



Type: Unpublished

Expanding Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Pre-Exilic Israelite Religious Patterns

Author(s): Gordon C. Thomasson

Abstract: A report on the discovery of major pre-exilic Israelite feasts, festivals, holy days, and related religious practices within the Book of Mormon, their implications for study of the text, insights into the continuity of religious practices from pre-exilic to modern times, and the potential contribution of the Book of Mormon to the study of pre-exilic Israelite religion.

EXPANDING APPROACHES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON:¹

PRE-EXILIC ISRAELITE RELIGIOUS PATTERNS

Gordon C. Thomasson² (c) 1985

ABSTRACT

A report on the discovery of major pre-exilic Israelite feasts, festivals, holy days, and related religious practices within the Book of Mormon, their implications for study of the text, insights into the continuity of religious practices from pre-exilic to modern times, and the potential contribution of the Book of Mormon to the study of pre-exilic Israelite religion.

INTRODUCTION

As is the case with any ancient scripture, systematic study of the Book of Mormon is a cumulative process. No discovery, however new or revolutionary in appearance, is made in a vacuum. Insights are built on the shoulders of others. As I have detailed elsewhere, study of the Hebrew nature of the Book

¹My indebtedness to Hugh Nibley here, as in many other areas, should be transparently obvious. As Rabbi Joshua ben Perachiah said, "Secure a teacher for yourself, and acquire a companion for yourself [with whom to study]." Hugh has been these things to many of us, and I am grateful, and dedicate this study to him.

²Gordon C. Thomasson is an applied anthropologist and student of the scriptures. Any errors contained herein are solely his responsibility. Special acknowledgements are due to the Gospel Doctrine class of the Lakeview IV Ward, Provo, Utah, who so enthusiastically met their responsibilities as students as to spur on and make possible many of these discoveries. Many thanks are owed to, among others, David E. Boruchowitz (DB), Richard Erickson (RE), Jerome Horowitz (JH), Hugh W. Nibley (HN), Robert F. Smith (RS), John L. Sorenson (JS), John W. Welch (JW), Steven Wood, and Benjamin Urrutia (BU), for their initial confirmations of my discoveries and encouragement, insights, corrections, and for their own discoveries as noted in Appendix II. Robert F. Smith's many contributions along other lines, at all stages in this research have been too numerous to adequately acknowledge. Also, I am indebted to F.A.R.M.S. for help in organizing the August 14, 1985 F.A.R.M.S. seminar on festivals in the Book of Mormon, and to the seminar participants. Special thanks are also owed to Elder Neal A. Maxwell for his encouragement and support, and to my family, who have sacrificed more than anyone else to make this research possible.

of Mormon has its roots in the first generation of L.D.S. church history.³

Later generations also each made their contributions. Notably, since the 1930s, Sidney Sperry and his students' study of the Hebraic nature of the Book of Mormon's translation-English greatly enlarged our horizons. More directly, with Hugh Nibley's recognition of "Old World Ritual in the Nephite World" as published in An Approach to the Book of Mormon a new frontier was opened.⁴

Following Hugh Nibley's pioneering, John A. Tvedtnes' study of "The Nephite Feast of Tabernacles" further enlarged our perspective,⁵ so that by 1984 the stage was set for the discovery of a multitude of texts referring or alluding to the major pre-exilic Israelite feasts, festivals, holy days, and related religious practices within the Book of Mormon. These discoveries initially accumulated without a recognition of their significance, through the spring and early summer of 1984. It was not until July 21, 1984, when clear, although heretofore unrecognized implicit references to the celebration of Passover in Alma 36-42 were firmly impressed upon my mind, that the implications of these discoveries became obvious: namely that the very foundations of the whole Book of Mormon narrative are, as they should be, the ancient Israelite ritual cycles (of weeks, lunar months, harvests, one, seven and fifty years, etc.). Up until

³See especially my forthcoming F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary, Report "Three Easy Pieces Preliminary to a Critical Analytic History of Book of Mormon Apologetics," which includes materials developed while doing graduate work under Hugh Nibley and Richard L. Anderson, 1966-68.

⁴Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, published by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957).

⁵John A. Tvedtnes, "The Nephite Feast of Tabernacles," in Tinkling Cymbals: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley [on the occasion of his 65th birthday], ed. John W. Welch (Los Angeles, Calif.:n.p., 1978), which is also available as a F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report (TVE-78).

now these have gone unrecognized, mainly due to the unconscious Goyische/Christian intellectual mind set or bias which students, for generations, have brought to their study of the text, conditioning their own expectations and even those of persons raised or trained in Judaism.⁶ The discussion which follows reports some of the discoveries which have been made, and their implications.

Methodological Caveats

Secular scholarship, for some two centuries, has consistently operated on a number of usually unquestioned assumptions, including, among others:

- 1) that religious histories reflect consistent evolutionary patterns,
- 2a) that prophecy based upon inspiration or revelation is impossible,
- 2b) consequently, any passage which appears to anticipate an historical event must necessarily be a later interpolation into a text, and
- 3) that the "supernatural" is an unnecessary category.

⁶The biases range from minor particulars such as the non-scriptural headnotes to chapters which editors after Joseph Smith have inserted (for example, the textually unjustified and anachronistic allusions to Nephite "coins" [1920 edition] and "coinage" [1981 edition] rather than to "weights and measures" in Alma 11), to a massive hermeneutical assumption that anything remotely resembling "Judaism" would not be found in the Book of Mormon since Lehi would have left behind all such supposedly "apostate" practices "in the old country" or when he "got off the boat." This latter prejudice, absorbed unconsciously from and reflecting a general current of Christian anti-Semitism in American culture, has conditioned most people's approach to the Book of Mormon, in spite of significant affirmations of the "Law of Moses" by the B.C.E. messianic/Christian New World Israelite communities in the text (cf. I Nephi 4:16, II Nephi 5:10, 25:24, Alma 30:3, etc.). And we should not shrink from calling the B.C.E. Nephite community Christian. From the standpoint of what constitutes a "good" translation into English, to say nothing of a true prophet revealing to a people the Lord's name before His earthly ministry, it is not at all anachronistic for the Book of Mormon to represent messianic communities as knowing the name of Jesus Christ, or being "Christian," at the same time that they remained observant of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

Any pretense of "objectivity" is thoroughly falsified by the adoption of such unprovable assumptions, of course, as is also the case with their opposites. As is now widely understood, one may claim to have adopted one set or another based on letting the "facts speak for themselves," but by the time "facts" have been teased enough to talk to anyone, they are already thoroughly molded by the puppeteer's (i.e. scholar's) hand.

Anthropologically speaking, it is a prideful self-deception that the implications of biases deriving from a secular worldview are any less pervasive and invisible to the scholars who share them than are those of the supposedly most "primitive" and isolated tribe.

The question of evolutionary and anti-prophetic/"supernatural" bias is especially relevant here since it often translates, in the academy, into an assumption that what we know as Judaism today is a post-Babylonian development. From an evolutionary framework, it is assumed that pre-exilic Judaism cannot be like what existed later, and so the biblical text is scissored to fit a pattern. I am operating with objectively no less justifiable assumptions:

- 1) that among other possibilities, continuity, even over millennia, and/or "social oscillation"⁷ are just as potentially viable as is unilineal evolution, especially in the realm of public religious rituals which are virtually community property,⁸

⁷"Social oscillation" is Sir Edmund Leach's term, coined to describe repeated changes back and forth between essentially totalitarian and democratic poles on a political spectrum within Burmese hill tribes. His findings, reported in Edmund Leach, Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pulled the cozy "evolutionary rug" out from under British social anthropological theory.

⁸As I have elsewhere written concerning the origins of myth in ritual, When an apostasy occurs the first thing that is lost is the priesthood or authority to act and speak for God. The ability to

- 2a) that historical sources are as or more entitled to the presumption of "innocence" or accuracy than is any theory developed after the fact, and
- 2b) consequently, that the burden of proof rests on those who assert the need to do violence to what is and will almost certainly always be our largest and primary source for Israelite history--the Bible--in order to make it (the facts) fit the procrustean bed of a particular theory or hypothetical model, developed millennia later, rather than letting the text "speak for itself," and
- 3) that the mantic, prophetic and "supernatural" are legitimate potential categories of explanation.

I accept as more probably true the proposition that most, if not all Old Testament religion and ritual pre-dates the exile, rather than being an after-the-fact interpolation by "deuteronomists" or whomever.⁹ I am also

communicate with and for God is seen as vital to maintaining the sanctity of the public teachings. The outward and physical rituals, on the other hand, are in effect "community property" and facts of common experience which are more resistant to change. The community "knows" that [and how] the rituals are to be performed, just as their ancestors had done, and the myths evolve as a rationale for the [persisting] rituals.

Gordon C. Thomasson, "The Gospel of Philip: An Interpretation" (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Mormon Heritage, 1970):3.

⁹I take this position without denying the potential validity of a JEDP-type hypothesis for explaining certain aspects of the canonical text. For one possible model which fits this case see John L. Sorenson's "The 'Brass Plates' and Biblical Scholarship" in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. X, No. 4, (Autumn 1977):31-39. This in no way precludes the option that an editorial melding of sources could have occurred under "supernatural"/prophetic direction before, as easily as after the fact, thus, for example, making possible a deutero- and trito-Isaiah without compromising the "authenticity" of scripture. It is ironic that some L.D.S. scholars have taken positions regarding biblical criticism totally oblivious to the ancient internal textual/editorial history of the Book of Mormon. In contrast, see Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and the Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report TSN-82, (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1983), note 2, for an outline of some thirty types of texts and textual traditions which feed into the Book of Mosiah alone, and S. Kent

convinced that sufficient evidence already exists to substantiate the authenticity of the Book of Mormon to justify its use as a source for the study of pre-exilic biblical religion, rather than using the Bible to "prove" the Book of Mormon. Given the significance of what has been discovered so far, I argue that the Book of Mormon is moving beyond the need for apologists, to the point where it can serve, second only to the Bible itself, as the richest, oldest, and most comprehensive documentary evidence available for the study of pre-exilic biblical religion.

Significant points of Israelite history remain unsolved at this point that are especially relevant to the Book of Mormon. These include, among others,

- 1) ambiguity as to whether, in the Old World, the New Year was situated on 1 Tishri or 1 Nisan (cf. Exodus 12:1-2) at a particular point in history.¹⁰ This is compounded by
- 2) the independently shifting location of New Years in Israelite (luni-solar) and Mayan (360-day Long Count) calendars,
- 3) the very close correlation between the dates of the Lehite exodus from

Brown's "Lehi's Personal Record: Quest for a Missing Source" in Brigham Young University Studies, 24, No. 1 (Winter 1984):19-42. Moreover, the 19th and 20th century editorial histories of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price provide a precedent and test case for the vast majority of hypotheses produced by biblical criticism, which in no way endangers the integrity of scripture. See, in this regard, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies' Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference, 3 volumes, (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1984-87).

¹⁰See especially the January 1985 F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE, "New Year's Celebrations" (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1985).

Jerusalem and Christ's birth within the Nephite text and Old World chronology that obtain using the Mayan Long Count,¹¹

4) the shifts that radical differences in climate, cropping patterns and growing seasons impose on agriculturally-linked festivals (and other culture patterns, including warfare--cf. II Samuel 11:1, 1 Nisan or the Vernal Equinox, I Chronicles 20:1) as one moves from the dry Mediterranean climate of Israel to the hot, rainy tropics,¹²

5) the apparent blurring of distinctions between the major festivals that are thematically and structurally connected with the Exodus from Egypt (Tabernacles, Passover, and [its arguable extension] Pentecost),¹³ in the Old World at certain points in history,

6) the oscillation in emphasis or predominance that occurs within a ritual complex such as the New Year-Divine Kingship-Feast of Tabernacles and Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur "days of awe," all of which were probably combined into one major annual event,¹⁴ with Tabernacles until this day still being called "The Festival," where the shifting emphasis would

¹¹The correlation was first noted by John L. Sorenson, "Observations on Nephite Chronology," unpublished Book of Mormon Working Paper #8a (Provo, Utah: April 1970). See also the discussion in Robert F. Smith, "Book of Mormon Event Structure: The Ancient Near East" F.A.R.M.S Preliminary Report SMI-84, (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1985):2.

¹²See especially the discussion of the linkage of royal progresses within systems of divine kingship to, for example, the monsoon cycle in Southeast Asia in Gordon C. Thomasson "Togetherness is Sharing an Umbrella: Divine Kingship, The Gnosis, and Religious Syncretism" in Tinkling Cymbals, op. cit.:86ff.

¹³See, for example, Abraham P. Bloch's discussion of "Shavuot: An Appendage of Passover" in The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days (New York: KTAV, 1978), chapter 9.

¹⁴See John Bright, A History of Israel, 3rd edition, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981):171.

depend primarily, so it would appear, more on "political" considerations such as whether the people are governed by a prophet and elders, judges, or a king at that moment in their history than by any single religious principle,¹⁵

7) unauthorized human intervention, as in I Kings 12:32-33, and 8) simple human clerical error, as reflected in III Nephi 1:5, 8:2-3,5.

Lastly, it must be acknowledged that references to Israelite religious practices in the Book of Mormon are of a more or less implicit nature. The majority of the writers of the text seem to have been relatively ethnocentric, as all humans are prone to be, and took for granted that later readers would "naturally" understand much of their own culture. They do not seem to imagine that later readers would not recognize the often subtle though unmistakable allusions they make to various practices without explicitly naming them. By taking their culture for granted, they leave readers in the same position as generations of New Testament students who, relatively ignorant of Jewish law (the anti-Semitic bias in Christianity again), see the Jewish evangelists' description of the death of Judas as being at odds with the account in the Book of Acts.¹⁶ Nevertheless, anyone minimally familiar with modern Judaism, let

¹⁵On some aspects of the writers' orientation in the Book of Mormon see John L. Sorenson's, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Codex" in the Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early and Historic Archaeology, 139 (December 1976).

¹⁶For a discussion of Jewish law which New Testament writers took for granted in discussing Judas' death, and which later perplexed readers and textual critics have ignored, see the forthcoming manuscript on this subject by John W. Welch and Gordon C. Thomasson.

alone Old Testament religion, will find that once pointed out, the references and allusions seem unmistakable.¹⁷

"The ordinances of God,
according to the law of Moses"

Nephi, within a brilliant discussion of the necessity of cultural understanding in relation to the interpretation of the scriptures, informs us that he intentionally did not teach the people the "doings," "manner," "works" and "things of the Jews," (II Nephi 25:2,6). I doubt that he would have even bothered to say this if he were thinking of hair length, clothing styles, or other trivia about which cultures become obsessed. It is fair to assume, in line with the practices of other desert sectaries such as the Rechabites, that he is instead concerned with interpretation of scriptures, ritual practices, etc. He would not be repudiating

the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses; for they were taught to keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled (Alma 30:3). Instead there would be a concern to purify the ordinances, removing layers of pagan accretions from the observances and restoring their true nature. If this is the case, then the major, scripturally mandated Israelite patterns of

¹⁷If the Book of Mormon were a forgery, it would, here as elsewhere, be an incredible masterpiece. The forger quite unsubtly creates apparent marks of authenticity, making sure no one misses them. Passages would thus be quite explicit, noting, for example, that a Passover was being celebrated, or whatever. Instead the Book of Mormon understates to the point that the Israelite rituals so far discovered and now clear to Jews, non-Mormons, and Mormons alike, remained invisible, with the exception of Mosiah 1-6, for 154 years, until our stupor of thought was removed and we deliberately sought them out.

worship, including rites¹⁸ of the home, synagogue, sanctuary, and temple, as well as festivals and Holy Days should have been practiced by the Book of Mormon peoples, though we should not necessarily expect them to be identical with what we find in other Old World sources. There would be both continuities and divergences, not just in terms of deletions, but also in adaptations based upon these peoples' own collective history as a covenant and a diaspora people. I would suggest that this is in fact the case, and it is time that we seriously begin discussion of ritual/religious life among the peoples of the Book of Mormon.¹⁹

THE NEW YEAR-LINKED COMPLEX OF FESTIVALS

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), religious (Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur "days of awe"), and religio-political (divine kingship) year rites are

¹⁸It should be noted that a common misspelling in the published editions of the Book of Mormon is the substitution of "rights" for the word "rites," thus giving a false political connotation to a religious statement (cf. Alma 43:45,47, where both the parallel verses read "rites" in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon and the printer's manuscript). Alma 44:5 preserves "rites" as it should be, whereas Alma 51:6 follows the printer's manuscript in reading "rights," while the original manuscript employs the word "rites" and makes much more sense in context. Cf. III Nephi 2:12 which was likewise very probably "rites" in the original manuscript--in accordance with a scribal correction in the printer's manuscript. These and other sources will hereinafter be referred to as [O] (original manuscript), [P] (printer's manuscript), [P^c] (corrected printer's manuscript), and 1830 (1830 edition of the Book of Mormon). The above cited text and subsequent references are corrected based on the Book of Mormon Critical Text, op. cit., (hereinafter referred to only as the Book of Mormon Critical Text) which normally follows [O], [P] and 1830 when possible. Exceptions will be noted accordingly.

¹⁹The Book of Mormon's authors and editors would have taken for granted the many religious practices we are here concerned with, and would hardly have thought to mention them explicitly for the benefit of Gentile readers. Moreover, our own lack of familiarity (to say nothing of a lack of expectation or "looking for" certain data) with Israelite religion would also blind us to what for them would be very obvious allusions and references.

linked with the new year celebration. While a given text may emphasize one element of the complex, almost eclipsing other dimensions, this quite predictably correlates with both the type of government in power (kings will tend to emphasize the coronation, prophets and judges the Day of Atonement, etc.), and the text we are reading at the moment (Chronicles vs. Samuel, for example, or the Large Plates of Nephi compared to the Small Plates). The Book of Mormon reflects elements of each dimension during different periods (patriarchal/Lehite, Kings/Nephi to Mosiah, and judges/Alma, etc.) of history, as does the Bible.

Tabernacles and Divine Kingship

The most well-known occurrence of ritual in the Book of Mormon is Sukkot or Feast of the Tabernacles in Mosiah 1-6.²⁰ This observance is linked very directly with the year-rite and regency of the two most notable kings in the Book of Mormon, Benjamin and Mosiah II, and has been amply discussed.²¹ Several examples of divine kingship ritual patterns have also been found among the Lamanites, indicating that their culture and that of the Nephites might be noted as much by their similarities as the differences that developed.

In Alma 20, after the conversion of Lamoni, Ammon and this vassal king, son of the overlord or "king over all the land" (v. 8), are proceeding to Middoni to attempt to free Ammon's brethren. Lamoni's father, the "king of

²⁰Tabernacles is one of the major festivals, the observance of which will occur in the last days. See Zechariah 14:16, 18-19. Compare also Malachi 3:3; III Nephi 24:3; Doctrine and Covenants 13; 124:39; 128:24.

²¹See notes 4, 5, and 12. Also see Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Symbolic Complex and the Complex Symbolism of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," cited in note 9. A more detailed study of Mosiah 1-6 is under preparation and is being edited by Stephen Ricks and John W. Welch.

kings" is, judging from the text, in a belligerent mood. His first words are the key:

Why did ye not come to the feast on that great day when I made a feast unto my sons,²² and unto my people (Alma 20:9, emphasis added)?

For a vassal king not to attend the great feast at the year-rite, or to give one himself was treason.

When Adonijah, one of David's sons, takes it upon himself to host such a "barbecue" everyone understands that it is more than a dinner. He, Nathan, Bathsheba and David all recognize it is an attempt to claim and usurp Solomon's place as David's heir (I Kings 1:1-30). David knows the "game," however, and "one-ups" Adonijah by having Solomon make a peaceful/royal entry into Jerusalem upon the king's mule (a horse was reserved for conquest), having him receive the prophet's anointing and receiving the acclamation of the populace, which puts Adonijah in his place and quells the revolt (I Kings 1:33-53, cf. Matthew 21:7-11, for Jesus' Triumphal Entry as King).

There is little reason to question, as Hugh Nibley immediately noted when this passage was pointed out to him,²³ that (in Hebrew) the Great Day referred to in Alma 20:9 was the annual coronation, and that Lamoni's father had mounted a punitive expedition to suppress the rebellion which King Lamoni's non-attendance normally would have signified. His anger at Ammon probably reflects his suspicion that Ammon had incited Lamoni to revolt, following a common pattern among Nephite dissenters in Lamanite history. In deed, Lamoni's

²²At least one of Lamoni's father's other sons, he who became the "Anti-Nephi-Lehi," and replaced his father after he abdicated his crown was almost certainly also already a vassal king like Lamoni himself. "Anti-Nephi-Lehi" is a very appropriate inherited title for a Lamanite king.

²³Conversation with the author.

father takes Ammon to be Lamoni's champion, and after being vanquished offers him (or he ritually offers through him to Lamoni?) half the kingdom. After his life is spared he in fact makes Lamoni his equal rather than his vassal, ceding to him "his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more" (Alma 20:26).

Two other reflections of the Divine Kingship/Year-Rite pattern have also been discovered reflecting both Nephite and Lamanite understanding of these practices. John Sorenson and I both independently noted that Teancum's killing of Amalickiah (Alma 51:34-37--52:1-2) almost certainly caused panic among the Lamanites because it (was timed/planned to?) so perfectly fit into the rituals of divine kingship with the dying and resurrection of the king taking place on the evening and morning of the New Year. In this case, however, Teancum's javelin prevents Amalickiah rising, and throws panic into the Lamanite forces. This was a set-piece of psychological warfare, like pulling tent pegs during a Bedouin night-time raid on the enemy's camp, and it worked as planned. Add to this the non-Freudian, though "Oedipal" accession of Amalickiah to the Lamanite throne (killing the king and marrying the queen) and the archetypal nature of this text becomes overwhelming. Moreover, Teancum's second foray, when he kills Ammoron and is himself killed, is not just an act of macho bravado. It too is timed, occurring on the day before the end of the thirty-first year of the reign of the judges (Alma 62:36-39). From these two instances we not only see the ideology of kingship reflected as it was understood among the Nephites and Lamanites, but also the emergence of what may be a New World seasonal pattern in the times when kings go forth to battle (II Samuel 11:1, I Chronicles 20:1). Such a pattern is predictable, both due to climate facilitating or rendering nearly impossible the movement of men and

matériel during the dry and rainy seasons respectively, and the characteristic reticence of agricultural peoples to fight during the times of peak labor demand that extend from when land clearing and sowing begin until the harvests are in. The season of traditional warfare in all but equatorial regions is usually after the harvests are in and before the coming of the next rainy season. Also, we may begin to suspect that in a book as heavily condensed and carefully edited as the Book of Mormon purports to be and demonstrably is, no date in the text is without some significance, whether or not it is immediately apparent to us.²⁴

Rosh Hashana--Yom Kippur: The Ten Days of Awe

Another, more pacific dimension of the New Year festival complex is the period of "ten days of awe" or penitence, that extend from Rosh Hashana or New Year's day to Yom Kippur, the "Day of Atonement." Under the reign of the judges we find the High Holy Days and other ancient festivals were also observed.

In Alma 28, for example, we see that the Amalekite-inspired war of Nephite armies against the Lamanites ended with widespread death and destruction.

²⁴Another example of the close editing of the Book of Mormon is found in what, at first glance, appears to be an almost pointless digression from the narrative in Alma 11. The discussion of the sophisticated system of Nephite weights and measures seems almost irrelevant to the text, until the metonymic relationships of the units ezrom (Alma 11:6) and the largest unit of measure, the antion (Alma 11:19) are linked to the character/nature/behavior of Zeezrom (Alma 11:22), the chief ruler Antionah (Alma 12:20), and the city characterized by pride in its "big money" status, Antionum (Alma 31:3). In this regard see Gordon C. Thomasson, "What's in a name?: Metonymic naming in the Book of Mormon" delivered at the Thirty-Third Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures as part of a F.A.R.M.S. panel on "Book of Mormon Names," sponsored by the Society for Early and Historic Archaeology, September 28, 1984, at Brigham Young University (unpublished ms. in possession of the author).

And now, surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer. And thus ended²⁵ the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi . . . and the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges is ended (Alma 28:6-7,9, emphasis added). After the end of the fifteenth year, and I feel it can justifiably be assumed from the way the text reads that warfare did not continue up to the very last day of that year, we find that a curious combination of statements occurs.

[B]ut it came to pass that²⁶ after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer, (and it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) there began to be continual peace throughout all the land. Yea, and the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord; and they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses; for they were taught to keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled. And thus the people did have no disturbance in all the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi (Alma 30:2-4, emphasis added).²⁷

²⁵"Ended," Book of Mormon Critical Text. It is used here in preference to "endeth," both because the latter is an archaizing of the text that occurred contrary to readings in [O], [P], and 1830, and because "ended" in verse 6 better matches verse 9.

²⁶Corrected following Book of Mormon Critical Text. In this and many other cases, reinserting words such as "that" makes the text translate back into Semitic languages much more easily.

²⁷At the F.A.R.M.S. 1984 Festivals Seminar, John W. Welch quickly recognized that continual peace throughout all the land (adding sixteen years of the reign of the judges together with thirty three years of the reign of Mosiah II), signals that this is a Jubilee year, falling 50 years after Benjamin and the priests had worked to establish peace in the land (Words of Mormon 17-18) and 49 years after Benjamin's feast and coronation of Mosiah II, which ends with Mosiah II commanding the people to go and plow their fields

Since the war was over, the phrase "buried their dead" normally would include a process of mourning. In the one description of funerary ritual in the Book of Mormon that gives timing (Helaman 9:10), in typical Semitic style the deceased is buried within 24 hours; and cases where immediate burial is impossible, as in some wars when the dead are too numerous, they are thrown into a river to avoid polluting the land (for example Alma 44:21-22). From this I would argue that we are justified in putting emphasis on the phrase "and also after" as setting off a reference to the period of 1-10 Tishri (the High Holy days that are aptly summarized in the phrase "the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer"). Without naming it, this is as explicit a reference to the Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur "Days of Awe" as could be made, and the text uses it directly ("and it was in") to introduce the sixteenth year, which, as noted above was a Jubilee year. From this dating, we can see that in contrast to the prose narrative sections that precede and follow it, Alma's "Thanksgiving Hymn" (Alma 29) is a most appropriate and predictable liturgical creation for celebrating the High Holy Days after so bloody a war.

Benjamin Urrutia has also noted a reference to the High Holy Days that has previously been missed because, among other things, we visually "read" chapter breaks and headings as interrupting narrative, often not connecting the content of the last verse of a chapter with the first verse in the next. When

(Mosiah 6:7. This is a non sequitur among agricultural peoples, unless it is a Jubilee year when all agriculture is prohibited), which Mosiah II himself begins--the royal ritual first plowing known around the world. Moreover, Helaman 6:14 indicates that the sixty-fifth year of the Judges was also a year of peace, continuing the Israelite Jubilee pattern. See also Appendix II. As Benjamin Urrutia suggests, this is a "Good question to pursue. Did Nephites and Lamanites respect the Jubilee year truce? Most of the time? Some of the time?" If they did, it suggests that both groups were still using essentially the same ritual calendar system, many centuries into their history.

chapter divisions and headings (including, as in this case, those found in the original manuscript) are removed, on the other hand, the obscure becomes obvious. Note how the New Year ritual elements, underlined, stand out below compared with normally printed editions, and obviously serve as both a ritual and a literary transition from the 18th to the 19th year.

And the armies of the Nephites, or of Moroni, returned and came to their houses and their lands. And thus ended the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus ended the record of Alma, which was wrote²⁸ upon the plates of Nephi. . . Behold, now it came to pass that the people of Nephi were exceedingly²⁹ rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto their God; yea, and they did fast much and pray much, and they did worship God with exceeding³⁰ great joy. And it came to pass in the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi . . .(Alma 44:23-45:2, emphasis added)

Finally, "Day of Atonement" types are notable in I Nephi 2-4. First we must contrast the Anchor Bible translation of the Hebrew text of Genesis 49:22-24 with the traditional reading:

²⁸Book of Mormon Critical Text.

²⁹[O], [P], exceedingly; 1830 exceedingly.

³⁰[O], [P], exceding; 1830, exceeding.

Anchor Bible

Joseph is a wild colt,
A wild colt by a spring,
Wild asses on a hillside.
Archers in their hostility
Harried and attacked him.
Yet each one's bow stayed
rigid. . . .³¹

King James Translation

Joseph is a fruitful bough,
even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall.
The archers have sorely grieved him
and shot at him, and hated him:
But his bow abode in strength. . . .

It should be noted that Latter-day Saint linkage of Lehi with both the jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:17) and Joseph's blessing is enhanced by Speiser's reading in combination with ancient "Day of Atonement" imagery (in Leviticus 16:5-28 and from numerous Talmudic and liturgical sources) that helps to clarify the ritual and typological aspects of I Nephi 2-4. We see Nephi's task is to **redeem** the plates (I Nephi 3:22-24) in order to **observe the law** (I Nephi 3:20, 5:11, etc.). There is a **rebuke for sins** and a **beating** (I Nephi 3:29, albeit a literal rather than a symbolic one). Laban, Nephi and his brothers are like **scapegoats**³² that are chosen by lot (Leviticus 16:8, I Nephi 3:11), one to be sent away from the camp of Israel to Azazel, never to return, and the other to

³¹E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday/ The Anchor Bible series, 3rd edition, 1980):363, 367-368, note 22. See also Speiser's discussion of bows that fail, note 24, and W.F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, "The Creation of the Composite Bow in Canaanite Mythology" in *JNES*, I (1942):227-229, in relation to I Nephi 16:18.

³²It should be noted that conventional interpretations of the cleansing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12-19) ignore the fact that a Samaritan was neither bound nor eligible to have a Levite perform the prescribed (and ritually isomorphic) "scapebird" ritual for cleansed lepers (Luke 17:14, cf. Leviticus 14:4-7).

be killed.³³ Lehi and his family must leave Jerusalem (I Nephi 2:1-2), and later his sons are pursued into the wilderness (over/beyond the [city] wall) by Laban's servants (I Nephi 3:27, Leviticus 16:10). And then Laban seems to fall into the place of the goat (ram or sheep) which is sacrificed:

"It is better than one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (I Nephi 4:12-13, cf. John 11:50, Leviticus 16:15).

Nephi's negative confession clearly fits the Yom Kippur pattern:

"Never at any time have I shed the blood of man" (I Nephi 4:10).³⁴

And lastly there is a concern for the fulfilment of vows which is evocative of Kol Nidre in I Nephi 3:7-4:37. For example,

"As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the lord hath commanded us" (I Nephi 3:15).

Such Book of Mormon types and images are consistent and coherent.

³³There is a reversal or substitution of roles here, like that of the killing of the king's substitute in divine kingship, when Laban dies instead of the brothers he tried to have killed. But more to the point, Laban dies with his throat cut like the ram providentially caught in the thicket [Genesis 22:13] instead of Isaac (Nephi and his brothers). Compare also the ritual slaying of the already defeated Goliath (I Samuel 17:51-54), thus redeeming Israel from an insult to their God and the threat of enslavement to the Philistines (also a type of Exodus and Passover):

"[I]f I [Goliath] prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us" (I Samuel 17:9).

³⁴See I Nephi, note 153, Book of Mormon Critical Text, Vol. I, which compares the formulaic passage in Acts 10:14, "I have never" with a command from heaven which is repeated three times (Acts 10:9-16, cf. I Nephi 4:10-18).

PASSOVER

While Alma 36 has been analyzed very thoroughly in terms of its style and is a classic example of chiasmus,³⁵ the question of why so much poetic effort would be expended in a written record also needs to be asked. In fact, when two of the most complex chiasms in the Book of Mormon, Benjamin's discourse in Mosiah 2-4³⁶ and Alma 36, are examined, I would suggest that the intricate "literary" form results from these being carefully composed as liturgical texts. To begin to see this in Alma 36-42 one should preface its reading with a question:

Father, why is this night different from other nights?

I cite the traditional first question asked by a child to begin a Passover seder because Alma 36-42 is structured upon and/or in fact is occurring during a Passover service.³⁷ The questions asked by a child are a very good place to

³⁵See John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. videotape, (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1983), for an illustration of the chiasm in Alma 36.

³⁶In this regard, the most recent study of Mosiah 2, by David E. Boruchowitz, "'Who Has Kept Us and Preserved Us...': On the Structure of Mosiah 2:20" (ms. in possession of the author), follows up and develops his very important discovery that Benjamin's discourse, besides being in a poetic/liturgical style, is a Midrash on a specific text, namely, the Shehecheyanu prayer, that translates:

Praised [or Blessed] art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us [alive], and hast preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

Anciently this prayer was to be offered on the first night of every festival, such as Sukkot, and with which Benjamin's audience, apart from their just having said it, would have been intimately familiar. Discovery of the text of this Hebrew prayer in the Book of Mosiah is a major step forward in our understanding of the pervasiveness of Israelite religious practices in the Book of Mormon.

³⁷Compare here the absolutely essential discussion of the Passover Haggadah as the underlying structure of the Gospel of Mark and early Jewish (pre-Hellenistic) Christian worship, based upon an analysis of, among other things, the nature of the four kinds of questions asked in Mark 11:27-12:34.

begin, since the normal Passover service contains answers a father may give to four different kinds of sons, according to the way the particular son asks the question.³⁸ To the wise son a father must "expound the laws of the Passover."³⁹ Alma's son Helaman, to whom the religious "birthright" (as it were) is ultimately conveyed, is given a very complex lesson in Alma 36-37. For a "simple son," or one so young as to "not know how to ask," the seder specifies other answers.⁴⁰ For the former there should be a "concise reply couched in elementary terms."⁴¹ Shiblun receives just the first half of the chiasm that is contained in Alma 36, without elaborations, which turns the poem into a prose narrative (Alma 38). For the latter case--really a variation of the previous one--the father must tell the child; and medieval manuscripts

In David Daube, "The Earliest Structure of the Gospels," New Testament Studies 5 (1959):174-187. Witness that Passover was not "done away" with and will yet be celebrated is found in Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18.

³⁸Concerning the questions asked, see David Daube "Four Types of Questions" in the Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. 2 (April 1951):45-48, and his "The Earliest Structure of the Gospels," op. cit. See also Abraham P. Bloch, op. cit.:152-166, and the August 1984 F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE "The Sons of the Passover," (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1984). The Sadducees' question in Mark 12:23 was, in part like Corianton's concern, involving the resurrection and marriage. The former, however, was also an attempt to elicit a commentary on the sixth through the ninth chapters of the Book of Tobit, which was taken as part of the canon by all parties concerned. See Gordon C. Thomasson, "Madness, Differentiation and Sacrifice, Or Reconciliation: Humanity's Options as Seen in 2 Maccabees and Genesis," unpublished manuscript in possession of the author, delivered at the Brigham Young University College of Humanities' Eighth Annual Symposium in the Humanities, "Myth, Literature, and the Bible" on November 15, 1984.

³⁹Haggadah for Passover, Copied and Illustrated by Ben Shahn, with A Translation, Introduction, and Historical Notes by Cecil Roth, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, & Paris: Trianon Press, 1965):20. The text of this Haggadah is based on the Ashkenazi tradition and on Cecil Roth's 1934 edition.

⁴⁰ibid., p. 29.

⁴¹ibid., p. 26.

pictured this as a ritual opening of the mouth for the child.⁴² To a "wicked son" a father should reply in such a way as to "set his [son's] teeth too on edge."⁴³ Alma's sermon to his son Corianton in chapters 39-42 certainly fills this requirement. I am suggesting, in other words, that Alma's statements to his three sons fall within the expected pattern of Passover ritual. This correlation alone would justify our relating the text structurally to an actual Passover observance or exposition. But beyond this correlation there is a high degree of resemblance of the content of the text to the ritual itself, keeping in mind that it is a very ancient practice to modify or personalize and internalize the communal celebration of the covenant of Israel with God, paralleling the history of Israel with one's own life.⁴⁴

As George Tate has noted, the typology of the Exodus pattern is found throughout the Book of Mormon.⁴⁵ The Passover seder is a ritual reenactment and celebration of those historical events as recorded in the scriptures. Alma

⁴²ibid., p. 26; cf. Benjamin Urrutia, "Psalm 51 and the 'Opening of the Mouth' Ceremony" in Sarah Israelit-Groll, ed., Scripta Hierosolymitana, XXVIII (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982):222-223.

⁴³ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁴In Rabban Gamaliel's words on observance of Passover, In every generation **each man must regard himself as though he himself came out of Egypt**, for it is written "You shall tell your son on that day 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt'(Exodus 13:8)." Mishnah Pesachim 10:5. See Appendix I which treats Jewish ritual in the New Testament.

⁴⁵George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon" in Literature of Belief (Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, 1978):245-262, also a F.A.R.M.S Reprint TAT-81 (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1983). See also Lisa Bolin Hawkins and Gordon C. Thomasson, "I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee: Survivor-Witnesses in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report H&T-84, (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1984), and my manuscript in progress, "Refugees and Survivors: Two Environmentally Unpredictable Themes in the Book of Mormon."

36 is a balanced chiasm. It begins and ends with a recitation of the basic events of the Exodus and the commandments associated with them. In so doing it is bringing to mind these crucial events just as they were to be recalled by Israel through all generations.⁴⁶ The chiasm (**boldface**) and Passover themes

(underlined) in Alma 36 appear below,

1) My son, give ear to my
words, for I swear unto you,
that inasmuch as ye shall keep

the commandments of God ye
shall prosper in the land.

30) But behold, my son, this
is not all; for ye had ought
to know as I do know, that
inasmuch as ye shall keep the
commandments of God ye shall
prosper in the land; and ye
ought to know also, that
inasmuch as ye will not keep
the commandments of God ye
shall be cut off from his
presence. Now this is
according to his **word**.

⁴⁶And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. . . .And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. (Exodus 12:14, 24-25, emphasis added)

2) I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions.

29) Yea, and he hath also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and he hath also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity, from time to time even down to the present day, and I have always retained in remembrance their captivity; yea, and ye also had ought to retain in remembrance, as I have done, their captivity.

The crux or pivot of the chiasm in Alma 36 is in verses 17-18.⁴⁷ Quite appropriately this is Jesus Christ, who, for the messianic Israelite Nephite community, although he is not explicitly named as such in this particular passage, is clearly alluded to since he is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world of which the sacrificial Passover lamb is only a type and an image.

Passover imagery and structure in Alma 36, whether by allusion or explicit mention, includes many other details. On every Sabbath night, and especially on Passover, it is appropriate for a father to bless his children.⁴⁸

An angel calls Alma to leave his former way of life/slavery to sin (v. 8-9), and threatens destruction if he does not (remembering that Alma is his father's firstborn, this parallels the death of the Egyptian firstborn). The three days and nights of torment Alma experienced (v. 10), is a

⁴⁷The above text follows the Book of Mormon Critical Text.

⁴⁸As Richard Erickson has pointed out, in II Nephi 1-4 Lehi blesses three kinds of sons, the righteous (Sam and Nephi), wicked (Laman and Lemuel), and those too young to fully comprehend (Jacob and Joseph). Was this a Passover occasion as well?

double-allusion harking back to the plague of darkness in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23), and looking forward to the darkness in the Nephite lands during the time Christ spent in the tomb. The pillar of fire which guided Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 14:24) is pointed to by citing Lehi's vision (v.22, quoting I Nephi 1:8) which, for those familiar with it, would also recall that patriarch's vision of a pillar of fire (I Nephi 1:6). Also the command to remember (pass on) these things from generation to generation (v.29) is recalled. There is much more that a detailed study of rabbinic literature (for example the tractate Mo`ed) and an historical study of the Haggadah would reveal, as, for example, Alma's helping Corianton see that his "mind is worried" (40:1) with the wrong questions, the answers to which "mattereth not." (v.5). A characteristic of the wicked son is asking the wrong questions.

Another striking Passover reference has been noted in Alma 8-10. At first glance, Amulek's mention of the "fourth day of this seventh month" (Nisan ?) in Alma 10:6 is not an obvious reference to anything. Once put in context, however, its significance becomes virtually incontrovertible. Amulek is here ritually serving as a witness in a prophetic indictment/judgement against the city of Ammonihah, seconding Alma's testimony ("in the mouths of two or three witnesses . . ."). Compare first their statements (important details are **boldfaced** and the main parallels are underlined, those readings followed with a ð and a number are from the Book of Mormon Critical Text, and will be explained in note 49, below):

AMULEK--Alma 10:

6 . . .even until the fourth day of this seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of our¹ judges.
7 As I was a² journeying to see a very near kindred, behold an angel of the Lord appeared unto me and said: Amulek, return to thine own house, for thou shalt feed a prophet of the Lord; yea, a holy man, which³ art⁴ a chosen man of God; for he hath⁵ fasted many days because of the sins of this people, and he is an hungered, and thou shalt⁶ receive him into thy house and feed him, and he shall bless thee and thy house; and the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon thee and thy house.

ALMA--Alma 8:

16 And behold, I am sent to command thee that thou return to the city of Ammonihah, and preach again unto the people of the city; yea preach unto them. Yea, say unto them, **except they repent the Lord God will destroy them.**
17 For behold, they do study at this time that they may destroy the liberty of thy people . . .
19 And [it came to pass that]⁷ as he entered the city he was an hungered, and he saith⁸ to a man: Will ye give to an humble servant of God something to eat?
20 And the man saith⁹ unto him: I am a Nephite, and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God, for thou art the man which¹⁰ an angel saith¹¹ in a vision: Thou shalt receive. Therefore, go with me into my house, and I will impart unto thee of my food; and I know that thou will¹² be a blessing unto me and my house. . .
26 And now, Amulek, because thou hast fed me and took¹³ me in, thou art blessed; for I was an hungered, for I had fasted many days.
27 And [it came to pass that]¹⁴ Alma tarried many days with Amulek **before he began to preach unto the people.**

Examining the two narratives together⁴⁹ we find it is crucial to the story that Amulek (a Nephite) was travelling to visit a near kinsman (who better to

⁴⁹ ¹, 2, 7, 12, 13, 14 [P], [1830]; ³, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 Book of Mormon Critical Text; ⁶ "shall" [P], 1830, "shalt" [P^c].

spend the Passover with?) when the angel appears to him and commands him to return to his own home and make a place at his table for a prophet who has been fasting. If he does this, he and his family will be blessed. Alma comes into his home and they are indeed blessed. Note what is crucial, however: Amulek, in describing the events says, "on the fourth day of this seventh month," (10:6) on the occasion of their preaching, while we are told "Alma tarrried many days with Amulek before he began to preach unto the people" (8:27). Restating the obvious, early in the seventh month (Nisan ?) Amulek is commanded to set a place for a fasting prophet. The prophet comes and tarrries many days, then--remembering that however long he tarrries it is still the seventh month, the month of Passover--they go out to preach to the people of Ammonihah, and the message they carry is that, if the people of Ammonihah do not repent, the destroying Angel will not pass them by. In this context, the plate Amulek sets, [anciently it is the plate that in their turns Abraham and Lot set for the angels whom Sodom rejected, in post-exilic times the plate Jews set for Elijah and the poor, and among Christians the meal that should be shared with a "poor wayfaring man of grief," "for inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me" . . .] serves as one more symbolic token of the judgement of condemnation that the people of Ammonihah will have visited upon them, Sodom-like, by the Lamanites.

Finally, the "Christian" Passovers in III Nephi demand special attention. The first, well known occurrence is in III Nephi 8, where Christ's death is witnessed throughout the land. What has been missed, however, is that popular non-scriptural media including paintings, pageants and dramatized cassette tape depictions of the Lord appearing to the survivors who are still crawling out of the ruins have biased our understanding of the text here in a

crucial way. Christ actually appears to the Nephites a year after (!) the events described in III Nephi 8. And understanding the pervasiveness of Israelite ritual among the Nephites makes this point obvious and intelligible. Here we follow the Book of Mormon Critical Text, except as noted.

And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will shew unto you that the people of Nephi which were spared, and also they which had been called Lamanites, which had been spared, did have great favors⁵⁰ shewn unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon⁵¹ after the ascension of Christ into heaven⁵² he did truly manifest himself unto them--Shewing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. . . . And now it came to pass that there were a great

⁵⁰[P] favours.

⁵¹"Soon" is the crucial word here, of course. Reading it in twentieth century English as meaning something akin to "immediately" gives us the impression that these events happened "back to back" or at most after Christ's "forty days" ministry. Consulting Noah Webster's An American Dictionary of the English Language (New York: S. Converse, 1828), which gives us our best access to what English words meant to Joseph Smith and his contemporaries at the time when the Book of Mormon was being translated, we find:

SOON, adv. [Sax. sona; Goth. suns] In a short time; shortly after any time specified or supposed; as soon after sunrise; soon after dinner; I shall soon return; we shall soon have clear weather.

The usage of **soon** to refer to an event occurring "shortly after any time specified or supposed," where the time specified may be quite long is exemplified in many scriptural passages, as below. . . . the day **soon** cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned. For the time **soon** cometh that the fullness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for He will not suffer that the wicked destroy the righteous. (III Nephi 22:15-16, emphasis added.)

Soon, in this example, refers to an event that may be +2600 years in the future of the time the prophecy is uttered.

⁵²Again, the question here is which ascension? The one of which he spoke of in the garden to Mary (John 20:17), or at the end of his forty day ministry (Acts 1:3, 9-11). How long is **soon** after either ascension?

multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful . . . (III Nephi 10:18-19, 11:1, emphasis added).

Again, the setting here is very similar to that of Mosiah 1-6, with the people gathered around the temple. The occasion is the typical Sukkot rituals for beginning the thirty-fifth year of the new Nephite calendar that began with Christ's birth. By the Old World calendar Christ was crucified at Passover (14 Nisan), which fell on the fourth day of the first month of the thirty-fourth year of the Nephite calendar (III Nephi, 8:2,5). But whatever the date in relation to previous calendars, in the coming of Christ to the Nephites we see a fusion of all the major festivals in the person of Christ, of whom all the symbols of the many feasts, festivals and Holy Days, the divine king, the new year's creation rituals, the sacrificial lamb, etc., are only types and images.⁵³

Jerome Horowitz, who has independently noted and quite convincingly argued that Christ came to the Nephites a year after his death, in accord with the traditional ritual calendar, makes a very good case for the events of III Nephi 11ff. dating a year after the Lord's death. Among other points he states,

⁵³Although almost a full year has passed, the Lehite survivors still gather to the temple to celebrate the Nephite New Year. It is celebrated based upon the calendar reform at the time of the Lord's birth, but their Passover now dates from Christ's death according to the Old World calendar. Applying Professor John L. Sorenson's insights regarding the Mayan Long Count, the two festivals would now be in conjunction (with the 360 day year there would be 178.5 days of "slippage" in a seasonally-based Passover festival during the 34 lunisolar years of Christ's life [5.25 days slippage per year X 34 years of Christ's life = 178.5 days]).

In 3 Nephi 23:9-13 Christ criticized Nephi for not having recorded the fact that many of the saints were resurrected following his resurrection. The context indicates that the time that occurred and should have been recorded was in the past. It seems incongruous to conclude that Nephi was criticized for having failed to record in the past what had just happened. 3 Nephi 23:12 says that Nephi "remembered" that it had not been written. Use of the word remembered seems to imply bringing back to mind something that happened at an earlier time. A likely explanation is that for a time following the resurrection Nephi was so busy helping with the consequences of the cataclysmic events just ended including burying great numbers of dead he did not make the record at the time and then when the hectic activity was over he forgot to make it.⁵⁴

PENTECOST

Even in the Old Testament, references to the Israelite Pentecost are elusive. This is partly because, as noted (see note 13, above) it is an extension of Passover and shares the general exodus theme of the other two major festivals, but it also has an agricultural theme and the historical theme of the giving of the Law at Sinai. This is in contrast to the more obviously "Christian" Pentecosts (Acts 2, III Nephi 19, 26:13-15, 16). Upon analysis of

⁵⁴Jerome Horowitz, "Some thoughts on 3 Nephi 10:18 concerning the time of Christ's visit to the Nephites," 1984, manuscript in possession of the author. See also S. Kent Brown's very carefully argued paper on the same topic, "Jesus among the Nephites: When Did It Happen?," A Symposium on the New Testament, 1984, Church Education System Symposium, Brigham Young University, August 15-17, 1984 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984):74-77.

the ancient festival's apparently most crucial details, however, one definite and several plausible allusions to Pentecost were found in the Book of Mormon. Remembering that the historical (Sinaitic) festival elements involved Moses being encircled by fire and smoke on the mountain, conversing with God and bringing down the tablets of the law, after which he shone to such a degree that the people had him veil his face (Exodus 35:29ff.), there are several possibilities.

One Pentecost type/event is quite clear in the Book of Mormon. While the text is not explicit as to the day when the prophet Abinadi comes to preach to the court of King Noah, it is very specific as to how he, in our vernacular, "lays down the law." Abinadi comes to the court of King Noah with a prophetic warning of impending destruction because the rulers have set their hearts upon the "golden calves" of riches and whoredoms and tax the people heavily to do so (Mosiah 12:29-32, 11:6). If we only look superficially this is like many others such warnings, but in detail it is a Sinaitic Pentecost. Two years after his first appearance Abinadi returns to preach to the people. He is arrested and taken to the court. After preaching against Noah and his retinue the first time, Abinadi is explicitly referred to as being transfigured (cf. Matthew 17:1-2) so that people feared to approach or touch him,

"and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses' did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord" (Mosiah 13:5).

His message is a careful recitation of the Decalogue to the assembly (Mosiah 12:33-36, 13:11-24),⁵⁵ and he tells them that if they had taught the people

⁵⁵Is it possible that this case of Abinadi's reading of the Law was based on part of the regular observance of Pentecost as a celebration of God's giving the Law to Israel, where it would be read to the assembly, as argued in Moshe Weinfeld's "The Decalogue: Its Uniqueness and Place in Israel's Traditions,"

these laws and kept them he would not have been sent by the Lord to prophesy against them (Mosiah 13: 25-26). It is worthy of note that Noah incarcerates Abinadi rather than executing him immediately, and that the trial is in fact resumed after three days (Mosiah 17:6). If the events of Mosiah 12:9--17:5 occurred during a festival such as Pentecost, the trial would have been illegal, to say nothing of the execution, which would have been doubly prohibited because of laws against executions and the kindling of fires on sabbaths and Holy Days. By resuming the trial after the festival it has a semblance of legality.⁵⁶ And if Abinadi had gained any supporters they would probably have gone home soon after the festival ended.

The next possible case is structurally similar to Pentecost, and fits reasonably with a Passover date for Lehi's flight from Jerusalem (though the reception of the plates in the camp more closely parallels Simhat Torah). The occasion is Nephi's intimate conversation with the Spirit which constrained him to kill Laban, thus obtaining the plates and bringing them back to the Lehite camp (I Nephi 4). If this seems strained, it should be recalled that the very imagery which Nephi uses is that of being "strong like unto Moses" (v. 2) and comparing Laban to the Egyptians. Related to the idea that "it is better that one man should perish" (v. 14) there is the fact that human death and/or sacrifice seems to have been an early and recurring part of Pentecost, as well

forthcoming in ed. J. W. Welch and E. B. Firmage, Law and Religion: Biblical, Jewish and Islamic Perspectives (Eisenbraun)?

⁵⁶On legal aspects of the trial see John W. Welch, "Judicial Process in the Trial of Abinadi" F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report WEL-81 (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1983). Contrast the attempted execution of Nephi and Lehi as recorded in Helaman 5:21-22, in which there is an apparent delay of the execution until Pentecost but no trial of any sort mentioned. See also discussion of the Helaman text in relation to Pentecost, below.

as being an implicit dimension of Passover. In fact, at the first Pentecost, Hur, thought to have been groomed as a successor to Moses (Exodus 17:12, 24:14), is supposed to have been:

[M]urdered by the people for courageously opposing their demand to make the golden calf.⁵⁷

Moreover, the sons of Levi killed about three thousand men (Hur's wife Miriam was a Levite. Was this in retaliation?) after Moses came down from the mountain (Exodus 32:26-28). That human sacrifice may have been linked with at least corrupted celebrations of Pentecost is not an unprecedented idea.

The third case is structurally similar. It involves Nephi's being commanded to go up the mountain (I Nephi 17:7), having a vision (vs. 8-10), and finally confronting his brothers in such a way that they "durst not lay their hands upon me nor touch me with their fingers" (v. 52, 48-55).

A case where structural elements do not exactly fit chronology is found at the Feast of Tabernacles where Benjamin repeats the text of his previously revealed "Apocalypse of Benjamin," that has certain pentecostal aspects (Mosiah 3:2-27), which he interweaves with his Midrash on the Shehecheyanu prayer to create his New Year sermon. The people's response, while ritualistic, also has certain pentecostal features (Mosiah 4:3ff.).

Another likely candidate for a type of Pentecost has been pointed out by Benjamin Urrutia in Helaman 5. The young Nephi and Lehi were taken prisoner by Nephite dissenters and Lamanites. Rather than being killed outright they are held in prison "many days" after which their captors:

⁵⁷See the article "Hur" in the Encyclopaedia Judaica; cf. Exodus Rabba 48:3, Sanhedrin 7a.

[G]o into the prison to take them that they might slay them (Helaman 5:22).

The two missionaries could easily have been slain at the time of their capture. Instead they are held for a specific occasion. Before they can be killed, however, Lehi and Nephi are "encircled about as if by fire" (Helaman 5:23. See also Acts 2:3). A heavenly message calling their captors to repent follows (See especially Helaman 5:30, compare Acts 2:2). Then the Lamanites ask "What shall we do?" (Helaman 5:40, compare Acts 2:37--is this formulaic?), and receive the reply to repent and have faith in Christ (Helaman. 5:41, see also Acts 2:38). If this occurred on a ritual occasion such as Pentecost the effect on the Lamanites would have been all the more impressive (cf. the narrative of Elijah in I Kings 19:11-12). This incident, at least, bears further study. It is not impossible that other pentecostal type events will yet be discovered in the Book of Mormon.

SIMHAT TORAH

The celebration at the Lehite camp upon return of Nephi's party with the brass plates parallels Simhat Torah rather than Pentecost (I Nephi 5:9). This is a case where the problematic in dating early festivals becomes obvious. How old is the celebration of Simhat Torah? In its modern form is it post-exilic, or is the absence of earlier references simply the result of its observance being part of the oral law rather than the written law. Or with the change of New Year celebrations from Nisan to Tishri did it get displaced as well, and perhaps have an earlier association with Pentecost celebrations. There is no easy answering of these questions. A linkage with Pentecost would seem to fit the probable overall chronology better, as at the moment Passover

seems the most likely time for Lehi's group to have first left Jerusalem, but at a minimum we must at least recognize its structural similarity with the Lehite celebration.

OTHER RITUAL PRACTICES

Like the festivals, circumcision is taken for granted by Book of Mormon writers through 95% of Lehite history (597 B.C. to +350 A.D.). It is only mentioned explicitly when its practice is abandoned (Moroni 8:5-8, which links the ritual significantly with baptism, as pointed out by Max H. Russell), and by implication in passages such as II Nephi 8:24 (cf. III Nephi 20:36 in Christian times), which presuppose the practice for all Israelites including the Lehite peoples.

Briefly, other Book of Mormon ritual practices that are mentioned and could be profitably compared with Old Testament and Talmudic sources include prayers of many types, non-Levitical thank-offerings upon altars (I Nephi 2:7), and sacrifice and burnt-offerings that may or may not have been Levitical in nature (I Nephi 5:9).⁵⁸ Reading the scriptures seems to have been a ritual practice. Marriage rituals seem to be taken for granted (I Nephi 7), but Hugh Nibley and Sidney Sperry's suggestions that kinship patterns that establish "preferred marriage partners" are also relevant (compare Abraham's concern that

⁵⁸Was Zoram a Levite who had resided in the Northern Kingdom and had been attached in a priestly capacity to Lehi's clan or Laban's family in particular? If so this would account for Levitical ritual among the Nephites prior to their joining with the Mulekite refugees, who very possibly would have had both Levitical and Aaronic functionaries as part of the retinue. If Zoram had a priestly function would this account for his seeming link to the brass plates? Also, are the descendants of Mulek the original "kingmen," raising their hereditary claims against those of the Nephites? Is there any connection between Zoram and Zoramite ritual (the Rameumptom, etc.)? Even today, those men of priestly descent are first among equals in the Jewish synagogue.

his descendants marry the appropriate cousins).⁵⁹ Divination for various purposes (including "place divination" Alma 16:5) took several forms, including using the Urim and Thummim and the Liahona (I Nephi 16:10, Mosiah 8:13). Prophecy seems to have had a role in ritual and worship services, as a didactic mechanism. Pre-Christian baptism is mentioned (I Nephi 10:9, Mosiah 18:13 [in fact, here, re-baptism]). There are specific mourning and funerary practices (I Nephi 16:34-35), as well as ceremonial executions (Mosiah 19:20, 24; III Nephi 4:28-33).⁶⁰ Bearing witness or testifying is also a specific practice, (I Nephi 22:31) as is the taking/making of oaths and covenants (I Nephi 4:32, Alma 24:15-19, Alma 37:27). "Patriarchal" blessings are frequently given (II Nephi 4). Various liturgical texts seem to have been employed, and numerous Old Testament Psalms are cited, as well as new ones such as the Psalm of Nephi (II Nephi 4:16-35), and the Thanksgiving Hymns of Ammon (Alma 26:11-37), and Alma (Alma 29:1-17). Temple worship of a Levitical nature seems to have been common throughout the Nephite lands from the building of the first Nephite temple (II Nephi 5:16). Temple worship of a non-Levitical nature, perhaps paralleling what the Coptic Gospel of Philip describes as a temple with a Holy of Holies and a "Bridal Chamber," involving the Melchizedek priesthood covenant also is present (Alma 9-14). Writings in Apocalypse style also have a liturgical function (see the Apocalypse of Benjamin, Mosiah 3:2ff.), and

⁵⁹Did their speculations serve as the foundation upon which Mark Hoffmann created part of the text of his forged letter from Lucy Mack Smith to her sister, which he dated January 23, 1829? Was this letter itself simply more groundwork for Hoffmann's planned forgery of the 116 missing pages of Book of Mormon manuscript?

⁶⁰See, for example, the November 1984 F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE on "The Execution of Zemnah" (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1984), which compares Maimonides' (the Rambam's) discussion of the law as it relates to this text.

midrashim also seem to be created for liturgy and/or sermonizing (see the Isaiah Midrash by Nephi in II Nephi 25:1, 7ff., and the already noted Shehecheyanu Midrash in Mosiah 2:20ff.). There is public covenanting (Mosiah 6:1) associated with some of the large festivals.⁶¹ Polygyny is practiced by various peoples (Jacob 2, Mosiah 11:14, and Alma 10:11). Ritual self-abasement is practiced as a sign of repentance (Mosiah 11:25), and there also is a ritual which signifies status differentiation that diffused from the Nephites to the Lamanites who elaborated upon it (Alma 47:22-23). "Spring" (equinoctial ?) festivals may have been common (Mosiah 20:1-2).⁶² Religious conversions and attending rituals (name changes and rites de passage, etc.) are common throughout the text. Priests were ordained (Mosiah 25:19), excommunication was practiced (Mosiah 26:36), and at certain times warfare seems to have been ritualized. Hugh Nibley also recently noted a pattern of syncretistic encroachment of some already established native American religion upon the Mosaic order practiced by the Nephites, one of the few probable references to non-Book of Mormon peoples in the Nephite records.⁶³

RITUAL PLACES

Besides the temples, sanctuaries [following the pattern of Northern Kingdom or Lehite worship?--perhaps involving "high places"] and synagogues

⁶¹There is also a very specific type of covenant administered by Moroni (Alma 46:21) which appears to be derived from the Book of Jacob (or Joseph) on the Brass Plates (Alma 46:24-25, a text which, as Dr. Nibley has noted, has echoes in the works of the Moslem scholar Tha'Labi) and known to, among others, Abinadi (Mosiah 12:3).

⁶²See the February 1985 F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE "Dancing Maidens and the Fifteenth of Av" (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1985).

⁶³Memo of 5/9/84. Copy in possession of the author.

["built after the manner of the Jews" reflecting the Kingdom of Judah and Mulekite practices?] were common (Alma 16:13, 23:2). Alma teaches and baptizes refugees from Noah's kingdom in the forests and the "Waters of Mormon" (Mosiah 18:5-8). Ammon teaches the Amalekites in their synagogues and the Lamanites in their "assembly[s]" (Alma 21:16).⁶⁴ The Zoramites gathered together once a week in a synagogue to pray (Alma 31:12), whereas Alma questions the supposition that one must either be in a synagogue to worship or only do so once a week (Alma 32:10-11). In his Midrash on Zenos' teaching (Alma 33:3-11), Amulek seems to reflect the more common Israelite practice of praying three times daily (Alma 34:21).

CONCLUSIONS

In 1957 Hugh Nibley pointed out Ariadne's clue for all to follow. Today we find that it is not a mere single red thread which runs through the tapestry of Nephite history. In Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon,

every English thread is overcast with a thick woollen woof of strange words (1627).

Strange words that reveal strange things strangely told, and not just to the philologist. Ancient Israelite religious ritual cycles in the Book of Mormon, unlike the occasional historical "facts" so commonly embroidered upon the

⁶⁴Robert F. Smith has pointed out the beauty of this parallelism.

Synagogue, "assembly"ÖÖAssembly
AmalekitesÖÖLamanites
Heb. `edaÖÖqahal

See the Book of Mormon Critical Text at I Nephi 4:26, II Nephi 26:26, notes.

fabric of after-the-fact pseudepigrapha, are the very warp threads that run almost invisibly and inseparably throughout the entire 1,000 years of Nephite history.⁶⁵ Most readers' vision of the book's integrity and "deep structure" has heretofore almost been obscured by the weft of day by day events it reports. And it is these latter which, due to the common denominators of human life in every age and the perennial concerns of any religious community, have led to the unjustified, cavalier dismissal of the Book of Mormon as a 19th century document, and to the book's devout students and most vicious critics alike completely missing its overall pattern.

Since Hugh Nibley began publishing, there has been no real justification for simple-minded "environmental" explanations that ignore the wealth of detail he alone has documented. Today, with the calendar of Nephite sacred time emerging into clear view, we know that probably not since the

⁶⁵Even cursory study of ancient Israel's festivals makes it obvious that celebration of the yearly cycle was inextricably linked with and had its primary locus in the temple. Elaboration of the point is beyond the scope of this study, but it is essential to note that along with the festivals, reflections, types and shadows of Israelite temple rituals are found throughout the Book of Mormon text. But these are only visible to persons within the culture of the text's origin, or to those who are sufficiently versed in it--knowing what the first Nephi describes as the "things of the Jews," (2 Nephi 25:5)--to recognize subtle or even unconscious allusions. This is compounded by the fact that, unlike the festivals, these references are to an esoteric tradition. Nevertheless, certain passages are transparent once recognized (cf. Alma 9-14). See Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mormon Symbols: Structures of Mormon Consciousness and the Basis of Mormon Communication Activities, Mormon Language and Mormon Arts" in Conference on the Language of the Mormons, (Provo, Utah: Language Research Center, Brigham Young University, 1973):75-80, especially note 12, "What's in a Name: Metonymic Naming in the Book of Mormon," and "Esoteric Texts: A Lesson on the Conceit of Understanding, Interpretation, and Translation (To Say Nothing of Deconstruction), Independent of Culture, Time, Place, and Context," unpublished manuscripts available from the author. Also see John W. Welch, "The Theological Treatment of Melchizedek in Alma 13," F.A.R.M.S. Reprint WEL-75 (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1975), and "The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. Reprint WEL-79 (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1979).

destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the interruption of its divine service, and certainly not in even the most conservative East European shtetl of Joseph Smith's day, let alone in upstate New York, has anyone had the ancient sacred cycles so thoroughly integrated into their life that they could write such a narrative so un-self-consciously. The ancient character of the book cannot be ignored. It is now past the time for apologetics. We must pay attention to what the Book of Mormon can teach us, even about Old Testament religion .

Ancient Israelite religion is the common substratum and the basic contextualizing feature of the Book of Mormon narrative. Whereas the previously known Feast of Tabernacles (Mosiah 1-6) appeared to be the exception to what critics of the Book of Mormon argued was only an otherwise supposedly de-ritualized American Protestant worship pattern that was an artifact of Joseph Smith's New England background, religious narrative in the text is now shown to be permeated with and in fact grounded in a usually implicit though highly sophisticated seasonal ritual calendar based on careful observance of the "ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses." Nevertheless, the Book of Mormon's treatment of ancient Israelite religious practices is so sophisticated and subtle that no less eminent and careful a social historian than Richard L. Bushman could conclude in his excellent study Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, that

Book of Mormon peoples abided by the Mosaic law until the coming of Christ, but Mormon buried the fact as if it were of little importance. Nephite prophets taught Christ and the resurrection. Sacrifices, feasts, temple worship, all the material evidence in View of the Hebrews received scant attention amidst the outpouring of sermons on salvation through

Christ. After the appearance of the Savior the Mosaic law was abandoned altogether and presumably sifted out of Nephite culture.⁶⁶

In fact, Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews⁶⁷ is just that. A distant picture of Hebrew religious life that is self-conscious and overdrawn, the obvious work of an outsider. The Book of Mormon reflects an intimate and integrated holistic Israelite religion as it can only be depicted by someone native to a society where the ritual year is the ground of experience within which all events occur, and everyone in the society takes for granted.⁶⁸ In contrast, secular societies' "holidays" punctuate history which otherwise, in an apt summation of the modern mind, is "just one damn thing after another." Just as the major feasts, festivals and holy days were the public/exoteric foundation of life, the temples of antiquity were the esoteric superstructure, to be

⁶⁶Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984):136.

⁶⁷Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America, second edition, (Poultney, Vermont: Smith and Shute, 1825). It is important to note that considering the notoriety of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon following the publication of Alexander Campbell's critique in his Millennial Harbinger, February 7, 1831, reprinted and circulated widely as Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon; with an Examination of its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority, (Boston, 1832), if Ethan Smith or any of his contemporary clergy who were closest to him and familiar with his work had suspected the slightest relationship of View of the Hebrews to the Book of Mormon they would have not hesitated in denouncing it. An evidence of Ethan Smith's status and visibility is to be found in his Key to the Revelation [of John] in Thirty-Six Lectures, Taking the Whole Book in Course, (N.Y.: J. & J. Harper, 1833), that notes his authorship of the View on the title page, which is followed by three pages of recommendations of Ethan Smith's works by some 23 leading Protestant clergy in the United States, beginning with Professor Ralph Emerson of the Andover Theological Seminary.

⁶⁸The first Nephi's discourse on a culturally-based hermeneutic or process of textual interpretation (II Nephi 25:1-6, discussed above), which I have employed in this paper, was still, even when published in 1830, far in advance of its time.

referred to, as in the Book of Mormon, through subtle and reverent, although clear and precise "between-the-lines" allusion, as in Alma 9-14. Understanding Israelite religion in the Book of Mormon is more of an anthropological than an historical problem, and it is no surprise that the book's students and critics alike have missed it. Finally, like the Jerusalem church of the first century, Book of Mormon peoples did not abandon those aspects of pre-Sinai Abrahamic and Mosaic religion that they had been commanded to observe through all their generations, but rather, like the early Old World Christians they infused new meanings into the timeless observances, whether or not we recognize them doing so.

Jan Shippo, in her recent study, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition,⁶⁹ goes farther than any non-Mormon scholar previously has attempted to go in understanding the outward isomorphic relationship of Mormonism to Judaism, or more accurately, to the ancient Hebraic religious experience up through the first century of Jewish Christianity. Professor Shippo acknowledges that a supernatural explanation is at least a plausible alternative for understanding Mormonism though she does not accept it.⁷⁰ Her

⁶⁹Jan Shippo, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition, (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1985), especially the Preface and chapters 1-3.

⁷⁰To quote Professor Shippo precisely,
But if the process [of restoration movements] is natural enough to be studied, it is nevertheless so very complex--aye, even mysterious--that unless its beginnings are examined within a clear theoretical framework, it can appear to be completely supernatural and thus amenable only to observation, not to analysis.
ibid. p. 69. One can develop such a "clear theoretical framework" only with the data available at a given moment in history, and time has a habit of revealing more data, such as this study reports, for example, and the ongoing research of Robert F. Smith epitomizes, which tend to complicate the data beyond the capacity of any time-bound theory. It must not be forgotten, after all, that theories can only be "lies", social fictions of a polite and often

Harnackian perspective on the Hellenization of Christianity,⁷¹ as extensive as it is, barely scratches the surface and fails to uncover the actual "Jewish" (more comprehensively, ancient Israelite) roots of modern Mormonism. For while she correctly recognizes that the essence of the 19th century Mormon experience was belief in the Book of Mormon, she did not have available to her the evidence of how thoroughly "Jewish" a book it actually is. And her essentially secular phenomenological analysis ultimately contradicts itself and fails, because unlike the collective social phenomena she so convincingly analyzes, the Book of Mormon itself cannot be accounted for as a social phenomenon, and yet, as she acknowledges, it was at the core of 19th century Mormon life.

Besides further study to discover the full extent of ancient Israelite patterns in the Book of Mormon, interpretation of the text must now be infused with a more complete grasp of the nature and value of heretofore neglected Abrahamic- and Mosaic-covenant based religious practices, liturgy and symbolism. The common Anglo-European Christian prejudice that "Judaism" is an apostate religion that can contribute little to our understanding must be reassessed as well, insuring that an intellectual anti-Semitism does not have any more place in our study of the scriptures than it does in our day to day social life.

well-intentioned nature, but oversimplifications of reality nonetheless, which humans in general and social scientists in particular employ precisely because it is impossible for finite humans to apprehend/comprehend all of reality.

⁷¹See Adolph Harnack, What is Christianity, trans. Thomas B. Saunders, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), and compare my discussion of related matters in Gordon C. Thomasson, "Teaching Across Dispensations: A Comparative Religions Perspective on the Challenges of Being a Worldwide Church" in Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures, ed. F. LaMond Tullis (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), especially pp. 236-258.

We must also recognize that, rather than strife between Nephites and Lamanites occurring because they were so different, these were two very similar cultures--sharing a calendar system and most if not all religious concepts. When a radical deviation occurs, as in the case of the Zoramite Rameumptom cult in the city of Antionum, it left the Nephite prophets nonplussed. Slight deviations they knew how to deal with, but huge qualitative differences were not what characterized the tensions among Lehite peoples generally.

Also, with the discovery of specific major Israelite feasts, festivals and Holy Days in the text, we are moving towards the point of establishing absolute dates for Book of Mormon chronology. When we get to the point that even a tenth as much archaeology has been done in Mesoamerica as has been done on ancient Near Eastern biblical sites, we will see the potential open up for direct correlation of Book of Mormon events and places with Mesoamerican records, inscriptions, and city foundation texts. John Sorenson's pioneering geography suggests where we will need to look.⁷²

Finally, the Book of Mormon stands out as an essential aid to our study and understanding of pre-exilic Israelite religion, for which there is a paucity of textual evidence apart from the Bible itself. The two books, joined together in one hand, are an ever more eloquent witness of the faith and devotion of God's chosen people in past dispensations to all who live today.

⁷²John L. Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book & F.A.R.M.S., 1985). And in spite of tremendous technical problems in recovering the remains of anything organic or metallic from the highly acid, bacterially active soils of the hot rainy tropics, where almost nothing lasts long enough to be mineralized (an incredible handicap which the layman ignores, especially in comparison to the almost perfect cold storage of the arctic or the near ideal artifact dehydrating preservation that takes place in the hot sands of much of the ancient Near East), we have every likelihood of success.

APPENDIX I

I have discovered a dramatic New Testament example of the same kind of personalizing of Passover liturgy I have noted in Alma 36. Acts 12:3 tells us Peter is imprisoned by Herod during the "days of unleavened bread," with the intention that after what the KJT incorrectly renders as "Easter" (the Greek reads Pas'cha [] which translates "Passover"), Peter would be brought to judgement and executed. The angel appearing to Peter tells him, among other things, to "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals... Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me" (v. 8). In the instructions to those who partake of Passover we read:

And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover (Exodus 12:11, italics in original, emphasis added).

The angel then goes before Peter (like a pillar of fire ?), gates opening of their own accord, delivering Peter from bondage (vs. 9-10). As it is Passover the disciples are meeting together in prayer (v. 12), when Peter arrives and declares "to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison" (v. 17). I have no doubt that Peter was in fact imprisoned, and miraculously released. I was once freed from arrest while serving as a missionary through God's power by the priesthood, and in trying to recount what had happened to me I have always felt compelled to relate my own experience to Acts 12, since I knew of no better framework in which to interpret and communicate what had occurred. Similarly, I now realize, the Jewish New Testament church had no better model, there was no more appropriate literary genre, in which to articulate and explain Peter's release than by describing it in terms of Israel being freed from bondage from Egypt. This is more than typological resemblance. Apart

from timing, Peter's personal salvation experience simply fits Passover, and his life experience is paralleled to the Exodus story, in accord with Rabban Gamaliel's teaching and what undoubtedly was accepted practice in the observance of Passover generally. Another complex of symbols or genre is not as efficient and evocative for a community of Jewish Christians who still keep the law. There is no better way to tell the story. Also note that the narrative of Peter's release ends with Herod attempting to have himself recognized as the divine king, giving the appropriate oration, receiving the prescribed acclamatio, and being smitten, as it were, by the plagues of Egypt for his presumption (Acts 12:21-23).

Other New Testament scriptures with an implicit Passover text matrix and Jewish cultural framework have been found. For example, in the "record of John" [the Baptist], representatives of the [leaders of the] Jews first ask him four questions: 1) "Who art thou" (John 1:19), 2) "Art thou Elias [Elijah]?" (v. 21), 3) "Art thou that prophet?" (v. 21), and "Who art thou? . . . What sayest thou of thyself?" (v. 22). John is then asked to elaborate on the law: "Why baptizest thou then . . .?" (v.25). Christ's twelfth year visit to the temple at Passover reveals him with "the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:46-47).

Unlike the Jerusalem-based Church, in the New World there was no "Pauline" crisis based upon an influx of Greek and Roman "gentile" converts. As a result, there was no reason to abandon the Abrahamic and Mosaic ordinances that they had been commanded to observe "throughout your generations . . . forever" (Exodus 12:14). It has long been known that first century Jewish Christianity continued to observe the mandated feasts, festivals and Holy Days

as long as they were permitted to do so by the larger Jewish community, probably up until the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). Everyone concerned, whether they believed or thought it heretical, recognized Christianity as one branch of messianic Judaism. As David Daube noted in "The Earliest Structure of the Gospels," *op. cit.*, the Jerusalem-based Church's ordinances were essentially only very slight modifications of existing rituals that continued to be observed by early Christians in the Temple and outside (Acts 2:46-3:1). The disciples knew of no reason not to keep the laws and ordinances. Even Paul, after it had been decided **not** "to put a yoke upon the neck" of the gentiles (Acts 15:10), knows he "**must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem**" (Acts 18:21, cf. I Corinthians 16:8), and "**hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost**" (Acts 20:16). And this was not the later developed Catholic Pentecost, but the Jewish feast of Shavuot. Moreover, just as Daube pointed out with regard to Mark 11:27-12:34, the Jewish liturgy constantly influenced the "telling" of the Christian story. The symbology of the early Church was a "Jewish" symbology. Thus, even Paul describes the Christ as "our Passover" and speaks of how the household of faith must purge out the leaven, employing an aspect of Passover ritual as a metaphor that was only meaningful to Jewish Christians who knew perfectly well what it was to "kosher" a house for Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). The Epistle to the Hebrews consists, in the main, of paired comparisons between Abrahamic and Mosaic ritual and law on the one hand and Christian practice on the other, and the purpose of the parallels is to show that there is continuity between the two, not a radical departure.

Finally, there has been systematic neglect of Jewish scriptures, and

also, as Benjamin Urrutia has pointed out, of liturgy.⁷³ A classic example of Western Christian blindness to Jewish liturgical language is found in the non-recognition of the derivation of Emma Lazarus' widely known and often quoted poem, "The New Colossus" from the Haggada de Pessach. See also Steven Wood's and my forthcoming discussions of Jewish ritual and cultural bases of New Testament texts, which will include his discovery of traditional Passover ritual aspects of the "cleansing" of the Temple, driving out money-changers, etc. (Matthew 21), on the same day in the liturgical calendar on which an Orthodox rabbi would inspect each house and even sweep out the cracks in the floor to purge out the leaven and insure the house was ritually pure for Passover. Thus the cleansing of the Temple is an analogue on a national scale to the cleaning of each home before the holy days. Similarly, we consider Judas to be a classic type of the "wicked son" within the Passover liturgy of the Last Supper (Matthew 26).

⁷³See Gordon C. Thomasson, "Madness, Differentiation and Sacrifice, or Reconciliation: Humanity's Options as Seen in II Maccabees and Genesis" delivered at the Brigham Young University College of Humanities' Eighth Annual Symposium in the Humanities, "Myth, Literature, and the Bible" on November 15, 1984, on both the exclusion of Jewish texts and the relationship of Jewish and New Testament scriptures such as Tobit 6-7 and Matthew 22:23-28, I Corinthians 10:28 and II Maccabees 6:7, and I Corinthians 15:29 with II Maccabees 12:38-45.