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ABRAHAM'S AMEN AND BELIEVING IN CHRIST: POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON TEXT

Loren Spendlove

Abstract: *Following the discovery of delocutive verbs and their likely usage in the Hebrew Bible, Meredith Kline proposed that the verb האמין (he'emîn) in Genesis 15:6 — traditionally interpreted as a denominative verb meaning “he believed” — should be understood as a delocutive verb meaning “he declared ‘amen.’” Rather than reading Genesis 15:6 as a passive statement — Abraham believed in Yahweh — Kline argued that we should interpret this verse in the active sense, that Abraham vocally declared his amen in Yahweh’s covenantal promise. In this light, I have analyzed various passages in the Book of Mormon that utilize similar verbiage — “believe in Christ,” for example — to examine how their meanings might be enhanced by interpreting the verbs as delocutives rather than denominatives.*

In Genesis 15 we are told of a covenantal dialogue that took place between Jehovah and Abraham. A key verse in this chapter, Genesis 15:6, is foundational for Jews¹ and Christians alike: “And [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (KJV).² The apostle Paul viewed this verse as doctrinally significant and employed its

1. “When Abraham is promised progeny as countless as the stars in the sky, ‘He believed in God’ [Genesis 15:5-6]. The word ‘believed’ is *he'emîn*, a variant of *emunah*, ‘faith.’ The Rabbis, ever after, called Abraham the quintessential ‘man of faith,’ a reminder that good deeds without faith are wanting.” Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, “The Essence of Faith,” *The New York Jewish Week*, Oct. 23, 2012, <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/the-essence-of-faith/>.

2. Even though his name has not yet been changed from Abram (אברם) to Abraham (אברהם) in Genesis 15, unless I am citing another author’s work, I consistently refer to the patriarch as *Abraham* in this paper.

use in his epistles to both the Romans (Romans 4:1–5) and the Galatians (Galatians 3:6–9). The passage in Romans reads:

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? *Abraham believed³ God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is counted for righteousness.* (Romans 4:1–5 KJV)⁴

Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, based his doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) on these teachings of Paul whose teachings were derived from Genesis 15:6:

Also [our churches] teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. *This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight.* Romans 3 and 4.⁵

The apostle James, in what many believe to be in opposition to Paul's approach, incorporated Genesis 15:6 into his treatment of justification through both faith and works:

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:* and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by

3. From the Greek πιστεύω (*pisteuō*) meaning “to trust.” The same Greek verb is used in the Septuagint translation of Genesis 15:6 for the Hebrew verb האמין (*he'emin*). Rather than conveying a delocutive meaning, *pisteuō* is more aligned with the denominative “believed” as האמין (*he'emin*) is rendered in the KJV translation of Genesis 15:6.

4. Throughout this paper, emphasis is mine unless otherwise indicated.

5. *The Augsburg Confession* Article IV, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0204/_P5.HTM.

works a man is justified, and not by faith only. (James 2:21–24 KJV)

In these verses, James explained that Abraham's initial expression of belief in Genesis 15:6 was perfected by his offering of Isaac upon the altar. In other words, according to one interpretation of James' teaching, Abraham's initial expression of belief was a righteous act but insufficient for justification; Abraham's belief, unaccompanied by works, was alone and without redemptive power. That is to say, his belief would have been "dead" without his works. Although Martin Luther took issue with the book of James,⁶ I believe that Luther would have agreed, at least in principle, that works are locked in a close orbit around faith. Luther wrote:

Faith is God's work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God. (John 1:13). It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever.⁷

In other words, Luther taught that good works naturally follow those who possess faith — good works are the evidence of real faith. In the sense that works always accompany true faith, by works is our faith made perfect also. In an effort to explain the apparent contradiction between Paul's and James' interpretations of Genesis 15:6, Larry Tyler wrote:

6. "In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and good for you to know, even though you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to them; for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it." Martin Luther, *Preface to the New Testament* (1522), http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_f8.htm.

7. Martin Luther, "An Introduction to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Dr. Martin Luther's Vermischte Deutsche Schriften*, ed. Johann K. Irmischer, vol. 63 (Erlangen: Heyder and Zimmer, 1854), 124-125, <https://christian.net/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/luther-faith.txt>.

The New Testament's treatment of Old Testament passages do not settle questions of text-critical nature. When a New Testament writer quotes from the Old Testament, his primary concern is its application to a particular circumstance. Therefore, a certain liberty is exercised so that the passage cited accomplishes the purpose of the New Testament writer. It is not unusual then to see the New Testament writer focus on a particular aspect of the meaning of an Old Testament text. In light of this a quotation of an Old Testament text does not necessarily resolve all questions related to the exegesis of that text. Moreover, the usage of the Old Testament text by one writer of the New Testament does not absolutely control the manner in which another New Testament writer uses the same text. The significance of any Old Testament text may have various applications all of which may be valid in the framework of the Old Testament text.⁸

Delocutive Verbs

The KJV's translation of Genesis 15:6 has long been accepted as lexically correct and doctrinally sound: Abraham *believed* God, and God counted his belief as righteousness. However, in the mid to late 1950s, two linguistic scholars independently identified a new verb form that came to be called *delocutive* (meaning, *from locution* or *from speaking*).⁹ Although the following discussion of delocutives may appear to the reader to be disconnected from Genesis 15:6, its relevance will soon become apparent.

Delocutives can be described as verbs that represent vocal exclamations common to one's culture. For example, in English it is very common to say *amen* at the end of a prayer, and for many Christians, even during the course of a prayer or sermon. While *amen* can be considered an exclamation in itself, it can also be expressed as a delocutive verb with the meaning of *to say amen*. Cecil Robeck provided a helpful example of this usage as he described a Christian revival in which a woman in the congregation seemed overcome by the Spirit:

8. Larry A. Tyler, "An Analysis of Abraham's Faith in Genesis 15:6 And its use by Paul and James in the New Testament," *Aletheias: A Journal of Biblical Studies, Theology, & Ministry* (Spring 2017): 22.

9. See Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971).

She jumped to her feet and some of the unregenerate who had looked on with open-mouthed wonder fled from the building in terror. But she didn't intend to do any one any damage. She had received sanctification, and was simply expressing her joy in her own peculiar way. All the brethren and the sistern gathered around her and *Amened* and *Hallelujahed* until they were hoarse, evidently as happy as she was.¹⁰

In this passage, the author used *amened* and *hallelujahed* as delocutive verbs (meaning, *to say amen* and *to say hallelujah*), each representing their respective exclamations. To be clear, in this sentence, *amen* and *hallelujah* function as delocutive verbs rather than the simple exclamations *amen* and *hallelujah*. The author could have rephrased the final passage like this: "All the brethren and the sistern gathered around her and shouted *amen* and *hallelujah*" In this reworked sentence *amen* and *hallelujah* are not verbs, but exclamations.

In a second example, Scott Cherney recounted a humorous story about an experience that he had in a movie theater. In this retelling Cherney wrote of an unruly and boisterous group in the theater audience:

I then proceeded *to shush* them. Yes, I said *I shushed* them
I shushed them once. *I shushed* them twice. *I shushed* them
 three times, drawing it out a little bit more and even adding
 a "please."¹¹

In this passage Cherney used the delocutive verb *shush* (meaning *to say shush*, or *shh*) five times, most likely without knowing that he was using a delocutive.

Although the identification of delocutives is quite recent, their usage is not. In the following passage from 1866, we are told of a boy named Gregory who was patted on the head repeatedly by guests at his family's home:

Mrs. Granton comes in for her share of the male and female
 Boxedge attention, and little Gregory is patted on the head
 and "good boyed," "fine boyed," and "dear little fellowed" all
 over.¹²

10. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Emanate Books, 2006), 174.

11. Scott Cherney, *In the Dark: A Life and Times in a Movie Theater* (n.p.: Scott Cherney, 2011), 121.

12. George, *The Church and State Coach, and the Disaffected Van: A Tale of Serious Sport* (London: T. Cautley Newby, 1866), 117.

The three delocutive verbs in this passage — *good boyed*, *fine boyed*, and *dear little fellowed* — stand for the exclamations *good boy*, *fine boy*, and *dear little fellow*, respectively.

As can be seen from these examples, delocutive verbs represent common exclamations in a given culture and language. Jewish scholar José Faur helped explain the difference between delocutive verbs and denominative verbs¹³ (meaning *from a noun*):

The delocutive verb is different from a denominative. The base term of a denominative is a noun or designation and stands in relation with “to do ... ” denoting, therefore, action. The base of a delocutive is a call or formulaic expression and has the particular connotation of “to say ... ” denoting, therefore, activities of discourse.¹⁴

The denominative verb *to hammer* could be understood as being derived from the noun *hammer* and represents the action of beating on something with another object. Likewise, the delocutive verb *to yes sir* is derived from the expression “*yes sir*.”¹⁵ Regarding the scope and expanse of delocutive verbs, Frans Plank added that this verb form is widespread among multiple language groups and cultures:

Although originally identified as such in, and illustrated exclusively from, Indo-European languages by Debrunner

13. According to David Clines, scholars and biblical Hebrew lexica do not agree on the corpus of denominative verbs in classical Hebrew. David Clines, “Denominative Verbs in Classical Hebrew,” *Academia.edu*, accessed May 31, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/37728444/Denominative_Verbs_in_Classical_Hebrew.

14. José Faur, “Delocutive Expressions in the Hebrew Liturgy,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 16-17 (1984-85): 43.

15. “‘I don’t know if I *yes-sirred* and *no-sirred* them, but that was definitely in the back of my mind,’ Matthews said.” Melanie Hauser, “Robert Brazile ‘last piece of puzzle’ for Houston Oilers in Hall of Fame,” *Houston Chronicle*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/texas-sports-nation/texans/article/Robert-Brazile-last-piece-of-puzzle-for-Houston-13109033.php>

(1956)¹⁶ and Benveniste (1958),¹⁷ delocutives are not confined to this family, but show a wide genetic and areal spread.¹⁸

Finally, with respect to the legitimacy of delocutive verbs, Laurel Brinton summarized Frans Plank's observations:

Delocutives are not marginal or even extragrammatical; in fact, they should be treated no differently than any other kind of denominative verb formation. They obey regular rules of syntax and do not show variation from speaker to speaker.¹⁹

Delocutive Verbs in Hebrew

With Debrunner's and Benveniste's novel identification of delocutive verbs, scholars began the process of searching for their presence in non-Indo-European languages as well. Delbert Hillers was a pioneer in the identification of delocutives in biblical Hebrew:

A pair of especially clear examples of delocutive verbs in Hebrew is צדק/הצדיק [*tsideq/hitsdiq*] and הרשיע [*hirshia*], "to say someone is in the right," and "to say someone is in the wrong," respectively. These have, of course, ordinarily been explained as cases of the "declarative" or "estimative" piel or hiphil, and later it will be necessary to set forth objections to this traditional classification. It seems best first to present the positive reasons for calling these verbs delocutives. ... צדק [*tsideq*] and הצדיק [*hitsdiq*] do not mean "to make someone just" or "to behave justly" as one might expect from the analogy of such words as גדל [*gadal*] (vb., qal), גדול [*gadol*] (adj.) with related piel גדל [*gidel*] and hiphil הגדיל [*higdil*]. As

16. Albert Debrunner, "Zur Hypostasierung von Wünschen und dergleichen," in *Festschrift für Max Vasmer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Margarete Woltner & Herbert Bräuer (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 1956), 113-23.

17. Émile Benveniste, "Les verbes délocutifs," in *Studia Philologica et Litteraria in Honorem Leo Spitzer*, ed. Anna G. Hatcher & K. L. Selig (Bern: Francke, 1958), 57-63.

18. Frans Plank, "Delocutive verbs, crosslinguistically," *Linguistic Typology* 9, no. 2 (2005): 459.

19. Laurel J. Brinton, "Interjection-based delocutive verbs in the history of English," in Irma Taavitsainen, Merja Kytö, Claudia Claridge, Jeremy Smith, eds., *Developments in English: Expanding Electronic Evidence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 141.

all agree, צדק [*tsideq*] and הצדיק [*hitsdiq*] mean “to say that a person is in the right.”²⁰

The verb הצדיק (*hitsdiq*)²¹ has been interpreted traditionally as meaning “to justify someone who is in the right” and הרשיע (*hirshia*) as meaning “to condemn someone who is in the wrong.” However, Hillers categorized these verbs as delocutives with the meaning of “to say/declare that someone is in the right” and “to say/declare that someone is in the wrong,” respectively.²² A good example of this usage can be found in Deuteronomy 25:1. The KJV renders this verse:

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; *then they shall justify the righteous* [והצדיקו את־הצדיק], *and condemn the wicked* [והרשיעו את־הרשע].

Young’s Literal Translation (YLT), published nearly 100 years before the discovery of delocutive verbs, more clearly rendered this verse:

When there is a strife between men, and they have come nigh unto the judgment, and they have judged, *and declared righteous the righteous* [והצדיקו את־הצדיק], *and declared wrong the wrong-doer* [והרשיעו את־הרשע].

With the benefit of this new understanding of delocutive verbs, a revised translation of this verse could be:

When there is strife between people and they come to the judgment, and they have judged, *and declared the one in the right to be right* [והצדיקו את־הצדיק], *and declared the one in the wrong to be wrong* [והרשיעו את־הרשע]. [author’s translation]

20. Delbert R. Hillers, “Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86, no. 3 (Sept. 1967): 320-321.

21. In addition to using a phonetic transliteration style of Hebrew words into roman script, I also provide the Hebrew spelling for those who are able to read it. In my opinion, this two-fold method of presentation meets the needs of both common readers and Hebrew scholars better than the use of an academic transliteration style alone.

22. In agreement with Hillers, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax* recognizes a delocutive Hiphil verb form: “A Hiphil verb can be delocutive. For example, if it is delocutive, the Hiphil verb הצדיק [*hitsdiq*] ‘he justified’ means ‘he caused someone to say to someone, “you are צדיק [*tsadiq*] (in the right).”’ Similarly, if it is a delocutive, the Hiphil verb הרשיע [*hirshia*] ‘he condemned’ means ‘he caused someone to say to someone, “you are רשע [*rasha*] (guilty).”’” Ronald J. Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 62.

Whereas the KJV translation understood these verbs (הִצְדִּיק *hitsdiq* and הִרְשִׁיעַ *hirshia*) as in the hiphil form, Hillers instead identified them as delocutives. So, rather than the judges “justifying” or “condemning” individuals, their job was actually *to declare* who was “in the right” and who was “in the wrong.” Faur helped explain the significance of properly identifying delocutive verbs in biblical Hebrew:

As a denominative, *lēhaqdīs* [לְהִקְדִּישׁ] means “to sanctify” and refers to the performance of a ritual whereby something is “sanctified” (cf. the pi’el usage in Exodus 40:10; I Kings 8:64; Job 1:5; etc.), becoming, thereby, “holy.” As a denominative, it would be insulting to apply such a verb to God (e.g., Isaiah 8:13; 29:23; etc.) since it implies that God’s holiness is the effect of a ritual performed on Him by the worshiper. As a delocutive, it simply means the utterance of a formula declaring that something is *qādōš* [קָדוֹשׁ] (“holy”). ... These verbs do not derive from the adjective *qādōš* [קָדוֹשׁ] “holy,” but from the formula *qādōš* [קָדוֹשׁ]. They mean “to proclaim: [God is] Holy!” — not “to sanctify [God].” The same applies to other passages usually taken to mean the “sanctification of God,” as when God says: “*wēniqdaštī* [וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי] among the children of Israel” (Leviticus 22:32). It means that He “will be declared Holy!” — rather than to be “sanctified.”²³

The KJV translation of Leviticus 22:32 interprets the verb וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי (*wēniqdaštī*) as a denominative: “*I will be hallowed* [i.e., sanctified] among the children of Israel.” However, according to Faur, it would be more appropriate to understand the verb as a delocutive: “*I will be declared holy* among the children of Israel.” Faur added that another example of the delocutive usage of *qadosh* (קָדוֹשׁ) can be found in Isaiah 6:3. The KJV text for this verse reads:

And one cried unto another, and said, *Holy, holy, holy* [קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ *qadosh qadosh qadosh*], is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

According to Faur, the employment of *qadosh* (קָדוֹשׁ) in this verse aligns with the delocutive (*to declare holy*) rather than the denominative (*to be holy*, or *to sanctify*) verb structure. In the verse from Isaiah the seraphim cried out to each other and *proclaimed* three times that the Lord of hosts was *holy*. Another Jewish scholar, Jeffery Tigay, following

23. Faur, “Delocutive Expressions,” 43.

in Hillers' footsteps, added to our understanding of delocutives in the Hebrew Bible:

Some verbs that are not derived in the first place from locutions have specific nuances that are. For example, the *Piels* of חזק [*chazaq*] and אמץ [*emats*], which both normally mean 'strengthen' (Isaiah 35:3, Job 4:4), also have a delocutive sense, 'say the formula חזק [*chazaq*] or חזק ואמץ [*chazeq veemats*] "be strong" or "be strong and resolute" to someone'. In English, we could translate the idiom as 'to *hazaq* (or *hazaq ve'emats*) someone'. This sense is found in such passages as Deuteronomy 1:38 and 3:28, where God commands Moses, with reference to Joshua, ארתו חזק [*oto chazaq*], and ואמצהו חזקהו [*chazqehu veamtsehu*]. That these commands mean 'say (ואמץ) חזק [*chazaq veemats*] ("be strong [and resolute]!") to him', not 'imbue him with strength (and courage)' (NJPSV), is clear from Deuteronomy 31:7, where Moses carries out this instruction by saying to Joshua, חזק ואמץ [*chazaq veemats*] (cf. 31:23 and Joshua 1:6–9, 18).²⁴

So, while in the KJV translation of Deuteronomy 1:38 the Lord tells Moses to "encourage him" (meaning Joshua), following Tigay's suggestion, the passage should read "say 'be strong.'" This shift in interpretation introduced by delocutives may seem subtle, and even of little practical importance, but it is actually very meaningful and can dramatically impact our understanding of scripture, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

Did Abraham Believe or Say Amen?

In the opening verse of Genesis 15 we are told that "the word of the LORD (דבר־יהוה *devar Yahweh*) came unto Abram in a vision" (KJV). In this vision, the Lord instructed Abraham to "look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5 KJV). In the KJV, we are told that Abraham's reaction to the Lord's covenantal promise was that he believed [האמין]

24. Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Some More Delocutives in Hebrew," in Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, eds., *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 410.

he'emin] ²⁵ in the Lord (Genesis 15:6 KJV). However, Following Hillers' discovery of delocutives in biblical Hebrew, Meredith Kline, a scholar in the fields of covenant theology and the Hebrew Bible, identified several more occurrences of delocutive verbs in the Bible. Among these is our passage under study in this paper, Genesis 15:6. Kline wrote:

Our suggestion is that האמין [*he'emin*] is another of these delocutive verbs and that its delocutive origin is discernible in Genesis 15:6 (and elsewhere). This verse will then state not (explicitly) that Abram's inner attitude was one of faith but that Abram voiced his "Amen" (אמן) in audible response to the word of God.²⁶

According to Kline, the verb האמין (*he'emin*) in Genesis 15:6 did not mean that Abraham merely "believed" God. Rather, as a delocutive, it meant that Abraham audibly "declared *amen*."²⁷ Since the context of Genesis 15 is covenantal in nature, saying *amen* would have been an appropriate way for Abraham to respond:²⁸

The fact that that statement appears in the context of a formal procedure in which such an "Amen" was a customary form of response adds plausibility to the interpretation presented here. Genesis 15 is the account of a solemn covenant ritual and an

25. האמן (*he'emin*) in Genesis 15:6 is a defective spelling of האמין (*he'emin*). Unless I am citing another author's work or quoting directly from the Masoretic text of Genesis 15:6, I use the *plene*, or full spelling of האמין (*he'emin*) in this paper.

26. Meredith Kline, "Abram's Amen," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 31 (1968): 2-3.

27. In Hebrew, *amen* and *believe* are derived from the Hebrew root א-מ-ן, implying firmness or support. Koehler and Baumgartner explain that when האמין (*he'emin*) is followed by ב, as in Genesis 15:6, the hiphil verb form means "to have trust in, to believe in, God" [emphasis original]. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "אמן." (Hereafter HALOT.) However, HALOT does not include any discussion of the delocutive verb form, perhaps because it was originally published prior to the discovery of delocutive verbs.

28. "A survey of the biblical usages of האמין [*he'emin*] indicates that a delocutive meaning is in fact present in many (though not all) instances. Gen 15:6 most likely contains such an instance, and this fact is apparent both from the verse's context and from the similarity of its use of האמין [*he'emin*] to delocutive uses of האמין [*he'emin*] elsewhere. The covenantal setting of Gen 15:6 commends a delocutive understanding of האמין [*he'emin*]." J. Bergman Kline, "The Hiphil Stem — Weak Verbs," in Gary D. Pratico and Miles Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 365.

“Amen” response by the covenant vassal in such ceremonies is attested in the records of both biblical²⁹ and extra-biblical covenants.³⁰

Kline reasoned that the verb *האמין* (*he'emin*) did not simply project Abraham's passive “inner attitude.”³¹ Rather, it represented an active vocal response to God's covenantal promise.³² Kline referred to the use of *האמין* (*he'emin*) in this verse as a *confessional act* by Abraham.³³ Kline was also aware that while not every occurrence of *האמין* (*he'emin*) in the Bible can or should be translated as “to say *amen*,” many can and should

29. For example, see Deuteronomy 27:15-26.

30. Meredith Kline, “Abram's Amen,” 3.

31. Contrary to the traditional interpretation of Gen 15:6 — that Abraham “believed” God — and to Kline's reading — that Abraham expressed an audible “amen” in Yahweh — Max Rogland argued that Abraham “kept believing Yahweh”: “What are the implications of the preceding discussion for our understanding of *והאמין* [*ve'he'emin*] in Gen 15:6? Given the abundant and clear attestation of *weqatal* as an indicator of imperfective situations in OT narrative, the *prima facie* reading of *והאמין* [*ve'he'emin*] would be as a habitual-iterative past and, as such, should be rendered along the lines of ‘and he kept believing Yahweh.’ Strikingly, however, English translations consistently render this verb as a simple past tense (‘and he believed’).” Max Rogland, “Abram's Persistent Faith: Hebrew Verb Semantics in Genesis 15:6,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 241.

32. This theophanic experience in which Yahweh promised Abraham countless seed and Abraham possibly responded with an audible “amen” can be profitably compared to the account of king David's selection of Solomon as his successor: “And the king sweareth and saith, ‘Jehovah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity; surely as I swear to thee by Jehovah, God of Israel, saying, Surely Solomon thy son doth reign after me, and he doth sit on my throne in my stead; surely so I do this day’” (1 Kings 1:29-30 YLT). Following this oath, king David relayed instructions to Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada to carry through on his oath. Benaiah responded: “Amen [אמן]! so doth Jehovah, God of my lord the king, say” (1 Kings 1:36 YLT).

33. “Abram's response to the word of God was faith. ‘And he believed in the Lord’ (v. 6). The Hebrew word translated ‘believed’ is ‘*aman*. In a typical covenant ceremony this was the actual response of one party to another in expressing agreement. It may have been that Abram expressed his faith by saying ‘*aman* at the appropriate place in a covenant ceremony. In Scripture the word ‘amen’ is always a strong affirmation of faith. Some writers have translated this phrase, ‘Abram said, “Amen” to the Lord.’ Elmer L. Towns, *A Journey through the Old Testament: The Story of how God Developed His People in the Old Testament* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1989), https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=towns_books.

be. Both “to believe” or “to say *amen*” can be appropriate translations of האמין (*he'emin*), depending on usage and context.³⁴ Kline clarified:

The delocutive meaning coexists with other meanings of these verbs in the same conjugations. Thus, just as טהר [*taher*] means both “purify” and “pronounce, ‘It is pure,’” so האמין [*he'emin*] means both “believe (in)” and “declare, ‘Amen.’”³⁵

Many biblical scholars have argued that Genesis 15 should be divided into two separate narratives: verses 1–6 comprising the first narrative, and verses 7–21 the second.³⁶ Several arguments for this

34. While Hillers, Kline, Faur and other biblical scholars recognize the presence of the delocutive verb form in the Hebrew Bible, knowing how and when to identify a verb as delocutive is not always clear. For example, many explanations have been proffered for the use of האמין [*he'emin*] in Genesis 15:6, Victor Hamilton explains: “Hebraists wonder why the verb for *put faith* or ‘believe’ is in the Hiphil stem (which generally has a causative force), and why the verb is sometimes followed by the preposition *be* (23 times) and other times by the preposition *le* (14 times). . . . The first issue, the use of the Hiphil stem for ‘believe, have faith,’ has been explained in various ways. The standard nuance attached to the Hiphil, that is, a causative, ‘to make firm,’ is certainly ruled out for Gen. 15:6. Some commentators (e.g., Speiser) have suggested a declarative-estimative function: ‘he declared him (or considered him) firm, steadfast.’ This shifts the emphasis from the subject of the action to the object of the action, and so in 15:6 it is Yahweh who is highlighted, not Abram. This suggestion is ruled out grammatically by the fact that verbs used declaratively are followed by a direct object. *he'emin*, on the contrary, is followed by a preposition or is used absolutely (Ps. 116:10, ‘I have remained faithful’). Close to the latter suggestion is the idea that we have here a delocutive use of the Hiphil. Gen. 15:6 would be read something like: ‘He declared, “Amen” in Yahweh.’ Thus Abram gives not just a mental response, but a verbal, confessional statement, to which Yahweh responds in v. 6b. Grammatically there is not the same need for a direct object after a delocutive verb as there is after a declarative one. The traditional explanation has been to assign to the Hiphil of this verb an internal-transitive function, that is, ‘the entering into a certain condition and, further, the being in the same.’ Abram ‘became steadfast (or firm) in Yahweh.’ This nuance differs from the previous two in that it emphasizes the certainty and the sureness of the believer, rather than the certainty of the object or statement in which faith was placed. What prompted Abram’s faith was certainly the promise of the Lord, and that is the incentive to faith. But this is a theological observation, not a linguistic one.” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 423-424.

35. Meredith Kline, “Abram’s Amen,” 2n4.

36. For example, see Moshe Anbar, “Genesis 15: A Conflation of Two Deuteronomic Narratives,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101, no. 1 (March 1982): 39-55.

arrangement have been proposed, but perhaps the most compelling is that while verses 1–5 contain dialogue between Abraham and the Lord, verse 6 has been viewed by many scholars as an editorial insertion — a summary statement lacking dialogue. In verse 7, the dialogue picks up again and continues for several more verses. However, if we accept Kline’s interpretation of Genesis 15:6, which presents Abraham declaring his *amen* to God’s promise of countless seed, then verses 1–9 offer a continuous, uninterrupted dialogue between Abraham and the Lord. O. Palmer Robertson agreed that interpreting אָמֵן (*he’emin*) as a delocutive properly integrates Genesis 15:6 into the overall narrative rather than isolating it as a “theological analysis belonging to a later age.”³⁷

Kline was not the first to claim that Abraham did more than just *believe* in God’s promise, but that he vocally expressed his *amen*.³⁸ As early as 1893 Christian pastors were promulgating this idea, still more than half a century away from the discovery of delocutives:

The Lord called Abraham out and said, Look at the stars and tell the number of them, so shall thy seed be. Abraham said, “Amen.” That is the Hebrew, Abraham said, “Amen.” And the Lord said, “You are right.”³⁹

37. “In a similar fashion, the phrase ‘He believed God’ may depict a situation in which Abraham ‘declared his “Amen” to the promise of God. As a consequence, Genesis 15:6 would not appear as an interruption in the midst of a straightforward historical narrative which represented the theological analysis belonging to a later age. Under this construction of the passage, the narrative proceeds in a rather straightforward manner: God promises, Abraham declares his ‘Amen,’ and the Lord pronounces him righteous. ... Although absolute certainty cannot be suggested with reference to this analysis, it certainly captures the flavor of the affirmation of Genesis 15:6. Whether verbally or otherwise, Abraham declared his ‘Amen’ to the promise of God, and God reckoned his faith in the stead of righteousness.” O. Palmer Robertson, “Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 263.

38. “There was a prompt response to the Divine revelation. ‘Abraham believed.’ He had faith before, but now it was prominent and emphatic, a clearer, stronger, fuller trust in God. The original Hebrew for ‘believed’ comes from a root whence we derive our ‘Amen,’ and we might paraphrase it by saying that ‘Abraham said Amen to the Lord.’” W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis I–XXV: A Devotional Commentary*, 3rd ed. (London: Religious Tract Society, 1909), 181.

39. Elder A. T. Jones, “Third Angel’s Message — No. 46,” *Review and Herald Extra: Daily Bulletin of the General Conference* 5, no. 16 (Feb. 24, 1893), 378.

The Babylonian Talmud, recorded in written form during the Amoraic period (roughly 200 to 500 CE), contains analysis and discussion of the law (תורה Torah) by Jewish scholars, the Amoraim. In Tractate Shabbat, we are given the following, which could be employed to bolster Kline's theory:

Reish Lakish said: One who answers amen with all his strength, they open the gates of the Garden of Eden before him, as it is stated: "Open the gates, and a righteous nation shall come who keeps the faith" (Isaiah 26:2). *Do not read: Who keeps [שומר shomer] the faith [אמונים emunim], but rather: Who says [שאומרים she'omrim] amen [אמן amen].*⁴⁰

In this passage from the Talmud, we are told that we should read Isaiah 26:2 as "a righteous nation shall come who *says amen*" rather than "a righteous nation shall come who *keeps the faith*."⁴¹ This reading requires some shifting of letters from one word to another, but this is not an uncommon practice in the Talmud. Below are the KJV translation, the Masoretic Text, and a literal translation (following Kline's delocutive interpretation) of Genesis 15:6:

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness (KJV).

והאמן ביהוה ויחשבה לו צדקה

And he declared "amen" in Yahweh, and He reckoned to him righteousness (literal, with delocutive usage).

Saying "amen in Yahweh" is normative practice in both Christianity and Judaism.⁴² In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we are typically taught to end our prayers "in the name of Jesus Christ, amen." However, since LDS doctrine also declares that Jesus Christ and Yahweh are the same person (cf. 1 Nephi 19:10), ending a prayer in this manner is functionally equivalent to saying "amen in Yahweh." Additionally, according to another passage in the Babylonian Talmud the word amen is an acronym for "God, faithful King":

40. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 119b.

41. The KJV for this passage reads: "that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."

42. "AMEN (Hebrew אמן ; "it is true," "so be it," "may it become true"), word or formula used as confirmation, endorsement, or expression of hope and wish on hearing a blessing, prayer, curse, or oath." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, ISR: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), 803.

What is the meaning of the term amen [אמן]? Rabbi Ḥanina says: It is an acronym of the words: God, faithful King [*El Melekh ne'eman* אל מלך נאמן].⁴³

According to this Babylonian Talmud passage, the three Hebrew letters in the word אמן (amen) stand for the first letter in each word of the phrase אל מלך נאמן (*el melekh ne'eman*, literally *God king faithful*), or א-מ-נ (*a-m-n*). Isaiah even refers to the swearing of oaths “by the God called Amen” (באלהי אמן) (Isaiah 65:16 Common English Bible).⁴⁴ In other words, according to the Babylonian Talmud, God himself is the very Amen.

There are other passages in the Hebrew Bible where we can perceive additional possible delocutive uses of the verb האמין [*he'emin*]. For example, the KJV translation of Judges 11:20 begins with, “But Sihon trusted not Israel.” However, J. Bergman Kline explained that “it may be that the clause ולא־האמין סיוחן את־ישראל [*ve'lo he'emin Sichon et Israel*] in Judges 11:20 is best translated, ‘Sihon did not declare ‘Amen’ with Israel.’”⁴⁵ In other words, Sihon, king of the Amorites, was unwilling to enter into a covenant of peace with Israel. This is evidenced by the fact that Sihon “gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel” (Judges 11:20). Kline concluded:

Like father Abram all God’s servants will pronounce their “Amen’s” in Yahweh’s name (i. e., ביהוה). Yahweh will be the God of the confessional “Amen” (אלהי אמן).⁴⁶

Possible Application to Selected Passages in the Book of Mormon

In this section I consider nine passages from the Book of Mormon that contain the phrase “believe in [Christ]”⁴⁷ to see how these could be understood differently if they were to be read as “declare *amen* in [Christ].” It is important to clarify that this is not an attempt to

43. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 111a. See also Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 119b, <https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin.111a.1?lang=bi>.

44. The KJV translates אמן באלהי אמן as “in the God of truth.” Although the Hebrew word for *truth* is derived from the same root as *amen* and *believe*, *truth* could be more appropriately rendered as אמת (*emet*). See also Revelation 3:14 “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”

45. J. Bergman Kline, “The Hiphil Stem,” 365.

46. Meredith Kline, “Abram’s Amen,” 9.

47. Or some other representation of the name of God.

“correct” these passages in the Book of Mormon. As Kline pointed out, the Hebrew verb *האמין* (*he'emin*) can be rendered as both to “believe” and to “say *amen*,” depending on whether one interprets the verb as a denominative or a delocutive, respectively. Since all of the verbs in the following passages from the Book of Mormon have been rendered as denominatives, my purpose in this section is simply to explore how the verses could be understood if these verbs were expressed as delocutives.

2 Nephi 6:14

And behold, according to the words of the prophet, the Messiah will set himself again the second time to recover them; wherefore, he will manifest himself unto them in power and great glory, unto the destruction of their enemies, when that day cometh when *they shall believe in him*; and none will he destroy that *believe in him*.

As with Genesis 15, 2 Nephi 6 is a covenantal chapter. Jacob tells us that “the Lord God will fulfil his covenants which he has made unto his children” (6:12), and that “the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people” (6:17). Sandwiched between these two verses, Jacob informs us that Messiah will “set himself again the second time to recover” (6:14) his covenant people, “they who wait for him” (6:13). This recovery will occur “when [the covenant people] shall *believe in him*; and none will he destroy that *believe in him* (6:14).” The delocutive phrase “declare *amen* in him” as a replacement for “believe in him” fits nicely into the covenantal nature of this chapter. The Messiah will recover his covenant people “when they shall *declare amen in him*; and none will he destroy that *declare amen in him*.” Another way of expressing this idea is that the Messiah will set himself to recover his covenant people when they begin to worship and covenant in his name, Jesus Christ.

In the Babylonian Talmud we are told that the word *amen* is affiliated with the elements of *oaths*, *acceptance*, *agreement*, and *confirmation*, or in other words, covenantal language:

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, says with regard to the term *amen*: There is an element of *oath* within it, there is an element of *acceptance* of the statement and *agreement* within it, and there is an element of *confirmation* of the statement.⁴⁸

48. Babylonian Talmud, Shevuot 36a, <https://www.sefaria.org/Shevuot.36a.9-12>.

2 Nephi 9:23–24

And he commandeth all men that they must *repent*, and *be baptized in his name*, having *perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel*, or they cannot be *saved* in the kingdom of God. And if they will not *repent* and *believe in his name*, and *be baptized in his name*, and *endure to the end*, they must be *damned*; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it.

This chapter (2 Nephi 9) is bookended by brief commentaries on covenants: “I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel” (9:1), and “behold how great the covenants of the Lord” (9:53). In the middle of the chapter, Jacob taught that believing in the name of God is essential for salvation (9:24). In order to fully appreciate this idea, verses 23 and 24 must be studied together, as each verse provides a list of requirements for salvation. While the two lists closely parallel each other, there are some differences in content and order (see Table 1).

Table 1

2 Nephi 9:23	2 Nephi 9:24
1. Repent	1. Repent
2. Be baptized in his name	3. Be baptized in his name
3. Have perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel	2. Believe in his name
	4. Endure to the end

Both verses teach that we must repent and be baptized *in his name* to be saved in the kingdom of God. And, while verse 24 states that we must “endure to the end,” verse 23 is silent on this requirement. But most importantly, in parallel phrases, verse 23 informs us that we must “have perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel,” while verse 24 states that we must “believe in his name.” These two phrases remind us of the previously cited passage from the apostle James:

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and *by works was faith made perfect*? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, *Abraham believed God*, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. (James 2:22–23)

James⁴⁹ explained that by works was Abraham's "faith made perfect,"⁵⁰ while Jacob taught the importance of having "perfect faith" in the Holy One of Israel (קדוש ישראל *qedosh Israel*). James also told us that "Abraham believed God," while Jacob spelled out that we must "believe in his name." These passages from James and Jacob can be expressed as parallel thoughts: perfect[ed] faith and believing [in] God. James' phrasing, that "Abraham believed God" is a clear reference to Genesis 15:6, where we are told that Abraham האמין ביהוה (*he'emin b'yahweh*, or believed in Yahweh, if the verb is interpreted as a denominative). As previously noted, Kline stated that the verb האמין (*he'emin*) in Genesis 15:6 is best understood as a delocutive, meaning that Abraham "declared *amen* in Yahweh."⁵¹ With these parallel connections between James and Jacob one could argue that Jacob's use of "believe in his name" could also be rendered "declare *amen* in his name." As previously discussed, declaring *amen* is integral to the covenantal process and demonstrates our "faith in the Holy One of Israel."

Additionally, while *believing* in the name of Messiah can rightly be understood as a passive mental process, *declaring amen* is active. Graham wrote: "*Belief* exists; *faith* acts. Belief is a passive faith, and faith is an active belief."⁵² Abraham did not merely engage in a passive thought process; he demonstrated his faith, or active belief, with his declaration of *amen*. According to James, Abraham's faith was "made perfect" when he acted further by offering his son Isaac.⁵³

49. Ironically, the name James is derived from the Greek name Ἰάκωβος (*iakōbos*), which originates from the Hebrew name יעקב (*ya'aqov*), or Jacob.

50. It is important to note that the Hebrew words for *amen*, *believe*, and *faith* are all derived from the Hebrew root א-מ-ן (*a-m-n*), signifying firmness or support.

51. Cornelis Vonk added: "The Hebrew word translated in Genesis 15:6 as 'believed' includes the word *'amen*. What the text literally says is that Abraham said *amen* to God's promise." Cornelis Vonk, *Opening the Scriptures: Genesis*, trans. Theodore Plantinga and Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013), 218.

52. G. F. Graham, *English Synonymes Classified and Explained; with Practical Exercises, Designed for Schools and Private Tuition* (New York: American Book Company, 1845), 113, emphasis original.

53. "While most of the quotations of Gen 15:6 in the New Testament (Rom 4:3, 22-24; Gal 3:6) do not make this delocutive, confessional character of האמין [*he'emin*] overt, an understanding of 'the confessional nature of justifying faith' nevertheless appears at various points in the New Testament, particularly in the statements of Paul and James (cf. Rom 10:8-10; James 2:23-24)." J. Bergman Kline, "The Hiphil Stem," 366.

2 Nephi 10:7

But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When the day cometh that they shall **believe in me, that I am Christ**, then **have I covenanted** with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance.

2 Nephi 10 is a continuation of Jacob's temple sermon from the previous chapter. In verse 7 we are told that one of the prerequisites for the covenant people to be restored is that "they shall believe in me, that I am Christ." If we rephrase this verse as "they shall declare *amen* in me, that I am Christ," we are faced with awkward English grammar. The Hebrew for this passage could be properly rendered as "אָמִינוּ בִּי כִּי אֲנִי מְשִׁיחַ (ya'aminu bi ki ani mashiach)." In biblical Hebrew the word כִּי (*ki*) can be translated as *that*, *for*, or *because*. In Exodus 6:7 the Hebrew כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה (*ki ani yahweh*) is translated as "that I am the LORD" in the KJV, while in Leviticus 11:45 the same Hebrew phrase is translated as "for I am the LORD." So, 2 Nephi 10:7 could be rendered as "When the day cometh that *they shall declare amen* in me, *for I am Christ*, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance." With this reading, we can understand that the time will come that the covenant people will declare *amen* in Christ; they will worship and covenant in his name. In that day he will fulfill the covenant that he made with their fathers.

2 Nephi 25:24–25

And, notwithstanding *we believe in Christ*, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.

Although not clearly discernible in English, if we render this passage in Hebrew, we discover a simple alternate parallelism:

- A And, notwithstanding *we believe in Christ*,
- B *we keep the law of Moses*,
- A' and look forward with *steadfastness unto Christ*,
- B' until the *law shall be fulfilled*.

In Hebrew, the words *believe*, *steadfastness*, *amen* (or *declare amen*), and *faith* are all derived from the same root: א-מ-ן (a-m-n).⁵⁴ So, “we believe in Christ” (or “we declare *amen* in Christ,” if we apply the delocutive sense) is parallel with “steadfastness unto Christ.” The second set of parallel phrases contrasts the Nephites’ *keeping* of the law of Moses with Christ’s *fulfilling* of it. Nephi also presents us with an apparent paradox: the purpose of the law of Moses was to point the people to Christ (cf. Jacob 4:5), but Nephi informs us that they already believed/declared *amen* in Christ.

In the subsequent verse (2 Nephi 25:25), presented below as a chiasm, we are told that the faithful were “made alive in Christ” because of their *faith*. More than a passive belief, the faith of which Nephi spoke was truly life-giving through Christ. Because of the shared root, א-מ-ן (a-m-n), this faith is related to *steadfastness* and the *declaration of amen* in Christ:

- A For, for this end *was the law given*;
 B wherefore the *law hath become dead unto us*,
 B’ and *we are made alive in Christ* because of our *faith*;
 A’ yet *we keep the law* because of the commandments
 (2 Nephi 25:25).

We could understand from these verses that the Nephites had entered into a covenant by declaring their *amen* in Christ. It was not the keeping of the dead law that demonstrated their faith in Christ. Rather, it is reasonable to believe that it was their declaration of *amen* in Christ, as part of their covenantal agreement, that demonstrated their faith in him.

2 Nephi 30:2

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the *covenant people* of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent *shall be cast off*; for *the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son*, who is the Holy One of Israel.

In this verse, Nephi informs us that personal repentance is imperative to being counted among the covenant people of the Lord. Nephi also tells us that a second requirement is to “believe in his Son.” Since this passage is covenantal in nature, it would also be appropriate to understand this

54. Psalms 78:37: “For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast (נֶאֱמָנוּ *ne’emenu*) in his covenant (KJV).” In this verse the English word “stedfast” is a translation of the Hebrew נֶאֱמָנוּ, from the root א-מ-ן (a-m-n).

phrase in the delocutive: “declare *amen* in his son.” As Kline explained, *amen* is an appropriate and expected response to a covenantal agreement. In section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, also known as “the olive leaf,” we are told of a formal covenantal salutation that the teacher in the school of the prophets was to pronounce at the beginning of each class. Facing the members of the class he was to declare:

Art thou a brother or brethren? I salute you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the *everlasting covenant*, in which *covenant* I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend and brother through the grace of God in the bonds of love, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, in thanksgiving, forever and ever. Amen. (D&C 88:133)

The members of the class were given the choice of answering this covenantal salutation by either repeating the salutation, or by merely saying the word *amen*, “in token of the same”:

And he that cometh in and is *faithful* before me, and is a brother, or if they be brethren, they shall salute the president or teacher with uplifted hands to heaven, with this same prayer and covenant, *or by saying Amen*, in token of the same. (D&C 88:135)⁵⁵

As described in this last passage, speaking the words of the covenantal salutation or simply declaring the word *amen* were substitutable responses. In other words, declaring *amen* was considered equivalent to speaking the covenantal oath. Likewise, declaring *amen* in the Son of God can be seen as an appropriate way to be counted among the “covenant people of the Lord.”

Jacob 4:5

Behold, they [the holy prophets which were before us]⁵⁶ *believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name*, and

55. “The saying of ‘Amen’ is equivalent to reciting the blessing itself, and such religious value has been attached to it, that it has been said to be superior to the benediction that occasioned the response (Ber. 53B; Maim., Yad, Berakhot 1:11).” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, ISR: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), s.v. “Amen,” 803.

56. See Jacob 4:4.

also⁵⁷ *we worship the Father in his name*. And for this intent *we keep the law of Moses*, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is *sanctified unto us for righteousness*, even as it was *accounted unto Abraham* in the wilderness to be *obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac*, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.

This passage in Jacob 4 is of particular interest because it combines multiple elements from our current study: believing in Christ, worshipping the Father in his name, being sanctified (or declared holy) for righteousness, and the inclusion of Abraham's offering. The phrase "they believed in Christ," if read as the delocutive "they declared *amen* in Christ," is a hand-and-glove fit with the nearly synonymous ensuing phrase, "and [they] worshiped the Father in his name." In addition, it is intriguing that this passage includes the idea that the keeping of the law of Moses was sanctified (made holy, or possibly declared holy) unto the Nephites for righteousness just as it was accounted to Abraham to be obedient unto God. Even more intriguing, nowhere in the story of Abraham's offering up Isaac (see Genesis 22) do we find this type of language. It is possible that Jacob borrowed narrative elements from Genesis 15:6 and placed them into the later story in Genesis 22 of the offering of Isaac. This semantic borrowing strengthens the argument that Jacob's use of "believed in Christ" could be properly rendered "declared *amen* in Christ." In fact, it is possible that Abraham may have been Jacob's primary allusion when he spoke of the "holy prophets which were before us."

3 Nephi 11:32

And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and *I bear record of the Father*, and *the Father beareth record of me*, and *the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me*; and *I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me*.

This is a passage saturated with the idea of bearing record. To "bear record" can be understood as the functional equivalent of to "bear witness" or to "testify." There are four record bearing interactions in this verse (see Diagram 1).

57. The conjunction "and also" (וְגַם, *vegam*) is a very Hebraic expression (cf. Genesis 15:14).

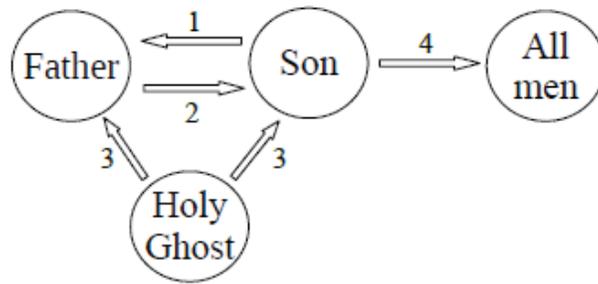


Diagram 1

The Father and Son testify of each other, and the Holy Ghost testifies of both of them. In addition, the Son testifies to “all men” that they need to do two things: repent and believe in him. This testifying, or record bearing, strongly implies the act of speaking aloud. Webster provided the following definition: “To show or exhibit; to relate; as, to bear testimony or witness. This seems to imply *utterance*, like the Latin *fero*, to relate or utter.”⁵⁸ Likewise, if we employ the delocutive for the phrase “[to] believe in me” (להאמין בי *lehe’emin bi*) we have the spoken expression “[to] declare *amen* in me.” Even more than the denominative phrase, “believe in me,” this delocutive interpretation is in harmony with the overall tone of the passage.

3 Nephi 19:22

Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because *they believe in me*; and *thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them*, and *they pray unto me*; and they pray unto me because I am with them.

During his ministry among the Nephites, Jesus “commanded his disciples that they should pray” (3 Nephi 9:17). Bowing himself to the earth, Jesus thanked the Father that the Holy Ghost had been given to the disciples “because they believe in me.” Jesus then provided evidence that the disciples believed in him: “Thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me.” If we apply the delocutive interpretation to this verse we have, “They declare *amen* in me; and thou seest that they declare *amen* in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me.” Interestingly, the disciples were praying to Jesus rather than to the Father. They must have been calling on his

58. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster 1828, *Original Facsimile Edition* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2010), s.v. “Bear.”

name or using some other way of indicating that Jesus was the person to whom they were praying. As the Babylonian Talmud informed, the word *amen* was considered by the Jewish sages to be an acronym for the phrase “God, faithful King” [אל מלך נאמן], *el melekh ne’eman*. So, one way of understanding the delocutive interpretation of “declaring *amen* in me” could be that they were calling Jesus their God and their faithful/true King as they prayed to him, perhaps even calling him their Amen.

3 Nephi 20:31

And *they shall believe in me*, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and *shall pray unto the Father in my name*.

Similar to 2 Nephi 10:7, this final passage contains the phrase “that I am Jesus Christ.” As discussed previously, this phrase can also be properly rendered “for I am Jesus Christ” in Hebrew. Additionally, this verse presents a parallel chiasmic structure that is only apparent if we interpret the denominative phrase “and they shall believe in me” as the delocutive phrase “and they shall declare *amen* in me” (see Table 2).

Table 2

	Original	Recast
A	And they shall <i>believe in me</i> ,	And they shall <i>declare amen in me</i> ,
B	that I am <i>Jesus Christ</i> ,	for I am <i>Jesus Christ</i> ,
B'	the <i>Son of God</i> ,	the <i>Son of God</i> ,
A'	and [they] shall <i>pray unto the Father in my name</i> .	and [they] shall <i>pray unto the Father in my name</i> .

The left column of the table shows the original wording presented as a chiasm, but only the two middle lines are parallel with each other. The first and fourth lines — “they shall believe in me” and “[they] shall pray unto the Father in my name” — are not truly parallel. The right column presents the verse with the first two lines modified to reflect the delocutive verb in line 1, and with “that” changed to “for” in line 2. With these modifications the chiasm becomes whole; line 1, “they shall declare amen in me” and line 4, “[they] shall pray unto the Father in my name,” are parallel statements. In terms of clarity and unity of message, the recast verse seems to present a more coherent and relevant message than even the original wording.

Conclusion

The identification of delocutive verbs in the 1950s and, more specifically, the discovery of delocutives in the Hebrew Bible has broadened our

understanding of that ancient collection of sacred scripture. The KJV translation of Genesis 15:6 informs us that Abraham “believed in the LORD” and that this belief was accounted to him for righteousness. Kline, however, postulated that האמין [*he’emin*], the verb translated as “he believed” in the KJV, should be understood as a delocutive rather than a denominative in this verse. He proposed that the passage should be rendered “he declared *amen* in Yahweh.” This shift in interpretation transforms Abraham’s *passive* acknowledgment of God’s promise into an *active*, audible response.⁵⁹ Since declaring *amen* is a typical covenantal response in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Deuteronomy 27) this interpretation fits nicely in the surrounding dialogue between Abraham and Jehovah in Genesis 15.

Applying this understanding of delocutive verbs to passages in the Book of Mormon that contain the phrase “believe in [Christ]” revealed interesting outcomes. Most of the Book of Mormon passages cited in the paper are part of a covenantal narrative where the declaration of *amen* would be an appropriate and even expected response. In these passages, “believing in Christ” can be replaced by “declaring *amen* in Christ” without doing harm to the integrity of the original wording. In fact, interpreting the verb as a delocutive can possibly add even greater insight. In the same way that Abraham’s passive belief in God’s promise can be interpreted as an active vocal response through the identification and application of the delocutive verb האמין (*he’emin*), related passages in the Book of Mormon can be profitably understand in a similar way. Our acceptance of God’s covenantal promise needs to be more than a passive “inner attitude”; it needs to include our active audible assent, followed by our faithful daily fulfillment of the covenantal agreement.

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59. “Abraham *believed* God, which is literally, ‘Abraham said, ‘Amen, God!’” Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 68, emphasis original.