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## Death Being Swallowed Up in *Netzach* in the Bible and the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** One way to read the Book of Mormon is to be attentive to ways in which it comes across as a translated text. Being mindful of this is wise, because all translations—even inspired translations—lose something of the primary language, particularly as meanings shift when words are rendered into the vocabulary or idioms of the target language.

While the exact nature of the original language used by Abinadi, Ammon, Aaron, or Mormon is unknown, the English text of the Book of Mormon gives helpful hints. Two passages (1 Ne. 1:2 and Morm. 9:32–33) suggest that Egyptian and Hebrew elements were found in the language used by Book of Mormon speakers and writers, which allows present-day scholars to look for places where the current translation displays these elements.

This article suggests a possible connection between three Book of Mormon passages and a Hebrew word with a wide semantic range—a range that appears to be reflected quite purposefully in the English translation of these three passages in the books of Mosiah and Alma. That Hebrew word is *netzach*.



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## Death Being Swallowed Up in *Netzach* in the Bible and the Book of Mormon

David Larsen

One way to read the Book of Mormon is to be attentive to ways in which it comes across as a translated text. Being mindful of this is wise, because all translations—even inspired translations—lose something of the primary language, particularly as meanings shift when words are rendered into the vocabulary or idioms of the target language.

While the exact nature of the original language used by Abinadi, Ammon, Aaron, or Mormon is unknown, the English text of the Book of Mormon gives helpful hints. Nephi says he wrote his record in the “language of [his] father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Ne. 1:2).<sup>1</sup> Roughly a thousand years later, Moroni observed, “And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Morm. 9:32–33). These two passages suggest that Egyptian and Hebrew elements were found in the language

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1. See Neal Rappleye, “Learning Nephi’s Language: Creating a Context for 1 Nephi 1:2,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 151–59, available online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/learning-nephis-language-creating-a-context-for-1-nephi-12/>; Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “Notes and Communications: Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 156–63.

used by Book of Mormon speakers and writers, which allows present-day scholars to look for places where the current translation displays these elements.<sup>2</sup>

Hebraic elements may be of several kinds. Some may be labeled “Hebraisms” or “Semiticisms.” These elements, which are usually syntactic or literary, are different from the standard English way of expressing things.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of determining verbal aspects of Nephite language, these expressions may be less useful, since they may simply reflect aspects of the translation or elements borrowed from the biblical idiom into which the Book of Mormon was translated. Another kind of textual element includes aspects that may be specifically tied back to another language, such as onomastic elements or wordplay. One example of this is the Book of Mormon name Jershon, which can be connected with the Hebrew root *yrs*, meaning “inheritance.” This is especially telling in Alma 27:22, where the Nephites promise the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi that they will give the land Jershon to them “for an inheritance.” There seems to be here a textual recognition of a connection between the name of the land as “Place of Inheritance” and the Nephites giving it as an “inheritance.”<sup>4</sup> Recently, Matthew L. Bowen has produced a number of studies suggesting the use of verbal analogy or other examples of wordplay in the Book of Mormon.<sup>5</sup> All of Bowen’s studies suppose a fairly strong connection to

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2. For an early discussion on these methodological considerations, see John A. Tvedtnes, “Since the Book of Mormon Is Largely the Record of a Hebrew People, Is the Writing Characteristic of the Hebrew Language?” *Ensign* 16, no. 10 (1986): 64–66.

3. Examples of Hebraic elements are numerous: Andrew C. Smith, “Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 40–57; John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998); Kerry Muhlestein, “Insights Available as We Approach the Original Text,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 60–65.

4. Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “Notes and Communication: The Hebrew Origins of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no. 2 (1997): 257–58.

5. Matthew L. Bowen, “Onomastic Wordplay on *Joseph* and *Benjamin* and *Gezera Shawa* in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter* 18 (2016): 255–73, available online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/onomastic-wordplay-on-joseph-and-benjamin-and-gezera-shawa-in-the-book-of-mormon/>; Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Were Moved with Compassion’ (Alma 27:4; 53:13): Toponymic Wordplay on *Zarahemla* and *Jershon*,” *Interpreter* 18 (2016): 233–53, available online at

Hebrew on the part of the prophet Mormon and in his compiled sources. This includes apparent wordplay coming from quotations of the Hebrew Bible, which seem to be keyed to specific words in the Hebrew Bible.

Building on these notions, this article suggests a possible connection between three Book of Mormon passages and a single Hebrew word with a wide semantic range—a range that appears to be reflected quite purposefully in the English translation of these three passages in the books of Mosiah and Alma. That Hebrew word is *netzach*.

Behind these three possible usages stands a text in Isaiah 25:8, where the Hebrew word *netzach* definitely is found. There, Isaiah announces a wondrous work that the Lord of hosts would perform at a future time: “He will swallow up death *in victory* [*netzach*]” (KJV; or “swallow up death *forever* [*netzach*],” as it is rendered in many modern translations).<sup>6</sup> Similar language describing the Lord’s victory over death is also used in other places in the scriptures (see Ps. 21:9; 69:15), and this line in Isaiah is quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:54. Three passages in the Book of Mormon use a similar expression regarding death being swallowed up, with interesting differences. The first is in Mosiah 16:8. After quoting Isaiah 53 to Noah and his priests in the city of Nephi (in Mosiah 14), and after speaking of Christ being subjected unto death as his will was swallowed up in the will of the Father (Mosiah 15:2), Abinadi went on to declare to the priests the coming redemption of Christ and testified to them that, through it, “death is swallowed up *in Christ*” (Mosiah 16:8, emphasis added).

Second, a generation later, Aaron, a son of King Mosiah, taught King Lamoni’s father in the land of Ishmael about the plan of redemption and concluded that “death should be swallowed up in the hopes *of glory*” (Alma 22:14, emphasis added).

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<http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/they-were-moved-with-compassion-alma-274-5313-toponymic-wordplay-on-zarahemla-and-jershon/>; Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter* 17 (2016): 181–95, available online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/nephis-good-inclusio/>. Bowen’s characterization of these analogies as the rabbinic category of *gezera shawa* goes somewhat outside of the ordinary definition of *gezera shawa*, but his observations remain useful as a heuristic category. See the discussion in Hermann Strack and Günter Stemberger, *An Introduction to Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 17–18.

6. J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 320 n. \*b; this expression is “celebrating Yahweh’s termination of Death and the sorrow humans experience in connection with it,” 323.

Third, a few years after that, in explaining why the Lamanite converts, now settled in the land of Jershon, were willing to die rather than take up arms, a declaration (presumably by Alma) says that this was because these Ammonites had such a strong hope in Christ and in the resurrection that “they never did look upon death with any degree of terror,” and therefore “death was swallowed up to them *by the victory of Christ over it*” (Alma 27:28, emphasis added).

### **Netzach in the Bible**

A natural question asks how one can account for this variety of apparently related expressions arising out of the language in Isaiah 25:8. A possible answer can be found in the fact that the semantic range of meanings of the Hebrew word *netzach*—the word translated as “victory” in the King James Version—embraces all of these nuances and meanings. Thus, the main differences between each of these passages in the Book of Mormon and Isaiah 25:8 (and also Paul’s quotation of it) can be seen as stemming from the various shades of meaning embedded in this underlying original Hebrew word in Isaiah 25:8.

This variation can be seen in many translations of Isaiah 25:8, both ancient and modern. Ancient readers and translators opted from among these senses. The Vulgate simply reads *netzach* as, “he will cast down death *for ever*.” The Syriac is more expansive, “death will be swallowed up *in victory for ever*.” The Septuagint reads literally, “death swallowed *having been strong*.”<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, in many contexts in the Old Testament, and in most modern translations of Isaiah 25:8, the Hebrew word *netzach* is translated as “forever.” The word *netzach* (or *nēṣaḥ*) comes from the Hebrew root *nṣḥ* (נצח), whose meanings have been the source of much debate in the academy. The following are some of the principal meanings that have been suggested for *nṣḥ*.<sup>8</sup>

7. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 320 n. \*b.

8. See David J. A. Clines, *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 281; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2:716; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (reprinted; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 663–64; G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Riggen, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 529–33, cited hereafter as *TDOT*.

1. “shine, flash, be bright”—based on philological comparisons to similar roots in Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic (this meaning appears principally in 1 Sam. 15:29; 1 Chron. 29:11; and Lam. 3:18, but may be the principal idea behind all meanings of the word)
2. “distinguish oneself, be eminent” (*hithpael*, or “reflexive,” Hebrew verb form)—drawn from the usage in biblical Aramaic (Dan. 6:3) and Egyptian Aramaic
3. “splendor, glory”—the above meaning, expressed as a noun
4. “conquer, overcome, be victorious”—based on usage found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Aramaic and Phoenician texts—there may also be contained in this meaning (together with the underlying meaning “to shine”) the idea of a goal or objective to be achieved
5. “be permanent, enduring”—this is often considered to be the primary meaning, based on interpretation of several biblical texts—may also stem from the meaning “to shine, be bright,” enduring like the stars
6. “supervise, lead” (*piel*, or “active, intensified,” verb form)—this is the most frequent meaning of the verb form of *nṣḥ* found in the Old Testament
7. “to be clear, pure”—based on cognates in Arabic and Ethiopic

The form of the *nṣḥ* root that is found in Isaiah 25:8 is the noun (*netzach*) with the preposition *la-* as a prefix, which adds the meaning “for.” Hence, the translation given in most modern English renditions of *netzach* as a noun is “for ever” or “for eternity,” based on the sense of *netzach* as “permanence, enduring.” This is often claimed to be the principal, or most common, meaning of the noun form in the Old Testament. Passages that use the noun *netzach* and are understood to carry the same sense include (the words in italics are the KJV translation of *netzach*):

Isaiah 34:10—“none shall pass through it *for ever and ever*”

Isaiah 57:16—“*neither will I be always* wroth”

Jeremiah 15:18—“Why is my pain *perpetual*”

Jeremiah 50:39—“it shall be no more inhabited *for ever*”

Lamentations 5:20—“Wherefore dost thou forget us *for ever*”

Habakkuk 1:4—“judgment doth *never* go forth”

Amos 1:11—“he kept his wrath *for ever*”

Psalms 9:18—“For the needy shall not *alway* be forgotten”

- Psalm 10:11—“he will *never* see it”  
 Psalm 13:1—“How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? *for ever?*”  
 Psalm 16:11—“there are pleasures *for evermore*”  
 Psalm 44:23—“cast us not off *for ever*”  
 Psalm 49:9—“That he should still live *for ever*”  
 Psalm 49:19—“they shall *never* see light”  
 Psalm 74:3—“unto the *perpetual* desolations”  
 Psalm 74:10—“blaspheme thy name *for ever*”  
 Psalm 74:19—“forget not the congregation of thy poor *for ever*”

For most of these passages, it is difficult to imagine a much different translation than the ones given—for example, rendering *netzach* as “victory,” as the KJV does for Isaiah 25:8, would not work for the majority of these instances. The Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of these verses tends to preserve the meaning of “strength, everlastingness, perpetuity.” However, a notable difference is in the Psalms passages. There, in the LXX rendition of these verses from the Psalms, *netzach* takes on the meaning “in/to the end” (*eis to telos*)<sup>9</sup> most likely referring to the Eschaton (the “end of times”). This expression of *netzach* is likely due to the understanding of the LXX translators of the book of Psalms as eschatological prophecy.

However, there are a few other important examples in the Old Testament of *netzach*, as a noun, which do not carry the sense of forever. In 1 Samuel 15:29, the prophet Samuel refers to the Lord as “the Glory of Israel” (translating *netzach yisrael*), as it is rendered in most modern English translations. Other translations render this phrase as “the Strength of Israel” (KJV, AKJV, ASV, WEB), “the Preeminent One of Israel” (NET), “the triumpher in Israel” (Douay-Rheims), “the Overcomer of Israel” (Jubilee Bible 2000), and “the Hope of Israel” (Darby), among others. Although translators have a hard time deciding how *netzach* should be translated here in 1 Samuel 15:29, the important point is that the sense in this verse is that the “*netzach* of Israel” is a person, namely, the Lord God. It is also interesting to note that among the translations given, the *netzach* is the “Triumpher” (“the Victor”) and also the “Hope” of Israel.

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9. The only exceptions are Psalms 10:11; 16:11; 49:19, which retain the sense of “forever.”

First Chronicles 29:11 represents an example in which *netzach* is rendered as “the victory” in most English translations.

In Lamentations 3:18, *netzach* is usually translated as “strength” or “splendor.”

It is unclear how the word should be translated in Proverbs 21:28 (compare Job 23:7), with the KJV offering “the man that heareth speaketh *constantly*,” but other English translations translating it as “forever” (NASB, NET), “successfully” (NIV, ISV), “endure” (ESV), “of victory” (Douay-Rheims), among others.

Curiously, *netzach* also shows up once in the Bible with a quite different meaning, likely based on the Arabic *nadah/ha* (“sprinkle”) and means “juice,” referring to grape juice, but also connoting “blood” (see Isa. 63:3, 6).

In summary, the noun form of *netzach*, as it appears in the Hebrew Old Testament, most often carries the meaning of “forever, perpetual.” However, there are a small number of instances in which the noun apparently refers to a person (likely “the glory/strength/victor”) or to victory/success/strength. The translators that produced the Greek Septuagint kept the Hebrew meaning in most of the above-cited passages but understood *netzach* to be a reference to the end times in most of the Psalms passages.

When it is used as a verb, the verbal form (piel) of *nšḥ*, *natzach*, has an even wider range of different connotations in the Old Testament. As a verb it almost always means “to oversee, supervise.” These examples seem to refer to priests or Levites overseeing work associated with the temple (Ezra 3:8–9; 1 Chron. 23:4; 2 Chron. 2:1; 34:12–13), or leading the music of the temple (1 Chron. 15:21).

This meaning is also carried over into the participial form (*l'manatzeach*), which is used as a noun, as it appears in 2 Chronicles 2:17, Habbakuk 3:9, and in the heading to fifty-five of the psalms.<sup>10</sup> In 2 Chronicles 2:17, the word refers to “overseers” of the temple construction or temple worship; and in Habakkuk 3:9, the author uses the word to, apparently, name the “director” of temple music. This last meaning is how the word is generally understood in its appearance in the headings of the psalms. It is taken to be a musical/liturgical reference to the person who is directing the choir, based on the general sense of “overseer/supervisor.” Ivan Engnell argued that the *manatzeach* was actually the king in his cultic role and was the North Israelite form of *ldawid*

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10. Psalms 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 18:1; and many others.



(“for David”), a reference to King David that appears in the heading of many psalms.<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel understood the word to be a liturgical instruction meaning “to cause [God’s countenance] to shine,” or “to make atonement.”<sup>12</sup> These possibilities are intriguing—especially if the glory or eternality of the victor over death relates in some way to the high priest or the temple program—but these possible allusions do not appear to have been followed up on by subsequent research.<sup>13</sup> However, the relationship between God’s face shining and salvation is quite clear in the psalms (for example, Psalm 80:3, 7, 19) and in the priestly blessing given, among other times, on the Day of Atonement (Numbers 6:27), although the verb *natzach* does not happen to be used in these passages.

The verbal form tends to take on yet another meaning in the Second Temple literature. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is used more overtly to signify “to be victorious” (4QBark<sup>c</sup>) and “to conquer” (11QT 58:11). In 1QM 12:5, it may mean “to triumph” or “to shine”—although the meaning is somewhat unclear. Another Second Temple period text, Ben Sira, offers further examples of the meaning “to shine” or “cause to shine” (Ben Sira 35:10; 43:5, 13). In the Dead Sea text 4QMidrEschat<sup>b</sup> 9:9, *natzach* is used to indicate “purification.” This range of meanings seems to substantiate, at least to some degree, Mowinckel’s speculations regarding the relationship between *natzach*, God’s glory, and his atoning work.

Regarding Paul’s quotation of the Greek translation of Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54, the rendering there of *netzach* in the Greek is *nikos*, which generally means “victory.” Although the LXX usually renders *netzach* as “the End” (*to telos*), as discussed previously, the Greek translation of the Torah by Theodotion, a Jewish proselyte from the second century BC, most often prefers the word *nikos* (victory). Theodotion’s translation was popular among early Christians, and Paul apparently preferred his rendering of Isaiah 25:8 over the LXX translation. Thus, Paul’s reading of the Isaiah prophecy envisions God’s *victory* over death

11. Ivan Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 86, as cited in *TDOT*, 9:532.

12. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, 2 vols. (reprint; Amsterdam, 1961), 1:17–22, as cited in *TDOT*, 9:532.

13. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 323, however, draws an interesting connection between Jehovah swallowing up death in Isaiah 25:8, as he turns the tables in a “shocking reversal” as he swallowed up Baal in *Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit (KTU)* 1.5 ii 2–4, thus invoking a cultic context for a priestly portrayal of Jehovah’s total victory over death, which is personified as the Canaanite god Mot.

through the resurrection, and he subsequently, and poignantly, emphasizes that God “giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

This understanding was not unique to Paul. The idea that the Messiah, in particular, would effectuate or accompany this victory over death was understood as one of the meanings of the prophecy of Isaiah. This traditional understanding was held in later Jewish circles as well. Although written much later than New Testament times, the *Shemot* (Exodus) Rabbah, a collection of Jewish commentary on Exodus, expressed a similar interpretation of Isaiah 25:8: “But when Perez arose . . . from him Messiah would arise, and in his days God would cause death to be swallowed up, as it says, *He will swallow up death for ever*” (Isa. 25:8).<sup>14</sup>

The collection of Jewish mystical writings known as the *Zohar* contains similar notions: “The world cannot escape his [the evil serpent’s] punishment until King Messiah comes and the blessed Holy One raises those who sleep in the dust, as is written: *He will swallow up death for ever*” (Isa. 25:8).<sup>15</sup>

#### Evidence for *Netzach* in the Book of Mormon

One can see that the range of meanings for *netzach* discussed above, which can be found in the Syriac, Aramaic, and Greek translations of this word in the LXX and New Testament, can also be located in the background behind the apparent Nephite understandings of this word in Isaiah 25:8 and also in the English renditions of this underlying language in three texts of the Book of Mormon.

First, the understanding of a messianic victor is explicit in Mosiah 16:8, where Abinadi declares that “death is swallowed up in Christ.” It is clear that Abinadi, who used the words of the prophet Isaiah extensively in his preaching about the death and resurrection of the Messiah, is quoting from or alluding to Isaiah 25:8. Instead of conveying the meaning of the Hebrew *netzach* as “victory,” Abinadi’s use of or allusion to *netzach* directly declares the *netzach*, the victor, to be Christ. As discussed above, the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 15:29 can be understood to carry this meaning, that Jehovah is “the Victor” or “the Triumpher.” Abinadi understands Jehovah, the God of Israel, to be the coming Messiah.

14. Exodus Rabbah 30:3 in *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*, trans. S. M. Lehrman, 10 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 3:349.

15. The *Zohar* 1:114a in *The Zohar*, trans. Daniel C. Matt, 7 vols. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 2:171.

Abinadi's overt use of the "prophetic past" in Mosiah 16:6 ("speaking of things to come as though they had already come") may also owe some debt to Isaiah 25:8, where the word "swallow" is also a past tense verb in the Hebrew text. As J. J. M. Roberts comments, "The use of the simple perfect form in this line for the future, followed by the converted perfect in the next line, and the imperfect in the following line is either a case of the prophetic perfect or a reflection of the same freedom found in archaic poetry."<sup>16</sup>

While it is unknown what word in his vernacular Abinadi used here, it appears that his testimony played off of some knowledge of the meanings of *netzach*. When he said "swallowed up in Christ," his declaration carried weight in the minds of his hostile but educated audience of priests, who knew enough of Isaiah to have defiantly challenged Abinadi to explain the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10. Abinadi's intricate answer was cleverly sophisticated enough to set his accusers back on their heels. They probably had not thought of Isaiah this way before, but something about Abinadi's explication of the Isaiah texts rang correct to them. Dropping their charge of false prophecy, they came back three days later against Abinadi with a different charge, one amounting to blasphemy (Mosiah 17:8).

The second example from the Book of Mormon recounts how Aaron taught the Lamanite king that Christ, through his Atonement, "breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory" (Alma 22:14). This verse also appears to be dependent on Isaiah 25:8, but its rendering of *netzach* is the furthest of these three from the KJV translation. However, as noted previously, the Hebrew word can carry the connotations of glory, a goal, or desired end, and thus "hope of glory" is also within the ambit of its possible meanings. Biblical translations of 1 Chronicles 29:11 variously render *netzach* as "victory," "glory" or "splendor." First Samuel 15:29 is sometimes translated as the "Glory of Israel." The coupling in Lamentations 3:18 can be translated: "And I said, my glory [*netzach*] and my hope [*tohal*] have perished from the Lord."

The composite idea of "the hopes of glory" is a beautiful way of personalizing the idea of *netzach*, especially in speaking to a king who was undoubtedly arrayed in some kind of glorious royal robes and surroundings. But he was "trouble[d]" (Alma 22:5). Yet he was seriously inclined to believe (22:7, 11–12) and had been deeply moved by hopeful desires for

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16. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 320, n. \*b.

“eternal life” and for the joyous “root[ing] out” of the “wicked spirit” that he might “be filled with joy” (22:15).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, after Aaron had “expound[ed] all these things” (22:14), he promised the king that if he would bow down and repent and call upon God’s name in faith, then he would be victorious and would “receive the hope which thou desirest” (22:16).

While this Lamanite king probably did not know anything about the lexical range of meanings behind the word *netzach*, Aaron very well may have. He was himself a preferred son of King Mosiah and presumably had been taught in the language and learning of his father and grandfather, King Benjamin (see Mosiah 1:3; 29:2). As Aaron “did expound” (Alma 22:13) the doctrine of the glorious victory of Christ, all these meanings seem to have broken forth in a rhetorical and spiritual cascade.

The third and final instance of *netzach* in this sequence arises in a context involving the Ammonites. The text explains that they had such strong hope in Christ and life after death that “death was swallowed up to them *by the victory of Christ* over it” (Alma 27:28, emphasis added). Here is found the understanding of *netzach* both as “victory” and also as “Victor,” the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again, the expression here resonates with the range of meanings of *netzach* set forth above, while it speaks specifically of the eternal messianic victory.

This all may have been a traditional understanding of the word *netzach* in Isaiah 28:5, tracing back to Isaiah’s or Lehi’s times. If words written by Alma the Younger gave Mormon his source material here in Alma 27, Alma may have been the source of this doubled iteration of Abinadi’s shorter expression, which Alma could well have learned from his father, Alma, who would have remembered it as one of the last words he heard Abinadi speak. Any such mention of that ultimate and enduring victory by the eternal Victor over death would have been as poignant to these Ammonites as it was to Abinadi. As Abinadi had chosen to be burned to death rather than to retract his prophecy, the Ammonites had

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17. Although joy is not listed among the direct meaning of *netzach*, everything about victory, glory, brightness, permanence, and eminence is closely engaged with joy. Exuberantly evoking this association, some Book of Mormon author (whether Alma or Mormon) went on to coin the expression “to be swallowed up in the joy,” which appears in Alma 27:17 (“even to the exhausting of his strength”) and also in Alma 31:38 (having “afflictions . . . swallowed up in the joy of Christ”). The idea of joy is apropos in these two verses, since being “swallowed up in *netzach*” could have been readily associated with the joyous successes of Christ’s power generally.

chosen to be slaughtered on the battlefield rather than to renounce their covenant to oppose at all cost any further shedding of blood.

If Abinadi, Aaron, and Alma or Mormon, the authors of the Book of Mormon passages discussed here, were indeed familiar with the Hebrew text of Isaiah's words in Isaiah 25:8, then this study demonstrates that they had a particularly keen understanding of the range of possible meanings behind this Hebrew term. They were apparently familiar enough with the nuances of meaning contained within the word *netzach* to be able use it or to paraphrase it suitably in addressing various audiences. However this happened, in expressing the doctrine of Christ's victory over death to a variety of audiences in varied circumstances, their words coalesce around a number of religious expressions related to that Hebrew word. Mormon himself, in his final farewell following the disastrous defeat of his own Nephite armies, echoed these understandings as he called out to any surviving remnant of his people that they might know that "Jesus Christ . . . hath gained the victory" through which death is "swallowed up" (Morm. 7:5). Thus, these nuances of meaning were somehow known, sensed, and preserved throughout the various stages of the writing, abridgement, and translation of the Book of Mormon.

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