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“With strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deuteronomy 4:34); “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jeremiah 21:5): Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

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Abstract: David Rolph Seely’s paper, “Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: ‘With strong hand and with outstretched arm’ (Deuteronomy 4:34); ‘With outstretched hand and with strong arm’ (Jeremiah 21:5),” examines instances of chiasmus and inclusio—both of which deal with the principle of repetition—in the texts of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Seely provides multiple examples of how these two literary techniques interplay in these scriptural texts. A famous example is in Deuteronomy, “with strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deut 4:34), which is inverted, creating a chiasmus, in Jeremiah, “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jer 21:5). Seely finds four distinctive categories of chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: “1. Chiasmus of the Speaker; 2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text; 3. Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in Middle Two Cola of 4-Cola Units; and 4. Occurrence of Rhetorical Questions in the Middle of a Chiasmus.” After presenting examples of these four categories in the Bible, Seely demonstrates the presence of the same four types of chiasms in the Book of Mormon, a text that can be read productively in conjunction with the words of Jeremiah.



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**“With strong hand and with
outstretched arm” (Deuteronomy 4:34);
“With outstretched hand and with
strong arm” (Jeremiah 21:5)**
Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

David Rolph Seely

The title of this paper presents an example of a textual interplay between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in which Jeremiah quotes a well-known formula from Deuteronomy “with strong hand and with outstretched arm” (Deut 4:34) in an inverted form “With outstretched hand and with strong arm” (Jer 21:5). Images of the “strong hand” and “outstretched arm” are found in various Egyptian and Mesopotamian textual traditions as well as iconography.¹ These images appear separately in various biblical sources but appear as a combination first in Deuteronomy (4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8) and then later in deuteronomistic literature (1 Kgs 8:42; Jer 32:21; Ezek 20:33, 34; Ps 136:12).² In the Bible this formula always refers to the might and power of the LORD to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt.

Jeremiah quotes this formula “strong hand and with outstretched arm” but reverses the two qualifying adjectives creating “outstretched hand and strong arm.” This phrase is unknown elsewhere in the Old Testament. The title of this paper juxtaposing these two formulas thus creates an artificial chiasmus bridging two books consisting of:

A *strong hand,*

B *outstretched arm,* (Deut 4:34)

B' *outstretched hand,*

A' *strong arm.* (Jer 21:5)

The reversal of the elements of a quote from another source is a phenomenon called Seidel’s Law and is well attested in the Hebrew Bible as an indicator that the author and/or editor is citing older material.³ The

reversal of these adjectives in Jeremiah also draws attention to the fact that the meaning of this formula/phrase as it is used in Jeremiah is the reverse of the usual meaning when it appears in its usual contextual formula. The usual contextual meaning is divine deliverance of Israel from her enemies. See, for example: “the Lord your God freed you from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut 5:15). But in the passage in Jeremiah, the image depicts the Lord using his divine might to *fight against* his rebellious people: “And I myself shall fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm” (Jer 21:5).

Jeremiah and Deuteronomy

The author and/or editor(s) of Jeremiah regularly allocate language, themes, and theology from Deuteronomy. British scholar S. R. Driver, among the other scholarly commentators on Deuteronomy, noted that “Jeremiah exhibits marks of [Deuteronomy] on nearly every page.”⁴ It is not surprising that Jeremiah uses language and theology from Deuteronomy. Though there is certainly older material contained in Deuteronomy, the final production of the book as we have it today appears to have been done in the seventh century BCE, during or after the time of Josiah—at the time of Jeremiah.⁵ This is of interest to Latter-day Saints since this is also the time period of Lehi and Nephi and the origins of the Book of Mormon.

Consider these specific examples of similarities between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah:⁶

- The prophecy of a “prophet like Moses” is integrated throughout the book of Jeremiah, especially in the elements of the call of Jeremiah (Deut 18:15–18; Jer 1:4–12).
- Jeremiah cites and alters Deuteronomic legal materials regarding divorce and remarriage (Deut 24:1–4; Jer 3:1) and the remission of debt/slavery (Deut 15:12–18; Jer 34:14).
- Jeremiah constantly condemns “going after other gods” just as in Deuteronomy (Deut 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:7 [13:6 Eng]; Jer 7:6, 9; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11).
- The image of the “circumcised heart” found in Deuteronomy is repeated in Jeremiah (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4).
- Many of the curses in Deut 28 are cited or alluded to in Jeremiah (Deut 28:18 in Jer 5:17; Deut 28:48 in Jer 28:14; etc.).⁷

Seventh-Century Judahite Rhetorical Tradition

Scholars have noted that in addition to Jeremiah allocating texts, themes, and theology from Deuteronomy, these two books also share common rhetorical features. One of the pioneers of the study of ancient Hebrew rhetoric is Jack Lundbom, who has written extensively on rhetorical features in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. His initial work, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, was his doctoral thesis presented in 1973. This was followed by numerous articles culminating in his massive three-volume commentary in the Anchor Bible Series on Jeremiah, and then his more recent commentary on Deuteronomy. Many of Lundbom's scholarly articles have been collected in *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, wherein he noted the common use of two rhetorical features—inclusio and chiasmus—in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.⁸

This study will attempt to review some of the usages of inclusio and especially chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Following this review we will identify four specific usages of chiasmus that are relatively distinctive in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah as possible indicators of the seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. Finally, we will identify some examples of these four distinctive features of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, and we will suggest some areas of future research in Book of Mormon studies that may reflect this rhetorical tradition.

Inclusio in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

There are two significant rhetorical features that are found throughout the Bible and, in particular, in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: inclusio and chiasmus. Both of these features are based on repetition.

Inclusio is a rhetorical figure that delimits a textual unit by the repetition of words, phrases, verses, or a series of verses at the beginning and at the end of a unit of text. This simple diagram demonstrates how the figure of inclusio is used to demarcate a section of text—either prose or poetry: ABCDEFGA.

Lundbom gives a simple definition of inclusio as a “key-word balance at the beginning and end of a discourse unit, where the balance usually—but not always—is a repetition.”⁹ This feature is also referred to by biblical scholars as “bracketing” or “enveloping.” The device of inclusio is a well-known rhetorical device that is often studied in regards to the authorship and/or editing and literary structures of biblical books. While this convention has been noted through the years by various

commentators, Lundbom is the first to comprehensively study inclusio in the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.¹⁰

Let us look at two examples from each book. The first example of inclusio is from Deut 1:1–5. The opening passage serves as a superscription to the book of Deuteronomy and consists of a keyword chiasmic structure that delimits the introduction to the book. Below is an abbreviated version of Deut 1:1–5, putting in bold the keywords that will be repeated in the inclusio in 4:44–49.¹¹

Deuteronomy 1:1–5

1:1 These are the words that **Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan . . . in the Arabah . . .**

1:3 **Moses . . . struck down Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon and Og king of the Bashan . . .**

1:5 **beyond the Jordan**, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to make plain **this law**, saying:

The following is an abbreviated version of Deuteronomy 4:44–49 with the words in bold that were repeated to form the inclusio:

4:44 and **this is the law . . .**

4:45 . . . **Moses spoke to** the children of **Israel**

4:46 **Beyond the Jordan . . . Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon**, whom **Moses . . . struck down . . .**

4:47 **Og king of Bashan . . . beyond the Jordan . . .**

4:49 **the Arabah.**

The passage in Deut 4:44–46 repeats the words and themes of the opening verses in 1:1–5, thus closing and demarcating the introductory unit of Deut 1–4. This inclusio also introduces the following unit in Deut 5–28 where Moses recites the law.¹²

The second example of inclusio is from Deut 1:1 and 28:69:

Deuteronomy 1:1 **These are the words** that Moses spoke to all **Israel** beyond the Jordan . . . **In the land of Moab**

28:69 [Eng 29:1] **These are the words** of the covenant that Yahweh commanded Moses to cut with the children of **Israel in the land of Moab**

This inclusio brackets or envelopes the unit from Deut 1:1 to the end of the recitation of the law in Deut 28 and binds together the whole of the law code of Deuteronomy. Many scholars believe this indicates an early or first edited edition of Deuteronomy that was later expanded by adding chapters 29–34.¹³

Two examples from Jeremiah also show how *inclusio* delimits a literary unit in this book. The first example links the first lines of poetry in chapter 1 with the last lines of a poem in chapter 20 and connects the poignant language of Jeremiah called from the womb to be a prophet and then lamenting the day that he ever came forth from the womb.¹⁴

Jeremiah 1:5 and 20:18

1:5 Before I formed you in the belly I knew you
and before **you came forth**
from the womb, I consecrated you

20:18 Why **from the womb** did **I come forth** to see trouble and sorrow
and have my days end in shame?

The second example of *inclusio* from Jeremiah shows how a simple repetition delimits the whole of the Book of Jeremiah from 1:1 to 51:64, since chapter 52, which duplicates 2 Kgs 24:18–25:30, is usually understood as an appendix.

Jeremiah 1:1 and 51:64

1:1 **The words of Jeremiah**

51:64 Thus far **the words of Jeremiah**

Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

Chiasmus is a literary device used in prose and poetry in which there is an inversion of an order of words, phrases, or themes. As noted above, like *inclusio*, chiasmus relies on repetition—only in a reverse order. The following simple diagram shows how chiasmus can also be a figure delimiting a unit of text featuring repetition of texts and/or themes through inversion: ABCDCBA.

When used in poetry, Lundbom notes, “Chiasms vary the monotony of repetition and parallelism, the two dominant characteristics of Hebrew poetry.”¹⁵

Too often we may think of biblical chiasmus as a quaint antiquated literary figure, but in fact it is a figure that is often used in our own rhetorical tradition. See, for example, the following familiar aphorisms that demonstrate the basic rudimentary element of chiasmus as the simple inversion of words and/or thoughts.

One should eat to live, not live to eat. —*Cicero*

I wasted time, and now time doth waste me. —*Shakespeare*, Richard II

All for one, and one for all. —*Dumas, motto of the Three Musketeers*

Let us preach what we practice—let us practice what we preach. —*Winston Churchill*

Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. —*John F. Kennedy*

Do I love you because you're beautiful? Or are you beautiful because I love you? —*Oscar Hammerstein*

I meant what I said, and I said what I meant. —*Dr. Seuss, Horton Hatches the Egg*

Chiasmus is also present in well-known and oft-cited scripture passages:

But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first. (Matt 7:6)

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt 23:23)

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (Isa 5:20)

John Welch is a pioneer in the academic study of chiasmus. Beginning with his edited collection of scholarly papers in *Chiasmus in Antiquity* in 1981,¹⁶ there have been many studies of chiasmus in biblical studies.¹⁷ Several online venues have attempted to collect all of the proposed chiasms in the books of the Bible. In response to this burgeoning identification of chiasmus in the Bible, some scholars have noted that caution must be exercised in identifying chiasmus.¹⁸ Examples of chiasmus can be found throughout the Bible in texts from all genres and periods. A review of the statistics generated by these venues may be able to give some kind of an idea of how commonly chiasmus may occur in a biblical book. Chiasmusresources.com notes 161 occurrences of chiasmus in Deuteronomy and 225 in Jeremiah.¹⁹

Chiasmus can occur at several levels in the Bible. The simplest form of chiasmus is called “syntactic” or “grammatical” and consists of the syntactic reversal of word order within bicola. For example the word order Verb—Prepositional Phrase is inverted as Prepositional Phrase—Verb. Usually these are synonymous. Below are a few examples of synonymous parallelisms from the Book of Jeremiah.

The first example, taken from Jer 4:5a, is diagramed. This is a synonymous parallelism with an inversion of the word order—thus a syntactic chiasmus:

Jeremiah 4:5a

A **Declare** (Verb)

B **in** Judah (Prepositional Phrase)

B' and **in** Jerusalem (Prepositional Phrase)

A' **proclaim** (Verb)

Other similar examples include the following:²⁰

5:6a: Therefore it will slay them
a lion from the forest,
and a wolf from the desert
will destroy them.

20:6: You shall go into captivity,
and Babylon you shall enter.

51:38: Together like lions they shall roar,
they shall growl like lion's whelps.

Occasionally the chiasmus is antithetical:

4:22c: Wise are they for evil,
and for good they do not know.

12:13a: They have sown wheat,
and thorn they have reaped.

Similar examples can be found in Deuteronomy:²¹

32:18: The Rock that begot you, you neglected,
and you forgot the God who bore you in travail.

33:9c: Indeed they kept your word,
and your covenant they observed.

It should be noted that because Hebrew rules of grammar are much more flexible in word order than English, most of these examples where the words appear in inverted order in Hebrew disappear in English translations.

There is also a form of chiasmus called "keyword" or "thematic" chiasmus that occurs in a verse or larger unit. This is where the reversal of the keywords and/or themes manifest in passages larger than bicola.

These commonly occur within one or two biblical verses or within a stanza of a poem.

A simple keyword chiasmus can be seen in the Song of Moses in Deut 32:

Deuteronomy 32:43

- A Praise, O heavens, **his people**,
 B For **he will avenge** the blood of his children,
 B' and **take vengeance** on his adversaries;
 A' and cleanse the land **for his people**. (NRSV)

A similar example can be found in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 20:14

- A **Cursed** be the day
 B **on which I was born!**
 B' The day **when my mother bore me**,
 A' **let it not be blessed**. (NRSV)

Chiasmus also occurs in larger structures—in chapters and groups of chapters and, some argue, in the structure of the books themselves. Let us look at some examples of larger chiasmus. We have already determined that Deut 1:1–5 opens with an example of inclusio. Here we can see that it is also a chiasmus.

Deuteronomy 1:1–5

- A 1 These are the words that **Moses spoke to all Israel**
 B **beyond the Jordan**—in the wilderness

 B' 5 **Beyond the Jordan** in the land of Moab,
 A' **Moses undertook to expound** this law as follows: (NRSV)

On a larger level, David Dorsey, in his book *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, has identified a chiasmus based on themes and keywords that forms the structure of Deut 4–11. He calls these Deuteronomy chapters “Exhortations to obey Yahweh”:²²

- A **Lessons from Yahweh’s awesome acts at Mount Sinai** (4:1–40): enticed, and now, blessings and curses, awesome signs, saw, love for Yahweh
 B **Lessons from giving of first tablets** (4:41–5:33): first time, respect
 C **Don’t forget; lessons from Yahweh’s past and future care** (6:1–25): testing, houses, vineyards, have eaten and are satisfied, don’t forget

- D CENTER: **Completely destroy the Canaanites** (7:1–26)
C' **Don't forget; lessons from Yahweh's past and future care** (6:1–2; 8:1):
testing, houses, vineyards, have eaten and are satisfied, don't forget
B' **Lessons from giving of first tablets** (9:1–10:11): first time, respect
A' **Lessons from Yahweh's awesome acts in Egypt and wilderness** (10:2–11:32):
enticed, and now, blessings and curses, awesome signs, saw, love for Yahweh

Similarly, Dorsey identifies a large chiasmus in Jer 1–12 that he calls “Jeremiah’s call and introductory message of condemnation”:²³

- Introduction: **Jeremiah's Call: Dialogue between God and Jeremiah** (1:1–19)
A **Condemnation of Judah: marital unfaithfulness** (2:1–3:5): Exodus, good land, ancestors, cry out, gods and towns, time of trouble
B **Condemnation of Israel for idolatry** (3:6–4:2): idolatry, nations
C **Disaster from the north** (4:3–6:30): from the north, gather together and flee, Dan, horses, “peace, peace”
D CENTER: **Temple message: Call to Repentance** (7:1–8:3)
C' **Disaster from the north** (8:4–9:25): from the north, gather together and flee, Dan, horses, “peace, peace”
B' **Condemnation of house of Israel for idolatry** (10:1–25): idolatry, nations
A' **Condemnation to Judah: covenantal unfaithfulness** (11:1–17): Exodus, good land, ancestors, cry out, gods and towns, time of trouble
Conclusion: **Jeremiah's Complaint: Dialogue between God and Jeremiah** (11:18–12:17)

Four Kinds of Distinctive Chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah

Various scholars have identified four distinctive forms of chiasmus in Deuteronomy that may have provided a rhetorical prototype for Jeremiah. This does not necessarily mean that these forms of chiasmus are unique to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah but that they are suggestive of Deuteronomy providing a prototype for similar figures in Jeremiah. It could be argued that these four distinctive forms of chiasmus are representative of seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. The four distinctive forms are:

1. Chiasmus of Speaker
2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text
3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in the Middle Two Cola of Four Cola Units

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure

1. Chiasmus of Speaker: A distinctive form of chiasmus in Deuteronomy is the chiasmus of speaker. This means that the inversion in the chiasmus is not with the themes or the keywords of the passage, but rather with the speakers.

Deuteronomy 1:20–31 illustrates a chiasmus of speakers. This type of chiasmus was first noted by Lohfink in 1960 and later discussed by Moran.²⁴ Lundbom describes this chiastic structure as follows: “In Deut. 1:20–31, Moses narrates in the first person, introducing the *direct address* of each of the participants in the discussion—including himself—in chiastic fashion.”²⁵

Deuteronomy 1:20–31

1:20–21 A **Moses**

1:22 B **People**

1:23–24 C **Moses**

1:25 D **Spies** “It is a good land that the Lord your God is giving to us.”

1:26 C' **Moses**

1:27–28 B' **People**

1:29–31 A' **Moses**

The same rhetorical figure of chiasmus of speaker is found in Jer 8:18–21.²⁶ In this passage Jeremiah speaks first (v. 8) and then he speaks on behalf of the people (v. 19ab). In the center of the chiasmus, Yahweh speaks (v. 19c), then Jeremiah speaks again on behalf of the people (v. 20), and finally Jeremiah concludes (v. 21).²⁷

Jeremiah 8:18–21

A **Jeremiah** 18: My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick.

B **Jeremiah for the People** 19ab: Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land: “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?”

C **YHWH** 19c: “Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?”

B' **Jeremiah for the People** 20: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

A' **Jeremiah** 21: For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. (NRSV)

Another example of chiasmus of speaker is found in Jer 5:1–8 where the chiasmus alternates between the words of Yahweh to the search party and Jeremiah, of Jeremiah to Yahweh, and then of Jeremiah to himself. It begins and ends with the words of Yahweh to the search party (vv. 1–2 // 7–8). The second and fourth speaker is Jeremiah speaking to Yahweh (vv. 3 // 5c–6) and in the center Jeremiah speaks to himself (4–5b).²⁸

2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text: A second distinctive type of chiasmus is where the chiasmus is placed in the position of completing a unit of text. This type of chiasmus is most frequently used to complete poetry—usually occurring at the end of a poem or a stanza. The following is an example of a key-word chiasmus completing the Song of Moses:

Deuteronomy 32:43²⁹

- A Give **his people** ringing acclaim, O nations,
 B For the blood of his servants **he will avenge**,
 B' yes, **he will return vengeance** to his adversaries,
 A' And atone for his land, **his people**.

Other examples include Deut 32:9 and Deut 32:18 where chiasmic structures complete poetic stanzas.³⁰

Deuteronomy 32:9

- A Indeed **the Lord's portion**
 B was **his people**,
 B' **Jacob**
 A' **his allotted share**.

Deuteronomy 32:18

- A The Rock **that begot you**
 B **you neglected**;
 B' **And you forgot** the God
 A' **who gave you birth**.

Comparable examples appear in Jeremiah where a chiasmus ends a stanza of a poem:

Jeremiah 4:9c

- A And **they shall be appalled**
 B **The priests**
 B' And **the prophets**
 A' **Shall be astounded**

Jeremiah 6:21b

A **And they shall stumble** against them

B **fathers and sons** together

B' **neighbor and friend**

A' **shall perish**

3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasms in the Middle Two Cola of Four-Cola Units: A third distinctive form of chiasmus found in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah is where Hebrew particles are found in the middle two cola of a four-cola unit. See the following examples:³¹

Deuteronomy 32:27

Had I not feared provocation by the enemy

lest their adversaries should judge amiss

lest they should say, "Our hand is triumphant

Yahweh has not wrought all this."

Lundbom argues that this construction in Deuteronomy may have provided Jeremiah with a prototype.³² The following are examples of chiasmus with Hebrew particles in the two-center cola:

Jeremiah 9:21 [9:22 Eng]

The dead bodies of men shall fall

like dung on the open field

like sheaves after the reaper

And none shall gather them.

Jeremiah 13:16a

Give glory to Yahweh your God

before it grows dark

before your feet stumble

on the mountains at twilight.

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure: Deuteronomy and Jeremiah are both known for their hortatory or their homiletical styles. Moses and Jeremiah are preachers. Moses, in his prose speeches in Deuteronomy, and Jeremiah, in his poetic speeches, often dramatize their messages with rhetorical speeches or questions coming from the mouth of God. Examples of the usage of rhetorical questions in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah include:

Deuteronomy 4:7–8

- 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?
 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? (NRSV)

Deuteronomy 32:6

Is not he your father, who created you,
 who made you and established you? (NRSV)

Jeremiah 2:31–32

- 31 Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
 or a land of thick darkness?
 Why then do my people say, “We are free,
 we will come to you no more”?
 32 Can a girl forget her ornaments,
 or a bride her attire?
 Yet my people have forgotten me,
 days without number. (NRSV)

One of the conventions shared by both books is to place the rhetorical questions in the center of a chiasm. See for example the passage in Deut 4:1–14:³³

- A (4:1) **hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe**
 B (4:2) you shall **not add** to what I command you **nor subtract** from it
 C (4:3) **You have seen with your own eyes**
 D (4:4) you, who clung to the LORD, **are all alive today**
 E (4:5–6) **Look**
 F (4:7) **For what other great nation** has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?
 F' (4:8) **8 And what other great nation** has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?
 E' (4:9) Do not forget the things which **you yourselves have seen**
 D' (4:10) they may learn to fear me **as long as they live**
 C' (4:11–12) **saw no form**
 B' (4:13) he **wrote** on two tablets of stone
 A' (4:14) **to teach you the statutes and decrees which you are to observe**

See also the rhetorical questions in the center of Jer 8:18–21, in a chiasmus that we have already discussed as an example of speaker chiasmus above:

- A My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick (18)
 B Hark a cry, “Is Yahweh not in Zion? Is her king not in her?” (19)
 C CENTER Why then have they provoked me to anger with their images
 and with their foreign idols? (20)
 B’ The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved
 A’ I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me (21)

Rhetorical Studies and the Book of Mormon

The observations about the four distinctive rhetorical features in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah may be useful to Book of Mormon studies. Noel Reynolds noted: “The growing understanding of and appreciation for Hebrew rhetoric of the 7th century BCE, suggests strongly that we should look at the writings of Nephi who was born and educated in 7th century Jerusalem, and who opens his narrative telling us that ‘I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father’ (1 Nephi 1:1), to see if the insights of rhetorical criticism might provide us with new insights.”³⁴ Deuteronomy is well-attested in the Book of Mormon, and prophecies of Jeremiah were contained on the Brass Plates (1 Nephi 5:13). John Welch has identified several examples of possible legal evidence in the Book of Mormon from Jeremiah.³⁵

Beginning with the work of John Welch, Book of Mormon scholars have noted and discussed chiasmus in their analyses of the Book of Mormon.³⁶ In 1992, Donald Parry produced a version of the Book of Mormon text that was reformatted to show parallelistic patterns in the Book of Mormon in which he identified numerous possible examples of chiasmus.³⁷ More recently, Book of Mormon scholars have begun to notice the importance of the rhetorical device of *inclusio* as well.³⁸ Just as the study of chiasmus has led to many insights in the Book of Mormon there is much work to be done in the study of *inclusio* in the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saint readers of the Book of Mormon have long noted the repetition of important themes throughout the Small Plates and the Book of Mormon as a whole. For example, the keywords and themes of a passage in 1 Nephi 1:20 which states, “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all whom he hath chosen,” have been noted to appear throughout 1 Nephi (1:14; 8:8; 21:10, 13) and 2 Nephi (2:8, 12, 26; 9:8, 19; 11:5; 19:17; 24:1), indicating a major theme of

Nephi's work. And yet, I am not aware of a study that identifies these as possible examples of inclusio. There are many similar examples of repetition that may be functioning as inclusios to be explored.

The four types of distinctive chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah as integral parts of the rhetorical tradition of the seventh century in Judah may be useful in further study of the Book of Mormon. Examples of all four distinctive uses of chiasmus can be found in the Book of Mormon.

1. Chiasmus of Speaker: While I have not yet located an example of a chiasmus of speaker in the Book of Mormon, we can point to a similar example involving the reversal of the subjects in the text. In Nephi's interpretation of the block of Isaiah chapters that he has inserted into his record in 2 Nephi 12–24 that equal Isa 2–14, he gives a long historical discussion of how these Isaiah passages may help illuminate the history of the Jews, the Lehites, and the Gentiles. Nephi presents this discussion in a chiastic form—that also turns out to coincide with the historical order of the visit of the Savior to the three peoples and their acceptance of the Book of Mormon:³⁹

2 Nephi 25–31

A 25:9–30 **Jews:** Messiah goes to Jews and is rejected

B 26:1–18 **Lehites/Nephites:** Christ visits the Nephites and is accepted then later rejected

C 26:19–30:14 **Gentiles:** pride of the Gentiles

C' 31:1–2: **Gentiles:** Gentiles accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

B' 31:3: **Lehites/Lamanites:** Lamanites accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

A' 31:4–8 **Jews:** Jews accept the Book of Mormon and Christ

2. Chiasmus in the Position of Completing a Unit of Text: Numerous examples of chiasms can be found in completing a stanza or a unit of text in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁰ See, for example, the chiasmus that bridges the modern divisions in 1 Nephi chapters 1 and 2:

1 Nephi 1:20

1:20: A and they also **sought** his **life**, that they might **take it away**.

B But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over those whom he hath chosen, **because** of their **faith**, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

2:1: C For behold, it came to pass that the Lord **spake unto my father**, yea, *even in a dream*.

C' and **said unto him**: Blessed art thou, Lehi, because of the things
which thou hast done;

B' and **because** thou hast been **faithful** and declared unto this people
the things which I commanded thee, behold

A' **they seek to take away thy life.**

Incidentally, this chiasmus contains Nephi's introduction of the theme of tender mercies that will be repeated throughout 1 and 2 Nephi. The next occurrence in 1 Nephi of the phrase "tender mercies" also occurs in the center of a chiasmus in 1 Nephi 8:8 that ends the first unit of Lehi's vision of the tree of life:

1 Nephi 8:8

A I began to **pray unto the Lord**

B that he would have **mercy** on me,

B' according to the multitude of his **tender mercies**

A' And it came to pass that after I had **prayed unto the Lord**

A simple chiasm also ends Alma's sermon in Alma 5.

Alma 5:62

A **I speak** by way of command unto you

B **that belong to the church**

B' and unto **those who do not belong to the church**

A' **I speak** by way of invitation.

3. Chiasmus Where Particles Create Semi-chiasmus in the Middle Two Cola of Four-Cola Units: Examples where a semi-chiasmus occurs in the middle two cola of a four-cola unit may be much harder to spot in an English translation than in the Hebrew biblical text. Nevertheless, there are some examples in the Book of Mormon. Some Book of Mormon examples tend to modify the second particle with a conjunction.

2 Nephi 3:1

A **Thou wast born**

B **in** the wilderness of mine afflictions;

B' **yea, in** the days of my greatest sorrow

A' **did thy mother bear thee.**

Mosiah 29:20

A But behold, **he did deliver them**

B **because** they did humble themselves before him;

B' **and because** they cried mightily unto him

A' **he did deliver them out** of bondage

Alma 34:36

A because the Lord hath said **he dwelleth not**

B **in** unholy temples,

B' **but in** the hearts of the righteous

A' **doth he dwell.**

4. Chiasmus Where Rhetorical Questions Occur in the Middle of the Structure: The Book of Mormon, like the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, is a hortatory work. All three books are full of preaching both to contemporary audiences as well as to future audiences. And the preaching in all three books is full of rhetorical questions. Book of Mormon commentators have long noted and discussed the usage of rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon.⁴¹ A few examples of rhetorical questions from the Small Plates are given below. However, these rhetorical questions have not been identified as occurring within a chiasmus structure.

1 Nephi 15:12: Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?

2 Nephi 31:6: And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

2 Nephi 31:7: Know ye not that he was holy?

Jacob 5:48: And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?

A study of the use and function of rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon may be productive in terms of coming to a better understanding of the rhetorical features in the Book of Mormon.

In regards to the convention of putting rhetorical questions in the middle of a chiasmus, there is an example of this in 1 Nephi 15:

1 Nephi 15:7–12⁴²

- A 7 And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which **our father** hath spoken
- B concerning the natural branches of **the olive-tree**, and also concerning the Gentiles. 8 And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?
- C 9 And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing **known unto us**.
- D 10 *Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not **keep the commandments of the Lord?***
- E *How is it that ye will perish, because of **the hardness of your hearts?***
- F 11 *Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—*
- E' If ye will not **harden your hearts**, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive,
- D' with diligence in **keeping my commandments**,
- C' surely these things shall be made **known unto you**.
- B' Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an **olive-tree**,
- A' by the Spirit of the Lord which was in **our father**;

Likewise, three rhetorical questions are placed in the center of a chiasmus in verse 4 in 2 Nephi 29:3–6.⁴³

- A 3 And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: **A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.**
- B 4 But thus saith the Lord God: **O fools**, they shall have a Bible;
- C and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, **mine** ancient covenant **people**.
- D **And what thank they the Jews** for the Bible which they receive from them?
- E *Yea, **what do the Gentiles mean?***
- F ***Do they remember** the travails, and the labors, and the pains of **the Jews**, and their diligence unto me,*
- G *in bringing forth salvation unto the **Gentiles?***
- G' 5 O ye **Gentiles**,
- F' ***have ye remembered the Jews**, mine ancient covenant people?*
- E' Nay; but ye **have cursed them**, and **have hated them**, and have not sought to recover them.
- D' But behold, **I will return all these things upon your own heads**;

C' for I the Lord have not forgotten **my people**.

B' 6 **Thou fool**, that shall say:

A' **A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible**. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

This paper has included a review of the use and function of inclusio and chiasmus in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and has shown that these literary patterns are prominent and, in some cases, distinctive features of a seventh-century Judahite rhetorical tradition. Similarly, the discovery of these same literary features in the Book of Mormon can sharpen our reading and study of this ancient book coming from the same period and rhetorical tradition.

In closing, we can remember the words of Bernard Levinson as he speaks of “the pleasures of chiasmus.” Professor Levinson reminds us that the “recognition of the structure of the chiasm provides an intellectual (and potentially spiritual) gain for the reader and a sense of pleasure.”⁴⁴

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Notes

1. Brent A. Strawn, “‘With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arm’: On the Meaning(s) of the Exodus Traditions(s),” in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice* (ed. Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 103–16.

2. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 329.

3. Bernard Levinson has, more than any other modern scholar, brought the function of Seidel's Law into focus and he uses it in his work to recreate how authors and editors appropriate older texts in their work. The principle of Seidel's Law says, “Repetition may reverse the elements of the original. . . . According to this principle, citation within the Hebrew Bible frequently reverses the elements of the source text.” See

Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18–19. Another prominent biblical scholar Marc Brettler explains Seidel’s Law thusly: “In the Bible, such reversal [Seidel’s Law] indicates that a later source is citing an earlier one—it functions like quotations marks in English.” Marc Brettler, *How to Read the Bible* (3d ed.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 178.

Book of Mormon scholars have noted occurrences of Seidel’s Law in the Book of Mormon. See David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, “Seidel’s Law,” in *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.

4. S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), xlvii. For a comprehensive study of the usage of Deuteronomy in Jeremiah, see Nathan Mastnjak, *Deuteronomy and the Emergence of Textual Authority in Jeremiah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

5. See Moshe Weinfeld, “Introduction,” in *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1–84; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 6–25.

6. A more complete list and discussion of these similarities can be found in Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 37–43.

7. A more complete list of the curses can be found in Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 41–42.

8. See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (2d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004); Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*; and Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013). Lundbom’s collection of essays in *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Studies* was reviewed by Noel B. Reynolds, “The Return of Rhetorical Analysis to Bible Studies,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 91–98.

9. Jack R. Lundbom, “The Inclusio and Other Framing Devices in Deuteronomy I–XXVIII,” *VT* 46 (July 1996): 300.

10. Lundbom identifies and discusses inclusio in Deuteronomy in “Inclusio and Other Framing Devices,” 296–315 and throughout his commentary. Likewise, he discusses inclusio in Jeremiah in *Jeremiah: A Study*, 36–81, and throughout his commentary.

11. Adapted from Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 155, 260–61.

12. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 260–61.

13. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 799.

14. Following Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 42.

15. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864. Lundbom here is following James Muilenburg, “A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style,” in *VTSup* (Congress Volume; Copenhagen, 1953), 1:97–111; and James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 1 (1969): 10.

16. John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981).

17. See John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1999). See also the bibliography at the end of this volume.

18. See David P. Wright, “The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structure Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19),” *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 10 (2004): 143–68.

19. See “Hebrew Bible,” Chiasmus Resources, <https://chiasmusresources.org/hebrew-bible#7>.
20. Taken from Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 84–87.
21. Following Lundbom’s literal translations in his commentary *Deuteronomy*, 850, 914.
22. Simplified from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 87.
23. Simplified from Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 238.
24. Norbert Lohfink “Darstellungskunst und Theologie in Dtn 1, 6–3, 29,” *Biblica* 41, no. 2 (1960): 122; W. L. Moran, “Deuteronomy,” in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (ed. Reginald C. Fuller; London: Nelson, 1969), 261; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 166.
25. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 83.
26. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 529.
27. Following Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 373. See also the discussion in Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 111–14.
28. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 100–104.
29. Following Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864.
30. Following Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 864.
31. All of these examples are from Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 88–89.
32. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study*, 89.
33. From “Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Book of Deuteronomy: Chiastic Structure and Concentric Structure and Parallel of Each Pericope,” http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/05_Deuteronomy_pericope_e.html.
34. Noel B. Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” unpublished, 2016, 6–7, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1679>.
35. For examples of Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon, see Ellis Rasmussen, “Deuteronomy,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (ed. Daniel H. Ludlow; 4 vols.; New York: Macmillan 1992): 378–79. Welch points out parallels to legal trials in the Book of Mormon to Jeremiah’s trial in Jer 26 in John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, 2008), 78, 87–88, 197, 223, 303.
36. John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 198–210. For a convenient and up-to-date bibliography on chiasmus, see the bibliography in Chiasmus Resources, <https://chiasmusresources.org/chiasmus-bibliography>.
37. Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, UT: F.A.R.M.S., 1992).
38. Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel According to Mormon,” *SJT* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34; Noel B. Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” in *“To Seek the Law of the Lord”: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch* (ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson; Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 333–349; Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95.
39. David Rolph Seely, “Nephi’s Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 159–60.
40. These examples are from Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 2, 13, 209.

41. Rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon have been noted and studied in a preliminary way by Ben Spackman, “Negative Questions in the Book of Mormon,” Update No. 179 in *FARMS Insights* 26/200, 2–3. Spackman notes that the occurrence of negative rhetorical questions in the Book of Mormon may be Hebraism. See also James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2004), 219–21.

42. First noted by Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 26.

43. Modified from Parry, *Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 108.

44. Bernard Levinson, abstract submitted for the conference entitled “The Pleasures and Perils of Chiasmus: Some Case Studies from Exodus and Deuteronomy,” Chiasmus Jubilee (Provo, UT: 2017).