Type: Book Chapter

Narrating Homicide Chiastically

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Source: *Chiasmus: The State of the Art*
Editor(s): Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch
Published: Provo, UT: BYU Studies; Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2020
Page(s): 151–176

Abstract: John W. Welch, "Narrating Homicide Chiastically: Why Scriptures about Killings Use Chiasmus," examines eight chiastic structures that pertain to homicides—three legal texts and five homicide narratives. The legal texts include "The Case of the Blasphemer (Leviticus 24:13–23)" and "The Law of Homicide (Numbers 35)." The narratives include "Abimelech's Killing of Seventy of His Brothers (Judges 9:56–57)"; "The Case of Phinehas (Numbers 25)"; and "The Slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4:4–27)." Welch concludes that these eight structures assist readers in recognizing the broader context of each homicide passage and "to discern the key central point on which the case turns." Welch's paper also contributes on a further level by cataloguing thirteen possible reasons why authors employed chiasmus when narrating a homicide. These purposes include, "propelling logic and persuasiveness," "creating order," "restoring equilibrium," "processing circumstances," "probing relevancy," and "reinforcing memory."

Narrating Homicide Chiastically

John W. Welch

The truth be known, murder is an ugly, awful subject. Even when packaged in beautifully crafted literature, first-degree homicide is to be universally assailed as vile, horrible, and most terrible. Murder is disruptive to the very fabric of human life. It instills in the community anxieties, horror, fear, chaos, vengeance, and blood feuds. It throws the normal boundaries of human powers in the world into personal turmoil, into metaphysical uncertainty, and into cosmic imbalance.

The groundbreaking legal historian F. W. Maitland once famously said, "But if some fairy gave me the power of seeing a scene of one and the same kind in every age of history of every race, the kind of scene that I would choose would be a trial for murder, because I think that it would give me so many hints as to a multitude of matters of the first importance."[1] And I would agree, but with one elaboration: I would add, "And show me a homicide narrative in a sacred text and we can know more about the laws, social beliefs, and ultimate values of its adherents than by any other way."

Many homicide laws and stories are found in scripture. In a recent volume of the *Jewish Law Association Studies,* which contains the papers from a meeting in Antwerp on Jewish law and narrative, I discuss twenty-three homicide narratives in the Bible and seventeen in the Book of Mormon.[2] Those forty stories are factually entangled and legally complicated. Much has been written about the laws of homicide and refuge in the Hebrew Bible[3] and also about the process of extracting legal material from biblical narratives.[4] As Assnat Bartor has recently

stated, in biblical texts "the narrative and the laws are not only combined together—at times they are actually merged."[5]

Among the findings of interest in that article is the observation that chiasmus is used both in the law codes and also in the legal narratives regarding homicide. Chiasmus does not appear in all such texts, but it is significantly used in several homicide accounts. While many scholars have analyzed legal aspects of these homicide narratives in isolation, no one has tackled the challenge of synthesizing and then analyzing all of these scriptural homicide narratives generically, reading them closely in order to generate a composite understanding of all their common legal rubrics and also their rhetorical and narrative strategies. That is the effort I undertook in the *JLAS* article. At the end of that study, I mention the fact that some of these homicide texts make use of chiasmus, calling for further examination of what that fact might tell us. This is the question I now take up: What might chiastic analysis contribute to our understanding of homicide texts? This paper will analyze the use of chiasmus in eight homicide laws or narratives and then discuss why, and to what effects or purposes, these homicide texts use chiasmus.

Chiasmus in Statements of Homicide Law

The Noachide Law of Homicide (Genesis 9:6)

In Gen 9:6, the A-B-C-C-B-A structure of the law of homicide, as it was given in connection with the covenant that God made with Noah, is clear:

A He who spills (*shofekh*)
  B blood (*dam*)
    C of the human (*ha'adam*)
    C′ by [or on account of] the human (*ba'adam*)
  B′ his blood (*damo*)
A′ will be spilled (*yishafekh*)

In his commentary on Genesis, Robert Alter notes that this chiastic arrangement suggests (1) "a system of retributive justice," (2) "an emphatic play on [the three key words]: spills, blood, human; by (or on account of) human, his blood, spilled," and (3) "[a formal] mirroring [of] the idea of measure for measure."[6] Additionally, chiasmus functions here in several other ways. For example, (4) the chiastic doubling of these elements emphatically doubles down on the seriousness of homicide; (5) the

carefully controlled reverse structuring of chiastic elements establishes that the controlled legal response to a homicide should echo precisely and reciprocally the same fate on the culprit that he caused and perpetrated on the victim; and finally (6) the chiastic balancing of these elements may also convey the inherently presumptive evenhandedness and fairness of punishments that appropriately fit the crime. Indeed, from the earliest depictions of divine justice in Egyptian funerary texts down to the modern portrayal of justice, justice is seen as a scale, anciently balancing the heaviness and hardness of the human heart against the lightness and purity of a feather, or in modern times, the blindfolded justice who lets the strengths and weaknesses of the case tilt one way or the other.

The Case of the Blasphemer (Leviticus 24:13–23)

In Lev 24:13–23, many scholars have found one of the most famous instances of chiasmus in the Bible. Like Gen 9, it too pertains to talionic justice.

A And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

B Bring forth him that has cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him . . . stone him.

C And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying,

D Who curses his God shall bear his sin . . . the stranger, the same as he that is born in the land.

E He that kills any man shall surely be put to death.

F He that kills a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.

G If a man causes a blemish in his neighbor, . . . so shall it be done to him;

H Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth:

G′ As he has caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.

F′ And he that kills a beast, he shall restore it:

E′ And he that kills a man shall be put to death.

D′ You shall have one manner of law for the stranger, the same as for one of your own country.

C′ And Moses spoke to the children of Israel,

B′ That they who had heard him should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones.

A′ And the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.

My configuration above, which runs A to H and back to A, is close to Nils Lund's, Jacob Milgrom's, and Bernard Jackson's.[7] I do, however, welcome the argument Timothy Willis has advanced that lines D and D′ should each be separated into two lines, strengthening the overall result by adding to the length of this structure.[8] Willis also contends that the use of chiasmus in this passage—even if occasionally and probably purposefully imbalanced—is quite "undeniable," and both Willis and Jackson skillfully argue that chiasmus is useful in several ways in this difficult case.

Although the case out of which this text arose did not involve a homicide but a blasphemous offense against God, the general rule regarding homicide is mentioned in E and E′, framing the beginning and ending of the central block of talionic formulations that stand at the heart of this text.

As it does in Genesis 9, chiasmus again—but here more fully—serves the purpose of focused clarification, emphatically highlighting "the legal principle that lies at the core of" the decision in this case—the talionic principle, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.[9]

Bernard Jackson has shown that *ka'asher* is a crucial word here. It has a qualitative meaning: "just as that" he has done, so "in the same way as that" shall be done to him. This expression appears only twice in this text—in G and G′ (24:19–20), and thus the chiastic structure draws the qualitative importance of this legal guideline doubly to attention.

At the same time, the three appearances in H of the quantitative *tachat* formula at the very center of this structure (a blemish *tachat* a blemish, an eye *tachat* an eye, one tooth *tachat* one tooth) are thus chiastically "enveloped" by the two *ka'asher* appearances in G and G′, and thereby chiasmus communicates the judicial unification of these two traditional expressions or legal rubrics.[10] As Bernard Levinson has also shown,[11] chiasmus can be used for tying together two legal traditions, and that is what it does here.

Additionally, Willis points out that the comparatively strong use of the intensive infinitive in E ("shall *surely* be put to death") serves to propel or "push the reader forward toward the center of the chiasmus," where the case's rationale is explained.[12]

Modern readers find it unsettling that a person, especially a non-covenant-making resident alien, should be executed for blaspheming or cursing God. As Willis points out, the chiastic structure in this judicial narrative "places the [most ordinary applications of] the talionic principle at the center, but it then proceeds [outward] from that principle in steps of ever-increasing import."[13] Thus, chiasmus serves a gradational

function here: the loss of one eye, or of a tooth, or a broken bone (in H), is not as severe as being marred, maimed, or rendered ritually defiled (G).[14] And that is not as severe as killing livestock (belonging to someone else, F), which is not as severe as homicide (E), which in turn is not as severe as blasphemy (D), which is most important and what this case was all about. This escalating chiastic ordering sustains the conclusion of Ze'ev Falk that "idolatry and other forms of insurrection against the suzerainty of God were the most serious of crimes"[15] under biblical law. Thus, as Milgrom has argued, the Holiness Code is particularly concerned that even a resident alien (*gēr*) is capable of polluting the "holy land of promise" by such blasphemy. This is the legal holding established in this case.[16]

Finally, Willis sees the comparatively simple verb form in E′ ("shall be put to death" instead of "shall *surely* be put to death" in E) as serving to resolve the case in a simple, settled summation.[17] In this way, the chiastic structure gives this legal account a sense of completion and finality. Paul Gaechter called chiasmus a "closed form,"[18] and with this characteristic in mind, we can equally say, this case is closed.

The Law of Homicide (Numbers 35)

In Num 35, we discover yet another example of chiasmus. This entire chapter is rightly seen as a unit, discussing not only the laws of homicide but also how a slayer may find asylum in a Levitical city of refuge:

A Establishment of six Levitical cities of refuge, in the land of inheritance (1–8)
  B Protection from the avenger comes by standing before the congregation in judgment (9–15)
    C Incriminating Factors: The slayer used dangerous implements—iron weapons, thrown stone, or hand weapon of wood (16–18)
      D Execution of the penalty: Avenger himself must do the slaying when he meets the slayer (19)
        E Standard for determining state of mind: If hate, lying in wait, or enmity, the slayer is guilty (20–21)
      D′ Execution of the penalty: Avenger shall slay him when he meets the slayer (21)
    C′ Mitigating Factors: The slayer acted suddenly, no enmity, no lying in wait, not desiring (22–23)
  B′ The congregation shall judge, shall deliver protection (24–25)
A′ Remain in a city of refuge until death of high priest, throughout generations (26–29)

Chiasmus is particularly used here to contrast and distinguish unprotected killings from those killings that can be protected by the city of refuge.[19] In addition, this entire chapter can be seen as chiastic, with chiasmus serving a number of further functions.

For example, the centering function of chiasmus (in E) helps to clearly state the essence of this law. The only issue, which the assembly in the city of refuge really needs to decide, is whether the slayer has or has not acted out of a preexisting hate or animosity toward the victim by preplanning or deceptively lying in wait. If he has not, the normal penalty of death does not apply to his case.

But if the killer has not fled to the city of refuge and an avenger inadvertently meets him, the avenger is to slay the killer and shall carry out the execution himself (D). This requirement is stated twice, to be doubly clear. The meeting must be by happenstance, and the avenger must act alone and cannot be assisted by a gang on the prowl in a blood feud. One of the natural functions of chiasmus is to give a sense of order. The form of this law aims to enhance and insure feelings of orderliness, patience, and peace in the aftermath of a killing, as opposed to chaos, haste, revenge, and feuding.

Once at the city of refuge, the standards to be applied in the case of the Avenger v. Killer are given in the C sections. The contrastive powers of chiasmus plainly establish, on the one hand, the presence of physical implements that presumptively point to the guilt of the killer, and on the other hand, the absence of certain hostile states of mind that would tend to exculpate the killer. As Bernard Jackson observes, "Thus by the use of a literary device, the draftsman has sought to preserve the traditional binary oppositional structure, while at the same time offering a more comprehensive and explicit account of the range of possible situations."[20]

The synthetic function of chiastic parallelism then brings into play respective roles and duties to make this system work. To encourage the accused to seek refuge and assure them, Numbers 35 promises certain protections from the avenger. However, to claim those protections the suspect, for his part, must willingly submit to the jurisdiction and judgment of the men of the congregation (B). And the members of the assembly, for their part, must undertake the duty of judging righteously according to these stated rules and protecting the exculpated killer (B′), provided he stays inside the city of refuge (A).

Chiasmus in Homicide Narratives

Keeping the statements of law discussed above in mind, we now turn to homicide narratives. As can be expected, Israelite narrators or Jewish audiences would have likely been very aware of the traditional legal rules and procedures regarding homicide. The powerful effectiveness of chiasmus in these general laws, setting forth the expectations of what should happen in a case of homicide, would most likely have preconditioned listeners to pick up on the subtle, but even sometimes not so subtle, uses of chiasmus in telling stories about homicides and drawing morals from these memorable accounts.

It is interesting that certain elements that figure prominently in what we would call the law codes do not appear at all in the twenty-three biblical homicide narratives. For example, cities of refuge play no role in these stories. (Of course, in most cases, the slayer is not even remotely entitled to seeking refuge.) And whereas the law codes focus on objective evidentiary tests and subjective inquiries into the state of mind *of the slayer,* the narratives focus quite incisively on the blameworthiness *of the victim* and, in addition, on the consequent operation of the hand of God in bringing about the slaying of the wicked.

Consider the following five narratives, all of which make use of chiasmus. Chiasmus serves many of the same purposes in these stories that we have identified above in the law codes. In addition, the use of chiasmus in these stories may tend to align these otherwise disturbing accounts with underlying senses of human law and justice, as well as divine order and righteousness.

Narrative 1. Abimelech's Killing of Seventy of His Brothers (Judges 9:56–57)

A So repaid God
  B the wickedness of Abimelech
    C done to his father to murder seventy of his brothers
  B′ and all of the wickedness of the men of Shechem
A′ brought God on the head of them

In Abimelech's fratricide (Judg 9), Abimelech killed all but one of his seventy-one brothers, butchering them "upon one stone" (9:5, 18), and then went on a rampage trying to make himself king. He eventually died after a woman threw a piece of a millstone off a tower and cracked

Abimelech's skull. We are not told if she threw this stone "awares" or "unawares" (as Num 35 might have asked), but neither would one assume that she had the skill to hit Abimelech squarely on the head. Abimelech was then killed, at his own request, by his shield bearer, so that no one could say that he had been killed by a woman (9:53–54).

This is more, of course, than just poetic justice, stone for stone. This is a narrative example of the principle of divine retributive justice, in which the doer of wickedness "suffers in return the same evil he has inflicted on another."[21] Abimelech suffered an equivalent talionic punishment at the hand of God, as "God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech" back unto him (9:56). God's intervention was needed to stop Abimelech's campaign, which threatened to unravel the entire nation, and as a result, no one ever wonders why the woman who dropped the broken piece of millstone was not accused of homicide.

The five-line chiastic resolution at the end of this episode is characteristic of most clever chiasms. It brings to light a new realization, based on a turnabout, following a rhetorical rule of reciprocity. As Robert Hariman has observed, "the symmetrical logic of the verbal [chiastic] figure is mapping some cosmic order."[22] Even something as mundane as the chiasm "he who fails to prepare, prepares to fail" communicates an incontrovertible truth of natural consequences of cosmic proportions. Terribly unsettling cases such as Abimelech's, which deal with atrocious homicides, can be somewhat domesticated by a chiastic resolution of its discord. In Hariman's words, "the [chiastic] device is obviously intended to please: witness the neat arrangement, the formal precision, the deft turn, . . . the satisfying resolution of an argument or other complex relationships"[23] that chiasmus brings to our rhetorical table.

Narrative 2. The Case of Phinehas (Numbers 25)

Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron the High Priest, spontaneously took the law into his own hand and killed Zimri, the son of a Simeonite prince, and his consort Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite chief, who in plain sight had defiantly come into the camp together and apparently committed sacrilege, being together after such relationships had been forbidden. God had commanded the people to abate this apostasy and hang the heads of offending people up before the Lord. This account in Num 25 is structured chiastically:

A the people commit whoredoms and idolatry in the matter of Baal-Pe'or, and Moses commands that everyone who had committed these crimes be killed. (1–5)

  B the flagrant appearance together of an Israelite man and a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and all the people. (6)

    C the bold action of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, piercing the offending man of Israel and the Midianite woman with his javelin. (7–8)

      D the plague was averted for most, but only after twenty-four thousand had died of the plague. (8–9)

    C′ the zealous action of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, turned back the wrath of the Lord from the children of Israel. (10–11)

  B′ Moses is told to pronounce a covenant of peace with the people (12–13), and the names of Zimri and Cozbi are given. (14–15)

A′ a mandate given to vex the Midianites (twice) because of their guile in the matter of Pe'or (mentioned twice). (16–18)

What does chiasmus contribute legally to this narrative? The text centers on a positive view of Phinehas's preservation of the people of Israel, whose condition was in serious difficulty, with twenty-four thousand having already died of the plague. By positioning at its center the fact that the plague ceased, the chiastic arrangement recognizes God's ratification of Phinehas's exceptional conduct.

By framing this central point with particular facts of legal significance, the narrative also justifies Phinehas in this extraordinary homicide. An unusual state of emergency clearly faced the entire nation, implicitly invoking the rare biblical principle that it is better for one man to perish than that the entire people be destroyed. Phinehas acted suddenly and spontaneously, a mitigating legal factor mentioned in the law codes in Exod 21 and Num 35. Phinehas had not been lying in wait to entrap or deceive Zimri and Cozbi, whose guilt was open and conspicuously obvious to all. Their defiant conduct went consciously contrary to Moses's public command and explicit warning at the beginning of the narrative. In the end, the case concludes with Moses pronouncing a covenant of peace between God and the people and doubly commanding them to vex the Midianites.

In this homicide case, chiasmus serves as a figure of thought, "a powerful engine for organizing, inflecting and generating ideas."[24] Decisions in hard legal cases, especially homicides, call for strong articulations that persuade and communicate details that might otherwise elude notice.

Narrative 3. The Killing of Gedaliah by Ishmael (Jeremiah 40–42)

A Johanan warns Gedaliah about Ishmael; but Gedaliah ignores this warning (40:13–16)

B Ishmael's murderous deeds, even killing Gedaliah; he starts to flee to Ammon (41:1–10)

B′ Ishmael is about to be captured and killed, yet manages to flee to Ammon (41:11–16)

A′ Johanan rescues people and they ask Jeremiah: "tell us which way we ought to go" and what to do; but they ignore his prophetic advice (42:2–3).

In the rarely discussed killing of Gedaliah by Ishmael (Jer 40–42), Ishmael, an agent of an Ammonite king, secretly killed Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of Jerusalem. At the same time, Ishmael also killed all of the Jews in Gedaliah's palace—suspecting them of collaboration with the Babylonians—as well as seventy unsuspecting Jewish pilgrims who happened to be there, in the wrong place at the wrong time. But he spared ten of those Jews, who apparently reported to Johanan what Ishmael had done, and Johanan comes and rescues the people. They ask Jeremiah where they should go, but when the prophet says that they should not go to Egypt, they ignore his advice, just as Gedaliah had ignored Johanan (Jer 40:13–41:2; see also 2 Kgs 25:25).

The scriptures are all about life and death decisions, spiritual if not physical. The key to this narrative is realizing that, in the beginning, Gedaliah's foolish ignoring of Johanan's warning resulted not only in his own death but in the deaths of many other people. In the end and in the same way, the rescued people foolishly ignore the words of Jeremiah. Just as many innocent people died at the hand of Ishmael, many unsuspecting people may well die as these rescued people still have not learned to heed the word of the Lord. Rather than allowing readers to turn their anger and condemnation toward the murderous Ishmael, this chiastic narrative shows people how they should turn their horror about Ishmael's slaughter inward toward themselves, in not heeding prophetic directions.

Narrative 4. The Slaying of Holofernes

In the apocryphal book of Judith, a virtuous and wealthy widow named Judith, acting on her own initiative, managed to endear herself to Holofernes, the Assyrian commander who was besieging Jerusalem. (This story is hard to situate historically. It may be set at a time following

the Assyrian conquest, or shortly after Lehi and his family had fled from Jerusalem after being warned by the Lord of the coming attack by the Babylonians, or the story may be drawn from a composite of folkloristic recollections.) In any event, Judith managed to behead a drunk Holofernes in his own tent, at night, and with his own sword. Toni Craven, whose work is followed quite widely, has identified several chiastic features in this narrative,[25] essentially dividing this famous story into two halves, both of which are chiastic.

The Warning of Holofernes and Failure of Achior's Diplomatic Attempt (Jdt 1:1–7:32)

A The Assyrian campaign against disobedient vassal nations; the people surrender (1:1–3:10)
  B Israel hears and is terrified greatly; Joakim orders war preparations (4:1–15)
    C Ammonite king Achior warns Holofernes, who mocks and expels Achior (5:1–6:11)
    C′ Achior is received into Bethulia; he talks with the people of Israel (6:12–21)
  B′ Holofernes orders war preparations; Israel sees and is terrified greatly (7:1–5)
A′ The campaign against Bethulia; the people want to surrender (7:6–32)

The Slaying of Holofernes (Jdt 8:1–16:25)

A Introduction of Judith (8:1–8)
  B Judith plans to save Israel (8:9–10:8, centering on Judith's prayer in 9:1–14)
    C Judith and her maid leave Bethulia (10:9–10)
      D Judith beheads Holofernes (10:11–13:10a)
    C′ Judith and her maid return to Bethulia (13.10b–11)
  B′ Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy (13:12–16:20)
A′ Conclusion about Judith (16:1–25)

Why might chiasmus have been used in telling this dramatic story? Again, an interpretive key can be found at the centers of these two halves. In the first, it becomes clear that Holofernes was warned by Achior, but gave him no heed, and then mocked and expelled him. Although the Israelites received Achior, from beginning to end of this section, the Israelites were terrified and wanted to capitulate. Thus, the stage is set, with the Israelites not seeking God's help, but most of all with Holofernes setting himself up for his own demise, not unlike Gedaliah.

When Judith announces her plan to save Israel, she is discouraged by the Israelite leaders. She prays and turns her fate over to God, not knowing how her plan will turn out. Judith wiles her way into Holofernes's tent, gets him good and drunk, and beheads him with the same sword that he had planned to use in killing the Israelites. Amazingly, Judith and her servant return to the Israelite camp, carrying the head of Holofernes, without being detected. Dramatically, but also legally, this decapitation is the climax of the entire story, as the chiastic structure makes abundantly clear.

Narrative 5. The Slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4:4–27)

Finally, the slaying of Laban in 1 Nephi in the Book of Mormon is also quite a dramatic instance of chiasmus. For the purpose of demonstrating the chiastic structure, I have arranged this narrative using headings, as follows:

A *Without the Walls of Jerusalem:* They [my brethren] did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem, And they [did] hide themselves without the walls (4)

B *Towards Laban's house:* Went forth towards the house of Laban (5), not knowing beforehand the things I should do (6). Near unto the house of Laban was a drunk man (7): it was Laban (8)

C *Sword:* I beheld his sword, the hilt was of pure gold and the blade was of precious steel (9)

D *Spirit:* I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban (10) And the Spirit said unto me again (11)

E *Delivered into thy hands:* Slay him for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands (12)

F *Perishing:* The Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes; it is better that one man should perish than a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief (13)

G *The Law and Commandments:* Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise (14). I also thought they cannot keep the commandments according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law (15)

F′ *Imperishable:* I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass (16)

E′ *Delivered into my hands:* And again I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands (17)

D′ *Spirit:* Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit (18)

C′ *Sword:* I took Laban by the hair of the head and I smote off his head with his own sword (19)

B′ *Laban's House—his treasury, his servant, his voice:* I went forth unto the treasury of Laban, servant of Laban, voice of Laban (20) Confused, supposed me to be his master Laban (21, 22), spoke as if Laban (23)

A′ *Without the Walls of Jerusalem:* To my elder brethren who were without the walls (24) Zoram did follow me, as I went forth unto my brethren who were without the walls (26–27)

As I have previously argued, any person proposing a text as chiastic has a burden of persuasion that the text is, to some extent, chiastic.[26] In addition to the obvious reverse parallelism of key phrases from Old Testament law and legal precedents, and the reverse repetition of words or phrases applying that law to the specific facts of the narrative, let me mention six other chiastic strengths that I see in this text.

First, this text has a clear geographical boundary marker, "without the walls of Jerusalem," at the beginning of the narrative and again at the end—not quite an inclusio, but a clear enough narrative boundary.

Second, in B and B′, Nephi "goes forth" (*lekleka,* perhaps an intertextual allusion to Gen 12:1) to Laban's house and then "goes forth" to Laban's treasury. Laban is named three times in B and seven times in B′. Confusion or mistaken identity also occurs in B and B′, probably because of the darkness of the night. All this mitigates the intentionality of Nephi's venture: not knowing beforehand what he should do and not lying in wait for Laban.

Third, the sword (hilt and blade) is in C, and the sword (hair and head) is in C′. The sword reappears in B′ but it occurs there in a subsidiary chiasm with sword/garments in v. 19 and garments/sword in v. 21.

Fourth, the Spirit speaks to Nephi three times in D and E, first constraining Nephi to kill Laban and twice saying, "the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands." This is answered in E′ and D′, where Nephi uses these same key words (which he must have known from Exod 21:13), "again I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands, for this cause that I might obtain the records according to his commandments," and therefore Nephi obeys the voice of the Spirit.

Fifth, near the center of the text is the affirmation that the Lord slays the wicked (as we have seen in Abimelech). In their worldview, Nephi didn't kill Laban, the Lord did.

And finally, a rhetorical question sometimes comes at the center of a chiastic structure, and in some Old Testament narratives we find the killer closely interrogating or cross-examining him- or herself before doing what needed to be done. Here in the center of this text, we find Nephi first remembering the words of the Lord promising that his seed would prosper if they kept the commandments, and second realizing that his posterity must have the law in order to know and keep the commandments. That is the central pivot or tipping point of Nephi's narrative.

I do not suggest that this is a perfect chiasm. The facts come first in this story. But Nephi's story-telling is clearly enhanced by his use of chiasmus.

This elaborately narrated story establishes several fundamental norms at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, including such themes as the importance of having and following the written law, of receiving and hearkening to the spirit of the Lord in all things, and of knowing that God will prepare a way for his people to accomplish the things that he has commanded them to do. But in order to establish those norms memorably and legitimately, the legality of the slaying of Laban needed to be presented by Nephi as effectively as possible. 1 Nephi 4 does this in many ways. Of the eight main rhetorical strategies I have identified in biblical homicide accounts, Nephi uses seven of them—and chiasmus is one of the main ones.

Purposes Served by Chiasmus in Homicide Texts

Let us consider why Nephi, specifically, or why any writer of legal text, generally, would have used chiasmus. Several reasons can be suggested. They might be catalogued under thirteen headings.

Propelling Logic and Persuasiveness

Chiasmus was a familiar and effective way to narrate a legal story in Nephi's culture. Nephi needed to persuade not only the future readers of his record but, most urgently, his family members. No one else was present when Nephi took Laban by the hair of his head (as Judith likewise did alone to Holofernes), and so there were no witnesses. His brothers had no idea what had happened and even thought that Nephi (in Laban's armor) was actually Laban who had just killed Nephi! While this lack of witnesses means that Nephi could not have been convicted in a court willing to follow the two-witness rule in Deuteronomy, it also

meant that Nephi needed to convince a surprised Laman and Lemuel, as well as a stunned Zoram and others, that he was telling the truth about what happened when he was alone that night in Jerusalem. Chiasmus would help Nephi tell his story formally, articulately, dramatically, and convincingly.

Creating Order

Chiasms segregate a complex body of rather random subjects or words into controllable units with boundaries. Chiastic ordering serves several purposes. It heightens the climactic turning point. Interestingly, as in the case of Judith, that climax is not the killing of Laban, but Nephi's personal deliberation and resolution that the need to make it possible for his posterity to obey the word of the Lord necessitated his killing of Laban. The ordering of the events leading up to and away from that centerpoint (G) gives a sense of divine order—a sense that God was at the center and was the driving force in unfolding these events in order of increasing importance *in* toward the fulfillment of God's will. This is similar to the gradational arrangement in order of increasing importance *out* from the center turning point of Lev 24.

The G element is in the prime position of importance, explaining the grave moral dilemma Nephi faced in the slaying of Laban and the preeminence, in Nephi's mind, of helping his people keep God's commandments.

The point made in F follows G in order of gravity and is key for weighing Nephi's culpability or lack thereof. It was commonly understood that in very limited circumstances, the righteous existence of a whole nation may require one life to be yielded for the survival of all (as happened in the chiastically narrated cases of Phinehas and Judith[27]).

Element E contains the succeeding pertinent principle. God delivering Laban into Nephi's hands is a crucial key trigger phrase from the law of homicide in Exodus 21:13.[28] Thus, the idea that God delivers enemies or adversaries into the hands of the slayer comes up frequently in homicide narratives,[29] as it does here.

Necessarily following E in consequence is D. The fact that Nephi heard and thus obeyed the voice of the Spirit of God is twice repeated. Nephi had measured twice and cut once.

The explanation that Laban's own sword had been made available to Nephi (C) and that Laban had previously threatened to use it against the four sons of Lehi is factually similar to the case of Judith using Holofernes's sword. These facts follow D in relevancy and add an

element of talionic order to this account. The balancing effect of talionic retribution is closely akin to the balancing of chiasmus.

The next fact in order of significance is that Nephi was on his way to Laban's house with no plan as to how he was going to work things out with Laban (B). This establishes that Nephi had no preconception or intent to slay Laban.

And finally, a unique but less vital point in this story is that all of the events involving Laban happened within the walls of the holy city of Jerusalem (A). Ironically, Jerusalem had become, in Lehi's day, the main city of refuge, if not the only "place" that the Lord had designated whereunto a slayer who had acted reluctantly, against his will, without preplanning or lying in wait, might find asylum (under Num 35). Apparently, Nephi's story directs us to see some significance in that.

Any killing seriously disrupts the normal order. The chiastic organization of this account, which emphasizes the hand and will of God at several points in these events, restores world order and brings closure to this case. The chiastic form contains and packages the Laban story in a closed and ordered literary unit.

Supporting Precedents

Nephi's use of chiasmus emphasizes four legal sources from which the legality of the case derives, and it associates the story with the legal precedents on which its legality is to be judged.

First, parts of the phrase from Exod 21:13, "but God deliver him into his hand," are highlighted three times in Nephi's narrative (in D, E, and E′).

Second, the narrative mentions the legal precedent established in legal stories such as those discussed above—"it is better that one soul should perish than an entire nation perish in unbelief" (F).

Third, the fact that Nephi had not been "lying in wait" is also worked into this chiastic structure. In B and B′, the narrative states that Nephi had no idea what he was going to do or how his daring, if not rash, plan was going to work out. According to the mitigating factors listed in the Law of Homicide in Num 35, this is strong evidence that Nephi had not preplanned or premeditated this slaying.

And fourth, also applying the legal rules outlined in Num 35, the fact that Laban's servant was also confused about what was going on (B′) proves that he and Nephi had not conspired.

One can almost hear Nephi making his case with these points to the assembly of judges in a city of refuge. All of these various legal justifications or defenses are thus unified here by chiasmus.

Restoring Equilibrium

As we have seen in several cases, chiasmus functions to restore balance, imbue an aura of authority, and contain or control a situation.

Functionally, chiasmus narrows the precedential value of any story by making the case truly one of a kind, and not a story that someone could ever voluntarily reenact. The laws, facts and circumstances of Nephi's case are so precisely set forth and chiastically intertwined that this case cannot be seen as setting any kind of legal precedent.

Chiasmus is unifying. It is aesthetically pleasing and satisfying. In classical ancient art, beauty was more often associated with form than it is among art critics today. Dealing with the ugliness of homicide cries out for a renewed sense of restored elegance in the world.

Processing Circumstances

Law is circumstantial. Crimes don't just come out of nowhere. Circumstances vary as to what leads up to the crime, and what conditions or situations are presented to the perpetrator. The circumstances of each homicide are usually quite unique. Intent, motive, state of mind, anger, suddenness, degree of premeditation, preplanning, lying in wait, weapons or tools used, accident, negligence, group or gang involvement, military context, prior relations, and provocation are all important circumstances that need to be considered before appropriate judgment can be made.

The trial of every homicide case begins and ends with stories trying to explain those circumstances. The accuser or prosecutor constructs a story from the adversary's point of view, hoping to establish culpability. The accused or defendant's advocate presents a different story favoring the perspective of innocence. The decision-maker (whether a judge or jury, a council of elders in a Levitical city of refuge, or some other authorized adjudicator) will then hear the evidence to see which of those two stories, or perhaps some other story, is most credible and compelling. What this means is that the best storyteller generally wins. This packaging of toxic human conduct results in a peaceful outcome. Since chiasmus is a wonderful storytelling tool, one can see why homicide narratives might be enhanced by a dynamic chiastic organizing structure.

Probing Relevancy

The legal concept of relevance is malleable. Anything probative or potentially significant can be admitted into evidence as "relevant" to the

case. This chiastic narrative manages to weave certain helpful facts into Nephi's factual account, making them relevant.

Chiastic homicide narratives make it clear that the wickedness of the victim is a relevant fact in the analysis of a case of homicide, especially when the victim had been strongly warned, as were Laban, Gedaliah, and Holofernes. Even though the law codes do not say so, the so-called victims got what they had coming, particularly since they ignored the words of prophets or messengers.

Reinforcing Memory

Working on the subconscious, chiasmus serves to make these particular stories memorable. Society wants to deter, constrain, curtail, and prevent murder whenever possible. These stories, especially as they wedge into consciousness the awful and tragic outcomes suffered by unjustified perpetrators, need to be told, retold, and remembered, in moral instruction and ethical formation.

Chiasmus is clever, even proverbially wise, tapping into the subconscious. Its cleverness is ironically found in some turnabout, allowing people to see things in an arresting way that they hadn't before, but in a way they intuitively accept. Its cleverness is found in attracting minds to cleave unto a new realization or difficult decision. Nephi's slaying of Laban certainly cries out for such a result.

Establishing Intent

Several similarities can be seen between many chiastic homicide narratives, but especially between the slaying of Holofernes and the slaying of Laban. Both dramatically tell how Nephi and Judith each acted alone. Emphasizing that a vulnerable killer has acted alone, as several homicide narratives do, tends to exculpate the killer. For when one weak person acts successfully against greater odds, this may indicate God's support and approval as in David's killing of Goliath (1 Sam 17:45–50). The same is so when Jael acted alone and on her own initiative in killing Sisera, thus showing God's power (Judg 4:18–21). Judith, also perilously alone, slays Holofernes. Nephi, likewise, acts alone: a youth against impossible chances of success. In all of these stories, these daring individuals acted at enormous personal risk to preserve their people.

When a killer debates with him- or herself, this may affect how the legal terms "deliberately," "premeditated," or "presumptuously" are to be understood by readers. Jotham's parable of the trees (olive, fig, vine,

thorn) offers a basis for deliberation in the case of Abimelech, making his killings all the more deliberate. A poignant dialogue of deliberation is found as David and Abishai hovered over the sleeping Saul (1 Sam 26:7–11), as is elegantly explicated by Klaus-Peter Adam.[30] In another case, Abner considers his options by asking, "Is it you, Asahel? Why should I smite you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Jo'ab?" (2 Sam 2:20–22). For her part, Judith offered a long prayer of deliberation, justification, and dedication (Jdt 9:1–14) before going forward with her plan to behead Holofernes. Nephi also carefully considers the justifiability of his action at the center of his account, only he had no idea how he was ever to succeed.

There are, however, differences between the cases of Nephi and Judith. Unlike Nephi, Judith did, in fact, lie in wait, intentionally and elaborately planning how she could entrap Holofernes.

Prioritizing Covenants

In legal narratives, if a person acts under a righteous oath he has sworn or a solemn duty he owes to God, that factor brings a motive of sworn loyalty to God and of binding self-deprecation into the narrative. Using a standard oath formula, David says to Abishai, "As the Lord lives, the Lord will smite Saul" (1 Sam 26:10). Judith openly avows, "We know none other god, we trust that he will not despise us" (Jdt 8:20). She prays earnestly to God, stating her motives (9:1–14), and pleads, "Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day" (13:7). Nephi also swears an oath: "As the Lord liveth, we will not return until we have the plates" (1 Nephi 3:15), and an angel commands him to "go again up to Jerusalem and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands" (3:29). Trusting in God by turning the matter over to divine forces is another way of understanding how God might then be seen as having, indeed, delivered the victim unto death at the hands of the slayer.

Divine intervention signals the message of the writer. In some cases, God delivers the slayer into the hands of people who will protect him. In Moses's case, God delivers him and the daughters of Reuel, or Jethro, "out of the hand of the shepherds" (Exod 2:19), which leads to his protection by Jethro. In Judith's case, the Lord will not allow men of Judah to deliver the city to the hands of the invading enemies (Jdt 8:33), thus sanctioning Judith's plot. These examples show signs of divine approval.

Sometimes, the Lord delivers the victim into the hands of the slayer. Sisera is delivered to Jael so that she can kill him: "the Lord has given Sisera into your hand" (Judg 4:14), and "on that day God subdued Jabin" (4:23). The

Lord sends an evil spirit to alienate the people from Abimelech, which ultimately leads to his demise (Judg 9:23). It was "of the Lord" that the woman of Timnah seeks occasion against the Philistines (Judg 14:4). For David and his soldier, Abishai says, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day" (1 Sam 26:8) "for the Lord gave you into my hand today" (26:23). But this is not enough to justify the killing of Saul, the Lord's anointed. Rechab and Baanah say to David, "The Lord has avenged my Lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring" (2 Sam 4:8), but this did not justify their killing him, son of the Lord's anointed. Laban is delivered to Nephi as Laban lies on the streets, drunk, and away from any witnesses (1 Nephi 4).

Chiasmus can, therefore, serve the function of drawing attention to these crucial, if not decisive, factors in homicide narratives.

Containing Justification

As stated at the beginning of this paper, homicide is ugly. Nephi's account of his slaying of Laban cannot be used by any other would-be murderers as a contrivance to justify their conduct. The Book of Mormon in no way condones homicide. Murder heads all twelve of the Nephite law lists found in the Book of Mormon, and murder is the only crime (out of thirty-six various offenses) that appears on all of these law lists.[31] Nephi, as the leader of his people, as a prophet, and as a recordkeeper, must have been concerned about how to limit and constrain any improper reading of this story. From the fact that he used chiasmus on several other occasions, we know that Nephi was familiar with this literary structure, how it worked, and, semiotically, what it could help communicate. It is plausible, therefore, to conclude that Nephi would have intentionally chosen to use chiasmus as his culturally preferred literary form that could best contain the toxic content of homicide.

Chiasmus not only "provid[es] the basis for cogent alternatives to other text critical interpretations which have called for a drastic fragmentation of certain basic texts,"[32] but brings together fractured legal expectations. The chiastic form of Nephi's narrative alludes to the chiastic form of the well-known law codes that clearly and stringently punish any extralegal taking of life. This form ties the numerous, unusual circumstances leading into and out of the account of this killing.

As many biblical homicide narratives likewise are, Nephi's narrative is a complex presentation of what lawyers would call a "very close case." By drawing doubled attention to certain important facts, it is as if these points are being called to the witness stand by Nephi to testify in his defense as the necessary two or three witnesses generally required

under Old Testament law. Twice the point is made that this deed was not preplanned, twice more that God's unusual hand delivered Laban into Nephi's hand, and twice again that Nephi acted against his will. In a sense, this drives the narrative that Nephi found himself involuntarily having to do this deed. The fact that Nephi could not have wanted or desired to do this is demonstrable by the twice-mentioned mortal peril that Nephi placed himself and his brothers in by committing this slaying. And twice in this account, the word "slay" (rather than the more incriminating word "kill") is emphatically used (first in Nephi's deliberation and second in the imperative command by the spirit of the Lord, 4:10, 12). This talionically echoes the earlier double use of the word "slay" (first in Laban's threat and second in Laban sending his servants to "slay" the four brothers, 1 Nephi 3:13, 25).

All these elements are chiastically arranged in such a way as to conform the case to scriptural rubrics, to contain this soul-wrenching bloodshed within bounds that the Lord had set and to allow Nephi himself to put to rest the harrowing night visions that must have continued to revisit his subconscious for the rest of his life.

Although not as well focused or carried out, chiastic structures are found in other homicide narratives, perhaps for similar reasons, to control and exceptionalize those homicides as well.

Balancing Rights and Values

Narratives about homicides and murder trials expose the balance maintained in a society between such polarities as individual personal rights versus collective societal needs, family loyalties versus social mores, political regimes versus priestly institutions, fate versus human choice, and divine providence versus provable objectivity. Because of its contrastive nature, chiasmus is able to encase and portray such dualities more naturally and authentically than any other literary form.

Homicide narratives seem to assume that killings are necessary in the establishment of any new regime, as has often been practically and politically necessary in the history of civilizations the world over. Cain's killing of Abel first signals the need for law outside Eden (Gen 4). Moses's slaying of the Egyptian shows that his authority begins with blood—a matter of life and death (Exod 2:12). One of David's men killed Saul so that he would not be captured by the Philistines (1 Sam 1:10).

In some cases, killing is necessary to preserve the people of God. Moses saved the life of an Israelite slave by killing an Egyptian (Exod 2:11). Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi, and "thus the plague was stayed

from the people of Israel" (Num 25:8). Judith killed Holofernes when the men of Judah unwisely swore an oath to deliver the city (Jdt 8:11). Laban was slain by Nephi in order to preserve Nephi's people (1 Nephi 4).

The factors allowing the "one for many" idea to be invoked also limited the operation of this factor: one life could be required for all, but only where that one was in some sense guilty. Phinehas wanted to prevent apostasy of the entire people, and thus he made an atonement for the sins of the people (Num 25:12), for Zimri and Cozbi were in flagrant violation of the divine order. Judith killed Holofernes to preserve her people from the onslaught of his army (Jdt 13:1–11), and Nephi killed Laban to preserve his people on the principle that it was "better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

The basic values of chiasmus are connecting values. Chiasmus connects words, thoughts, events, norms, and social awareness. Robert Hariman notes that embedded in chiasmus is a social character: "It is important to emphasize the social character of the chiasmus, however, to fully understand its significance and limitations. . . . Chiasmus both activates and thwarts desire for meeting in the middle, for melding with another."[33] In much the same way, law strives for this result as well, seeking to achieve social reconciliation without loss of individual integrity.

Hariman continues: "Chiasmus refers the audience to its own cultural capital but not [so far as] to shared experience."[34] Likewise the law, especially in difficult cases, must appeal to the shared cultural capital of all the parties to the lawsuit, but cannot require them all to walk away from the proceeding in shared agreement.

"Chiasmus is a linguistic screen, and its mood is that of spectatorship."[35] Similarly, the role of the judge requires careful observation to see and consider the facts laid before the court, while at the same time the court must generate a resolution by creating (as chiasmus also creates) the "common ground" on which the binary opposites that are propounded by the plaintiff or defendant, by the avenger or the killer, "can stand together."[36]

Meting Out Justice

Chiasmus may function cosmically. All is well in the world when peace and order reign in the world, in literature, as well as in the justice system. This is because law and justice seek for what is appropriate, fair, evenhanded, right, even righteous. The homicide laws and many of the homicide narratives are based on this talionic principle.

Laws must allow, but also contain and limit, exceptions or mitigating factors.

In any case, law must not appear to be random or arbitrary. Ultimately, the written outcome of a case must be well-crafted, organized, systematic, and logical. The literary features of chiasmus model most of the positive aspects of justice itself.

Chiasmus is orderly, controlled, and purposeful, helping to restore the personal, social, cosmic, and divine relationships that have been violated and disrupted, especially by hateful killings.

Structuring Closure

Chiasmus can also give a sense of closure and completion, enhancing the moral imperative of a text by reinforcing reiteration, or by conveying a sense of equilibrium or balanced retributive justice.[37] The structure of a narrative can also affect the outcome or message of a text: "Structure is 'an indispensable aspect of [any text]; . . . it is one of the factors governing the effect of the work on the reader and in addition it serves to express or accentuate meaning.'"[38]

Chiasmus gives order to the promulgation of rules that otherwise might appear unprecedented or irregular, as in the Case of the Blasphemer or in the rules of Num 35. It gives regular structure to the unfolding of events that could otherwise seem spontaneous or out of control, as in the cases of Phineas and Ishmael. Chiasmus also heightens the central narrative effect of climactic turning points, as in the cases of the slaying of Holofernes and of Laban.

Murder is disruptive and causes fear, terror, insecurity, rage, revenge, and open-ended uncertainty. When does a blood feud end? Chiasmus tells a homicide story in a way that leaves a sense of completeness. A sense of closure is fostered by ending by coming back to where the story began. As a traditional form of formal literature or speech, chiasmus restores a sense of traditional order—even cosmic order.

In the laws and cases we have examined in this paper, chiasmus emphatically doubles down on the seriousness of its subject, imbues legal texts with an aura of authoritativeness, and clarifies the logical relationships between the parts of the controlling texts. It helps to point and propel legal narrative to its conclusion and establishes a gradational grid that positions certain crimes, such as homicide and blasphemy, above lesser laws. It conveys a sense of justice, fairness, reciprocity, and judicial or divine retribution. It conveniently affords inherent mnemonic capacities, which promote oral presentation in the courtroom, recitation in

legal debates, and reinforcement in public instruction. And ultimately chiasmus gives to a judicial verdict, especially in a homicide case, a much-needed sense of completion, restoration, peace, and finality.

Conclusion

The distance between law and narrative is not as great as people might think, especially in the literary works of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. While laws tend to emphasize objective factors used in establishing facts about what happened and how events developed, the use of chiasmus in homicide narratives gives greater meaning to the unfolding facts and helps to convey human and ethical dimensions about who did things and why actions were undertaken. Knowing both objective facts and subjective intentions is necessary in order to correctly and righteously judge events of the past and to encourage and motivate admirable moral behavior in the future. Chiasmus helps judges, readers, victims, and teachers see beyond the narrowly stated facts of any case to perceive the bigger picture and to discern the key central point on which the case turns.

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Notes

1. Quoted in Fritz Stern, ed., *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 29.

2. John W. Welch, "Narrative Elements in Homicide Accounts," in *Judaism, Law, and Literature* (ed. Michael Baris and Vivian Liska; Jewish Law Association Studies 27; [Liverpool, UK?]: Jewish Law Association, 2017), 206–38.

3. See, for example, Pamela Barmash, "Homicide: Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law* (ed. Brent A. Strawn; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 396–403; Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bernard S. Jackson, "Homicide in the Hebrew Bible: A Review Essay," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische*

Rechtsgeschichte 12 (2006): 362–74; Jonathan P. Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 253–83; Raymond Westbrook, "Reflections on the Law of Homicide in the Ancient World," *Maarav* 13, no. 2 (2006): 145–74.

4. Klaus-Peter Adam, Friedrich Avemarie, and Nili Wazana, eds., *Law and Narrative in the Bible and Neighbouring Ancient Cultures* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Assnat Bartor, *Reading Law as Narrative: A Study in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Jonathan P. Burnside, "Exodus and Asylum: Uncovering the Relationship between Biblical Law and Narrative," *JSOT* 34, no. 3 (2010): 243–66; Jonathan Burnside, "Flight of the Fugitives: Rethinking the Relationship between Biblical Law (Exodus 21:12–14) and the Davidic Succession Narrative (1 Kings 1–2)," *JBL* 129, no. 3 (2010): 418–31; James K. Bruckner, *Implied Law in the Abraham Narrative: A Literary and Theological Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Bernard S. Jackson, *Law, Fact, and Narrative Coherence* (Liverpool, UK: Deborah Charles Publications, 1988). While acknowledging that "literature is only incidentally about law" and that narratives may not always accurately portray legal subjects, Barmash makes a strong appeal for the claim that "narrative texts are indispensable for the study of biblical law. The analysis of literary texts is necessary for reconstructing legal practice and the perception of how law operated. Statutes only tell us so much." Pamela Barmash, "The Narrative Quandary: Cases of Law in Literature," *VT* 54, no. 1 (2004): 2; Barmash, "Homicide," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law,* 400–401.

5. Assnat Bartor, "Narrative," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law,* 126.

6. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 38 n. 6.

7. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 57–58; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2129; Bernard S. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws: A Study of the Mishpatim of Exodus 21:1–22:16* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 448.

8. Timothy M. Willis, "Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus: The Marriage of Form and Content in Lev 24,13–23," *Biblica* 90, no. 1 (2009): 70.

9. Willis, "Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus," 71.

10. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws,* 206–7. Discussed also in John W. Welch, *Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2008), 338–48, esp. 345 and in connection with the chiastic structure of the meaning of the word "restoration" in Alma 41:13–15.

11. Bernard M. Levinson, "At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in Primeval History and Deuteronomy," in this volume.

12. Willis, "Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus," 72.

13. Willis, "Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus," 73.

14. Following Milgrom, *Leviticus,* 2131, on understanding *mum* as creating a physical defect that disqualifies the injured person from entering the priestly service, or p. 2135, as causing some serious, permanent physical loss.

15. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times: An Introduction* (2d ed.; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 71.

16. Milgrom, *Leviticus,* 2133.

17. Willis, "Blasphemy, Talion, and Chiasmus," 72.

18. Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium* (SBS 7; Stuttgart, 1965), 33. Translated as *Literary Art in the Gospel of Matthew* (trans. Lore Schultheiss), available at https://chiasmusresources.org/literary-art-gospel-matthew, 33.

19. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws,* 128.

20. Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws,* 129.

21. T. A. Boogaart, "Stone for Stone: Retribution in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem," *JSOT* 32 (1985): 48–49.

22. Robert Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus? Or, Why the Abyss Stares Back," in *Chiasmus and Culture* (ed. Boris Wiseman and Anthony Paul; New York: Berghahn, 2014), 47.

23. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 48.

24. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 49.

25. Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBL Dissertation Series; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 62–63; followed by Michael D. Coogan, ed., *New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31–36.

26. John W. Welch, "Introduction," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 13.

27. Roger David Aus, "The Death of One for All in John 11:45–54 in Light of Judaic Traditions," in *Barabbas and Esther and Other Studies in the Judaic Illumination of Earliest Christianity* (ed. J. Neusner and others, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 54; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 29–63. See also Nahum Rakover, "The One vs. the Many in Life and Death Situations," *Jewish Law Association Studies VIII* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 129–53.

28. On the words "But if he did not lie in wait for him" and "God delivered him into his hand," see generally, Jackson, *Wisdom-Laws,* 120–30.

29. See below.

30. Klaus-Peter Adam, "A Didactic Case Narrative on Homicide Law: 1 Samuel 26," in *Law and Narrative in the Bible and in Neighboring Ancient Cultures* (ed. Klaus-Peter Adam, Friedrich Avemarie, and Nili Wazana; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 107–13.

31. John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), chart 127.

32. John W. Welch, "Introduction," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity,* 12.

33. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 61.

34. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 62.

35. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 62.

36. Hariman, "What Is Chiasmus?" 52.

37. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law: An Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4, no. 1 (1990): 9–10.

38. S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30, no. 2 (1980): 172; as quoted in Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law," 22.