of Christ became activated in their lives. And so the faith of their father, Lehi—rather than the unbelief of their fathers Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael—became the faith of these Lamanites.

“The Spirit of the Lord Poured Out According to His Prayers”

In his dualistic prophecy⁵⁵ about the future restoration of Israel, Joel declares twice for emphasis that the Lord would “pour out [his] spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28–32 [Masoretic Text 3:1–5]). For his part, Mormon also invokes language similar to Joel's collocation.⁵⁶ In Alma 19, he uses the expression twice for emphasis:

Now Ammon seeing *the Spirit of the Lord poured out* according to his prayers upon the Lamanites, his brethren, who had been the cause of so much mourning among the Nephites, or among all the people of God because of their iniquities and their traditions, he fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren; and he was also overpowered with joy; and thus they all three had sunk to the earth. (Alma 19:14)

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 repent and believe on his name. (Alma 19:36)

Not only did Lamoni, his wife, Ammon, and many other members of Lamoni's household see visions, but Lamoni's wife speaks "many words which were not understood" (Alma 19:30), or perhaps "with the tongue of angels" (2 Nephi 31:13–14; 32:2; 1 Corinthians 13:1). Mormon's point here is that the "gifts of the Spirit"—gifts that are lost during apostasy⁵⁷—had returned to the Lamanites for the first time since the Nephites had departed from the Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5). They "received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:14). Mormon will describe a second great Lamanite restoration in similar terms (see Helaman 6:36), one preceded by faith and a subsequent vision. Those Lamanites were "baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (see 3 Nephi 9:20; Ether 12:14).

A Covenant Fulfilled: The Literary Reminiscence of Enos's Prayer for the Lamanites

This harvest did not come without great effort on the part of Ammon and his brethren. Faith and faithfulness truly preceded the miracle (Alma 18:2, 10; Ether 12:15). In Alma 8:10, Mormon reports that Alma, ministering simultaneously among the Nephites, "labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer, that he would pour out his Spirit upon the people who were in the city; that he would also grant that he might baptize them unto repentance." The word *wrestling* recalls Enos's "wrestle . . . before God," described in Enos 1:2–6, which is itself filled with intricate allusions to Genesis 32 and Jacob's "wrestling" with a "man" or "divine being." The expression "pour out his spirit" points forward to or anticipates what will happen in the subsequent chapters of the book of Alma: the pouring out of God's Spirit (Alma 16:16; see below).

Before Ammon and Alma, Enos's personal writings suggest that he, perhaps more than anyone else, not only "wrestled" before God but "struggled" and "pour[ed] out his spirit" in prayer that the Lamanites might be "restored" to a knowledge of the truth (Enos 1:11–16; cf. 1:20). As noted elsewhere,⁵⁸ Enos begins his account with these words: "Behold, it came to pass that I, *Enos* [*enôs*], knowing *my father* [*abi*] that he was a just *man* [*is / enôs*]⁵⁹—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and *blessed be the name of my God* for it—And I will tell you of

the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins” (Enos 1:1–2).

Enos models his own self-introduction on Nephi’s self-introduction (1 Nephi 1:1), including imitating Nephi’s use of wordplay.⁶⁰ Moreover, Enos alludes to the story of Jacob wrestling at Peniel in Genesis 32,⁶¹ which is itself a pun on the name of his father, Jacob, i.e., *ya ʾāqōb–yē ʾābēq*.⁶² Enos (*ʾenōs*) sees the patriarchal Jacob’s wrestling “a man” (*ʾīš*) as the template for his wrestle with his own sinful nature (the carnal man) that will allow him to become a “just man” like his own father, Jacob, and like the patriarchal Jacob, who became Israel (*yisrā ʾēl*): the one who “struggled [*śārītā*, KJV ‘had power’] with God and with *men* [*ʾānāšīm*, the usual plural of both *ʾīš* and *ʾenōs*], and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28).

Although embedded in Mormon’s narrative as a short biographical notice, the wordplay on Abish as “one of the Lamanitish *women* [cf. Heb. *nāšīm*]” who was “converted unto the Lord on account of a remarkable vision of *her father* [cf. *ʾābīhā*]” fits a pattern of autobiographical wordplay⁶³ and biographical wordplay⁶⁴ embedded in Mormon’s narrative abridgment. It particularly echoes the language of Enos 1:1. The faith of Enos’s father—Jacob, who as a “just man” taught Enos (“man”) appropriately—only became Enos’s faith after his “wrestle before God.” Abish’s father’s faith, whether during his mortal life or afterward, became her faith. Lehi’s faith had become Abish’s faith. The “remarkable vision of [Abish’s] father” came in fulfillment of the Lord’s covenant to Enos and his “fathers” (Enos 1:17–18).

Restored: “Converted unto the Lord”

Enos stated that he and other Nephites’ efforts were “vain in *restoring them* to the true faith” (1:14) and reiterated that they “s[ought] diligently *to restore* the Lamanites unto the true faith in God” (1:20). Alma testified that the meaning of a word rendered “restore” means to “bring back again” (Alma 41:13). The reduplicated and causative stems of the Hebrew verb *šub* (“turn,” “turn back,” or “return”)⁶⁵ can denote not only “restore”⁶⁶ or “bring back” (suggesting wordplay in Alma 41:13) but also “convert.”⁶⁷ Thus, the “restoration” of the Lamanites to “the true faith in God” meant their being “brought back again” and “converted unto the Lord.” The further possibility exists that the term “convert” (cf. Hebrew *hāšīb/yāšīb* < *šub*)⁶⁸ intentionally adds to the wordplay on “Abish.” A metathesis of the consonants in Abish’s name yields the Hebrew verb form *ʾāšīb* and thus creates the interpretive pun

“I will restore,” “I will bring back,” “I will return,” or “I will convert (others).”⁶⁹ Might Mormon have had this in mind with his repetitious use of the phrase “converted unto the Lord” throughout these narratives?

Indeed, the first attestation of the phrase “converted [un]to the Lord” occurs in Alma 19:16–17, which is appropriate since Abish’s or her father’s vision and her conversion occur years before any of the other Lamanites’. In fact, she is the first Lamanite convert that Mormon or his sources tell us about. This constitutes a major narrative point: Mormon wishes us to see that Abish was the first Lamanite convert in that pivotal generation. Perhaps for this reason, too, he felt compelled to mention Abish by name, whereas other prominent men and women (including kings and queens) and other prominent servants go unnamed, as noted above.⁷⁰

The phrase “converted unto the Lord” next occurs in Alma 22:23, which informs us that King Lamoni’s father’s personal ministrations following his own remarkable vision led to many conversions: “And the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them. And he did minister unto them, insomuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord” (Alma 22:23). The phrase “converted unto the Lord” occurs frequently in Alma 23, where Mormon provides a catalogue of the Lamanites that were converted and the cities and lands in which they were (and were not) converted (see especially Alma 23:3, 6, 8, 13).

In Alma 24:6, Mormon describes the character and devotion of the truly converted—what it means to be converted in the deepest sense: “Now there was not one soul among all the people who had been *converted unto the Lord* that would take up arms against their brethren; nay, they would not even make any preparations for war; yea, and also their king commanded them that they should not.” For Mormon, to be “converted unto the Lord” was not an empty rhetorical platitude.⁷¹ The doctrine of Christ had full sway in these Lamanites’ lives. They embodied true conversion (see Alma 27:27–30). Mormon uses the phrase “converted unto the Lord” in Alma 53:10 to recall these events, and subsequent uses of this phrase evoke memories of Abish’s and subsequent Lamanites’ conversions.⁷²

Conclusion

The sole attestation of the name Abish, which as a Hebrew *ʾāb* name would have meant “father is a man,” appears in the text of Alma 19 in connection with the phrase “a remarkable vision of her father,” a phrase that takes on

several possible meanings. Mormon situates this vision as the first of several theophanies that result in the conversion of many Lamanites (Alma 19, 22). The text of Alma 19 emphasizes terms “man” and “woman” and alludes to the divine Redeemer of being “born of a woman” and “going forth” to redeem “mankind.” This language and the descriptions of “joy” that the Lamanites experienced allude directly back to Lehi’s and Nephi’s vision of the tree of life and of Jesus as “the eternal God” and “the eternal Father” becoming a “man” in order to perform his redemptive work.

In these narratives, we see the doctrine of Christ activated in the lives of the Lamanites as they are restored to the “tree” of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the embodiment of the love of God. This was the meaning of Lehi’s vision and was “knowledge of [the] fathers” to which the Lamanites needed to be restored.⁷³ For Mormon, the name Abish (“father is a man”) served as the sign of the miracle—the “remarkable vision of *her father*,” the Lamanite “conversions” (cf. *āsīb*) that she aided, and an outpouring of revelation.

Mormon records the initial fulfillment⁷⁴ of Enos’s prayer for the Lamanites being “brought to salvation” and having the scriptures “restored” or “brought” to them (see Enos 1:11–18) in Alma 17–28. The result is poignantly captured in words that echo those of Lehi, Nephi, and Enos:

And thousands were *brought to the knowledge of the Lord*, yea, thousands were brought to believe in the traditions of the Nephites; and they were taught the records and prophecies which were handed down even to the present time.

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, . . . 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 23:5–6)

Like Lehi “and those that were partaking of the fruit also” but “heeded . . . not” the “scorn” and mockery coming from the great and spacious building, and unlike those who “heeded” the scorners (1 Nephi 8:33–34), Abish, Lamoni, and all the “converted” Lamanites “never did fall away.”

Taken together, the Lamanite apostasy prior to Abish’s “remarkable vision of her father” (Alma 19:16) and the theophanies that followed as described in Alma 19 and 22 emphatically demonstrate a remarkable truth: “For if there be no faith [cf. Heb. *lō* - *ēmūn*, Deuteronomy 32:20] among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself

until after their faith” (Ether 12:12). But when men and women exercise even “a particle of faith” (Alma 32:27), great miracles inevitably follow. **RE**

Notes

1. In the short term, the mass Lamanite conversions precipitated a mass of Lamanite migrations (Alma 27, 35) and what Mormon describes as “a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens thousands of Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad” (Alma 28:2). The people of Ammon retain a formidable narrative presence throughout the rest of the Book of Alma (Alma 30:1, 19–20; 35:8–11, 13; 43:11–13; 53:10–20; 56:3–58, 40; 62:17, 27, 29) and beyond (see, e.g., Helaman 3:12 and Ether 12:15).

2. Theophany < Greek *theophaneia* (“manifestation of God”) = *theos* (“god”) + *phaneia* (“manifestation,” “appearance”) < *phainein* (to “show,” “manifest”).

3. Ecstasy < Greek *ekstasis* (“[the state of being] displaced,” “standing outside oneself,” “[being] beside oneself”) = *ek/ex* (“out of,” “outside of”) + *stasis* (“standing,” i.e. “state”) < *histēmi* (“stand”). Compare Paul’s barely veiled description of his own vision of the third heaven: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.)” (2 Corinthians 12:2–3). Compare, too, the visions that Jesus’s Lamanite/Nephite disciples experienced after he was with them: “And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard; and whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God” (3 Nephi 28:13–15). Joseph Smith describes his own vision of the celestial kingdom similarly: “The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell” (D&C 137:1). The theophanies experienced in Lamoni’s court in Alma 19 appear to fit this description, as does the theophany experienced by Lamoni’s father in Alma 22. The context of events in Alma 19 suggests that “the remarkable vision” in Alma 19:16 was similarly ecstatic.

4. Cf. Ammon’s description of Lamoni and his ecstatic vision: “He sleepeth in God” (Alma 19:18).

5. Mormon uses the description “carried away in God” in Alma 19:6. Abish’s knowledge of what was happening in Lamoni’s court was clearly similar to Ammon’s.

6. Cf. Alma 19:17–18; 22:17; 24:21. The term “prostrate” only occurs in the Lamanite conversion narratives.

7. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Father Is a Man: The Remarkable Mention of the Name Abish in Alma 19:16 and Its Narrative Context,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 55–71.

8. Bowen, “Father Is a Man,” 55–71.

9. Mosiah 15:4, Mosiah 16:15, Alma 11:38–39. See especially the original text of 1 Nephi 11:21 (see further below).

10. 2 Nephi 10:2; 30:5; Alma 37:19; and Helaman 15:11 can be understood as fulfilled for the first time with the Lamanite restoration during Ammon’s time (see Alma 17–27).

Additional prophecies anticipated an additional future restoration (e.g., 3 Nephi 5:25; Mormon 6:36).

11. Book of Mormon, title page; 2 Nephi 26:12.

12. Following Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 230–33. In 1 Nephi 11:18–32, the phrase “the Son of” is a clarifying gloss. See also Mosiah 15:4; 16:15; Alma 11:38–39.

13. 2 Nephi 25:12; Mosiah 3:8; Mosiah 15:4; Alma 11:39; Helaman 14:12; 16:18.

14. 1 Nephi 11:13–24; Mosiah 3:5; 7:27; 13:34; Alma 7:11 and esp. Alma 19:13, citing Isaiah 42:13.

15. Bowen, “Father Is a Man,” 55–71. Paul Hoskisson (personal communication with author, 2002) proposes the meaning “Father is a man” or “My father is a man,” which is the preferred etymological explanation for “Abish” in the Book of Mormon Onomasticon Project: <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/ABISH>.

16. Another example of an ambiguous genitival phrase is “the love of God”—i.e., “God’s love” (subjective genitive) and “(human) love for God” (objective genitive). The phrase occurs in the Book of Mormon at 1 Nephi 11:22, 25; 2 Nephi 31:20; Jacob 7:23; Mosiah 4:12; Alma 13:29; 4 Nephi 1:23.

17. The Book of Mormon names Sariah (four times, 1 Nephi 2:5; 5:1, 6; 8:14), Eve (thrice, 1 Nephi 5:11, 2 Nephi 2:18–19), Sarah (once, 2 Nephi 8:2), Mary (twice, Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10), Abish (once, Alma 19:16), and Isabel (Alma 39:3).

18. Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, *Alma* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 303, writes, “The preservation of her name is even more remarkable . . . not only [because she was] a woman, but she was a servant. Both factors would virtually guarantee her anonymity. Even the queen [Lamoni’s wife] is not named.”

19. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 230–33.

20. 1 Nephi 11:16, 26. Cf. 2 Nephi 4:16; 9:53; Jacob 4:7.

21. Beginning in Alma 19:16, the phrase “converted unto the Lord” becomes a key phrase both in the Lamanite conversion narratives (Alma 19:16, 31; 22:23; 23:3, 6, 8, 13; 24:6; 8 times) and in the remainder of the Book of Mormon (Alma 53:10, an allusion to the Lamanite conversion narratives); 3 Nephi 2:12 (also used with reference to the Lamanites); 3 Nephi 7:21; 3 Nephi 28:23 (generically); 4 Nephi 1:2 (used specifically with reference to the Lamanites and Nephites). See further below.

22. Numbers 5:8; Ruth 3:9, 12–13; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, and 14.

23. Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 51.

24. Isaiah 49:7 and 1 Nephi 21:7 use the unique title “Redeemer of Israel.” Cf. also “our Redeemer” (Isaiah 47:4; 63:16; Alma 61:14; Helaman 5:12; D&C 138:36) and “thy Redeemer” (Isaiah 41:14; 44:24; 48:17 [1 Nephi 20:17]; 49:26 [1 Nephi 21:26]; 60:16; 54:5, 8 [3 Nephi 22:5, 8]; 2 Nephi 2:3; 6:18).

25. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, 51. He cites Genesis 48:16; Exodus 15:13; Job 19:25; Psalm 119:154; Proverbs 23:10–11; Isaiah 43:1; 44:22–23; 48:20; 52:9; 63:9; Jeremiah 50:34; and Lamentations 3:58 (cf. Psalm 72:12–14) in support of this thesis.

26. The expression “my redeemer” (*gō ’ālî*) appears twice in the Hebrew Bible. Famously, Job exclaims, “I know that my redeemer [*gō ’ālî*] liveth” (Job 19:25), and the Psalmist extols the Lord as “my strength [rock], and my redeemer [*gō ’ālî*]” (Psalm 19:14). In the Book

of Mormon, Lamoni's exclamation "I have seen my Redeemer" finds further antecedents in Nephi's assertion regarding Isaiah and himself: "He verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him" (2 Nephi 11:2; cf. 1 Nephi 11:27; 2 Nephi 31:17) and similar statements by others (2 Nephi 1:15; 2:3; Enos 1:27).

27. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 1:16; 1 Nephi 2:1–2; 3:2; 1 Nephi 8:2, 36; 10:17; 2 Nephi 1:4; cf. 1 Nephi 7:1.

28. 1 Nephi 2:16–24; chapters 11–14; 2 Nephi 1:24–27.

29. 1 Nephi 2:11; 16:37–38; 17:22; 2 Nephi 1:24–27.

30. Cf. Lamoni's father's initial assertion regarding Nephi that drew on traditional anti-Nephite polemics: "Behold, he robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, deceive us, that they again may rob us of our property" (Alma 20:13).

31. Cf. Isaiah 42:13; Mosiah 7:27; 13:14; see also Exodus 15:3.

32. 2 Nephi 25:23; Jacob 4:3–7; Enos 1:11–12, 20.

33. See, e.g., Mosiah 7:27; 13:34 in light of Isaiah 53:3 and Mosiah 14:3. Abinadi's assertion of this became the charge on which King Noah et al. executed Abinadi. See especially 1 Nephi 11:20–24 (original text).

34. Alma 18:23–40; 19:9–10; 22:7–13.

35. See Alma 18:41; 19:15; 22:16–18.

36. See especially Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31 (Summer 1991): 31–50; Reynolds, "The True Points of My Doctrine," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 26–56; Reynolds, "How to Come unto Christ," *Ensign*, September 1992, 7–13; Reynolds, "The Gospel According to Mormon," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (May 2015): 218–34; Reynolds, "The Gospel According to Nephi: An Essay on 2 Nephi 31," *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 51–75.

37. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 15:18; 2 Nephi 29:14; 3 Nephi 20:25–27; Mormon 5:20; Ether 13:11. Cf. especially 1 Nephi 5:17–19; 7:1; 2 Nephi 3:16; 4:2; 2 Nephi 30:3–8.

38. On "know" as a covenant or legal term used in the ancient Near East and in the Book of Mormon, see RoseAnn Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 48–61, 128–29.

39. The word "follow" is used six times in 2 Nephi 31:10–13, 16.

40. See 1 Nephi 13:37; 2 Nephi 9:24; 31:16, 20; 33:4; 3 Nephi 15:9; Mormon 9:29; Moroni 3:3; 8:3; cf. Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; James 5:1; D&C 14:7; 18:22; 20:25, 29; 24:8.

41. Note the use of the verb "know" throughout 2 Nephi 31, especially in vv. 14, 16–17; see also 1 Nephi 13:14–42.

42. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 230–33.

43. Following Skousen (*Analysis of Textual Variants*); cf. 1 Nephi 13:40 and Skousen's note in *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 298.

44. On the apparent wordplay involving "desire"/"love" and "Mary" as mother of the Redeemer, see Matthew L. Bowen, "'Most Desirable Above All Things': Onomastic Play on Mary and Mormon in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 27–61.

45. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 2:12–13; 18–19; 3:16–21; 7:8–12; 17:15, 18 (cf. 11:6).

46. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's*

Vision, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; SLC: Deseret Book, 2011), 240–63.

47. Jennifer Clark Lane, “The Presence of the Lord,” in Belnap, Strathearn, and Johnson, *The Things Which My Father Saw*, 130.

48. See especially Mosiah 9:1, which imitates the language of 1 Nephi 1:1 and Enos 1:1, including Nephi’s wordplay on “Nephi” and “good.” Zeniff’s words in Mosiah 10:12–18 address several of the cultural and political issues that recur in the writings on the small plates (e.g., Lamanite hatred, degenerative culture, etc.).

49. See Belnap, “Even as Our Father Lehi Saw,” 222–33.

50. Mystagogue (< Greek *mystagōgos* [*mystēs* (“an initiate”) + *agō* (“lead”)] = “one who initiates into mysteries”). See H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 523.

51. Psychopomp (< Greek *psychos* [“spirit,” “soul”] + *pompos* [“sender” or “conductor”]) = “spirit-guide” or “soul-sender”).

52. Docent (< Latin *docere* = “to teach”) = teacher.

53. The expression occurs four times altogether in the Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 15:29, 35 (Nephi *bis*); Alma 19:29 (Lamoni’s wife once); and Alma 54:7 (Moroni once).

54. See Matthew L. Bowen, “They Came Forth and Fell Down and Partook of the Fruit of the Tree’: Proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12–19 and 17:9–10 and Its Significance,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2012), 105–29.

55. I.e., Joel’s prophecy in Joel 2:28–32 [Masoretic Text 3:1–5] can be understood as having multiple fulfillments. Cf. Acts 2:17; D&C 95:4; and Joseph Smith—History 1:41.

56. Similar phraseology involving the terms “pour” and “spirit” occurs in Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 29:10; 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; and Zechariah 12:10. However, the proliferation of visions in the context of the pouring out of the Spirit of the Lord suggests that Mormon has Joel’s prophecy specifically in mind.

57. See especially Moroni 10:7–19 (see also 7:16); see also Jacob 6:8; Alma 9:19–24.

58. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Wordplay on the Name ‘Enos,’” *Insights* 26, no. 3 (2006): 3.

59. Cf. the description of the patriarch Noah in Genesis 6:9: “Noah was a just man [*’is saddiq*] and perfect in his generations.”

60. On which, see also Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22, no. 11 (2002): 2

61. John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, “Jacob and Enos: Wrestling before God,” *Insights* 21, no. 5 (2001): 2–3. On Enos’s sophisticated adaptation of the wordplay of Genesis 32–33, see Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And There Wrestled a Man with Him’ (Genesis 32:24): Enos’s Adaptations of the Onomastic Wordplay of Genesis,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 151–60.

62. “Wrestle” = Heb. **hē’abēq*; cf. *wayyē’abēq* and *bēhē’abēqō* in Genesis 32:25–26. This wordplay has been noted elsewhere. See, e.g., Bowen, “‘And There Wrestled a Man with Him,’” 151–60; Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit,” 245, 261n12.

63. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22, no. 11 (2002): 2; Bowen, “Wordplay on the Name ‘Enos,’” *Insights* 26, no. 3 (2006): 2.

64. See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And He Was a Young Man’: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay,” *Insights* 30, no. 4 (2010): 2–3; Bowen, “Becoming Sons

and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 5.

65. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1428–31.

66. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1431–34.

67. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1433.

68. Compare the use of *hāšīb/yāšīb* in 2 Samuel 12:23; 14:13, 21; 15:8, 20, 25, 29; 19:10, 43; 22:21, 25.

69. Compare the use of *'āšīb* in Genesis 24:5; 42:37; Deuteronomy 32:41; Judges 17:3; 1 Samuel 12:3; 2 Samuel 24:13 (1 Chronicles 21:12); 1 Kings 2:20; 20:34; Psalms 68:22; 69:4; 81:14; 116:12; Proverbs 24:29; Lamentations 3:21; Hosea 4:9; Joel 3:4; Habakkuk 2:1. Cf. 2 Samuel 17:3; Nehemiah 2:20; 6:4; 13:9; Job 31:14; 35:4; 40:4; Psalm 119:5; Proverbs 27:11; Amos 1:6, 8–9, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; in the prophetic books, Isaiah 1:25–26; Jeremiah 15:19; 32:44; 33:11; 49:6; Ezekiel 34:16; 39:5; and Zechariah 9:12 all prophesy of restoration using permutations of *'āšīb*.

70. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 303; see also Bowen, "Father is a Man," 55–56.

71. David A. Bednar, "Converted unto the Lord," *Ensign*, November 2012, 109, observes, "Note that the Lamanites were not converted to the missionaries who taught them or to the excellent programs of the Church. They were not converted to the personalities of their leaders or to preserving a cultural heritage or the traditions of their fathers. They were converted unto the Lord—to Him as the Savior and to His divinity and doctrine—and they never did fall away."

72. 3 Nephi 1:22; 2:12; 7:21; and especially 3 Nephi 28:28 and 4 Nephi 1:2.

73. 2 Nephi 3:12; 30:5; Enos 1:14, 18; Mormon 7:5; cf. D&C 3:20.

74. I.e., this is a dualistic prophecy that was fulfilled in Ammon's time and again in the latter days.