



Type: Journal Article

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## Vox Populi and Vox Dei: Allusive Explorations of Biblical and Book of Mormon Politeias

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Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,  
Volume 47 (2021), pp. 1-80

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

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# INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT  
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 47 · 2021 · Pages 1 - 80

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Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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# VOX POPULI AND VOX DEI: ALLUSIVE EXPLORATIONS OF BIBLICAL AND BOOK OF MORMON POLITEIAS

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Alan Goff

A review of David Charles Gore, *The Voice of the People: Political Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2019). 229 pp. \$15.95 (paperback).

**Abstract:** *David Gore's book The Voice of the People: Political Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon is a welcome reading of Book of Mormon passages which engage in conversation with the biblical politeia — those parts of the Hebrew Bible that explore the constituent parts of the Israelite governance under judges and kings. Gore asserts that the Book of Mormon politeia in Mosiah is in allusive dialogue not just with the Bible but also the Jaredite experience of kingship in Ether. This allusive (intertextual) feature is present not just in the Book of Mormon but any text (Dead Sea Scrolls, New Testament, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and other writings) in the biblical tradition. The textual connection is conveyed when the biblical Noah is a type and King Noah the anti-type. The same is true of the biblical Gideon, who is a narrative bridge between the period of the judges and the transformation to monarchy; the Book of Mormon Gideon serves a similar typological function, bridging the reign of kings to the period of judges. Our modern notions of federalism and democracy owe much to the biblical legacy of covenant and republicanism, and although the Book of Mormon political structures share some features with modern federalism, the roots of both go deep into the Hebrew Bible. The Book of Mormon politeia, also a branch of that biblical political legacy, requires that readers understand that filiation, and demands awareness of the dialogue between the Book of Mormon and the Bible on the subject, so such reading can enrich our understanding of both Hebraic scriptures.*

There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world.<sup>1</sup>

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Everything in the universe goes by indirection. There are no straight lines.<sup>2</sup>

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

I come not to bury directness but to praise allusion and indirection, to exhume metalepsis and invigorate intertextuality in the practice of reading both the Book of Mormon and the Bible. To this end David Gore's *The Voice of the People: Political Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon* participates in a salutary trend toward close exegesis of the theological-political elements of the Book of Mormon text. Along with Jim Faulconer's brief theological introduction to Mosiah<sup>3</sup> (Mosiah is the most politically weighted portion of the Book of Mormon) we are now getting readers who can read out of the text the political reverberations in the book of Mosiah (and other parts of the scripture) which continue and amplify the theological-political portions of the Hebrew Bible. Both Faulconer and Gore suggest that the book of Mosiah requires being read against the backdrop of the biblical politeia, the primary productive contribution in Gore's and Faulconer's analyses.<sup>4</sup>

This trend of sensitive readers engaging the Book of Mormon with exegetical attention is a movement to be encouraged. The Mormon

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1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," (lecture, Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard College, August 31, 1837).

2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Society and Solitude* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870), 162.

3. James E. Faulconer, *Mosiah: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020).

4. When I refer to the Bible or use the adjective *biblical* in this review, I mean the Hebrew Bible, what Christians refer to as the *Old Testament*. When the Nephite authors migrated from the old world to the new, they had before them something equivalent to the Hebrew Bible through the time of Jeremiah. When I refer to the entirety of the Christian canon, I'll so state. I will sometimes refer to the *Old Testament* but usually because I am drawing from biblical critics who use such terminology in that context.

scripture itself insists that the Jewish and the Nephite scriptures must be read jointly, so it is praiseworthy to have readers engaging the texts, taking the text's prior demand seriously that the Bible generally and Book of Mormon specifically be read for their rich intertextual layers. Nephi asserts in his tree of life discourse that the angelic guide said "these last records [the Nephite writings], which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first [the Hebrew and Christian scriptures], ... wherefore they both shall be established in one" (1 Nephi 13:40, 41). Book of Mormon believers have a responsibility to read the two scriptures as unified in their prophetic and narrative designs; and Book of Mormon skeptics have a responsibility to analyze the scriptures' prophetic and narrative claims with at least a modicum of depth and understanding.

I attempt four tasks in this book review: (1) write a review of Gore's book so the reader understands its contents and import while occasionally disagreeing with Gore's readings, (2) introduce the reader to the notion of intertextuality/allusion in Hebraic texts, which is an essential prerequisite to understanding the Bible and the Book of Mormon, (3) demonstrate how the book of Mosiah (and first few chapters of Alma) uses such allusion to connect to and elaborate on the biblical *politeia* (1 Samuel 8–12), the law of the king (Deuteronomy 17), and other relevant biblical passages, while building out the Hebrew Bible's political theory (or perhaps theories), and (4) increase the reader's appreciation of the complexity of Book of Mormon narrative and the principles by which it conveys its meaning.<sup>5</sup> I'll draw upon a fair amount of biblical criticism in order to articulate a biblical politics, but my reader should be aware that I am barely digging the well to the upper stratum of the biblical criticism aquifer; much work needs yet to be done among the Saints to make use of the gift of biblical criticism to learn more about the Bible and the Book of Mormon so that the well of living water extends to the depth of that aquifer and not just to the upper reaches. Both the biblical and Book of Mormon texts are more sophisticated than we treat them, and we need to train our reading habits to follow in sophistication so we can make that living water plain and accessible for readers. I recognize that those four strands I attempt here to intertwine into a rope capable

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5. Nephi asserts his writings are plain (2 Nephi 31:2; 2 Nephi 25:7–8), but plainness and complexity are not necessarily in conflict. I assert that the Book of Mormon is complex and sophisticated because of its plainness, because its plainness accumulates into something beyond simplicity, moving from a simplex to a complex.

of supporting my readings may be beyond my reach and capabilities, but I ask my reader's indulgence as I venture, despite the sheerness of the cliff face and roughness of the trail ahead.

Mormon also asserts that the Book of Mormon and the Bible must be read jointly, except reversing the direction of knowledge and understanding between the Bible (*that* in the following passage) and the Book of Mormon (*this*) from the way we believers read (that is, we too often read biblical narrative as primary to understand — usually as a proof text — the Book of Mormon, neglecting to read the latter's narrative for its illumination of biblical narrative): “For behold, *this* is written for the intent that ye may believe *that*; and if ye believe *that* ye will believe *this* also; and if ye believe *this* ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them” (Mormon 7:9). Belief and comprehension of the Bible, Mormon asserts, is rounded out and elevated by belief and understanding of the Book of Mormon, and if we don't grasp the ubiquitous intertextuality between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, we apprehend far too little of either sacred text. We modern readers must be taught to read anew with scriptures as our primer, to be as sophisticated in our reading as the biblical and Book of Mormon writers were in their writing.

Gore treats the book of Mosiah, the first few chapters of Alma, and chapter 6 of Ether as addressing the institution of kingship, bringing excellent insights and innovative readings of those passages. I have labeled Mosiah the Book of Mormon *politeia* in order to focus attention on the change in constitution narrated there as a political revolution from kingship to judgeship. The discussion of kingship in 1 Samuel 8–12 and 15–16 (and its companion text Deuteronomy 17:14–20) is frequently designated the biblical *politeia* because these chapters anticipate and narrate a political reversal of what happens in the Book of Mormon, as they show a shift from judgeship to kingship among the Israelites. Gore is right and insightful in reading the biblical *politeia* and the Book of Mormon *politeia* in dialogue with each other, and the message is a variation on the theme I have already articulated: God exhibits a sacred discontent with the works of fallen humanity's hands, and our political and social arrangements and governmental constitutions are no different. God creates the cosmos and pronounces the work “very good” (Genesis 1:31); and in a fallen world when humans create societies and polities, some may be better than others for particular purposes. But God doesn't say at the end of the foundation of the first city/civilization after the fall (Enoch, Genesis 4:17) and the first city after the flood (Babel,

Genesis 11:1–4, 9) “I approve this message.” That is, God is content to approve the pottery made by divine hands; but when humans continue the divine work of creation (even in imitation), the deity doesn’t endorse or take credit for the work of such fallible potters as we are: as with pottery, so with politics. Samuel resists the Israelites’ demand for a king, but God reluctantly gives the people what they want, knowing the people would be better off with the status quo than to implement monarchy. As late as the classical prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Hosea asserts that “they have set up kings, but not by me” (Hosea 8:4); God and the prophets resist the endorsement as much as political candidates imply or state that God is on their side.

When the “first” of an event happens in the biblical record (the first man and woman, the first murder, the first city, the first sacrifice by Adam, the first entry into a new land, the first king), that founding event is paradigmatic for all that follow, a pattern for good or evil that illuminates subsequent history; St. Augustine recognized the firstness of things to portend what ensues. The violence of Cain against Abel and Romulus against Remus demonstrated the violence upon which all cultures were built. The founding murder showed, the Church Fathers thought, that violence is the necessary mode of operation for the city of man. Gore notes that

the tragedy of human politics is not merely that all political regimes and economic systems tend toward corruption but that the corruption to which they tend goes beyond the political and economic realms. Whether corrupted by bad leaders from the top down or from cultural strife, contention, and violence from the ground up, the result is the corruption of human hearts, individually and collectively. (p. 12)

Gore astutely takes up the following material in the Book of Mormon in the following chapters.

***Chapter 1: The Calling of Samuel and Mosiah: Mosiah’s Succession Crisis.*** Rightly, Gore reads the material in Mosiah 29 as an intertextual commentary on David’s calling and anointing in 1 Samuel 16, but more generally the chapter alludes to the transition from judges to kings in Judges and 1 Samuel (p. 33). Gore, in providing fresh insights to the discussion of political systems in the Book of Mormon, connects those passages to the institution of kingship among the Jaredites in Ether 6:19–27. By alluding to the Hebrew Bible’s political concerns, the Book of Mormon highlights wisdom and obtuseness in the biblical text’s characters: “The openness of the Book of Mormon to the Bible means



not only that we can bring the two works into fruitful conversation with each other, but also that it is difficult to predict where the conversation will lead” (p. 31). This relationship between the two scriptural works isn’t one of “enthralment” or “subservience,” as weak underreaders often assert, but instead shows how the Nephite scripture “reinforces the Bible’s relevance while at the same time refusing to accept what the Bible says as the last word about what the Bible means” (p. 30). Gore ably notes the correspondences between the biblical and Book of Mormon politeias and draws out keen insights in the allusive comparisons.

**Chapter 2: Monarchical Succession in the Book of Ether.** Gore notes the internal repetitions between the offer of kingship to Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s sons and the sons of Jared and his brother in Ether. Pointing to what I have here labeled allusion or intertextuality, Gore notes that “the Book of Mormon is engaging in serious dialogue with the Bible, showing that the biblical stories are by no means finished or complete” (p. 61). Gore not only shows the narrative similarities between the two stories about dynastic kingship but, more importantly, provides a plausible reason why they are connected. Just before initiating a structural transformation from kingship to judgeship, Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had translated the Jaredite record, so the lessons from endorsing kingship were conspicuous not just from the Nephites’ own experience with King Noah but also fortified from the Jaredite example. “By bringing Mosiah 29 into dialogue with the book of Ether and Judges-Samuel, Mormon draws attention to the weight of the phrase ‘the voice of the people’ to emphasize the responsibility of the people to express their desires and to bear the burdens — whether of kingly oppression or the shared responsibility of governing” (p. 62). Gore doesn’t often misfire in reading the relevant texts, but he does here. He cites Mosiah 25:12 to the effect that after the reunification of the three branches of Nephites (King Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s Nephites and Mulekites, Alma<sub>1</sub>’s group of Zeniffites, and Limhi’s Zeniffite company), each group telling their story, “The people emerged from this assembly with a desire for greater unity. They no longer wanted to be recognized by their separate political identities because they ‘were displeased with the conduct of their fathers’ (25:12)” (pp. 71–72). But this action refers not to the Nephite assembly as a whole, or even the Limhi portion of it. It was the much narrower group — specifically the children of the priests of Noah — who were displeased with their fathers. These fathers had abandoned their wives and children to take wives of kidnapped Lamanite girls, and were absorbed into the Lamanite tradition. It was the much narrower group of Nephites who wanted no such patrimony, but preferred only to be known as Nephites. This fits with Gore’s theme of unity, for after

this group disavowed their birth fathers and became Nephites, “all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites” (Mosiah 25:13).

**Chapter 3: Mosiah’s New Constitution.** Gore notes that King Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s pitch to convert the Nephite governing structure from kingship to judgeship is “based on quasi-democratic principles” but was fragile from its inception, although it lasted for nearly 1,200 years (p. 99) (with a period of tribal interregnum around the meridian of time). No apology should be made for referring to the system as democratic (that may not look like republican, presidential, or parliamentary democracy as we know it today; see p. 117), for democracy broadly defined is neither a modern nor an Athenian invention (as I will demonstrate in this review). The Nephite experience with bad monarchy (King Noah) prompts Mosiah<sub>2</sub> to urge constitutional change. Mosiah<sub>2</sub> midwives change toward a more egalitarian system. But the reader must understand that equality means something different to Mosiah<sub>2</sub> than the way we define the word today. For the Book of Mormon the emphasis isn’t on equivalence of rights or results but on equivalence of duty, each person carrying the burden of governance and civic obligation rather than a king (righteous or unrighteous) shouldering a larger share of the burden. “Mosiah saw inequality as one of the greatest harms to the people, and, as indicated above, he is no longer convinced that the sins of the people should be answered on the heads of their leaders” (p. 120). This equality means, additionally, that each person should labor to provide for him or herself and family (p. 121). I would add that each person should not live off public taxation or contribution, for such is priestcraft or kingcraft.

**Chapter 4: Nehor Exploits Equality.** As soon as Mosiah<sub>2</sub> persuades the people to adopt judgeship and enact democratic — as opposed to dynastic — leadership, the system faces a challenge of legitimacy. Nehor emerges, stress-testing the commitment to equality, the basis of the new judgeship polity. Gore provides a summary of Emmanuel Levinas’s notions of ethical systems and applies them not just to the Nephite experience but to all human praxis. Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s notion of equality is founded on the commitment to *being-with-and-for-others*, while Nehor’s proposed alternative ethic is founded on *being-in-and-for-oneself* (p. 134); and a second principle that each person should labor for her or his own support rather than being supported by the people. This may just be a philosophical restatement of the dialectic of selfishness versus selflessness, but Gore’s articulation is useful. The order of Nehor will be a long-lasting obstacle to Nephite cohesion and the government by judges: “The order of Nehor is an order of opposition rooted in

*being-in-and-for-oneself*, and it lasts throughout the rest of the reign of the judges as a counterpoint to the regime established by Mosiah” (p. 135). Gideon is the narrative bridge between kingship and judgeship narratives. When Nehor is challenged by an aged Gideon, Nehor kills the sage. But remember that this same Gideon led a rebellion against King Noah’s misrule, and Nehor’s doctrine is just a systematic articulation of King Noah’s governing ethos. Gore notes the story’s intertextual character when he points out that this Gideon is intended to remind us of the biblical Gideon in the book of Judges, the charismatic leader who led the Israelites out of bondage to the Midianites. Both were charismatic military leaders from the tribe of Manasseh who emerged in a time of crisis to free the people from bondage. “One quite obvious clue that the book of Mosiah is open to and seeks to engage the biblical book of Judges is the presence of a character named Gideon” (p. 144). The Book of Mormon Gideon challenges wicked King Noah, while the biblical Gideon declines the Israelite offer of kingship. I will engage the two Gideons and Gore’s discussion of them, but I postpone until I leave behind my summary stage for an analytical one; I don’t think Gore gets the allusive comparisons quite right. After being tried and convicted of murdering Gideon, Nehor is executed, but his doctrine outlives him:

The order of the Nehors is a theological-political faction opposed to the work of Kings Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, Benjamin, and Mosiah, as well as both Alma<sub>1</sub> and Alma the Younger, after his conversion, and during his time as high priest and chief judge. The doctrine of Nehor disrupts the possibility of establishing a regime of equality and the sharing of public burdens by sowing the seeds of inequality and idolatry. (p. 154)

The doctrine of Nehor also intensifies the rivalry between Nephites and Lamanites.

**Chapter 5: Amlici’s Rebellion and a Heap of Bones.** The theme chronicling the transition from kingship to judgeship continues in Alma 2 because verse 1 of that chapter ensures that the reader gets the connection by stating that Amlici is of the order of Nehor. Leading the Nehor dissidents, Amlici attempts to overthrow the new constitution, which prompts a referendum to revert to monarchy (with no intermedial Electoral College the “king-men” might use to manipulate and overthrow the will of the people expressed in an election). Amlici intensifies his attempt to negate constitutional governance through an attempted coup d’état. Led by Alma<sub>2</sub>, the narrative circles back to kingship. After the first day of battle between what the book of Alma will later call *king-men*

and *freemen* (Amlici's name has that Hebrew root for king — *m-l-k* — as do other Book of Mormon would-be or sometime kings such as Amalickiah) in the Nephites' camp in the valley of Gideon. "As if it was not already obvious, the name of the valley where the battle breaks out is emphasized to show that Alma is defending the same cause for which Gideon opposed Nehor" (p. 179), and King Noah, by the way.

**Conclusion: Awake to Mourfulness.** While Gore recognizes the need for people of good will to be involved in politics, he rightly notes that we ought to recognize the limits of any political philosophy. "Politics is tragic to the extent that we exercise faith in political solutions to what are in reality religious problems" (p. 192). If we elevate the stakes of politics to a win-at-any-cost competition, then we haven't understood the Book of Mormon's take, which "depicts a politics of tragedy by showing us the worst that can happen when we take the stakes of politics too seriously" (p. 193). The consequences of sin can be ameliorated and souls converted, but not by political parties, and one ought not to treat soulless parties or factions as we do religious congregations. Nor should we consider congregations as extensions of political parties. "Politics cannot save us because of its fundamentally tragic character of overpromising on solutions to problems it cannot comprehend" (p. 193).

Gore's reading accurately puts the Book of Mormon *politeia* (largely the book of Mosiah and the first few chapters of Alma) in persistent dialogue with the biblical *politeia* (1 Samuel and Judges, and more generally the entire Deuteronomistic History [Joshua-2 Kings with Deuteronomy also thrown into the description by some]); and such an effort ought to be rewarded with a wide readership. Josephus was the first writer in the Jewish and Hellenistic tradition not only to refer to the biblical *politeia* (a *politeia* is an analysis of the governing order in a society and its relationship to the governed; it is often translated *constitution*, and that is the way Josephus meant it); but also to argue that the Mosaic constitution was on par with those governmental structures analyzed by Aristotle and the broader Greek and Roman tradition. Gore provides keen and subtle insight both into the relationship between the two *politeias* but also into reading the Book of Mormon on its own.

### **The Ends and Means of a Scriptural Politics**

In our fallen world — so far from God, so near to partisan politics — we humans fashion a matching lone and dreary political philosophy. Never should we make the mistake of asserting that our personal, party, or national politics are also God's. That doesn't mean that all politics

are equally good or bad, just that we have to work through all political platforms while attempting to exorcise the evil and cruel elements and bolstering the good and moral; the moral and religious principles can be enacted in various ways by differing platforms. Like all aspects of the post-lapsarian world, the tares are yet interwoven with the wheat (in the primordial garden, apparently, weeds did not exist). Gore notes that “the larger narrative arc of the Book of Mormon is a critique not just of those in power, but of power itself” (p. 12). Most of us live compartmentalized lives in which our involvement in matters political aren’t sufficiently informed by matters religious. We feel good — perhaps even morally superior — in inventing or repeating lies we know are false in order to gain political advantage, insisting on supremacist notions regarding our own tribe or ethnic group, using our access to the levers of power to advance our private interests while declaring them to be in the public interest, or demonizing those who disagree with us as unpatriotic or ungodly while our own commitments resemble a highly selective patriotism.

The God of the Bible and the Book of Mormon is neither Republican nor Democratic (nor conservative nor liberal), and the Christ of the testaments advances a politics, but not one of this world. Gore notes that “sometimes we are tempted to use scripture to justify a partisan position or moralize against the opposing position” (p. 8). I am attempting to walk a fine line here: I agree with Gore, if I don’t misrepresent his position, that God is not a partisan when it comes to human politics, but we still must be able to criticize political positions based on their human qualities from within our own commitments, which include religious principles and practices. The scripture warns that political parties, political individuals, economic advocates, and economic positions are liable to deception and corruption. Citizens should trust but verify, and not even trust too much, for “whether corrupted by bad leaders from the top down or from cultural strife, contention, and violence from the ground up, the result is the corruption of human hearts, individually and collectively” (p. 12). The tendency to become partisans or advocates of parties or positions tends to make people forget the purpose of both big and small pictures: service to others. The institutions humans build are fallible and fallen, prone to error and cruelty, and we ought to improve beyond the limits of what politics can do, supplementing with moral and religious action.

A major divide between political opponents is over fundamental commitments toward individuals and social groups: should the

happiness and fulfillment of the individual take priority over the good of social groups the individual inhabits, such as families, neighborhoods, nations, employers, religious congregations, and others? We would be more generous and charitable toward those who disagree with us if we recognize that major divide between those whose basic orientation is to empower individuals to self-actualize their possibilities, and those who elevate dedication to family, religious congregation, and other social units over individualism (or more likely, that sometimes the same person might favor individualistic commitments, and other times prioritize communal obligations, because our practice and principles need to be worked out in the mangle of life experienced through improvisation).

Gore refers to Levinas, a Jewish philosopher, whose philosophy takes seriously the obligation to tend to the other, which position is opposed to the worldly tendency symbolized by Cain, the founder of the first city in human history, according to the Bible, to be “in-and-for-oneself.” Cain thought the answer to his question “am I my brother’s keeper?” was so obvious that even God should know it. The Bible portrays Cain not only as the first murderer but important as the founder of all civilizations, because all originate in violence, as Cain’s city did. God curses Cain to be a vagabond, but immediately after the cursing (Genesis 4:15), he goes out and establishes the first urban center (Genesis 4:17). The Cain syndrome of being-in-and-for-oneself is opposed to being-with-and-for-others, a true dichotomy of the two basic orientations people can embrace toward social life (p. 13). Like the Bible, “the Book of Mormon reiterates the biblical call to being-for-others, which is a radical politics acknowledging one’s own temptations toward freedom from responsibility as well as welcoming all the trials, troubles, and travails associated with bearing the burdens of the community (see Mosiah 29:33)” (p. 13). Politics tends to lose sight of being-for-others in favor of being-for-oneself or being-for-party, being-for-nation, being-for-my-ideology, being-for-people-who-look-like-me, or many more possibilities. The Book of Mormon conveys the biblical message that the problems we encounter in society are not fundamentally political problems but religious ones (p. 16). Therefore the solutions are necessarily religious, not political.

The Nephite scripture urges a “politics oriented toward the Other” (p. 3), one beyond bad and evil that cultivates self-interest and self-gratification. “In the here and now, politics rests on competition, conflict, and violence arising from self-assertion, anger, faction, vanity, and pride. Such politics traffics in a light-minded, pretentiously grave

posturing that all too seriously reckons that the defeat of one's opposition is all that matters" (p. 3). A politics of the Other requires that we recognize that those who disagree with us are more than likely rational, with good motivations, but perhaps moved by a conviction to purposes or ends that are different from those to which we are committed. The fact that our opponents' political means and ends differ from ours doesn't make them villains. Whether our political commitments emerge from highlighting individualism or communitarianism, our religious commitments ought to require that we reject the politics of cruelty. We should all agree that such policies, regardless of party affiliation, are odious and morally and religiously repugnant.

The Bible and the Book of Mormon call us to an ethics of love, of brotherhood and sisterhood, of inclusiveness and care. The better we read those scriptures, the better and more apt we are to enlarge our circles of love and acceptance. In the past 40 years, developments in our ability to read the biblical text have dramatically improved our capacity to understand the biblical and Book of Mormon text and context, and I will make use of some of that biblical criticism in this review. Such developments permit us to read between the texts to understand how Hebraic writings such as the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon are constantly in dialogue with each other to produce commentary on the world of politics that a single scriptural work cannot deliver, reflected through its limited prisms on reality.

Over the past four decades biblical critics have made huge advances in demonstrating that the Hebrew and Christian Bibles constantly allude to other portions of the scripture. We have come to the realization that intertextuality is a central feature of biblical textuality.<sup>6</sup> Such persistent allusion is just as fundamental to Book of Mormon textuality as it is to any group in antiquity who believed they were still carrying out the biblical

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6. Most biblical critics are sensitive to the conflation of the terms *allusion* and *intertextuality*. They insist that allusion requires a temporal relationship, the writer doing the alluding living after and having access to the text being alluded to. Some critics also insist on authorial intentionality, that the belated alluder consciously intends the connection. Intertextuality, on the other hand, is often used atemporally, such as referring to Shakespeare's allusions to T.S. Eliot. Biblical critics are a variety of historians and are touchy about the charge of anachronism. In most circumstances, I don't think the distinction between the two terms makes much difference, and my tribal affiliation is to literary critics who generally don't care so much about historians' obsessions. I will use the two terms interchangeably in order to have a varied vocabulary available to describe a range of textual relationships that are fundamental to biblical and Book of Mormon readers.

mandate to multiply and fill the earth and to make the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant available to all the progeny of Noah and Adam and Eve. If the reader doesn't grasp the Book of Mormon's constant allusion to the Bible, that reader doesn't understand the Book of Mormon (or the Bible, for that matter, for as I have quoted Nephi already, "wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth" (1 Nephi 13:41).

### **Allusive Scriptures and Metalepsis**

Not only does the Hebrew Bible constantly and insistently allude to other parts of its own canon, but so do any subsidiary texts that followed in the biblical tradition: the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Dead Sea Scrolls. These belated ramifying texts were in constant dialogue with the trunk but also the other branches. What Schiffman says about the Dead Sea Scrolls should also be applied to the Book of Mormon (and the other mentioned texts): "We have to acknowledge that, to a great extent, the authors of some of the scrolls saw themselves as in some way continuing the biblical tradition or actually living in a sort of time-warped biblical Israel."<sup>7</sup> Such persistent allusiveness, both internal to the Hebrew Bible and between successor writings and that Bible, places demands on the readers of the successor and ancestor writings. "Therefore, between this corpus and the Hebrew Bible — as well as inside the corpus — we should expect complex levels of intertextuality. Put simply, the Bible was formative for Second Temple literature and, hence, intertextuality was rampant."<sup>8</sup> A pressing need for readers to match the sophistication and complexity of the Bible and the Book of Mormon has come with the recognition of biblical intertextuality.

I ought to emphasize that in this persistent allusiveness — the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Book of Mormon and the rest of the family of ancient Hebraic writings (the descendent texts) — are merely doing what the predecessor text does. Biblical scholars and disciples have become manifestly more sensitive to this constant reference to earlier biblical passages and narratives, keenly aware that

the biblical authors themselves also comment on, explain, revise, argue with, and allude to texts written by their

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7. Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Intertextuality in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, eds. Marianne Grohmann, Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2019), 212.

8. Schiffman, "Intertextuality in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 212.



predecessors. The implications of this phenomenon, which we may call inner-biblical allusion and exegesis, are important both for students of the Hebrew Bible and for students of the religious and literary traditions that grew from it.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, any adequate understanding of the Bible requires that modern readers understand the ways moderns, medieval people, and ancients approached the texts with fundamentally different presuppositions.<sup>10</sup> Any adequate grasp of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon requires readers who have struggled to understand the persistent allusiveness of those scriptural texts. The writers paid the price to understand traditional modes and conventions, and contemporary readers must pony up in the same coin.

Ancient Hebraic writers used techniques we call *allusive* because they believed that God was in charge of history and God's path keeps circling upon itself, so there are multiple falls from paradise, exodus escapes, redemptions from bondage, confrontations between kings and prophets, new covenants between God and humans, etc. The stories repeat patterns because history is repetitive. So too is human nature unchangeable (outside divine intervention), and like God's salvation history, one eternal round, so it would be surprising if past events didn't repeat, because human shortcomings are as predictable as sunrise, winter, or greed. For exploration of the political-theological nexus of Hebraic writings we must recognize that the children of Israel repeatedly were dominated by foreign despots and cultivated their own autochthonous tyrants. Consequently, we would expect to find political structures and other human inventions repetitive; King Noah of the Book of Mormon is not *sui generis* nor even original, but part of a pattern as old as humanity and human society itself.

Indeed, the self-aware manner in which Qumran sectarians and other Second Temple period authors reworked and drew on biblical ideas and biblical phraseology raises one final question: Is it possible that intertextuality is simply a complex word for phenomena that were just second nature to ancient

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9. Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 2.

10. James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 14–16, 31–33. The ancient and medieval rabbinic tradition was fully aware of this constant allusive interplay in biblical textuality, but they approached it using different assumptions than we moderns do.

Jewish authors? Perhaps “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccles. 1:9).<sup>11</sup>

The problem for us moderns is that we don’t write or read the way ancient Hebraic writers wrote and read, nor do we think the way ancients thought. Consequently, we often miss too easily and too simply the point of ancient Hebraic narrative by assimilating antiquity to modernity.

I could point to the traditional analysis of allusion in Hebraic texts as typology in the Christian tradition, or I could take up Robert Alter’s notion of type scenes and related allusive techniques internal to the Hebrew Bible. I could rely on the more general discussion of intertextuality, which usually emerges from literary criticism; these are different approaches to describing the same phenomena. I will instead begin from New Testament scholar Richard B. Hays on metalepsis as the New Testament incorporates references to the Old Testament. Just as the Book of Mormon constantly alludes to the Old Testament, the New Testament also projects the history of salvation as one riff after another on Old Testament events and themes, because those Christian writers believed that their historical situation was an extension of that portrayed in the Old Testament. Hays narrows his focus to one type of allusive reference — metalepsis: one detail in the referring text can evoke a much larger narrative context full of detail in the alluding text while assuming the reader will understand. Metalepsis can be subtle, so elusive that it might easily be missed or misunderstood:

Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed. This sort of metaleptic figuration is the antithesis of the metaphysical conceit, in which the poet’s imagination seizes a metaphor and explicitly wrings out of it all manner of unforeseeable significations. Metalepsis, by contrast, places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences.<sup>12</sup>

The invocation works from a mode of indirection. Metalepsis as a literary figure is extremely efficient, for “allusions are often most powerful when

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11. Schiffman, “Intertextuality in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 224.

12. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 20.

least explicit. This remains true even if some readers are slow of heart to discern the metalepsis.”<sup>13</sup>

For example, the gospels often invoke entire narratives from the Old Testament by dropping just one word or a name. In the gospel of Mark, the author is an expert at metalepsis by using such allusive details to see a much larger narrative world. “Significant elements of the intertextual relations lie just under the surface, suggested but not explained by the narrative”<sup>14</sup> in which the reader of the metalepsis has some heavy lifting to do to keep up with the text. “The result is that the interpretation of a metalepsis requires the reader to recover unstated or suppressed correspondences between the two texts.”<sup>15</sup> Much like Mark, Paul is constantly quoting, alluding to, echoing, and citing scripture. “The extraordinary thing about Paul’s use of this metaphor [comparing the incestuous relationship in the Corinthian congregation to the purification of the of the Passover dough] is how little he explains.”<sup>16</sup> He leaves it up to the reader to catch the reference and fill out the connection. The auditor who misses the clue isn’t Paul’s ideal reader.

The gospels, like the Book of Mormon, persistently use various forms of allusion. Metalepsis is one such reference in which a small metonymic detail evokes a much larger and fuller narrative.

Metalepsis is a literary technique of citing or echoing a small bit of precursor text in such a way that the reader can grasp the significance of the echo only by recalling or recovering the original context from which the fragmentary echo came and then reading the two texts in dialogical juxtaposition. The figurative effect of such an intertextual linkage lies in the unstated or suppressed points of correspondence between the two texts.<sup>17</sup>

Modern readers commonly read the wrong meaning into scripture when scriptural narrative repeats with a difference. We moderns often mistakenly think in terms of copying, plagiarism, or lack of originality when we encounter a repetition, but these are all modern concerns, not ancient ones, and what modern readers often mistake as a deficiency

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13. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 17.

14. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 84.

15. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 2.

16. *Ibid.*, 13.

17. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 11.

should more likely be read as a plenitude. Biblical writers considered recurrences of foundational events more real (not mere facsimiles) *because* they repeated earlier patterns and paradigms. So attention to even the smallest allusive connection is essential to the reading enterprise: “the allusive ripples spread out widely from brief explicit citations to evoke larger narrative patterns.”<sup>18</sup> The reader who is forewarned to look for quotations, allusions, and echoes is forearmed about the vigor needed to keep pace with the text.

The Book of Mormon’s use of a biblical name (Noah and Gideon are examples I will explore along with a single word — *disguise* — to ground my discussion of metalepsis) is able to recall to the reader’s mind the entire biblical backdrop of the drama from the Primeval History of Genesis, the period of judges and conquest, and the biblical engagement with monarchy. The gospels, like the Book of Mormon, persistently use various forms of allusion. Metalepsis is a minimal reference in which a narrative element evokes a maximal narrative context. We moderns (and historical criticism of the Bible exponentially compounds the tendency) are trained to think atomistically, to break the object of study into smaller and smaller units in the hope that when we get as miniature as possible we can reassemble the tree, the zebra, and the liver from those quarks and other subatomic particles. We ought to think of metalepsis as more like microcosmic thinking than atomistic study, in which the microcosmic object always connects up the chain of being to the macrocosmic original. Of course, to use the short phrase “chain of being” ought to remind the reader of more holistic medieval and antique thought when some unifying force (say, a deity) held nature together much as on a different scale gravity, electromagnetism, the weak nuclear force, and the strong nuclear force serve a similar function today.

For example, in the conflict between the prophet Abinadi and King Noah, one small clue points allusively to the many stories in the Old Testament with narratives of conflict between kings and prophets: the disguise Abinadi wears. Abinadi is to be seen in continuity with the biblical prophets: Abinadi comes in disguise (Mosiah 12:1); Saul comes in disguise to the witch of Endor to raise the ghost of Samuel (1 Samuel 28); a prophet disguises himself to condemn the king (Ahab) who released an enemy king (1 Kings 20:38); a prophet urges a naïve King Jehoshaphat to disguise himself in battle (1 Kings 22:30); King Josiah

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18. Richard B. Hays, “Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 228–29.

disguises himself to go to battle (2 Chronicles 35:22); and King Jeroboam tells his wife to disguise herself to consult the blind prophet Ahijah (1 Kings 14:2). The metalepsis occurs when with one small detail (the prophetic or antagonistic disguise) evokes the entire world of biblical stories about conflict between kings and prophets<sup>19</sup> and the theological point bolstered by that series of biblical stories. Each narrative differs in details and decoration, but the Book of Mormon invokes those biblical stories for readers who have eyes to see, for narrative blindness can lead to moral and political blindness.

Two details in the conflict story between King Noah and Abinadi point back to the biblical Noah; the metalepsis develops out of two hints: the name both Noahs bear and the vineyard that both Noahs plant to produce the grapes for wine. What Hays says about the New Testament is just as accurate regarding the Book of Mormon: “If we want to understand what the New Testament writers were doing theologically — particularly how they interpreted the relation of the gospel to the more ancient story of God’s covenant relationship to Israel — we cannot avoid tracing and understanding their appropriation of Israel’s Scriptures.”<sup>20</sup> A large part of the alluding story’s meaning is carried by that space, too often ignored or too little examined, between the referring and the referred to stories.

The events recounted in Genesis are intended to be archetypal — paradigmatic patterns — in which first events model and establish precedent in the world and society they introduce. Those events in what biblical scholars call the *Primeval History* (Genesis 1–11) lay out the pattern of God’s relationship to humans and human relationships with each other in society. That Primeval History outlines three beginnings, not just one, to represent the new world(s): (1) Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, (2) Adam, Eve, and their progeny after the expulsion into the lone and dreary world, and (3) after the deluge and Noah’s charge to repopulate a recently baptized world. Each of the three events and worlds needs to be seen in relationship to each other. “Each of the three beginnings of humankind is characterized by a sin or fall: Adam’s and Eve’s eating of the fruit, Cain’s murder of Abel, and Noah’s violation” after his drunken exposure.<sup>21</sup> For my purposes in this review, Noah’s planting

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19. Alan Goff, “Uncritical Theory and Thin Description: The Resistance to History,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 1 (1995): 170.

20. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 27.

21. Devora Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden: The Drunkenness of Noah in the Context of Primeval History,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2

a vineyard, producing wine, and his subsequent drunkenness are the most important, but some treatment of the previous two introductions of humans into new creative orders needs to be seen as the backdrop to the King Noah narrative. All Hebraic scripture demands a reader who is sensitive to the allusive qualities of the material being read: and what is true of the New Testament is just as true of the Book of Mormon, for “the New Testament itself can be understood only in light of a profound theological reading of the Old Testament.”<sup>22</sup>

Because we have been disciplined to think as moderns, we must be schooled to reason and narrate outside our linear and unidirectional conceptual schemes and historical notions to understand ancient patterns of thought. We must recognize that, as with the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament, and the Hebrew Bible itself, we must read the Book of Mormon in near constant dialogue with the record that Lehi risked his sons’ lives to obtain from Laban. “Every text of the Hebrew Bible opens a window to other biblical texts and to postbiblical interpretations.”<sup>23</sup> We exist in a living tradition, and we moderns need to acknowledge that we, in our own way, are doing what Second Isaiah was doing when appropriating the religious tradition to which he belonged. “It follows that the religion which *generated* the Hebrew Bible in a crucial respect resembles the religions *generated by* the Hebrew Bible. Israelite thinkers, like those of Judaism and Christianity, looked back to existing texts and constructed new works in relation to those earlier ones,”<sup>24</sup> and we stand little chance of understanding *this* if we don’t understand *that*.

### The Two Noahs

To understand the politeia in the book of Mosiah, we must understand the typological connections between the biblical Noah and King Noah. The name of King Noah should by itself alert the reader to the symbolic link between the two characters. In some important ways that guide the reader along the path to meaning, what happens to the biblical Noah happens to the Book of Mormon Noah. The story of the first Noah is

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(1994): 194.

22. Ellen F. Davis, “Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church,” *The Art of Reading Scripture*, eds. Ellen F. Davis, Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 203), 20.

23. Marianne Grohmann, “Intertextuality and Canonical Criticism: Lamentations 3:25–33 in an Intertextual Network,” *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, eds. Marianne Grohmann, Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: SBL, 2019), 227.

24. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 2.

important because he functions as a second Adam. Of Noah and his vineyard, Steinmetz notes that “it is the first vignette that we are offered of the postdiluvian world, indeed the only thing we know about Noah after the flood story is completed. As such, I think, it describes for us what this new world is like.”<sup>25</sup> Noah’s world and the vineyard in it aren’t merely retrospective, in that they attempt simply to repeat the world of the Eden, but they reflect the divine command to exert dominion over the created order: “Thus, Noah’s vineyard is not a return to primitive Eden, but a development of Eden in accord with the implicit eschatology of Genesis 1–2.”<sup>26</sup> Adam and Noah are charged with completing and expanding the creative work that occurred in Eden by cultivating the creation and extending it. Since the Bible views Noah’s world as the one we still inhabit, understanding the meaning the author attributes to it is essential. Noah’s is the third world described in the Primeval History, and comparison with the first two worlds (the Garden and the lone and dreary world after expulsion) is essential to grasping the biblical view of our created order. Each world is characterized by a transgression or fall from grace: the humans’ partaking of the fruit, Cain’s murder of his brother, and Noah’s drunkenness.<sup>27</sup> The murder perpetuated by Cain introduced a mimetic contagion, for after Noah’s arrival but before the flood, human society had devolved into mayhem and bloodshed: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). God sees the violence and decides to start over with a new Adam and a new world because “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5), and “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Genesis 6:6). After seeing the level of corruption and violence, God telegraphs his plans to Noah: “God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:13).

The Noah-as-Adam story is what Sonnet calls a *false start narrative*. God’s attempt to replicate humans and their societies in the divine image proves problematical, if not a failure, so God decides to start over from the beginning with recalcitrant humans, with the Noachide covenant,

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25. Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden,” 193–94.

26. Peter A. Green, “Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation: A Thematic-Theological Analysis of an Old Testament Motif” (PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2016), 140.

27. Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden,” 194.

the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and others: “Each of the covenants that govern biblical history — the creation covenant, the covenant with the people of Israel (grafted upon the covenant with Abraham), and the monarchic covenant — has had a ‘false start,’ which included an act of repentance coming from God.”<sup>28</sup> In each of the founding stories the humans inhabit a new world, and “each of them tells of the first act of violation perpetrated in a new world. In addition, Adam, Cain, and Noah are each described in relation to the earth”<sup>29</sup> because some planting occurs: the tree in the garden, Cain’s vocation as a farmer, and Noah’s vineyard. The deluge is a dissolution of the first created order that permits the watery chaos to de-create the original work of God’s organizational act.<sup>30</sup> The process of the deluge’s receding and the land emerging, the animals disembarking and God’s blessing the Noah group and issuing virtually the same creation and reproduction mandate Adam and Eve received shows that “the flood account is a historical action of new creation”<sup>31</sup> parallel to the first one. Each transgression results in a curse, and part of that curse in the Adam and Eve story and the vineyard story is related to human nakedness and sexuality.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, King Noah inherits a world not entirely new but at least renewed by his father (King) Zeniff; keep in mind that the new worlds of Adam and Eve and of Noah are born or reborn under the divine initiative. The new world that Zeniff attempts to recover and King Noah continues is nowhere labeled a divine scheme. In fact, Zeniff himself calls his program of recolonizing the Land of Nephi an “overzealous” project (Mosiah 9:3, the description is used another time: 7:21, of King Zeniff the account says “he being over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers”) initiated by humans, not God. And Zeniff himself is only a bit player in the Zeniffite campaign: the real focus is his son, King Noah, and the antagonistic prophet Abinadi. Nephi and the Lehi group had literally gained a new world when they migrated out of Jerusalem (the land of promise; 1 Nephi 18:23); Zeniff and his group attempt a paradise regained. Why else would Zeniff name his heir *Noah*?

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28. Jean-Pierre Sonnet, “God’s Repentance and ‘False Starts’ in Biblical History (Genesis 6–9; Exodus 32–34; 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 7),” *Congress Volume Ljubljana 207*, ed. Andre Lemaire (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2010), 469.

29. Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden,” 194.

30. Green, “Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation,” 128–29.

31. *Ibid.*, 131.

32. Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden,” 194–95.



Sometime after arrival, Lehi dies, and Nephi leaves this land of first inheritance to escape his brothers' murderous designs and possesses a new, new world, the land of Nephi (2 Nephi 5:8). Years later, Mosiah migrates from the land of Nephi (Omni 1:12) and settles in the land of Zarahemla. Later, under Zeniff's leadership, a group of Nephites return to inhabit "the land of Nephi, or of the land of our fathers' first inheritance" (Mosiah 9:1), which they intend to redeem and possess (not the least from Lamanite control): a brave new world, a brave new land (even if a repetition of place and action from earlier generations). Just as Adam is a gardener and the tree of knowledge dominates the garden's landscape, Cain (as opposed to Abel, who is a pastoralist) is also a farmer, and both Noahs plant a vineyard. A vineyard is different from, say, wheat or oats. Grains don't require as long-term a commitment to a particular piece of ground: a season from planting to harvest. But a grape vineyard demands a three-year commitment before it begins to yield fruit suitable for wine making. Noah the mariner and Noah the ruler are committed long term to the land they cultivate. All four of these Adam figures are men of the earth: "each story begins with a planting; the tree of knowledge, Cain's produce, and Noah's vine each set the stage for the fall that is to occur,"<sup>33</sup> with apparently both pride and planting which precede a fall.

In fact, Noah is not only the antitype of the typological Adam, the Genesis text expresses hope that he will undo the curse that Adam brought on humans and the creation. After the fall, "the locus of humanity's discomfort is their work and toil, and the source of their comfort will be the ground, despite YHWH's curse. The first person plurals indicate that Noah will be a representative for all humanity, paralleling Adam's role."<sup>34</sup> Genesis 5 gives a false etymology (perhaps *disputed* is a better description) of Noah's name when Noah's father (no philologist) recounts the human genealogy: "And [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort [*nachum*] us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (Genesis 5:29). Noah's name is based on the Hebrew word "to rest,"<sup>35</sup> not "to comfort." This desired reversal of the curse upon

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33. Ibid.

34. Green, "Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation," 132.

35. Noah's Hebrew name is alluded to in the Genesis Eden account: "The etymology of Noah's name also connects with 2:15 in which God 'rests' Adam in the garden. God gave Adam rest in the garden, and Noah imitates God by giving humanity rest by planting a vineyard in fulfillment of the hope/prophecy of Lamech that Noah will provide 'relief' (נַחֵם) 'from the ground.'" In this way Noah "lives up to the meaning of his name, ... creating 'rest' around him by planting a vineyard

the ground and the humans connects Noah more closely to Adam as a savior figure who holds promise to fix the difficulties resulting from the fall. “This, in fact, is one interpretation of the significance of planting the vineyard; Noah, for the first time since Adam’s sin, brings forth comfort from the earth.”<sup>36</sup> The original plants in the Garden were sown or transplanted by God, but the plants cultivated by Cain, Noah, and King Noah were placed there by human initiative. Once the humans are forced into the fallen world, they have to plant, cultivate, and harvest (and in the case of grapes, further refine the produce of the ground) the

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and thus parallel[ing] Adam in the garden of Eden.” (Green, “Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation,” 142, quoting Richard S. Hess, “Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–22,” *Alter Orient und Alter Testament* 234 (Kevelaer: Butson & Bercker, 1993), 116–17; Hennie A. J. Kruger, “Subscripts to Creation: A Few Exegetical Comments on the Literary Device of Repetition in Gen 1–22,” *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wenin, BETL 155 (Leuven, BEL: Leuven University Press, 201), 443). Both Adam and Noah are expected to expand the work of gardening, of working the ground throughout the world as much as human progeny are expected to multiply and fill the earth. The etymology of King Noah’s name may also be alluded to when describing that king’s court and the luxurious appointments they had built for themselves at the expense of the people’s labor and taxation; they themselves did not work with their hands to support themselves but engaged in priestcraft. Noah built “elegant and spacious buildings,” “a spacious palace” with a throne, and expensive seating in their temple with a breastwork so “they might *rest* their bodies and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people” (Mosiah 11:8–11). And although Lamech isn’t an astute Hebrew etymologist when he attaches Noah’s name to “comfort” or “relief,” the biblical writer knows the etymology of Noah’s name and plays on the meaning when Noah’s ark “rested” on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4). The Genesis narrative plays with both interpretations of Noah’s name: “to rest” and “to comfort.”

36. Steinmetz, “Vineyard, Farm, and Garden,” 201. As Steinmetz notes, rabbinic tradition holds that Noah’s vine was a cutting from the Garden of Eden, so it hearkens back to a time before the fall. “The fruit of the vine is a luxury, pleasurable to experience like the fruit of Eden and in stark contrast to the staple of grain for which human beings have had to labor. For Noah’s viniculture as the alleviation of the consequences of the earth’s curse” Steinmetz refers to various sources (201n18). One should keep in mind the symbolism of wine in the Bible: wine represents joy (Judges 9:13 and Psalms 104:15). In addition to joy, wine was also viewed as an aphrodisiac, and Noah in advanced age may view wine as an aid in his fulfilment of the reproductive aspect of the creation mandate; although an old man, Noah is not exempt from the command to multiply. This commandment to “be fruitful” and “fill the earth” is given twice in the first creation account in Genesis (1:22 and 1:28) but three times in the post-deluge account (8:17, 9:1, and 9:7) (Green, “Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation,” 133–34).

crops themselves. Lamech's hope for his son is that Noah will redeem the land from the curse accompanying the fall (from toil and thorns), just as Paul believes that a second Adam will reverse the effects of the fall and redeem all of mankind (1 Corinthians 15:45–49).

When God promises never again to curse the ground (Genesis 8:21–22), Noah's first act after receiving the creation mandate is to plant a vineyard, which "is his act of faith that demonstrates his confidence that the new creation will endure according to God's promise. Because a vineyard requires at least three years of care before it produces suitable fruit, ... Noah's act represents substantial investment in the current creation"<sup>37</sup> and its durability. The Genesis narrative goes to great lengths to convey that the Noah story is a repetition of the two previous creation stories which result in the human inheritance of a newly founded order.

The Noah story is more important in that the text asserts that Noah's world is still our world; God has not de-created and re-created the world since Noah's time. Noah is exemplary for the cosmos in which he is the model and first man. "We must read the vineyard story in the context of the prior creations and violations and that such a reading will provide a description of human existence in the new — and real-world."<sup>38</sup> The King Noah narrative so obviously triggers an allusive connection to the biblical Noah. Each transgression is tied in some way to "the awareness or seeing of nakedness, and the intimation of sexuality or sexual sin."<sup>39</sup> The verse before the Book of Mormon mentions King Noah's vineyards and drunkenness, noting the sexual sins of King Noah and his sycophants: "And it came to pass that he placed his heart upon his riches, and he spent his time in riotous living with his wives and his concubines; and so did also his priests spend their time with harlots" (Mosiah 11:14). King Noah's sins are much more wide-ranging than just carnal sins, but the story's chronicler highlights the sexual: "he did not keep the commandments of God, but he did walk after the desires of his own heart. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness" (Mosiah 11:2).

The three biblical stories of new beginnings in a novel world need to be wound together with the King Noah narrative, because that is what the Book of Mormon's allusive quality demands that we understand. The

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37. Green, "Vineyards and Wine from Creation to New Creation," 138–39.

38. Steinmetz, "Vineyard, Farm, and Garden," 195.

39. *Ibid.*, 194.

Zeniffite experiment of redeeming the land of the first inheritance is also a failed experiment and false start after King Noah's failed one-term kingship, as both the Saulide and Davidide monarchies disintegrated into oppression and violence. The lesson isn't lost on King Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, who, after the two splinter groups of Zeniffites rejoin the main Nephite current with their story of King Noah's oppressive rule, persuades the Nephites to abandon kingship. God repents after the Adamic covenant (Genesis 6:6) — a the covenant with newly freed Israelites narrated in Exodus 34 (Exodus 32:12, 14), and the monarchical covenant of making Saul king — and starts anew with David (1 Samuel 15:11, 29, 35). “In all three divine commitments, time is re-launched after a catastrophe and is endowed with a new quality,”<sup>40</sup> and in the case of King Noah's fall, a new constitutional order.

The Israelites' failed experiment with monarchy sets a pattern for biblical writers, so the model of false starts isn't just apparent in the Primeval History, but “the paradigm of God's repentance and resilience is to be found in the ‘false start’ of monarchic history” also.<sup>41</sup> Sonnet refers to Meir Sternberg's exposition of biblical meaning. For the biblical writers (and also Book of Mormon composers and editors) God repeats patterns in history that humans too often don't perceive, except in hindsight, and by reading the sacred record with prophetic tutoring. One biblical narrative is linked to others, and the job of the biblical reader is to see the connections, for

in a God-ordered world, analogical linkage reveals the shape of history past and to come with the same authority as it governs the contours of the plot in fiction [in Genesis and the rest of the Hebrew Bible]. ... As one cycle follows another through the period of the judges, the Israelites thus stand condemned for their failure to read the lessons of history: the moral coherence of the series luminously shows the hand of a divine serialize[r].<sup>42</sup>

That same analogical thought process ought to be extended to Book of Mormon narrative in general, and the story of King Noah in particular. Samuel's caution about kingship warns that the king will appropriate the Israelites' sons and daughters for his own service,

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40. Sonnet, “God's Repentance and ‘False Starts’ in Biblical History,” 470–71.

41. Ibid., 480–81.

42. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 114.

confiscate their land and produce, and “will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves” (1 Samuel 8:17, NRSV). Samuel’s rebuke echoes the Israelite experience of slavery in Egypt. Enthroning a king will result in a repetition of Egyptian bondage, but this time to an Israelite king instead of an Egyptian Pharaoh. “Samuel’s exhortation indicates how systematic subjugation can emerge from prosperity. Only because one already possesses ‘fields, vineyards, and olives’ can these be confiscated. The more productive one’s land and flocks, the more these can be taxed. The more children one has, the more who can be conscripted.”<sup>43</sup>

Under Zeniff, King Noah’s father, the Nephite group realizes their theological and eschatological goal of inheriting and possessing the land of their fathers, and they prospered in it. “We did inherit the land of our fathers for many years, yea, for the space of twenty and two years” (Mosiah 10:3). That prospering in the land is specified in the production of fruit and grain, linen and cloth to the extent that the Zeniff group “did prosper in the land” (Mosiah 10:4–5). But after Zeniff “conferred the kingdom upon Noah, one of his sons” (with no mention of Zeniff’s apparent death) (Mosiah 11:1), the successor king demonstrates the potential for a return to slavery much like a return to Egypt. A prophet emerges who predicts such descent into Egyptian-like slavery: “Thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that this generation, because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage, and shall be smitten on the cheek; yea, and shall be driven by men, and shall be slain” (Mosiah 12:2). When King Noah’s priests interrogate Abinadi, it is obvious that they believe they have possessed the land of first inheritance and redeemed it, achieving some eschatological goal.

### **When Kings and Prophets Don’t See Eye to Eye**

Joseph Spencer’s reading of the confrontation between King Noah and Abinadi is insightful for what it reveals about the theological motivations of King Noah and his priests (no doubt those rationales handed down from Zeniff are the main driving force for the reclamation project). The priests, at Abinadi’s trial, recite Isaiah 52:7–10 and ask why the prophet seemingly contradicts Isaiah’s beatific predictions. These priests take for granted that this passage “had a single, obvious, incontrovertible

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43. Joshua I. Weinstein, “Goalkeeping: A Biblical Alternative to Greek Political Philosophy and the Limits of Liberal Democracy,” *Is Judaism Democratic? Reflections from Theory and Practice Throughout the Ages*, ed. Leonard J. Greenspoon (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2018), 15.

meaning — a meaning that everyone in the Land of Nephi would immediately see. Such an interpretation would have to have been well-known and rooted in a culture-wide ideology.”<sup>44</sup>

These Zeniffites apparently had a theological goal to reclaim the land of first inheritance, and they used a variety of typological interpretation, applying Isaiah’s prophetic oracle to themselves: “Because Zeniff seems to have seen himself as an eschatological figure, he likely would have seen Isaiah less as spelling out the *still-future* history of Israel than as detailing the *present* history of Israel — the history he and his people had lived out.”<sup>45</sup> Prophets like Abinadi with their message of doom and repentance were no longer needed, because “the good tidings of the eschatological restoration of Nephi’s kingdom had been definitively delivered, prophets (Isaiah, Nephi) and kings (Zeniff, Noah) had finally seen eye to eye and together lifted up the voice to sing praises.”<sup>46</sup> History had come to an end, and pesky, nattering, nabob prophets like Abinadi had been made obsolete. Of course Abinadi prophesies no end of history, as a Francis Fukuyama might, but asserts that history had not culminated but was actually repeating itself: a human descent into wickedness and violence, in this instance led by their king. Initially, the project of repossessing the promised land of first inheritance achieves its eschatological goals, in the Zeniffite view, for “we again began to establish the kingdom and we again began to possess the land in peace” (Mosiah 10:1), and the ground yields its produce in abundance: “And I did cause that the men should till the ground, and raise all manner of grain and all manner of fruit of every kind” (Mosiah 10:4). The promise first given to Nephi of prospering in the land (“And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands” 1 Nephi 2:20) is fulfilled (Mosiah 11:5), and they successfully defeat the Lamanites militarily (Mosiah 10:20). Nephi had been promised that if he and his descendants were righteous he would be made a ruler (1 Nephi 2:22). Zeniff and his people, according to this interpretation of Isaiah, think they have fulfilled not only the positive vision of Isaiah but also the promises made to the fathers, Nephi in particular. That is the Zeniffite condition when Zeniff turns monarchy

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44. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt, 2012), 142. In the second edition of Spencer’s book, this quotation also starts on page 142.

45. *Ibid.*, 144.

46. *Ibid.*, 145.

over to his son Noah: “I, being old, did confer the kingdom upon one of my sons; therefore, I say no more” (Mosiah 10:22).

The priests as King Noah’s agents are asserting a theological and textual interpretation, Spencer notes; and Abinadi is challenging the typological meaning of “likening the scriptures” predominant among the Zeniffites. Against this reading of scripture and history, King Noah is not a new Adam, argues Abinadi, redeeming his people from the fall and liberating the land from the curse, as he plants and harvests grapes from a vineyard and other crops to repeat the gardening activities of the first Adam and the first Noah. This farming and harvesting is symbolic of all the consequences of the fall, and Lamech holds out hope that Noah would redeem the land from the curse wrought by Adam: “And he called his name Noah, saying, *This same shall comfort us* concerning our *work and toil of our hands*, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed” (Genesis 5:29).

King Noah asserts that the Isaiah passage foretells their own time when they themselves are empowered to declare “how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (Mosiah 12:21). Abinadi, they counter, is declaring the need for future repentance and punishment rather than declaring peace, good tidings, comfort, and redemption in the present tense. Isaiah foretold a time when any gospel message would “break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for *the Lord hath comforted his people*, he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Mosiah 12:23).<sup>47</sup> Noah’s priests instead maintain that Abinadi is wrong: “And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man? . . . And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper” (Mosiah 12:13, 15). Lamech hoped for “comfort” from his son Noah, and Zeniff returns to the land of Nephi in the belief that the Lord through this act of redeeming their symbolic Jerusalem had “comforted his people.” The Book of Mormon reader needs to see how the messages of King Noah and Abinadi are diametrically opposed, and the conflict of interpretation is borne out in their typological views and readings of Isaiah.

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47. Isaiah 52:9, the verse the priests are quoting, uses the Hebrew *nâcham*, “to ease or comfort.”

Abinadi has to reorient the theological and historical interpretation of Zeniffite society. He first teaches the priests the ten commandments, imperatives their society, the priests, and King Noah have been violating. Then Abinadi teaches the true meaning of Isaiah's messianic prophecies. The suffering servant songs of Isaiah are yet to be fulfilled, for the messiah must first come as a suffering messiah, who shall take the world's sins upon himself and die (Mosiah 15:7–12). That future redeemer is the one spoken of by Isaiah, as Abinadi echoes back to the priests the passage they quoted from the scripture and prophets such as Abinadi are still needed, for

Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord — I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. ...

Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.

And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever! (Mosiah 15:13, 15–17)

Prophets, Abinadi notes, were essential in the past, in the present, and will be required “from this time henceforth and forever!” The Zeniffite celebration of their achievements in redeeming the land is a wrongheaded and mistaken interpretation of Isaianic and Nephite scripture. King Noah's name — whether based on the Hebrew word *to comfort* or *to rest* — and the allusion to the biblical Noah account is key to understanding the Zeniffite portion of the book of Mosiah. King Noah has brought unrest to the land and the people instead of rest.



## Kings and Other Oppressors

King Noah is the prototypical evil king whom the descendants of Abraham encountered time and again in scripture. Biblical narrative provides a few examples of good kings: Josiah, Hezekiah, Solomon in the first half of his life, David (a king without flaws, if the account in 1 Chronicles is to be taken at face value). The Book of Mormon explicitly compares bad King Noah with good kings Benjamin and Mosiah<sup>2</sup>. I have pointed out the way the King Noah narrative is to be seen against the biblical Primeval History, especially the story of Noah. The Noah narrative establishes the biblical framework for the world we live in now, having been preceded by other world formations with higher expectations and aspirations for human conduct in the Garden and the lone and dreary world. The Noachide, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants are attempts by divinity to establish proper relationship between humans and between God and humans, but God had renounced another total reboot in the flood episode. The establishment of monarchy among the Israelites is just another extension of that Noachide world.

Just as the movement from one Adam to the next and the next results in the humans' taking more and more responsibility for themselves in planting and nurturing the fruit of the ground, and the same is true as we move through the Primeval History, as humans take more and more responsibility for their sins. "Both Adam and Eve, when accused by God, cast blame on others rather than accepting personal responsibility for their actions" (Adam blames Eve, Eve blames the serpent).<sup>48</sup> In the next generation, Cain can't shirk the responsibility for his fratricide onto others. When Cain is angry that God doesn't accept his sacrifice, Cain is forced to accept that he himself is a moral agent, answerable for what he himself has done. "Cain is enjoined to accept responsibility for his actions. Cain's sin, in fact, results from his refusal to assume such responsibility and his choice, instead, to destroy the object of his blameful anger."<sup>49</sup> Steinmetz asserts that Genesis 3:18 and 4:7 call on Eve and Cain to accept their own moral culpability. "These clearly parallel statements, I believe, have the same import: although you may be seduced to sin, you have the power to rule over that which lures you," so each human is responsible for choosing between good and evil.<sup>50</sup>

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48. Steinmetz, "Vineyard, Farm, and Garden," 203.

49. *Ibid.*, 204.

50. *Ibid.*

Similarly, when the two Nephite assemblies attempt to restore kingship after the disastrous events of King Noah, Alma<sub>1</sub> and Mosiah<sub>2</sub> use this exact argument about each person being accountable as moral agents for themselves. Citing the example of King Noah, who “did cause his people to commit sin” (Mosiah 11:2), Alma<sub>1</sub> urges his group not to shift their righteous responsibilities onto a king or a teacher:

Now as ye have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you. And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments. (Mosiah 23:13–14)

Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, also reverting to the example of wicked King Noah, notes that people have too often shifted their moral accountability to their leaders: “For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings” (Mosiah 29:31). But such an arrangement is morally inadequate.

Mosiah<sub>2</sub> finds this moral blame-shifting to be unsatisfactory, and he calls it an instance of inequality. Equality in the Book of Mormon means that people take responsibility for their own moral or immoral decisions: “Now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike” (Mosiah 29:32). Mosiah related to the people the burdens he himself had borne, with the hope that a more egalitarian solution would help the people take responsibility rather than shift censure or credit to a king. “And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the burden should come upon all the people, that every man might bear his part” (Mosiah 29:34). Equality is achieved when the people accept accountability for their own moral choices and actions. The Nephites are persuaded by Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s argument and accept this form of equality: “Therefore they relinquished their desires for a king, and became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance throughout all the land; yea, and every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins” (Mosiah 29:38). This moral accountability is the very purpose of the Eden, Cain, and Noah stories in Genesis. Partaking of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil includes such culpability and reward. “Human beings are responsible for

their own deeds; once the human being achieves the capacity to choose between good and evil, blame for sin cannot be cast upon any external agent.”<sup>51</sup>

The biblical account establishes the larger backdrop against which Book of Mormon kings are to be compared and contrasted. The Israelites’ suffering under the oppression of kings is analogous to their Egyptian experience under Solomon and later kings. “The first signs of oppression come in Solomon’s reign. The royal bureaucracy can now put endless dainties on the king’s table, and while internal taxation clearly receives a substantial boost from foreign tribute, impressed Israeli labor reaches four months a year for each of 30,000 men (1 Kgs 4–5).”<sup>52</sup> Solomon is the oppressor king, the model of kingship warned about in Samuel’s manner of the king: using forced labor for his building projects.<sup>53</sup> “The fact is that Solomon was the Israelite king who came closest to living up to this forbidding picture, and it is not credible that anyone familiar with Israel’s history, and concerned about the break-up of its united kingdom, should have been unaware of this fact.”<sup>54</sup> Solomon’s son and successor Rehoboam (no Dale Carnegie student) suggests that his father was a piker when it comes to Egyptian-like bondage: “Now my father loaded you with a heavy burden, and I will add to your burden; my father punished you with whips and I will punish you with scorpions’ (1 Kings 12:14).”<sup>55</sup> If the northern tribes accept Rehoboam’s kingship as they endorsed his father’s, they will have made a covenant on those terms. Solomon started the process of converting prosperity in the land into bondage and servitude, a land of milk and honey into a land of oppression and taxation. King Solomon systematically violated the law of the king,<sup>56</sup> as did King Noah. In fact, Samuel predicted that the newly appointed kingship function would oppress the people by taking ten percent of their produce. Now ten percent doesn’t seem so oppressive, for a government needs revenue, as Halpern notes: for ancient or modern readers “the king’s predilection for tithing seems ... more responsible than corrupt”;<sup>57</sup> of course Samuel describes the manner and taxation of

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51. Ibid.

52. Weinstein, “Goalkeeping,” 16.

53. R. E. Clements, “The Deuteronomistic Interpretation of the Founding of the Monarchy in I Sam. VIII,” *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 403.

54. Ibid., 404.

55. Weinstein, “Goalkeeping,” 17.

56. Ibid., 18.

57. Baruch Halpern, “The Monarchy Begins: 1 Samuel 8–10,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press,

future kings in a period without a central government and state, one with only localized infrastructure and defense expenditures, so a ten percent taxation rate might in such circumstances seem like a policy initiated by a king of debt and an emperor of taxation. The description of King Noah ensures that the reader see his taxation as oppression and corruption by noting that it is not only twice the going rate of kingly taxation at one fifth, and not only on the agricultural production as Samuel warned, but also on precious metals (Mosiah 11:3). King Noah is twice the oppressor Solomon was.

Just as Adam and Eve's transgression results in the curse of hard labor to produce food and children, Cain's curse makes him a vagabond and a wanderer; similarly, Noah's drunken nakedness and Ham's mocking of that posture results in a curse on Ham's son. When Abinadi pronounces judgment on King Noah's wickedness, he delivers a curse that the Zeniffites will experience bondage and suffering (Mosiah 11:20–25). In the Mosaic regime (as opposed to the kingly Davidic regime), prophets occupy the rulership slot. After regime change to a system ruled by kings, the prophet still has a central role with three functions: king makers, king critics, and king removers, while the tribes can join the prophet in these three functions.<sup>58</sup> Abinadi needs to be seen in this same function, or at least operating as the king critic and moving force as king remover. Both King Noah and Abinadi need to be seen as inheritors of a long line of biblical precedents.

We often use the word *type* or variations, such as *typology*, when we read the Bible or the Book of Mormon (*archetype*, *typical*, *typify*, Robert Alter's *type scene*, *typecast*, *prototype*); and much of our language about printing comes from the same etymological roots: *typography*, *typist*, *typeface*, *typesetter*, *typewriter*. The etymology of the Greek word points to a substantial original, and the antitype is a copy, just as a hammer would leave an indentation in wood, and a printing press or typewriter leaves an ink spot and impression on paper that matches the metal type. The vocabulary emphasizes the typicality of some object or idea. These words come from the Greek *typos*, sometimes transliterated as *tupos*. The Latin translation of *type* is *figura*, from which we derive in English, and

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1987), 123.

58. Daniel J. Elazar, "Dealing with Fundamental Regime Change: The Biblical Paradigm of the Transition from Tribal Federation to Federal Monarchy under David," *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding, Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, vol 1. (eds. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Nahum M. Sarna (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 126.



most other languages influenced by classical or church Latin, a range of words regarding metaphor: *figuration*, *figurative language*, *figure of speech*. “The terms *typology* and *figural interpretation* are essentially synonymous, though the latter more clearly emphasizes the act of reception by the reader.”<sup>59</sup>

The word *archetype* comes from Greek roots meaning “original or foundational” and “pattern or model.” Gore points out that King Noah is “an archetype for iniquity” (p. 106) and is understood to be a typical example of a wicked ruler. When the word *typos* or its plural *typoi* (or synonyms such as *paradeigma*, a “pattern or example”— one can see the English *paradigm* in it) are used in the New Testament, the reader should be reminded that the acts of God and of humans are repetitive, following some established pattern. King Noah was a bad king because he “lived *in-and-for-himself*” (p. 108), which is the way of the world. Such degeneracy in high station “shows that corrupt leaders can corrupt the people” (p. 110). This living-in-and-for-oneself is what made King Noah the archetypal evil king. Gore contrasts being-in-and-for-oneself with being-with-and-for-others. Mosiah<sub>2</sub> preaches and practices the latter, while King Noah embodied the former philosophy (although Nehor and his order formally introduce the former “as a counterpoint to the regime established by Mosiah” (p. 135)).

The problem with King Noah is not just his personal wickedness, but the larger reverberations of his rule, for “he *did cause his people to commit sin*, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord.

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59. Richard B. Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 73n6.

Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness” (Mosiah 11:2). His wasn’t just a private indiscretion but he *caused* the Zeniffites to sin also. Alma<sub>1</sub> notes that King Noah’s wickedness caused his own personal sin as a priest of that king (Mosiah 23:9), much as government ministers or cabinet secretaries and legislators would sin by becoming mere sycophants to a wicked ruler. King Mosiah<sub>2</sub> notes the larger causal factor for kings generally: “For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been *caused by* the iniquities of their kings” (Mosiah 29:31); the private character flaws and misdeeds of political leaders aren’t merely private matters, but have political consequences, and are magnified when combined with political authority. It is a biblical principle that the ruler’s character is too often stamped on the ruled. Under King Manasseh, the Israelites “hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Kings 21:9; see also 1 Kings 14:16; 1 Kings 15:26; 1 Kings 16:2).

This politics of being in-and-for-oneself doesn’t end with King Noah. It is expressed as a public philosophy of Nehor, who declared that priests and teachers should be supported by the taught, and no longer work to support themselves (Alma 1:3). He grew proud, wore expensive clothes, and established a church driven by a prosperity gospel (Alma 1:5–6). Nehor’s philosophy is articulated in opposition to Mosiah’s social principles. Mosiah says that every person should “esteem his neighbor as himself” (Mosiah 27:4), while Nehor urges that “every priest and teacher ought to become popular” (Alma 1:3). The principle of equality was central to Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s political reform, and continues as a guiding governing tenet as long as Nephite judgeship endures. Gore refers to Nehor’s novel notion as a cult of personality (p. 139), but it can easily be discussed in similar contemporary terms as a cult of celebrity, or as people pursuing an apprenticeship in notoriety, in which being infamous or famous is more important than being good or charitable. For Nehor, this notoriety is about wearing expensive clothing and avoiding physical labor (ibid.) Nehor’s leadership doctrine also exalts the leader, placing the ruler’s interest above the interests of the populace. “Nehor represents the problem of a provocative leader whose motives do not rank the goodwill of their audience highly and who employ rhetoric to serve morally bad or questionable ends” (p. 142). One form of idolatry is to fashion and worship political idols. “Idolatry in public discourse refers to false promises, including the vain hope that human problems have an

ultimate solution” (p. 135). This suggests that only the demagogic ruler can fix the problems a society faces.

For 90 years “the order of Nehor” will be the phrase that marks the chief rival philosophy to that of the church of God, “thereby fostering *being-in-and-for-oneself*, as exemplified by Nehor, and the outwardly directed speech of Alma, which cultivates ... *being-with-and-for-others*” (p. 143). One of the greatest sins, according to Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, is not so much to have inequality among the people, but to accept that inequality as the natural state of society. “Throughout his reign, Mosiah saw inequality as one of the greatest harms to the people, and, as indicated above, he is no longer convinced that the sins of the people should be answered on the heads of their leaders” (p. 120, citing Mosiah 27:3–5). As that passage from Mosiah insists, one form of such inequality can be remedied by having people (priest, teacher, government official) work with their own hands to support themselves. When Mosiah<sub>2</sub> sends a letter to the Nephites, urging that they no longer pursue a monarchical governmental form, he articulates a principle upon which this equality would be founded:

The positive political vision offered in Mosiah’s epistle is rooted in equality of responsibility, which is described by Mosiah in two specific ways. First, equality means dividing the share of the public burden among everyone, rather than shouldering the king with all of it. ... Second, equality means laboring with your own hands for your own support. (pp. 120–21)

We often have a presentist attitude in reading ancient texts. We expect such writings to reveal people living in such times to think like our contemporaries, to socialize like us, to work out their everyday lives as we do. We need to be more like anthropologists of the past and let antiquity be more antique. Only in modern times (over the past, say, four hundred years) did we come to expect a division between church and state, family and neighborhood, religion and knowledge about the surrounding world. We might be tempted to take the narrative portraying conflict between Alma<sub>2</sub> and Nehor to be one about theology, but religious confrontation is also fundamentally political. When Nehor opposes the polity established under Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, Benjamin, and Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, which is continued under the judgeship of Alma<sub>2</sub>, he challenges the regime as much as the church. Alma<sub>2</sub> is, after all, both chief judge and high priest at the time of the confrontation with Nehor (Mosiah 29:42). “The doctrine of Nehor disrupts the possibility of establishing a regime of equality and the sharing of public burdens by sowing the seeds of

inequality and idolatry,” and when the order of Nehor continues after his execution, his acolytes not only take up arms to oppose the Nephite establishment after losing an election, they also defect to the Lamanites. Thus “the order of Nehor fuels Lamanite aggression as well as rebellion among the Nephites. It inspires a lust for dominance and control as well as for property and carnal security” (p. 154).

The sharp distinction between religious and secular movements doesn’t exist in these stories the way we moderns think about segmenting parts of our lives. The approaches to individual life and social relationships between those who maintain allegiance to Nephite judgeship and the church and the nascent order of Nehor are inevitably public and political. When Amlici, a disciple of Nehor, attempts to overthrow the political structure and seeks to be king (first by democratic then by extraconstitutional means), believers and adherents to Nephite traditions viewed such actions and advocacy as “alarming” (Alma 2:3). Those in the church placed more value on assisting the poor and weak than on acquisition of wealth, striving for equality rather than climbing a stratified social structure. The order of Nehor endorsed (and was willing to enforce through appeal to violence) their own value commitments: self indulgence, idolatry, conspicuous consumption, stealing, dishonesty, infidelity, and murder (pp. 164–66). Every society faces similar choices between contrasting virtues and vices, and as Mormon edits the Book of Mormon, he highlights these different fundamental commitments that each society cultivates (p. 166).

There will always be Nehors, people who are *in-and-for-themselves*, who feel no need to curb their base desires for recognition, achievement, and gratification. They seek only their own welfare and do not consider themselves obligated to play host or to proffer hospitality. There will also be Almas, people who are *for-the-other*, who foster networks of sympathy and develop sensitive hearts and hands willing to serve the common good. The presence of Almas in the world represents an extraordinary possibility. They sound a clarion call to all who might hesitate or fence-sit between *being-in-and-for-oneself* and *being-for-others*. (p. 168)

Nehor is executed, but his doctrine survives him, for the next chapter notes that Amlici belongs to the order of Nehor (Alma 2:1). Amlici’s political program is organized according to Nehor’s theological program, and both entail a return to kingship and overthrow of judgeship while making social inequality the official policy of government: “This



Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people” (Alma 2:2).

The narrative about Amlici continues the Nehor thread. Amlici challenges the new political regime. “That there should be a referendum on a return to monarchy only five years into the reign of the judges reveals the relative strength of Amlici’s faction as well as Alma’s desire to govern by the people’s voice” (p. 172). It must also demonstrate the weakness of the new government to be contested so soon. The book of Alma encounters hurdle after obstacle, challenge after confrontation to government by the voice of the people, often authored by explicitly named *kingmen*, led by Nephites with the Hebrew word for “king” (*m-l-k*, or *melek*) built into the root of their names (Amlici, Amalickiah).

Amlici first attempts through constitutional means to change the recent governing structure from judgeship to kingship — with Amlici, of course, ambitious to make himself king. When the Amlici party loses the plebiscite, their alternative is to reject the vote result and to declare Amlici king, declare martial law, and resort to violence to enforce the result (Alma 2:10). To ensure that the reader sees the connection between the Amlici rebellion and the narrative strand back to Nehor and King Noah, Gideon shows up in these narratives. After the Amlicite rebellion, Gideon makes his ultimate appearance in the story. The final battle between the Amlicites and Nephites begins in the valley of Gideon and the venue of the future city named Gideon. Gideon is used one last time to bookend the narrative trajectory from opposing King Noah and suggesting a liberation exodus to escape Lamanite bondage, to confronting Nehor in defense of the old-time religion from a self-interested and unprincipled politics, to the successful military action against the first not-yet-so-named kingmen in the valley of Gideon. Gideon ties the political events in the book of Mosiah to those in Alma, especially the political transition. “As if it was not already obvious, the name of the valley where the battle breaks out is emphasized to show that Alma is defending the same cause for which Gideon opposed Nehor” (p. 179), and stretched back to the Zeniffite political interrogation of the kingship’s faults.

The story of Nehor and Amlici doesn’t really end with Alma chapter 2 (although Gore’s analysis does), for the order of Nehor continues to affect politics through the book of Alma, but the making of longer and longer books needs to end. Putative kingmen continue to acquire power through force and manipulation. Gore sees in the biblical passages

(Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel) and the Book of Mormon passages (Ether, Mosiah, Alma — especially Mosiah 29 to Alma 2) a pattern that sketches out a politico-theology of scripture. While politics is to be engaged, it isn't the telos of life. The gift of brushing the texts together “is in the call to mourning and wakefulness. No other response can do justice to the horror and destruction brought about through sin.” The dead bodies of Amlicites and Lamanites moldering in the graves or battlefields remind us what politics is about as it is practiced in most of its manifestations: “The strong, recurring desire to dominate others at the price of everything is precisely the opposite of the common good. Combatting this, finally, may not be totally within our power, but we can guard against it by cultivating mournfulness and wakefulness” (p. 195).

### **The Two Gideons**

The two Noahs multiply into multiple Adams as we gain a knack for understanding biblical repetition. Gore correctly sees the Book of Mormon Gideon as a bridge to the biblical past and the period of the Judges, and from opposing King Noah bridging to the future to another period of Book of Mormon judges; Gideon carries a heavy burden of intertextual weight to ensure we read the story of salvation history as recursive. The biblical Gideon is one of the first of the deliverer/saviors in the book of Judges: “Both Gideons are warriors whose task is to defend a people beset by idolatry” (p. 145). That allusive connection between the two Gideons should be triggered by their names: “One quite obvious clue that the book of Mosiah is open to and seeks to engage the biblical book of Judges is the presence of a character named Gideon. The biblical Gideon ... and the Book of Mormon Gideon ... have a lot in common” (p. 144). Whether we are reading about two Noahs or two Gideons (one each for the Bible and Book of Mormon), we ought to remember that identical or similar names are a metaleptic clue to a connection the reader should make when reading antique Hebraic writing. The King Saul of the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish Saul who later carried the Greek name Paul in the New Testament ought to be seen as parallel characters with some theological point being made by the repetition. A “Jacob” in the Hebrew Bible and a “James” in the New Testament ought to trigger the reader to see a correspondence. The same is true of a typological relationship of the name “Joshua” in the HB and a “Jesus” in the NT. When we get a “Laban” and a “Nabal” (a palindrome of Laban) in biblical narrative and a “Laban” shows up in the Book of Mormon, the text is making a point about repeated stories and events — and not too subtly. “Recognizing

the similarity between names means that the name of Jesus in the New Testament is not a tradition-free nominal marker but instead bears content from the Old Testament even *prior* to any information about Jesus' own life and work being provided by the New."<sup>60</sup>

Gore treats both Gideons as anti-monarchical warriors and saviors, rescuing the people from idolatry and kingship. "Both Gideons are warriors whose task is to defend a people beset by idolatry. Gideon is called to slay kings" (p. 145). Gore sees the biblical Gideon as more straightforwardly a *mosiah* of the Israelites: one who destroys the idols, liberates the chosen people, and declines kingship for himself and his sons: "One of the reasons why the biblical Gideon is highly regarded in republican circles is his refusal to worship idols and to become king" (p. 147). The Bible is more subtle and nuanced than Gore's portrayal permits. True, Gideon overthrew the idols, but after his victory over the Midianites he requests the precious metals obtained in the booty and fashions an ephod; the Israelites worship in a way indistinguishable from idolatry (Judges 8). Likewise Gore notes that Gideon refused the kingship office the Israelites offer, and "not without contradiction, Gideon acts as a proto-king and desires his children to inherit his power and influence" (p. 148). Gore mentions Abimelech, Gideon's son, and asserts that despite Abimelech's "treachery" (murdering 70 of his own half brothers), but "never succeeds in establishing himself on a throne" (p. 149). To the contrary, the Bible asserts that Abimelech was made king (Judges 9:16) and reigned three years (Judges 9:22). And Jotham, Abimelech's half brother, uses the word *king* in his parable about the plants (Judges 9:7–21, referring to Abimelech in verse 16 as king) to refer to Abimelech's place after the murder of his 70 half brothers.

Gore could treat the allusive connections with more sensitivity than he does. In the Judges Gideon story, Gideon ostensibly refuses kingship (even dynastic kingship) after delivering the Israelites from Midianite oppression (Judges 8:22–23), but other indicators obscure the claim that he is opposed to idolatry and monarchy. For one, Gideon names his son Abimelech, "my father is king," and Abimelech (after some intrigue) does indeed become king for a short period (Judges 9:1–6, 22). Gore even notes the presence of Abimelech in the narrative (p. 149), without also pointing out that his name undermines the notion that Gideon was

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60. Stephen B. Chapman, "Saul/Paul: Onomastics, Typology, and Christian Scripture," *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 241.

a good or thorough anti-monarchist. Instead of kingly office, Gideon asks for the people's plunder; from the gold earrings he fashions an ephod which the people worship in an idolatrous manner (Judges 8:24–27). Gideon's words, as recorded in the book of Judges, do indeed renounce kingship, but his actions don't. Gideon's harem, request for gold spoils, and struggles for hereditary leadership among his sons are all indicators of kingly status: "Gideon's wealth, harem, children, his sanctuary, and the disputes among his children concerning the succession to their father are generally cited as the major evidence for the royal character of his life and career."<sup>61</sup> Such a harem "is characteristic only of kings in historical times."<sup>62</sup> Davies outlines more details in support of the notion that despite denials, Gideon's trajectory was toward kingship: (1) Gideon and his sons seem to have exercised dynastic rulership in Shechem; (2) Jotham's parable of leadership among the community of trees in the middle of the Gideon/Abimelech narrative never mentions Israelite kings but is clearly a parable about kingship requiring only an analogical sensibility to apply to Abimelech (Judges 9); (3) other characters in the story compare Gideon and his brothers to a king's children (Judges 8:18); (4) Gideon asks for captured jewelry of defeated kings to, perhaps, fashion the same status for himself; and (5) Gideon's explicit denial of kingly ambitions butts up next to his request for the gold booty of kings so he can forge an ephod, an object that in later monarchies is symbolic of kingly presence. "Gideon like Saul and David sought to show his royal position by possession of an ephod."<sup>63</sup>

Despite voicing his refusal of the position, "Gideon did, *de facto* retain certain important privileges belonging to the ruler," including the following: (1) the ephod at Ophrah, which location may have become a sacred venue with political and religious implications; (2) Gideon's son's name *Abimelech*, which "seems to allude to royal status;" (3) Gideon's dual name Gideon-Jerubbaal (not necessarily stemming from two different sources) might be a doubled royal appellation which often occurred in later Israelite and Near Eastern systems; (4) the large-scale harem, including a wife of royal Shechemite descent, was a common monarchical feature of the time and place; (5) the allusion in Judges 8:18 is that Gideon and his siblings are a king's children; and (6) the implication

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61. G. Henton Davies, "Judges VIII 22–23," *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963): 155–56.

62. Barnabus Lindars, "Gideon and Kingship," *Journal of Theological Studies* 16 (1965): 323.

63. Davies, "Judges VIII 22–23," 157.

of Judges 9:2 is that Gideon's sons are dynastic rulers.<sup>64</sup> So Gideon's explicit refusal of the offer to become king is more nuanced: "Gideon's words are not a refusal: they are rather a protestation: a protestation of the kind of kingship he would exercise, an avowal that his kingship and that of his family will be so conducted as to eliminate any personal and tyrannical element, and to permit of the manifestation of the divine rule through his own."<sup>65</sup>

So the story of Gideon and his son Abimelech augur what will happen when the Israelites request a king, as a warning of "what the granting of a dynastic monarchy to Gideon's family would have meant."<sup>66</sup> It is a "narrow escape" from the whims and selfishness an erratic king can impose on the citizens, and shows what the antithesis of a righteous ruler would do. "It also advances the view that kingship of the Abimelech type (and thus kingship generally, for Abimelech's is that form of Canaanite city-state kingship with which Israel at that time would have been most familiar; cf. 1 Sam. 8, would have been inimical to the best interests of Israel."<sup>67</sup> Had the Israelites heeded the Gideon/Abimelech warning narrative, they would have known better than to request a king like all the nations, when they already had God as their king.

### King Mosiah and the Mosiahim of the Book of Judges

The biblical Gideon and the Book of Mormon Gideon do have some allusive connections that indicate an intertextual association we ought to catch. The book of Judges details the rise of ad hoc deliverers who save the Israelites from Midianites, Philistines, or other neighboring threats. The word often used for this "deliverer" is *mosiah*, which can be translated "savior." The "'deliverer' and 'judge' are identical" to the Deuteronomist more generally and in Judges 2:16 in particular,<sup>68</sup> (Judges 2:16 uses *yasha*, which is the same root as *mosiah*). Both are deliverers who "save" their people from bondage (to King Noah and to the Midianites) (Judges 6:14).

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64. A. Malamat, "The Period of the Judges," *The World History of the Jewish People: Judges*, vol. 3, ed. Benjamin Mazar (Givatayim, ISR: Jewish History Publications, 1971), 148.

65. Davies, "Judges VIII 22–23," 157.

66. W. J. Dumbrell, "'In Those Days There Was No King in Israel; Every Man Did What Was Right in His Own Eyes.' The Purpose of the Book of Judges Reconsidered," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983): 28.

67. *Ibid.*

68. A. D. H. Mayes, "The Period of the Judges and the Rise of the Monarchy," *Israelite and Judaeon History*, eds. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 289.

Both are *mosiahs* from the tribe of Manasseh (if we assume the Gideon in the book of Mosiah is a Nephite [as opposed to, say, a Mulekite] (see also Judges 6:15). All the Zeniffites desired to return to possess the land of the Nephites' first inheritance (if we generalize from Zeniff's heritage to the larger group of Zeniffites, which ought to be a reliable generalization, for "Zeniff ... was made king over this people, he being over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers" (Mosiah 7:21)). Mosiah 12:1–2 presents to the people under Limhi's kingship a dilemma. In bondage to the Lamanites, Limhi consults how they might "deliver" themselves. Gideon comes forward to suggest a strategy by which "I will be thy servant and *deliver* this people out of bondage" (Mosiah 22:4), much as the biblical Gideon serves as a deliverer, the Israelites from Midianite bondage; and the angel declares to Gideon, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save [*yasha*'] Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14). Later, when the Book of Mormon Gideon is reintroduced in his confrontation with Nehor, the reader is reminded that "it was he who was an instrument in the hands of God in *delivering the people* of Limhi out of bondage" (Alma 1:8). Remember also that the biblical Gideon was a charismatic judge and savior of the Northern tribe of Manasseh (Judges 6:15; see also Alma 10:3, where Nephi's genealogy notes his descent from Manasseh).

These stories of deliverer/saviors in the book of Judges likely concerned judges and events occurring in the northern tribal territories and collected by "prophetic groups in the northern kingdom."<sup>69</sup> Gideon, like all the savior/judges in the book of Judges, is God's answer to the people's cries for deliverance; then he leads the Israelite army to victory against their oppressors.<sup>70</sup> Unlike the biblical Gideon, the Book of Mormon Gideon demonstrates no ambivalent ambition for dynastic glory. And Gore is right that the reader ought to see in the biblical Gideon a conflation of kingship and idol worship as related-but-different forms of idolatry (p. 147). And, as Gore notes, much biblical criticism of Judges sees in Gideon a proto-king. "Gideon's act of refusing the monarchy for himself *and his posterity* harkens back to the moment just following his sacred calling. His first public act, done under cover of darkness, is to destroy the grove and altar to Baal that belonged to his father, Joash" (p. 148). Gideon is often seen as a good Yahwist because he overthrows

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69. Ibid., 310.

70. S. Talmon, "Kingship and the Ideology of the State," *World History of the Jewish People*, ed. Abraham Malamat, vol. 5 (Jerusalem, ISR: Masada, 1979), 8.

the pagan altars (Judges 6:25–32). But his role as anti-idolatry leader is more ambiguous.

Gideon serves as a narrative bridge between the period of kingship and judgeship in the Book of Mormon. The biblical Gideon serves a similar narrative function. Gore usefully notes the essential allusive connection between the two Gideons: the Book of Mormon Gideon “was likewise not one to submit to authority or idolatry. He appears to have accepted only the rule of just men. His refusal of Nehor links the latter with King Noah, who was also prone to flattery and dependent on the support of those whom he regarded as existing primarily for that purpose” (p. 150). Gore devotes much of his discussion of the Book of Mormon Gideon to his role in confronting Nehor. But more emphasis should be placed on his earlier function in confronting King Noah and delivering the people of Limhi from Lamanite bondage. This Gideon is also a narrative bridge from kingship to judgeship.

### **Federalism, Branches of Government, Separation of Power in Antiquity: An Anachronism, Mere Wishful Thinking?**

I have been sketching out a governing arrangement in ancient Israel and among the Book of Mormon people that looks much like a federal system with various layers of government from local to national and within each layer a separation of powers so that authority is dispersed among different elements of the system to avoid too much concentration of power; the position I have articulated also shows the Nephites under Mosiah<sup>2</sup> acting democratically in the transition from kingship to judgeship and its revalidation when challenged, even engaging in debates that look much like New England town-hall meetings:

And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful contentions one with another. And thus they did assemble themselves together to cast in their voices concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges. (Alma 2:5–6)

My reader would be justified in questioning whether or not I am confusing the U.S. Constitution with Samuel’s manner of the king or engaging in anachronism by projecting modern governing structures on primitive societies. After all, might some semblance of separation of powers and republican forms of government be more of an argument

for the Book of Mormon's modernity rather than its antiquity? It is a fair question, so I want to attend to it directly. Biblical critics have long addressed this very issue in the context of Samuel's transition to kingship. In taking up historical topics, one must always be wary of anachronism: thinking that the past must be like the present, so past people and societies must think and act as we do; we then project onto the past our own understandings and patterns of thought and action. Anachronism places ideas or events in questionable chronological order. This warning is relevant to my topic in that my reader might consider that in asserting something akin to our modern notion of democracy, or federalism in the Hebrew Bible and Book of Mormon, I am committing anachronism. Being aware of the problem is the first step in addressing it. The second step in thinking about the process and orienting a direction of historical development in complex ways moves toward the right temporal relationship.

The Greek and Jewish traditions develop a "difference of logic," for they have distinctive ultimate purposes and foci; the Greek political tradition's main concern was "Who should rule and how?" while the Hebraic and Jewish tradition focused less on institutions and rulers but more on what is the goal of governance.<sup>71</sup> Biblical and the Jewish political thought that developed out of it had three main goals: (1) remembering the lessons of slavery in Egypt, pursuing liberty from oppression; (2) incorporating the lessons learned from wandering in the wilderness that "liberation without food is simply starvation," so land policy and political structure advocated prosperity (exile from the land resulted in loss of both freedom and prosperity); and (3) the pursuit not of happiness or property, but freedom and prosperity that occurs within the covenant relationship with God<sup>72</sup> — the promises to Abraham of land and offspring which emerge from the creation mandate to Adam and Noah and emphasize the fertility not just of humans but of plants and animals: "Blessing, in the first instance, means children, plain and simple,"<sup>73</sup> security from neighboring peoples so prosperity can be enjoyed,<sup>74</sup> and a vertical covenant community relationship with God integrated with a horizontal community relationship with others.<sup>75</sup> The book of Mosiah, starting with the Zeniffite digression, raises frequent concern with

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71. Weinstein, "Goalkeeping," 3.

72. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

73. *Ibid.*, 9.

74. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

75. *Ibid.*, 11.



freedom: from King Noah’s oppression by Lamanite domination, and from control by the priests of Amulon, once integrated into Lamanite social structure.

The idea that the biblical Hebrews had a constitution comparable with what Aristotle would call a *politeia* was introduced by Josephus. This fountainhead of Jewish commentary on the Republic of the Hebrews was Josephus, who asserted that the Hebraic *politeia* was unique in that it had God himself as the civil sovereign,<sup>76</sup> even if it employed judges, kings, and councils as the executive at various points. All the words we use to articulate the notions of limits on government (federalism, constitutionalism, republicanism) emerge from ancient thought, usually attributed to the Greeks. But at least as important, those ideas are also separately traceable to the biblical notion of covenant.

The claim that constitutional thought has its roots in the Book of Deuteronomy is ancient indeed. Josephus (37–100 C.E.) referred to Deuteronomy as the *politeia* — regime plan or national constitution — of the Jewish people and implicitly suggested that the idea of a constitution is first found in the Bible and not in Greco-Roman sources, as his readers would have undoubtedly believed.<sup>77</sup>

One shouldn’t too easily conflate republican government as we know it in modern political systems with what ancients experienced and wrote about (although both are differently republican); neither should we neglect the similarities and genealogies. Using terms such as “representative government,” “checks and balances,” “equality,” “separation of powers,” “branches of government,” and “democratic” “must be understood as importing concepts that do not spring from the intellectual tradition” in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>78</sup> and therefore have the potential to be misunderstood. “There is nothing illegitimate in this practice — despite the risk of mistakenly imputing one’s own conceptual framework to the object of one’s studies — but it does have the unfortunate tendency to obscure the Jewish terms and approach to collective matters of rule and authority.”<sup>79</sup> And yet, despite the valid warnings biblical critics offer about reading our own political structures and commitments back into biblical narrative,

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76. Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 90.

77. Joshua A. Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52.

78. Weinstein, “Goalkeeping,” 2–3.

79. *Ibid.*, 3.

biblical critics at the same time acknowledge that in important ways the biblical text laid the foundation for our contemporary ideological and political commitments and arrangements.

Whether starting with Adam or Moses, Samuel or Solomon, Noah or King Noah, the biblical political ethos constructs any account of a biblical politeia around the notion that God is the King and meta-ruler of any earthly state based on biblical principles of governance. “Power in society is God’s,” and to humans God denies any “concentration and permanence of power.”<sup>80</sup> All moral commitments in politics, all law, all authority originates in deity, and God’s commitments and goals should be the commitments and goals of any state founded on biblical principles, including “freedom and a measure of equality.”<sup>81</sup> In the eleventh century BCE Samuel presaged the message of the classical prophets of the eighth century by predicting that earthly kings would abuse their power and deviate from the notion that monarchs are mere servants of the divine king; the classical prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea, were types and shadows of Samuel when “by the eighth century the consequences of the idea of divine kingship had been ever more ignored by the rulers of the people, and reality had come ever more into conflict with it. It was then that the great prophets rose to adjust the reality of their day to the standards of the idea.”<sup>82</sup> As long as there were prophets called by Yahweh, and not sycophants appointed and paid by their kings, there was ever the conflict between kings and prophets calling those monarchs such as King Ahab, King Manasseh, and King Noah back to a covenant model of governance. Jeroboam — the founding king of the Northern Israelite regime — was an archetypal evil king in the Northern tradition (1 Kings 12:26–33), and Ahijah the prophet called him to repentance.<sup>83</sup> Jehu castigated Baasha, and Elijah did the same for Ahab.<sup>84</sup> Just as Kings Benjamin and Mosiah<sub>2</sub> were the symbolically good kings in the Book of Mormon, the Bible similarly presents paradigms of good kings and bad kings: “The crucial event in Judah, comparable to

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80. Matitiah Tsevat, “The Biblical Account of the Foundation of the Monarchy in Israel,” *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: KTAV, 1981), 91.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Frank Moore Cross, “The Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire: Conditional Covenant and Eternal Decree,” *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 238.

84. Ibid., 280–81.

the sin of Jeroboam, was the faithfulness of David. ... David in Kings is the symbol of fidelity, Jeroboam the symbol of infidelity.”<sup>85</sup>

Evans offers a similar warning when reading about the two groups of men Rehoboam consulted after his father Solomon died about how to start governing as king (1 Kings 12) and dominating the battle space on the king’s behalf. His advice from the “elders” (his father’s counselors) was to give the people what they want by promising tax breaks and lowered regulation, and then once power was consolidated the king could do anything he wanted. The young turks’ (his friends from youth) advice urges him to tell the people his real plan: that Rehoboam will make their tax burdens heavier than those Solomon laid on them. Understandably, the ten tribes reject that proposal and secede from the Kingdom of Judah to form their own separate monarchy. But the rump monarchy left to Rehoboam demonstrates the constraints the people can exert on the king, even the heir of Solomon, who had concentrated and centralized authority: The people “*made him king*, as if to say that they would serve him only so long as he served them.”<sup>86</sup> Evans warns against taking these two advisory groups as a bicameral political entity as we might think about them in modern times or for comparison to cultures surrounding the ancient Israelites. “Not only does the slenderness of the evidence oblige us to make the most of it in a dangerous extent, but it increases the risk, which is always present in studies of the remote past, of importing into our sources modern constitutional ideas and practices which have no place in them.”<sup>87</sup> Malamat, in the same issue of the journal, offers a companion warning against anachronism. Kingly advisers are common in the ancient Levant, but to read too much into either the Rehoboam consultation or similar stories from Sumer is to run such a risk, despite the fact that Malamat asserts that a Sumerian city state did have in the third millennium what some scholars have labeled “primitive democracy” with representative bodies, at least in local governance.<sup>88</sup>

It is then possible to argue for some element of participatory governing institutions in ancient Israel and its neighbors which

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85. *Ibid.*, 282.

86. Michael Walzer, *In God’s Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 56.

87. D. Geoffrey Evans, “Rehoboam’s Advisers at Shechem, and Political Institutions in Israel and Sumer,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 1966): 273.

88. Abraham Malamat, “Kingship and Council in Israel and Sumer: A Parallel,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (October 1963): 250.

resulted in “the restriction of the absolute power of kingship and to the democratization of political conduct.”<sup>89</sup> With the warning about too easily assimilating ancient institutions to modern ones, biblical critics still often note that biblical Israelites did have participatory political arrangements: the biblical *‘ēdāh* and *kāhāl*, “the assembly” and “the people.” Gordis takes the use of these words as evidence of primitive forms of democracy in Israel, operating at least by the time the Torah was granted to the congregation at Sinai. This assembly endured over the ages, even though its influence waned. “But the positive democratic spirit which actuated it in its earliest period never died in Israel, and through the Bible, it entered the fabric of Western civilization.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, “the elders” (of the people, of the assembly, of the tribes — the term is used in various ways) often “appear as a governing body; this function overlaps their representative function and their association with the leader,” whoever the leader happened to be.<sup>91</sup> In this structure of having local elders acting in local governance and an advisory role in national politics, the Israelites were — like their Mesopotamian neighbors — “ruled by popular sovereignty to a high degree,”<sup>92</sup> and these elders in Israel were “very frequently representative of the people.”<sup>93</sup> These local representative assemblies functioned differently than larger deliberative bodies. In Absalom’s rebellion “it is clear that the ‘elders of Israel’ and ‘the men of Israel’ are not used synonymously, but ... there is a clear distinction between them. Whereas the king and the ‘elders of Israel’ accepted the advice of Ahitophel, ‘the men of Israel’ rejected it. This, then, was a higher authority, which could overrule the decision of the elders,” and Tadmor argues that “the men of Israel” is another way of referring to the army.<sup>94</sup> When David and Abner negotiate to incorporate the Northern Tribes into David’s kingdom, Abner brings a delegation of elders to meet with David. “Note how the institution of the elders is still playing an authoritative role in covenant-making and the election

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89. *Ibid.*, 253.

90. Robert Gordis, “Democratic Origins in Ancient Israel — The Biblical *‘Edah*,” *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, English Section (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 378–88.

91. John L. McKenzie, “The Elders in the Old Testament,” *Biblica* 40 (1959): 525.

92. *Ibid.*, 531.

93. *Ibid.*, 534.

94. Hayim Tadmor, “‘The People’ and the Kingship in Ancient Israel: The Role of Political Institutions in the Biblical Period,” *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale/Journal of World History* 11, no. 1–2 (1968): 50.

of kings,”<sup>95</sup> and Rehoboam convenes a similar deliberative body when he moves to make himself king. The message is the same as far as governance is concerned: “the rule of Judean kings over the northern tribes is conditional upon a covenantal agreement between the king and his future subjects,”<sup>96</sup> arrived at after negotiation with representatives of the people,<sup>97</sup> whether the “assembly” or the people.<sup>98</sup>

Athens gave the world democracy, but the ancient Greeks had a spotty record when it came to liberation from despotism. Ancient Greek thought exercised its influence even through the time of the Founders of the American Revolution, but for the Greeks, hierarchy and class structure were essential in political governance. “The greatest philosophers of Athens, Plato and Aristotle, viewed the necessity of social hierarchy as absolutely axiomatic.”<sup>99</sup> Democracy even in classical Athens was democratic, but not in the way we moderns define democracy, for the majority of the residents were slaves and women with no role in governance. The influence of the Bible on subsequent polities was the opposite counterbalance, a source of advocacy for equality. All Israelites were considered equals before God. Since their entry into the Promised Land, Israelite law portioned out the land equally and built in safeguards to ensure that the land, if sold or confiscated, would revert to the families to which it had been granted, thus ensuring some measure of economic equality (unlike Rome, for example, where in the Empire, concentration of landholding among the rich led to contentious agrarian reforms intended more widely to distribute the means of production beyond just the aristocracy). “By investing greatly in the creation of a covenantal brotherhood of individuals bound by law and theology, the Pentateuch envisions an ideal society that holds together on the merits of its members, rather than on the basis of the authority of its power brokers.”<sup>100</sup> Deuteronomy limits the institutional power of various centers of authority and oppression: “the military, the cult, the judiciary, the economy, and the harem” by placing “checks and balances that curb

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95. Abraham Malamat, “Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy,” *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, eds. Edward F. Campbell and David Noel Freedman, vol. 3 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 164. See also Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, “Some Aspects of the Hebrew Monarchy,” *Studia Semitica: Jewish Themes*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 9.

96. *Ibid.*, 165.

97. *Ibid.*, 167.

98. *Ibid.*, 168.

99. Berman, *Created Equal*, 169.

100. *Ibid.*

the power of the various seats of authority: the king, the priesthood, the judiciary, and the prophet.”<sup>101</sup>

If my summary sounds too much like Madison and Hamilton, then the reader ought to consider the connection not to be one of anachronism, but of directional influence from the Bible to early modern thinkers to the American Founders. The Greeks weren't the only influences on even the more secular of such American Revolutionary thinkers as Jefferson and Paine (who were outliers in their distance from the Christian mainstream of the leaders in the Revolutionary and Federal periods). Berman asserts that “the kernel of a theory of checks and balances that one may adduce from a reading of Deuteronomy is suggestive of formulations we do not encounter again until the writings of the American founding fathers.”<sup>102</sup> The Bible precedes Montesquieu in establishing some separation of powers, for “Deuteronomy illustrates notions of separation of powers that have usually been considered quite recent. Classical Greek political thought understood that in the absence of a strong center in the figure of a monarch or tyrant, factionalism threatened the stability of the polity.”<sup>103</sup> The Pentateuch and Deuteronomist History stand out starkly against the other political structures of the ancient Near East in that “for the first time in history, a division of at least some powers is articulated along lines of institution and instrument rather than of class and kinship.”<sup>104</sup>

To be like all the nations isn't entirely a model of despotic kingship, for some of the nations in ancient Israel's neighborhood had developed some forms of participatory governance: “The existence of primitive democracy in Mesopotamia is now generally recognized.”<sup>105</sup> The Hittites, for example, demonstrated a wide variety of structural forms that included royal and democratic models, and their political inheritance took “seriously the opinion of others, equals, vassals and people alike.”<sup>106</sup> Ancient Israel, like those people surrounding it, developed democratic tendencies. Several passages in the period of judges and kings look very much like deliberative processes (Judges 20, 2 Kings 11:12,

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101. Ibid., 10.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid., 78.

104. Ibid., 79.

105. Pinhas Artzi, “‘Vox Populi’ in the El-Amarna Tablets,” *Revue d'Assyriologie* 58 (1964): 159. Talmon expresses dislike for the term “primitive democracy” in “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 8.

106. Ibid., 160.

Nehemiah 5:13),<sup>107</sup> and during this era “the political system was essentially based on a voluntary federation with a ‘democratic character’ unlike the monarchical regime which generally dictated from above.”<sup>108</sup> These processes and institutions endured not only through the tribal era of the judges but later into the period of the kings.<sup>109</sup>

Think of Mosiah’s discourse on equality and the need for every citizen to carry the burden of governance instead of delegating that agency and burden to a king. The Bible precedes the Book of Mormon in rejecting the dominant Mesopotamian notion that stratification of society is just part of the natural order of the world. “The covenant paradigm as ideological underpinning for an egalitarian order should prompt us to consider anew the role of human kingship in biblical thought.”<sup>110</sup>

The Bible outlines a political system entirely dissimilar to those known before a people called Israel emerged. The monarchies and despotisms of the ancient Near East were based on the exclusionary principle, where rulers attempted to monopolize power. The Bible and some rare ancient systems invest in a “collective” power system in which authority is divided between various power centers: “Collective power strategies divest a single ruler of the control of power. The various offices of power are subordinated to a bureaucratic management structure determined by a code of law and formally established standards of conduct.”<sup>111</sup> Berman details how the Law of the King in Deuteronomy 17 restricts the accumulation of military power by the monarch, divests the ruler of cultic status, insists that only a “brother” can be king, so a foreigner can’t be imported from some Mesopotamian Hanoverian dynasty, and restricts the assimilationist trend of the king’s harem of foreign wives.<sup>112</sup> But the Law of the King insists that the king’s duties were identical to the duty of every Israelite. “The prerequisite for being a good Israelite king is to be a good Israelite citizen.”<sup>113</sup> That is a powerful pattern of egalitarianism.

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107. C. Umhau Wolf, “Traces of Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947): 102.

108. Moshe Weinfeld, “The Transition from Tribal Rule to Monarchy and its Impact on the History of Israel,” *Kingship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses* (Jerusalem, ISR: Center for Jewish Community Studies, 1983), 151.

109. Wolf, “Traces of Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel,” 104.

110. Berman, *Created Equal*, 48.

111. *Ibid.*, 54.

112. *Ibid.*, 58–62.

113. *Ibid.*, 63.

Of “the law of the king” in Deuteronomy and Samuel’s “manner of the king” conveyed warnings about kingly abuse of power, a paradigmatic abusive king who violated the prohibitions in the Law and the predictions in the Manner is Solomon. “The ‘manner of the king’ in this description agrees very well with what we are told of Solomon’s régime,” but these are just standard practices of kingship like those of all nations, and “it is doubtful whether the lesson was fully learned at so early a period in the history.”<sup>114</sup> Solomon was only the third king since the founding of the Saulide attempt at dynasty. Both the Northern and Southern kingdoms would have plenty of experience with wicked and oppressive kings before dynastic kingship disappears in the biblical tradition under coercion, invasion, and conquest from Mesopotamia. The law of the king (Deuteronomy 17) and the manner of the king (1 Samuel 8) have to be viewed as anticipations of legislation, the markup of law, the Federalist Papers laying the groundwork for adoption of a constitutional arrangement. “The Law of the King and the Statute of the King probably preserved parts of a social contract which laid down quasi-constitutionally the rights and duties of the king. This is the *mispat ha-melukah* (the Law and Statute of the King) which Samuel proclaimed and committed to writing subsequent Saul’s coronation (1 Sam. 10:25) as attesting the covenant between the king and the people before God. Of this document only a selection of prescriptive and proscriptive ordinances which apply to the king have been preserved in the Bible.”<sup>115</sup> Kaplan argues that Samuel’s manner of discourse has parallels to the Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel*,<sup>116</sup> or is a mirror for princes, whose goal to provide a model for rulers and princes; it sets forth the proper behavior of a ruler, and draws on eighth century BCE Near Eastern documents (although the date of the Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel* is disputed), especially the Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel* and other documents read in Babylonian new year ceremonies. This document belonging to a loose genre of details that are improper behavior for a ruler, including misuse of judicial powers, bribery, pilfering silver from the people, and the use of forced labor. Mesopotamian gods are the enforcement mechanism mentioned in the *Fürstenspiegel* who threaten the king with

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114. C. R. North, “The Old Testament Estimate of the Monarchy,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*. 48.1 (October 1931): 8.

115. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 12.

116. Jonathan Kaplan, “1 Samuel 8:11–18 as ‘A Mirror of Princes,’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 4 (2012): 625, 631.



curses on the land, invasion, and military defeat.<sup>117</sup> Samuel may be doing what this not uncommonly archived Babylonian document does: school the potential ruler in advance with the goal of limiting the exercise of power by the king, and so has affinities to the manner and the law of the king articulated by the Samuel character and the Deuteronomist in an attempt to “curb” the “excesses” to which kings are prone.<sup>118</sup>

Ultimately, the point is that the kingship of Noah points back to earlier understandings of the social contract between ruler and people which permit the overthrow of a ruler who violates that covenant. “The threat that the king’s mission could be revoked should he not comply with the statutes of the divine Covenant and the social contract with the people, as interpreted by the prophet, meant that even the institutionalized dynastic monarchy in Israel retained the principle that continuity of leadership was not automatic, neither in the lifetime of a king, nor from generation to generation.”<sup>119</sup> Gideon, it seems, was justified in starting a rebellion against King Noah.

Another influential devolution of authority came with the appointment of judges, not by the king but by the people.<sup>120</sup> The power of the prophet is another important check on the king’s authority. Soon after the Law of the Kings (Deuteronomy 17) is articulated, the role of the prophet is spelled out (Deuteronomy 18:15–22) in a way that the prophet checks the influence of both the priest and the king. The prophet Samuel selects the first kings of Israel at the inception of Israelite monarchy,<sup>121</sup> serving as a one-man electoral college. The verses adjacent to the Law of the King deal more holistically with the institutions of authority in the biblical polity: judges (16:18–20; 17:8–13), kings (17:14–20), priests (18:1–8); and prophets (18:9–22).<sup>122</sup>

The passages in Deuteronomy 17 on kingship and 1 Samuel 8–12 are viewed as the principal commentaries in the Hebrew Bible with an anti-monarchical stance. “Not only is a king not required, but it seems that according to Deuteronomy, Israel would be better off without one.”<sup>123</sup> God acquiesces to the will of the people despite both Samuel’s and the

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117. Ibid., 632.

118. Ibid., 641, 642.

119. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 24.

120. Berman, *Created Equal*, 69.

121. Ibid., 71.

122. Baruch Alster, “The ‘Will of the People’ in Antimonarchic Biblical Texts,” *Is Judaism Democratic? Reflections from Theory and Practice Throughout the Ages*, ed. Leonard J. Greenspoon (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2018), 33.

123. Ibid., 34.

deity's better judgment, but God relents in order to punish the people for choosing unwisely. "No law can actually control a corrupt king. And a corrupt king is what the people deserve for forsaking the almost direct rule of God, with the prophet-judge Samuel as more intermediary than ruler."<sup>124</sup> Note that when Alma<sub>1</sub> refuses to be made king and advises the people not to subject themselves to kings, he doesn't do it in the name of God but by his own opinion based upon the principle of equality: "Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another; therefore *I say unto you* it is not expedient that ye should have a king" (Mosiah 23:7). Similarly, when King Mosiah<sub>2</sub> urges the people to shift from kingship to judgeship, he gives the advice in his own name, not God's: "*I command you to do these things* in the fear of the Lord; and *I command you to do these things*, and that ye have no king; that if these people commit sins and iniquities they shall be answered upon their own heads" (Mosiah 29:30). The brother of Jared and Jared acquiesce to the will of the people despite their reservations (Ether 6:21–27), and God isn't even mentioned in the process; Samuel also acquiesces to the desires of the people despite both God's and the prophet's reservations. The intermediary between the Jaredites and God — the brother of Jared — is chastised for not calling upon God (Ether 2:14). This sketches an almost secular relationship between God and these people, so it is hardly surprising that no mention is made of a consultation with God when the Jaredites decide on their governmental structure. This is different from the authority Abinadi declares in condemning King Noah: "Thus saith the Lord" (Mosiah 12:2).

Gore labels Samuel and the brother of Jared as anti-monarchists (p. 98); but a more nuanced view of opinions against kingship needs to be advanced. Nor should Alma<sub>1</sub>'s comments regarding kings in Mosiah 23 be viewed as anti-monarchical. When Alma<sub>1</sub> declines the job offer, he gives a principled reason and a practical reason: "But he said unto them: Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king; for thus saith the Lord: Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another; therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king" (Mosiah 23:7). He then follows with the practical reason: "Nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king" (Mosiah 23:8), citing King Noah as the example of what happens when the wrong person is chosen as king. King Mosiah<sub>2</sub> provides similar reasoning:

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124. Ibid., 36.

Therefore, if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people — I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you. (Mosiah 29:13)

In the next verse he cites himself and his father as examples of good kings, before referring to King Noah as the counter example. If Alma<sub>1</sub> is anti-monarchical, then *King* Mosiah<sub>2</sub> is also.

Eslinger notes that the passages in 1 Samuel 8–12 are often divided into anti-monarchical and pro-monarchical sections. But some characters within the narrative express differing views toward kingship. There are those (Samuel) who start out anti-monarchical, but by the end of the narrative endorse a tepid pro-king position. Others start out pro-king and move toward a more ambivalent position by the end of the story.<sup>125</sup> Other biblical critics see the institution of kingship in Israel as neither pro- nor anti-positions, but a clear-eyed view of the problems and promises of monarchy. Mayes sees the Deuteronomistic writer as portraying kingship as a problem rather than a sin, a theological conundrum. He is not anti-monarchical, “rather, he sees the benefits of the institution, especially in the matter of justice in Israel,”<sup>126</sup> while recognizing that it poses risks. The pro- and anti-monarchical sentiments might just be differing points of view from a narrator who wants to present both the good and bad qualities of various governmental forms. The solution to the problem as worked out in 1 Samuel 12 is to impose the requirement that both king and people yield to the law of Yahweh.<sup>127</sup> McCarthy concurs: “the section is not just about kingship, it is about kingship as a problem, and the reader is not allowed to lose sight of this even in the so-called promonarchical units.”<sup>128</sup>

When the Israelites asked for a king “like all the nations,” two models were available in their neighbors: the Egyptian standard with

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125. Lyle Eslinger, “Viewpoints and Point of View in 1 Samuel 8–12.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26 (1983): 67.

126. A. D. H. Mayes, “The Rise of Israelite Monarchy,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978): 12.

127. *Ibid.*

128. Dennis J. McCarthy, “The Inauguration of Monarchy in Israel: A Form-Critical Study of I Samuel 8–12,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 27 (1973): 403.

a deified, absolute ruler; and the Mesopotamian structure, having a mortal king with checks upon his authority in the assembly of elders in the society, and the limitations of other gods in the pantheon.<sup>129</sup> This Fertile Crescent model requested of Samuel by the people had the people making the king, not the military or deity elevating the leader. With the people as king-makers, that system is “literally ‘democracy.’”<sup>130</sup> This spreading model of dynastic kingship was not only adopted in Israel, but by other Transjordan peoples at the same time.<sup>131</sup> According to Alster, the requirement in Deuteronomy 17 that if a king is to be chosen, he must be selected from “among thy brethren” implies that any Israelite male could be appointed king, regardless of lineage. This qualification makes possible a broad equality “which empowers the general male populace, rather than the king, and places on their shoulders the responsibility for upholding the covenant, including the mandate to appoint leaders — judges and kings — who will help them in their task.”<sup>132</sup> This sounds very much like Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s notion of equality, by which the people should shoulder an equal burden of governance and not shift the burden of sin and responsibility onto a king.

The rabbis interpreted the political passages of the Hebrew Bible so that responsible government was inextricably entwined with the idea of covenant, for in the covenant each Israelite male is equal and the *res publica* owned by each person equally. “All share equally in the responsibility for creating the *malkhut shamayim* [kingdom of heaven], which is the purpose of political action; all therefore possess a sanctified right (enshrined in the *torah*) to participate in the process whereby policies are formulated and executed”<sup>133</sup> within a political structure that is “both federal in arrangement and consensual in tone.”<sup>134</sup> We don’t know how diffused the democratic tendencies were through the height and depth

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129. E. A. Speiser, “The Manner of the King,” *The World History of the Jewish People*, ed. Benjamin Mazar, vol. 3 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 283.

130. *Ibid.*, 284.

131. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 18–19.

132. Alster “Will,” 39.

133. Stuart A. Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets: Patterns of Constitutional Discourse and Constitutional Conflict in Ancient Israel,” *The Quest for Utopia: Jewish Political Ideas and Institutions through the Ages*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 22.

134. Stuart A. Cohen, “The Concept of the Three *Ketarim*: Its Place in Jewish Political Thought and Its Implications for a Study of Jewish Constitutional History,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 9 (1984): 34.

of ancient Israelite society, but we can judge that at the highest level, power sharing was idealized. We would translate that into separation of powers today, when power is diffused among priests, kings, and prophets.<sup>135</sup> Cohen even goes so far as to call these institutions the “three branches” in the biblical texts<sup>136</sup> and even sees that such “power-sharing” preferences provide a tendency toward “representative government.”<sup>137</sup> Ancient Israel didn’t organize their democratic institutions the way we do in Western societies, but nevertheless they seemed to have governmental ministers serving executive functions and the elders advising the king and his agents,<sup>138</sup> each *keter* (crown) “acts as a particular prism on the constitution of the Jewish polity. Accordingly, each is entitled to exercise a constitutional check on the others.”<sup>139</sup>

In the U.S. constitutional arrangement, James Madison wrote about the legislative branch in Article 1 of the Constitution because the Founders viewed Congress as the leading branch of governance, but we see an evolution in which the executive branch attempts to siphon control away from the other two branches (often referred to as the “imperial presidency”), and we often hear complaints that judges too often legislate and exercise “judicial usurpation.” Similarly, the biblical history record notes trends when “principal instruments of one *keter* attempted (sometimes, and for limited periods, successfully so) to attain commanding authority within the *edah* [assembly] by posing as the repositories of two domains. By thus amalgamating prerogatives and wearing, as it were, two crowns, they contrived to neutralize the constitutional influence of the third and subject its officers to their own particular will.”<sup>140</sup> The kingship of Solomon and the period of Alexander Yannai (in the Hasmonaean period) “witnessed the emergence of a particularly strong *keter malkhut*. In both cases, moreover, that *keter* attempted to attain constitutional preponderance by encroaching upon roles which properly belonged to another *keter*.”<sup>141</sup>

Another check on the concentration of power that accompanies monarchy is a tribal muster rather than a professional army. A tribal armed force is answerable to local leaders, while a standing army is

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135. Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets,” 22–23.

136. *Ibid.*, 29; Cohen, “The Concept of the Three *Ketarim*,” 34.

137. Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets” 35.

138. Malamat, “Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy,” 174.

139. Cohen, “The Concept of the Three *Ketarim*,” 35.

140. *Ibid.*, 40.

141. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

answerable to the king; and in times when the latter's services aren't needed against external enemies, the professional army and its accompanying mercenaries can be used to squelch internal dissent. Under David, a mercenary army of non-Israelite Canaanites who had been conquered formed the backbone of the new state army. With no tribal loyalties, these soldiers owed their income and lives to the king (Uriah the Hittite was one of these Canaanites serving in David's national army). Talmon refers to this group as a "Swiss Guard" that was increasingly relied upon by David.<sup>142</sup> Solomon later drew administrative boundaries that ran across tribal lines, thus further diminishing the influence of alternative political structures. The king used agents to carry out his will. One of those agencies was the standing army, which doubtless led to a decreasing influence and efficacy of the "people's army," and "its say in public affairs dwindled."<sup>143</sup> Saul and David, at least early in his kingly rule, led the army personally. The third Israelite king, Solomon, is never shown as a warrior king. "He is, quite to the contrary, depicted as being totally inexperienced in military affairs, a mere youngster who certainly could not command an army (I Kg 3:7)."<sup>144</sup> Solomon had, in the evolution of monarchy, subcontracted the military function almost entirely.

These innovations under Solomon were assimilationist, moving Israelite society away from its unique features, and toward the governing structures of societies surrounding it: the people wanted to be "like all the nations" after all. Solomon imported from neighboring Phoenicia not just the architects and workers to build a Canaanite-style temple, but also the dynastic house and the dynastic notion of kingship.<sup>145</sup> David followed the Law of the King and hamstringed captured horses, but Solomon profited from a thriving trade in horses (horse-drawn chariots, this new weaponry, consolidate power in the institution of the monarchy, although chariots were less useful weapons in the hill country of Judea than on the flat coastal plains). This led to a new class of elites made of professional military officers and court officials, with the expansion of taxation and corvée labor required to financially support such a system.<sup>146</sup> Inevitably, such officers and officials need to be rewarded, usually with

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142. Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Biblical Idea of Statehood," *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, eds. Gary Rendsburg, Ruth Adler, Milton Arfa, Nathan H. Winter (New York: KTAV, 1980), 242.

143. *Ibid.*, 242.

144. *Ibid.*, 243.

145. Cross, "Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire," 238.

146. *Ibid.*, 239.

land, so the Israelite system of land ownership broadly distributed is threatened.<sup>147</sup> Solomon also drew new administrative boundaries,<sup>148</sup> deliberately ignoring tribal boundaries in order to reduce the political influence of tribal leaders. “While David eschewed outright innovations which seriously violated traditional religious and social institutions, his son Solomon sought to transform Israel into a full-fledged Oriental monarchy, and was prepared to ignore or to flout older institutions in his determination to centralize powers and to consolidate his realm.”<sup>149</sup>

During the time of the judges, a judge (*shofet*) had two functions. The first was to judge the people, deciding difficult conflicts and providing justice and relief for those who sought redress). When peaceful times dissipated, the judge became a military leader. “In both situations and in both roles he is called a *shofet*,”<sup>150</sup> to save or deliver the people. By the way, at the inception of judgeship among the Nephites, Alma<sup>2</sup> is shown carrying out both functions: he judges Nehor (Alma 1:10-15), and leads the Nephites in battle (Alma 2:16, 29–32). The federated system of the biblical judges period gave way to a monarchy “like all the nations” and the oppressive power grabs and taxation such a system overwhelmingly tends toward. The charismatic judges were expected to carry out two main functions: lead the people in battle, and provide justice. The biblical kings were expected to continue in both functions: in some respects “kingship arose in Israel in continuity with the traditions and theological conceptions of the pre-monarchic league,”<sup>151</sup> not just continuity with the judges but also stretching back to Moses and Joshua. The titles applied to the judges and the kings are the same before and after the political revolution: *sōfēt*, *mōšēl*, *nāsī*, *mōšīā’*. “Despite etymological differences, the use of the terms in *parallelismus membrorum* and their interchangeability in parallel passages indicates that they were considered synonymously during, as well as preceding, the monarchy.”<sup>152</sup> The configuration of the regime under kingship is not much different from that of judgeship. “There is no difference between

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147. Ibid, 239–40.

148. Ibid., 240.

149. Ibid., 240–41.

150. Walter J. Wolvertson, “The King’s ‘Justice’ I Pre-Exilic Israel,” *Anglican Theological Review* 41 (1959): 278.

151. Baruch Halpern, “The Uneasy Compromise: Israel between League and Monarchy,” *Traditions in Transformation, Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, eds. B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 72.

152. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 16.

the king and the ‘savior’ of old,”<sup>153</sup> although Talmon notes that the king will not have to rely on a tribal muster but will recruit a professional army, and such a transformation in the structure of the state will have profound consequences.

By Solomon’s reign, the army would incorporate cavalry and chariots, resulting in the consequent political gravitational pull of a black hole, with power accumulating to a center that will hold.<sup>154</sup> The kings did (as kings do) develop bureaucracies to carry out those functions. The army and the administrative state develop as agents of the king. David soon acquired the temperament and habits of the sedentary king. A main implied criticism of David in the Bathsheba affair (2 Samuel 11) is that David tarries at home when he should be leading his soldiers in battle. David’s son Absalom gathers support for his overthrow of David by arguing to the people that David is skimping on justice, for “thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. And Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath a suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!” (2 Samuel 15:3–4). Absalom argues that since his father is not fulfilling the two main obligations, the people are justified in rebelling; the same is true of Sheba’s attempt to overthrow David. The same goes in the Book of Mormon for Gideon’s rebellion against King Noah. King Noah’s proceeding against Abinadi is a clear-cut instance of injustice, and King Noah uses his soldiers as agents without going out himself to lead the armies. When Alma’s group splinters from the main Zeniffite colony, King Noah sends his troops:

The king, having discovered a movement among the people, sent his servants to watch them. Therefore on the day that they were assembling themselves together to hear the word of the Lord they were discovered unto the king. And now the king said that Alma was stirring up the people to rebellion against him; therefore he sent his army to destroy them.  
(Mosiah 18:32–33)

Of the biblical examples, Wolf notes that “in both cases it is clear that the tribes of the kingdom of Israel acted from the conviction that their obligation of faithfulness and obedience to the reigning king ceased as soon as it became evident that for his part he was no longer carrying out the function bestowed on him according to the commission he had

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153. *Ibid.*, 13.

154. *Ibid.*, 14.



been given.”<sup>155</sup> The Northern and Southern kingdoms were subject to persistent internal rebellion, assassination, and coups,<sup>156</sup> although such political turmoil was much more common in the Northern Kingdom. The turnover started with the first king, Saul. Absalom appeals to the people to negate the sedentary model of kingship that comes along with his father’s increasingly bureaucratic state, and return to an earlier model whereby the leader risks in battle and at the city gate. “Absalom’s revolt failed, and with it the hope of his supporters to set back the clock and to revive the authority of the ancient institutions.”<sup>157</sup> Similarly, after the Nephite revolution from kingship to judgeship, Amlici attempts to return to an earlier relationship between the ruler and the ruled by overthrowing judgeship in order to make himself king. This tradition of approving revolt when the king violates the charter with the people endured in the Northern Kingdom, where the “people [were] free to choose whom they wished to be their leader,” because the people were the sovereigns, not the king.<sup>158</sup> In the selection of king and his deposition, the people ruled. Wolf refers to the congregation of people providing “checks and balances” to limit the power of kings.<sup>159</sup>

### Founding Fathers, Biblical Roots and Branches

We often think our contemporary concerns and concepts are late arrivals, born in modernity and refined to take definitive shape in the twenty-first century. The early and even late modern periods in the West were still saturated with Christian (and more generally biblical) thought and allegiances. The 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries gave birth to what we think is a distinctively modern politics and political theology. Nelson notes that these concepts and institutions are commonly attributed to a modern trend toward secularism, but one still steeped in religious commitments. “Questions about politics quickly became questions about Revelation, about the proper understanding of God’s commands as reflected in Scripture.”<sup>160</sup> But the theological connections in such development of political thought began to lessen in the 1700s and recede faster later. The Wars of Religion, the Scientific Revolution, and other

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155. Albrecht Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 245.

156. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 22.

157. Tadmor, “The People’ and the Kingship in Ancient Israel,” 54.

158. Wolf, “Traces of Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel,” 105.

159. *Ibid.*, 108.

160. Nelson, *Hebrew Republic*, 1.

factors resulted in what is commonly called The Great Separation,<sup>161</sup> as political concerns disengaged from theological ones or actively opposed political entanglements with religion. This Separation, as the consensus articulates, resulted in distinctive features of modernity: commitments to individual rights, the role and shape of the state, and religious toleration.<sup>162</sup> But to be successful, religion had to be disentangled from politics, the latter immunized from the former. Nelson argues that this conventional wisdom about certain modern institutions and commitments gets the chronology and causation all wrong.

While Nelson agrees that the modern shape of democracy, individualism, human rights, and federalism developed in the 17th century, it wasn't from the separation of political thought and religious considerations, but the kneading together of the two: "It is, indeed, not for nothing that seventeenth-century historians have dubbed their period 'the Biblical Century.'" Yet secularization was not the reason for these developments but the intensifying influence of the Bible during the period.<sup>163</sup> Christians (many committed and a few nominal) drew upon rabbinic and medieval Jewish discussion to conceive of the Hebrew Bible as articulating a theory and structure of good government. The earlier political philosophy considered monarchy, aristocracy, and polity (what we today would call republicanism) as legitimate governmental structures. But the 17th century saw important thinkers — based on their readings of the Old Testament and medieval and contemporary Jewish midrashic analysis of the Torah — rejecting the first two governmental structures: "They now began to claim that monarchy per se is an illicit constitutional form and that all legitimate constitutions are republican."<sup>164</sup> These thinkers argued that a republic was the only valid governmental structure endorsed by the Bible and by God.

These Protestant thinkers saw in Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 8–12 a political constitution endorsed by God, an eternal political arrangement that had neither been negated nor superseded in the Christian dispensation.

They increasingly came to see it as a set of political laws that God himself had given to the Israelites as their civil sovereign. Moses was now to be understood as a *lawgiver*, as the founder of a *politeia* in the Greek sense. The consequences

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161. Ibid.

162. Ibid., 1–2.

163. Ibid., 2–3.

164. Ibid., 3.

of this reorientation were staggering, for if God himself had designed a commonwealth, then the aims of political science would have to be radically reconceived.<sup>165</sup>

The passages in Deuteronomy and 1 Samuel restricted the power of the king and provided a counterweight to the centripetal accumulation of power in the monarchy. The responsibility of believing Christians, according to this line of thought, was to align their own governing arrangements according to this biblical pattern. “It became the central ambition of political science to approximate, as closely as possible, the paradigm of what European authors began to call the *respublica Hebraeorum* (republic of the Hebrews): to compare it both to ancient and modern constitutional designs and thereby to see where the latter were deficient.”<sup>166</sup>

Think of political covenants such as the Mayflower Compact. The Puritan colonists who settled Massachusetts took their Bibles seriously and saw themselves as repeating the biblical exodus. “The American constitutional tradition will be found to have derived much of its form and content from the Judeo-Christian tradition as interpreted by the dissenting Protestant sects that made up such a high percentage of the original European settlers in British North America.”<sup>167</sup> Long before Madison and Hamilton, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut and similarly the Rhode Island Acts and Orders had installed a federal system of government, antecedent to the use of the word *federalism*. The word *federal* emerged from the Latin *foedus*, meaning “covenant.”<sup>168</sup> Such a federal system features central governing parts and local governing elements, all without losing their own identities. “Federalism in the political realm is thus analogous to the Judeo-Christian marriage relationship, and it too is derived from the Bible. As with a marriage, political federalism creates a permanent relationship while preserving the moral independence of the partners,”<sup>169</sup> whether they be spread across one horizontal governing level (such as branches of a central government) or parts of a vertical system (such as national governments linked all the way down to state, county, city, and even township governments), or both. Wherever such Protestants settled (New England, Dutch outposts in the Mid-Atlantic

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165. Ibid., 16.

166. Ibid.

167. Donald S. Lutz, “Religious Dimensions in the Development of American Constitutionalism,” *Emory Law Journal* 39 (1990): 23.

168. Ibid., 33.

169. Ibid.

colonies), “when it came time for these Protestants to order themselves politically as their charters allowed and as circumstances required, they turned to the covenant form.”<sup>170</sup> Because Calvinists were considered dangerous by more powerful and government-aligned versions of Christianity, Calvinists tended to migrate to find religious freedom and looked to the Bible to formulate political constitutions: “Across Europe and the Atlantic, from Germany to New England, Calvinists came to think of their theopolitical enterprises as ‘new Israels.’”<sup>171</sup>

The New England Puritans immediately come to mind, but “political Hebraism has [also] been recognized as a foundational principle in the establishment of the Dutch republic (1581), which took its inspiration from the biblical narrative of Exodus.”<sup>172</sup> The same modeling of ancient biblical precedent was enacted by American colonists: “Confronting particular political dilemmas with regard to legitimacy and authority, American patriots appropriated a biblical constitutional paradigm to help them make sense of their historical circumstances.”<sup>173</sup> The biblical tradition is one of the main source streams of our notions of federalism and constitution. We in the 21st century may have trouble thinking this process through, because we no longer have as strong an influence from the Bible or typological thought as the American colonists and founders had. “The importance of the Mayflower Compact is that it was the first explicitly political use of the church covenant form — the first of many political covenants to follow.”<sup>174</sup> Such covenant forms were having their impact before the American founding, before Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau were old enough, or even not yet born, to write about branches of government or life, liberty, and property. “By 1641 there was in operation on American shores much of what would become American constitutional government”<sup>175</sup> founded by settlers steeped in religious devotion and biblical readings.

These Protestant settlers saw, in their possession of a new land, a repetition of what had happened to biblical Israel as they conquered Canaan. Their attempt to escape the oppression of kingship in European contexts worked out a repeat of their reading of 1 Samuel, which cast

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170. Ibid., 25.

171. Eran Shalev, “‘A Perfect Republic’: The Mosaic Constitution in Revolutionary New England, 1775–1788,” *The New England Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (June 2009): 235.

172. Ibid., 237.

173. Ibid., 240.

174. Lutz, “Religious Dimensions in the Development of American Constitutionalism,” 26.

175. Ibid., 29.

the request for a king as resulting in a punishment for the people, who had perfectly good relationship to each other and God in the rule by judges. They read the period of the judges before Saul was anointed king as constituting a biblical idea of “the idea of several tribes living under a common, covenanted government, while preserving their respective tribal identities; [and this] became the model for the federal or covenant relationship in politics. Each town or county in America was the equivalent of a tribe, each based on a tribal covenant that created the ‘peopleness’ of the tribe.” This federal idea would later be justified and articulated in secular terms and contexts, but the model came from covenant theology.<sup>176</sup>

The Hebrew Bible doesn’t provide a theoretical discussion of the workings of government;<sup>177</sup> as Michael Walzer says, “there is no political theory in the Bible. Political theory is a Greek invention.”<sup>178</sup> Although readers can pick up details in the narrative, they have to fill in gaps in order to make any systematic description. Yet Elazar sketches four “constitutional periods” between the Exodus and Malachi. The first begins with the leadership of Moses and extends through a federal arrangement, organized by a loose confederation of tribes. “This union, perhaps the first true federal system in history, was bound together by a common constitution and law” with rudimentary national integration.<sup>179</sup> The second constitution arrived with kingship, which possessed limited power hemmed in by preexistent tribal and religious arrangements. A persistent conflict between “king and prophet was to be the primary constitutional feature of the second constitutional period.”<sup>180</sup> Even when no overt conflict between king and prophet is related, the possibility of such confrontation tended to keep the king in line, as the prophet served his “watchdog” role. This was in addition to counterbalancing the impact of the elders and people on the king’s exercise of power.<sup>181</sup>

One should see the conflict between prophets and kings in the Deuteronomistic History as a balancing of powers, a division of labor intended to ensure that kings don’t aggregate too much power into one institution or person. The American Founders tried to create a similar

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176. Ibid., 34.

177. Daniel J. Elazar, “Government in Biblical Israel,” *Tradition* 13.4 (Spring-Summer 1973): 106.

178. Walzer, *In God’s Shadow*, xii.

179. Elazar, “Government in Biblical Israel,” 107.

180. Ibid., 109.

181. R.N. Whybray, “Some Historical Limitations of Hebrew Kingship,” *Church Quarterly Review*, 163 (1962): 137.

separation of powers between different functions of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. If we see 1 Samuel 8–12 as a narrative about the prophet’s establishing legislation, about what will happen if the people’s request for a king is realized; and if we read in the story about Nathan’s condemnation of David’s murder and adultery, plus Samuel’s condemnation of King Saul for claiming priestly and executive functions to himself, we see some balancing of prophetic and monarchical powers — checks and balances. All the narratives from 1 Samuel to 2 Kings demonstrate the danger of the king’s accumulation of authority sufficient to result in despotism. Even early in the development of monarchical institutions and powers, David felt free enough to encroach on religious functions by appointing his own priests and instituting his independent policies.<sup>182</sup> King Noah also dismissed the current group of priests and appointed his own, more amenable to his interests (Mosiah 11:4). Jeroboam also instituted at the beginning of his reign what the Bible views as idolatry, by setting up two shrines, so his subjects didn’t have to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice and be influenced by southern political propaganda. A central feature of that plan was to appoint priests not of the tribe of Levi but ones loyal to him (1 Kings 12:31).

In the Northern Kingdom the prophets provided sufficient weight to prevent consolidation of kingship into dynastic arrangements. “Kingship in the northern tribes meant, in no small degree, a restoration of the principles and practices of the tribal federation with the kings far more limited in power than their southern counterparts and the older institutions of the tribal federation stronger in their governing role.”<sup>183</sup> The functions of judges/saviors in the Judges period were ad hoc and charismatic and not dynastic. “This principle of discontinuity in the chain of leadership resulted in interregnal gaps between saviors.”<sup>184</sup> Before the institution of kingship in 1 Samuel, the Israelites in the period of judges reacted to foreign threats with an ad hoc charismatic leader emerging to face the danger. With the possible exception of Gideon, such leadership never resulted in dynastic leadership but “allowed no institutional consolidation, and, above all, . . . it could not be transferred to, or inherited by, another person,”<sup>185</sup> but completed its cycle with the death of that judge/deliverer, or even earlier upon completion of the defense of the tribes from foreign incursion. This temporary or limited-term leadership was

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182. *Ibid.*, 142.

183. Elazar, “Government in Biblical Israel,” 111.

184. Talmon, “Kingship and the Ideology of the State,” 9.

185. Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, 178.

premised on the faith of the people that God would raise up in troubled times a *mosiah* who is adequate to the challenge. The destruction of the Northern Kingdom resulted in the third constitutional period, with a weakening of the prophets as a counterbalance to the monarchy in the remaining Southern Kingdom, and prophets advocating for the traditional arrangement between power centers.<sup>186</sup> The fourth period (the Second Commonwealth period) began when the last of the Davidide rulers exited the scene, and what independent rule that existed was done by a council. In all four of these constitutional arrangements “the fundamental principles animating government and politics in ancient Israel were theocratic, federal and republican.”<sup>187</sup> Through all these historical changes it is entirely proper to use what we think of as modern political terminology to describe the institutions. “Political relationships in ancient Israel were based on the covenant or federal principle (the word *federal* is derived from the Latin *foedus*, which means covenant)” and regardless of the constitutional form, the Bible builds that structure on the notion of a covenant between the people and God.<sup>188</sup> These federal structures and mindsets didn’t end with the termination of rule by judges, but endured during the monarchical period. Even the memory of that federal system was maintained by the prophets in later periods as “a messianic goal.”<sup>191</sup> An essential aspect of that federal system was the republican principle, because it “reflects the view that the political order is a public thing (*res publica*), that is to say, not the private preserve of any single man or ruling elite but the property of all those within the scope of its jurisdiction,”<sup>189</sup> with a sharing of authority among different power centers.

Just previous to the Nephite governmental reform that instituted judgeship, King Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had translated the Jaredite record. Seeing parallels between the Jaredite experience of kingship and the Nephite occasion with King Noah, Mosiah<sub>2</sub> endeavored to avoid the Jaredite disaster through institutional change. And we ought to use appropriate terminology. Mosiah<sub>2</sub> engages in regime change, and other examples of regime change in the Bible might provide a model for deeper understanding of the political revolution in Mosiah 29. Elazar focuses on two such regime changes: the Mosaic and Davidic ones.<sup>190</sup> Under Joshua,

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186. Elazar, “Government in Biblical Israel,” 111.

187. *Ibid.*, 118.

188. *Ibid.*, 120.

189. *Ibid.*, 122.

190. Elazar, “Dealing with Fundamental Regime Change,” 99.

the Mosaic regime had its most representative formulation with the three crowns (*ketarim*) represented: the ruler, the priests, and the people. The judges succeeded Joshua in this regime; under this Mosaic regime, Samuel was the last of the leaders who straddled the two divisions of the judge responsibilities (the civil administrative and the judicial), just as Alma<sub>2</sub> in the Nephite tradition similarly bridged two roles: prophetic and executive.

After the transition to kings, the biblical constitution maintained elements of the previous regime. “What was characteristic of the new regime is the combination of monarchic and tribal (or federal) institutions.”<sup>191</sup> But the people still maintained sovereignty with the power to appoint (David and Solomon) and depose kings (Rehoboam),<sup>192</sup> so that even dynastic successors had to go to the assembly and get the “consent of the governed.”<sup>193</sup> We moderns think of such institutional contrivances in terms of separation of powers, but such parceling out of authority was also characteristic of Hebraic and Jewish history, which had “no sympathy with a system of government in which a single body or group possesses a monopoly of the attributes, prerogatives, and privileges of political authority.”<sup>194</sup> Mosiah<sub>2</sub> held a constitutional convention and consulted with the governed to change regimes after King Noah violated the previous covenant between ruler and ruled. Mormon, abridging and summarizing, merely states that “Zeniff conferred the kingdom upon Noah,” without elaborating on any of succession procedure, such as ritual or covenant (Mosiah 11:1). Similarly reticent about governing arrangements is Nephi, of whom the third person narration reads, “Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings” (Jacob 1:9). In the two biblical regimes “only after rulers had usurped power or done something to break the normal constitutional relationship between governors and governed was it necessary to go through some formal covenantal act in order to reestablish the principles upon which the relationship was built.” So after Queen Athaliah usurped the throne (2 Kings 11), the priest Jehoiada covenanted with the palace guard and later the people to restore traditional governance (2 Chronicles 23:1–3).<sup>195</sup>

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191. Ibid., 119.

192. Ibid.

193. Ibid., 121.

194. Cohen, “The Concept of the Three *Ketarim*,” 29.

195. Elazar, “Dealing with Fundamental Regime Change,” 122.



The Book of Mormon engagement with kingship and judgeship is illuminated once the reader recognizes the biblical transformations of governing forms and the biblical influence on modern formulations of government into the period when kings became merely ceremonial or were eliminated altogether.

### **Nephite and Jaredite Kingship Exemplifications**

When King Mosiah<sup>2</sup> proposed changing the Nephite constitution to eliminate kingship, as Gore points out, he was responding to events in the previous chapter (Mosiah 28), having finished translation of the Jaredite record. Gore focuses on the inception of monarchy among the Jaredites, but one example king he doesn't mention rules and misrules almost exactly the way King Noah did, and is exemplary in the same way, spurring Mosiah<sup>2</sup>'s reforms. "Riplakish did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he did have many wives and concubines, and did lay that upon men's shoulders which was grievous to be borne; yea, he did tax them with heavy taxes; and with the taxes he did build many spacious buildings" (Ether 10:5). He built a magnificent throne for himself, and prisons for dissenters and tax delinquents, until the people deposed him, killed him, and exiled his family (Ether 10:6–8). Brent Metcalfe reads the similarities to be evidence that Joseph Smith plagiarized from himself in writing the Book of Mormon, stylizing King Noah and King Riplakish as copies of each other: "Attention to other literary forms and structures can be similarly problematic. One striking literary phenomenon in the Book of Mormon is the instance of narratives that mirror each other. As a case study we can distinguish twelve parallels between the stories of the Nephite king Noah and the Jaredite king Riplakish."<sup>196</sup> Metcalfe imposes a modern notion that a repetition in a story indicates lack of originality, a penchant for narrative theft. He never once considers that ancients valued repetitions and similarities because they viewed history as repetitive, and such recurrence made the events more real, more historical, more pedagogical, not less. Metcalfe joins that notion about recurrence with a simplistic modern notion that if a text demonstrates literary features, it can't also be historical: the literary and the historical are mutually exclusive.<sup>197</sup> Ancient thought

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196. Brent Lee Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue* 26 (Fall 1993): 169.

197. I have elsewhere written about the modern penchant for assuming without reading through the countervailing sources the notion that if an ancient story has what we think of as literary elements such as repeating motifs, it can't at the

didn't make a sharp distinction between literature and history. The literary and the historical were just different facets of rhetoric. Since Hayden White demonstrated, starting in the 1970s, that history and literature are inextricably intermingled, even contemporary historical theory has demolished the boundary between history and fiction. So that King Noah and King Riplakish conform to a literary motif says nothing about their historical status. White has led the revolution in historiography, which reverses the positivistic notion that literature and history are two totally different kinds of writing. Since White, we must consider that the two kinds of writing are too closely bound together for the historian to unwind them.

In White's view, then, there is a stock of "archetypal story forms," which are the bearers of the ideology of the given culture. When a historian, including the most modern and "scientific" of historians, reconstructs the past, this is always done in conformity to the plots which the intertext of the culture allows. This is what endows the narrative he or she creates with both plausibility and significance.<sup>198</sup>

Of course, the classic example of the tyrannical king in scripture who taxes his people too heavily, multiplies concubines and wives, and builds elegant edifices is the older Solomon. He 1) imposes heavy forced labor levies to build his palaces and temples (we usually call that *corvée* labor, and in the biblical tradition, it reminds the children of Israel of their slavery in Egypt (1 Kings 9:16, 21)); 2) takes many foreign and domestic wives and concubines (1 Kings 11:1–8; 9:16); 3) builds a luxurious throne (1 Kings 10:18–20) and palaces; and 4) consolidates and profits from a tremendous trade in horses and chariots, using that power to kill dissidents and rival claimants to the throne from Saul's line. The Law of the Kings in Deuteronomy forbade the accumulation of horses, and David hamstringed the horses he captured in battle — think of horses and chariots as the stealth bombers and nuclear missiles of warfare

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same time be historical. See Alan Goff, "How Should We Then Read? Reading Mormon Scripture after the Fall." *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 137–78, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1797&context=msr>. The sharp distinction between history and literature is another modern invention that doesn't reflect how history was written or understood in the ancient world; and uncritically applying that notion to ancient texts is to build a historical and textual foundation upon a misunderstanding of antiquity.

198. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 86.

today, so the accumulation of these advanced weapons results also in the accretion of power in the monarchy (1 Kings 10:26–29). Solomon turned to wickedness in his old age and presents the clearest model of evil kingship that King Noah replicates and Riplakish foreshadowed; this is kingship in all the nations that Samuel warned about.

Most of Gore’s attention to the allusive connection between the Nephite and the Jaredite patterns of kingship is spent on the selection of the initial king in the Jaredite tradition. Much as Samuel passes over the eldest sons of Jesse until settling on the youngest and least likely candidate to be the king to succeed Saul, in Ether 6 the brother of Jared is alarmed that the people request a king: “Surely this thing leadeth into captivity” (Ether 6:23), and each of the sons refuses the kingship until the last one accepts. Much like Samuel, Jared acquiesces to the desires of the people: “Suffer them that they may have a king” (Ether 6:24). Jared lets the people select their king; they select the sons of the brother of Jared, who all reject the honor and obligation until they run out of sons. They then move on to the sons of Jared, and only the last one accepts the offer and position (Ether 6:25–27). A portent of the dangers of kingship, Samuel’s choice of David “ultimately reveals the damage wrought, both individually and collectively, when political power is misused” (p. 79). Gore sees a similar dynamic in the selection of the first Jaredite king:

The rejection of the monarchy by the sons of the brother of Jared and most of the sons of Jared signifies an understanding on their part that the thing would lead into captivity. As we will see, the older brothers of Orihah [the first Jaredite king] who are unwilling to take the throne refuse to subscribe to an idolatrous politics. (p. 79)

Gore describes this politics of kingship as not only dangerous but also a religious offense, a variety of idolatry.

The Book of Mormon also describes King Noah’s leadership as idolatrous. Note that it doesn’t state that the Zeniffites worshipped idols made of wood and stone, but that their willingness to believe and follow the lies, flattery, and misrule of their king was itself idolatrous: “they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests; for they did speak flattering things unto them” (Mosiah 11:7). Believing the deceptions and blandishments of an incompetent and wicked ruler and his sycophants, merely because one prefers lies to the truth, is a form of idolatry denounced by Abinadi and the story’s narrator, Mormon. (The account of Zeniff is written in the

first person by Zeniff himself, but starting in Mosiah 11:1 the narrative shifts to third-person narration).

The Jaredite people ask that Jared and the brother of Jared appoint one of their sons to be king. The brother objects: “And now behold, this was grievous unto them. And the brother of Jared said unto them: Surely this thing leadeth into captivity” (Ether 6:23). Like Samuel, Jared acquiesces to the people’s desire to be like all the nations. Note the repetitive claim here that the monarchy the Israelites, Nephites, and Jaredites experienced had a recurring quality: “But Jared said unto his brother: Suffer them that they may have a king. And therefore he said unto them: Choose ye out from among our sons a king, even whom ye will” (Ether 6:24). Not only is King Noah a repetition of Noah, but King Noah, in King Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s reading of the record, is also a repetition of King Riplakish, and many other kings in the scriptural tradition. “By bringing Mosiah 29 into dialogue with the book of Ether and Judges-Samuel, Mormon draws attention to the weight of the phrase ‘the voice of the people’ to emphasize the responsibility of the people to express their desires and to bear the burdens — whether of kingly oppression or the shared responsibility of governing” (p. 62). This vicarious experience Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had through reading about the Jaredite kingship “surely grabbed Mosiah’s attention, presaging the possible fate of his own people” (p. 74). The book of Ether touches on something universal in human experience that Mosiah<sub>2</sub> hopes to avoid with preventive measures: “The Jaredite fall was profound and showed the depths of depravity to which any people could sink if they did not check the lust for power. The brother of Jared prophesied that captivity would befall his people if they appointed a king, and captivity ensued as father, son, and brother fought against one another, tearing society apart from the top over a quest to hold the throne” (p. 74).

### **Slow Down: Intertextual Crossing Ahead**

Having explored the intertextual connections between Noah and King Noah alongside those between the two Gideons, the most straightforward metalepsis hinted at in the Mosiah politeia pointing to the biblical politeia occurs when 1 Samuel and Mosiah define the relationship between a seer (*ro’eh*) and a prophet (*nabi*). In the Samuel/Saul story the people haven’t been persuaded by Samuel in chapter 8 that establishing a monarchy is worse than the current alternative. God tells Samuel to make it so, but Samuel procrastinates, dismissing the assembly to go home (1 Samuel 8:22) without having anointed a king. The narrative introduces the reader to Saul, whose height seems to be a qualification

for kingship (1 Samuel 9:2). Saul and his servant are looking for lost asses. The servant suggests they consult Samuel about where to search: “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer” (1 Samuel 9:9).

The book of Mosiah ensures that the reader make the connection to Samuel/Saul and kingship in the chapters after the Limhi and Alma groups recount their oppression under King Noah. In the chapter before Mosiah<sup>2</sup> enacts constitutional reform that converts government by kings to government by judges, King Mosiah<sup>2</sup> uses seer stones to translate the Jaredite records recovered by Limhi’s scouting party. Of those stones, the account explains, “And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times” (Mosiah 28:16). Earlier, Ammon told Limhi that King Mosiah<sup>2</sup> was not only a king but also a seer, and a seer is greater than a prophet (Mosiah 8:13–17). This is an example of what Richard Hayes often refers to as *metalepsis*, an intertextual connection, which by invoking one small detail, the writer can evoke the larger narrative shape of an earlier text. In the narrative about Saul’s anointing by Samuel as king, the mention of the seer reveals “what Saul’s journey to Samuel is all about: the *mispat bammek* [the manner of the king], the rights and duties of the king, will necessarily involve the *mispat bannabil*, the rights and duties of the prophet.”<sup>199</sup> Prophet and king are inextricably interconnected in biblical governance, and in the case of the anointing of a king (both Saul and David are the prime examples), the prophet can appoint the ruler or dismiss him (1 Samuel 13:13–14). At least under the initial kings anointed by Samuel, the king is more just a military commander than one who fully exercises the powers of kingship we think about when considering monarchy, and is still subject to the prophet/seer.

Gore calls the intertextual connection between the Book of Mormon and the Bible a “preoccupation with the inner and outer workings of the great biblical text,” not merely subservience to the Bible (p. 30). It engages with it, expands on it, and explains it. Such relationship of incorporating the Bible into itself, and correcting the Bible when it needs emendation and gap filling, makes for a much more complex positioning of the two scriptures than merely copying or plagiarism. The book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon especially has a particularly strong

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199. Robert Polzin, “The Monarchy Begins: 1 Samuel 8–10,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 130.

affiliation with the biblical books of Judges and Samuel (p. 32), with its backdrop of idolatry followed by military threat from outside groups and internal conflict and violence. The recurrence “in Judges-Samuel is found in Mosiah-Alma too,” with a similar theological message about wickedness and captivity (p. 33). What is often translated as the “manner of the king” in 1 Samuel 8:8–18 could be translated as the “legislation of the king,” for Samuel is setting up not just the expectations but the contractual relationship between the people and their king. The scriptural figures Samuel and Mosiah<sub>2</sub> both warn that political arrangements fall apart, and leadership by kings is particularly prone to failure (pp. 34–35). Similar to Jim Faulconer’s reading of Mosiah, Gore sees a futility in politics: “Readily apparent in these narratives is the precept that politics cannot save human beings from themselves” (p. 35). This should result in a tragic view of politics, but perhaps a comic view of religion, as long as religion is not viewed as a subsidiary of politics. Mingling the two all too often results in bad tragedy, bad comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited. This failure of politics laid out by Samuel and developed in the dialogue demonstrates the disadvantages of dynastic kingship, while the people focus on the immediate problem it solves: who will lead the Israelites militarily when they are threatened?

Of course, by the time King Noah comes along, the Israelites and Lehites had experienced centuries of kingship’s benefits and travails. Gore notes the intertextual connection between the Nephite disestablishment of monarchy and the Israelite establishment, using different terminology than I myself employ. Mosiah<sub>2</sub> is “the mirror image” of Samuel: the former is the last of the Nephite kings who oversaw the transition to judgeship, just as the latter was the last judge who supervised the transition to kingship and even supervised the first king (p. 36). The Book of Mormon doesn’t present a case study in which the Nephites merely reverse the institution of kingship and revert to an earlier and better form of government by judges. “What the Book of Mormon does not offer is fairy tale wherein the failures of Israel are simply reversed and corrected” (p. 54). Rather, the Book of Mormon is more realistic, recognizing that all formal arrangements in government bear their own risks and failings. The Book of Mormon illustrates that kritarchy, the rule of judges (p. 53), is no cure-all, but merely reveals different human and social weaknesses than those manifest by kingship. Gore argues that the analysis of politics in Mosiah 29–Alma 2 conveys a complementary

lesson to portions of the Deuteronomistic History in Judges, 1 Samuel, and the King David narrative, along with discussion of kingship in the book of Ether, to analyze the weakness of politics in addressing the fundamental problems of politics that politics can't solve.

Gore finds not just the intertextual connections between 1 Samuel and Mosiah to be important interpretive filiations to understand, but he usefully goes beyond that allusive nexus to read what the story of leadership institutions in Ether adds to that discussion. "By tracing the effects of the succession crisis experienced by Samuel, the book of Mosiah develops a parallel, kindred political theology of the heart" (p. 61). The matrix includes the Jaredite experience with kingship, especially in a founding generation of a civilization. "One of the ways the book of Mosiah overmatches the biblical story is by referencing the story of the Jaredites" (Ibid.). Even though, chronologically, the Jaredite record would precede the Samuel narrative, and the Nephite experience would bring up the rear, yet "the Book of Mormon is engaging in serious dialogue with the Bible, showing that biblical stories are by no means finished or complete" (Ibid.).

### **A Concluding Prolegomenon: Allusive Texts and Contemporary Reading**

The biblical believer asserts that the Bible is inspired by God but written by humans, even like-minded humans who may liken their thoughts about history and humanity to God's thoughts. As with all productions planted by human minds and harvested by human hands, it contains gaps, contradictions, and puzzles which the divine mind leaves the readers to fill or demystify — with sufficient clues to do so adequately. "If God is the implied author of the Bible, then the gaps, repetitions, contradictions, and heterogeneity of the biblical text must be *read*, as a central part of the system of meaning production of that text."<sup>200</sup> The Bible and the Book of Mormon can be both inspired and full of aporias and ambiguities. It is a rabbinic way of thinking which insists that scripture requires the reader to unriddle the fissures and inconsistencies because ultimately — when rightly read — the shortcomings are such only from a too limited and shallow reading. Some of those gaps need to be filled by the reader, with a recognition that the creative process resulting in the Eden event and all that follows hasn't ended the divine creative impulse. God continues to create, and so do humans, as much as they are created

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200. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, 41.

in the divine image. The creation mandate given to Adam and Eve and Noah included the human extension of the divine work of organizing the chaotic wildlands by engaging in agriculture, an extension of the work God undertook to bring organization out of chaotic, unformed matter. Humans have merely added upon that cultivation engaged in as Adam wrings produce out of the land by the sweat of his brow; Cain exercises dominion by planting and harvesting food; Noah nurtures the rows of his vineyard; and King Noah plants vineyards and wine-presses to make wine in abundance. We modern humans greatly expand that creative work by typing words into keyboards, manufacturing cars and computers, designing and building complex machines such as aircraft and CRISPR gene-editing equipment. We fulfill that creative mandate by sitting, philosophizing, and writing about texts we inherit from past, and the connective conceptual tissues, such as theories about allusion, that, much like tendons and ligaments, permit those scriptural muscles and joints to bend, flex, and leverage. As such, the text that recounts that creative activity constantly works forward and backward, into the future and pointing to the past, so that type and anti-type are connected with allusive filaments we may yet not grasp. In some future we'll no longer see through a glass darkly, but clearly.

The nearly ubiquitous presence of allusions to the Bible in postbiblical Hebrew literature is a major index of this binocular vision of the Bible: the allusions occur because the Bible provides later Hebrew writers a thick concordance of phrases, motifs, and symbols that encode a set of theological, historical, and national values (a canon in the strict sense of the *O.E.D.*); and the allusions occur ... because the Bible in Hebrew speaks resonantly, even to the most pious readers, as a collection of great works of literature.<sup>201</sup>

We twenty-first century readers have only begun to read.

The Bible (and the Book of Mormon), like all texts, we “never really confront [them as] a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or — if the text is brand-new — through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive

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201. Robert Alter, *Canon and Creativity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 32.



traditions.”<sup>202</sup> Sometimes those interpretive traditions mislead readers, as the always-already-read texts are read superficially, in ways that would be improved upon by adjusting or abandoning one interpretive tradition (modern reading habits and presuppositions, for example) for another.

The tendency moderns exhibit to foreground historical questions as we read such sacred texts is one such tradition we ought to recognize as limited, superficial, and misleading. We need to start from a new genesis and learn to read again, and Gore’s example of, and emphasis on, reading the spaces and gaps between Book of Mormon passages and between the Book of Mormon and the Bible provides one such exemplary opportunity to start reading anew. The reader then can be conscious of the “metacommentary,” “according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it. Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code.”<sup>203</sup> By understanding the presuppositions and habits we bring to reading ancient scripture, we can better comprehend the inevitable contribution the reader brings to the task of creating meaning from the texts. We can not only become better readers but also better disciples, for reading also is part of the creative mandate. We ourselves are Adam and Eve, plowing deeply the furrows into the genealogy of humans, working the soil of a whole new world of textual understanding and planting, as we organize and harvest the ground east of Eden. We have much planting and reaping to do, and we textual farmers should dig and fertilize, cultivate and weed, and water in the hope that we may gather in abundance the wisdom sown by God and our ancestors.

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202. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.

203. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

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