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**Title** Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract** When authors use the rhetorical device of literary allusion, they not only teach through their own words but also attach to their own text meanings and interpretations from the alluded text. This is true of Nephi's allusion to the account of David and Goliath in Nephi's own account of his killing Laban, which allusion is generally of a thematic nature. A few of the main thematic parallels between the two accounts are that both unbelieving Israel and Laman and Lemuel are fearful of the main antagonist, both David and Nephi prophesy the death of their opponent, and both Goliath and Laban have their heads cut off and armor stripped. The implications of this allusion run deep. At a time in which the right to kingship was continually in dispute between Nephi and Laman, Nephi casting himself as David—the archetypal king of Judah, whose faith led to his supplanting Saul—could be seen as legitimizing his regal authority over Laman.

# NEPHI & GOLIATH



## A CASE STUDY OF LITERARY ALLUSION IN THE BOOK OF MORMON<sup>1</sup>

BEN MCGUIRE

### INTRODUCTION

In a 1994 review in the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, John W. Welch wrote:

Notwithstanding the significant increase in Book of Mormon studies, little has been written in this field of study about methodology itself. . . . Accordingly, if the study of the Book of Mormon is to become a more rigorous discipline, all of its practitioners will need to become more explicit about their methods, their assumptions, their purposes, and the degree to

which their conclusions are based on various forms of evidence or depend on various theoretical predilections.<sup>2</sup>

This study is an exploration of the Book of Mormon as a complex piece of literature and of a methodology useful in discovering the meaning of the text. In presenting a new approach to the Book of Mormon I am hoping not only to present new meaning to the reader, but also to address the lack of methodology that Welch observed.

This study identifies and analyzes an instance of literary allusion in the Book of Mormon narrative between 1 Nephi 3:31–4:19 and 1 Samuel 17. The paper contains two sections: In the first, I briefly introduce the methodology used to identify the literary allusion in the text. I include a more complete description of the methodology in the appendix. In the second part, I explore the proposed literary allusion, after which I conclude with a brief discussion of the significance of this reading.<sup>3</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

### The Need for Methodology

There are several reasons to formally introduce a methodology: (1) to reduce as much as possible personal subjectivity in the analysis of the evidence, (2) to produce empirical results as opposed to purely theoretical results,<sup>4</sup> (3) to involve the reader as much as possible in the process of discovery, (4) to allow the reader to find additional instances of intertextuality following the same model of discovery, and (5) to allow for criticism of the process, as well as of the conclusions.

This study uses a definition of literary allusion offered by Ziva Ben-Porat.<sup>5</sup> Ben-Porat's work defines the structure of a literary allusion and identifies it through a series of signs and markers, as well as through the process of interpretive parallelism in which new meaning is introduced through the allusion. Building on Ben-Porat's model, I have incorporated criteria for identifying the individual signs and markers from both Konrad Schaefer and Jon Paulien.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the identified allusion is evaluated using a series of questions proposed by Richard B. Hays.

### Definitions

It is useful to briefly contrast three terms used in this study: allusion, literary allusion, and intertextuality. An *allusion* is generally defined as an indirect reference in one text to another. By definition, an *allusion* is recognizable only by someone who is familiar with the text to which it alludes. This awareness of the source text is often referred to as the “competence” of the reader.<sup>7</sup> *Literary allusion* is specifically a rhetorical device used by writers to give new or additional meaning to their texts, when read by a “competent” reader. Ben-Porat calls

this “the simultaneous activation of two texts.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the reader interprets the text, and then in recognizing the allusion, reinterprets the same text with new meaning provided through the literary allusion. While allusion may be either an intentional or an unintentional borrowing of material, literary allusion involves a deliberate and identifiable usage of another text employed as part of a rhetorical strategy. *Intertextuality* describes more generally the interaction between writers, their texts, and other texts. Allusion and literary allusion are specific types of intertextuality.<sup>9</sup>

As a rhetorical device, literary allusion also supposes an intention on the part of the author. Identification of this authorial intent<sup>10</sup> is to a large degree both subjective and theoretical. The reconstruction of authorial intent, no matter how appealing the evidence, still remains as a construct of the reader. This means that we are capable of understanding the rhetorical intent of the author only as far as we can be relatively certain what that intent is. Though speculative, the identification of literary allusions

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can be supported by their connection to the larger rhetorical context of the text in which they appear. As with other rhetorical devices, it can also increase our confidence in correctly identifying authorial intent.

With these limitations on discovering the intentions of the author in mind, the Book of Mormon offers us two significant benefits. The first is that unlike proposed intertextuality between biblical texts, the text of the Book of Mormon indicates that its authors did in fact have a copy of many of the biblical texts from which to work.<sup>11</sup> The second advantage is that the Book of Mormon narrative contains several explicit statements of intent (both



divine and human). At the same time, the Book of Mormon has some unique challenges as well.

Claims of intertextuality are made more difficult in this case because of the fact that we don't have original texts; we do not have the brass plates, nor do we have the gold plates. We have Joseph Smith's translation of the gold plates and the suggestion that the text makes that the brass plates are related in some way to the traditional Hebrew biblical text. These difficulties are not unique to this particular case,<sup>12</sup> but they do show the need to establish a more formal methodology than merely showing a series of parallels and claiming dependence. To deal with this, and in part to deal with the issues involving the translation produced by Joseph Smith, this study is placing more of an emphasis on the narrative as a whole and its relationship to the surrounding text than on verbal points of contact between the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible (whose language it has adopted for much of the biblical material within the text).

### Allusion and Echo Allusion

It is also necessary to discuss the concept of "echoes" within the text. An allusion, by definition, must be indirect or passing. "The test for [allusion] is that it is a phenomenon that some reader or readers may fail to observe."<sup>13</sup> A reader's recognition and understanding of an allusion passes through three distinct stages. First, the allusion must be recognized. Second, the text alluded to must be identified. Finally, this recognition changes the reader's interpretation of the local text.<sup>14</sup>

Just as allusions can be missed, it is also possible to find allusions where none exist. These are caused when common language is shared by two sources, but where no rhetorical device was employed or intended. To see an allusion where none exists is, essentially, to misinterpret the intentionality of the text.

Schaefer distinguishes between a conscious allusion and an "echo allusion." The echo allusion is

often unintentional, which results from the use of stock language in common circulation. The author reflects or replicates ideas that can be found in previous literature, but he may be unaware of the background source, and he does not wittingly advert to the original. Because an echo is unintentional, its understanding does not require knowledge of a particular source.

The interpreter who fails to distinguish between allusions which are intentional and echoes which are not can err in attributing what recalls a source by chance and what is a deliberate reference; this leads to misapprehension in the exegesis of a text.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, it is necessary when finding an allusion to demonstrate its intentionality—that its identification will alter the interpretation of the text and thus show that it is not just a familiar phrase or point of contact between texts. This discussion also brings up another significant point. A reader must be a "competent" reader to recognize the allusion. He must be capable of identifying the referent text, and he must be able to recognize the relationship between the alluding text and the referent text.

In order to evaluate perceived allusions in Paul's writings, Richard B. Hays notes seven questions that should be used to test the presence of allusions or echoes within a text:<sup>16</sup>

1. *Availability*: Was the source of the alleged allusion available to the author and/or the original reader?

2. *Volume*: How extensive is the explicit repetition of words or syntax (or other indicators)? How prominent is the material in the source text? How much rhetorical stress does the allusion receive in the alluding text?

3. *Recurrence*: How often does the author cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?

4. *Thematic Coherence*: How well does the alleged allusion fit into the argument that the alluding text is developing?

5. *Historical Plausibility*: Could the author have intended the alleged meaning effect? Would his readers have understood it?

6. *Historical Interpretation*: Have others seen the same allusion?

7. *Satisfaction*: Does the proposed reading make sense?

While Paul's use of scripture is often quite different from the prophets' use of scripture in the Book of Mormon, these questions still provide an excellent tool for evaluation. For example, the question of availability is significant; unlike the Pauline texts, the Book of Mormon often does not provide citations.<sup>17</sup>

## BEN-PORAT'S MODEL OF LITERARY ALLUSION

In 1976, Ziva Ben-Porat published her landmark study, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion."<sup>18</sup> In this study, Ben-Porat defined the term *literary allusion* as follows:

The literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts. The activation is achieved through the manipulation of a special signal: a sign (simple or complex) in a given text characterized by an additional larger "referent." This referent is always an independent text. The simultaneous activation of the two texts thus connected results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined.<sup>19</sup>

Ben-Porat then describes the process of this activation:

The more complex process of actualizing a literary allusion can be described as a movement starting with the recognition of the marker and ending with the intertextual patterning. The reader has to perceive the existence of a marker before any further activity can take place. This perception entails a recollection of the original form of the marker, and in most cases leads to the identification of the text in which it has originally appeared. The recollection of the marker's original form may suffice for a modified and fuller interpretation of the sign as it appears in the alluding text. Identification of the marker's larger "referent," the evoked text, is mandatory for intertextual patterning beyond the modified interpretation of the marker itself.<sup>20</sup>

The process of activating the literary allusion then takes on four distinct stages: (1) recognition of the marking elements and signs, (2) identification of the evoked text, (3) modification of the original interpretation of the local text, and (4) activation of the evoked text as a whole to produce maximum intertextual patterns.<sup>21</sup>

### Types of Markers

Rather than detailing the different ways in which an allusive marker may be expressed, I wish to discuss, in general terms, the kinds of markers

that can be used within the literary allusions to help the reader recognize the source text.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, I will be focusing on the criteria presented by Konrad Schaefer<sup>23</sup> and Jon Paulien.<sup>24</sup> This study will focus on four distinct categories of allusive markers: (1) quotations, (2) structural parallels, (3) thematic parallels, and (4) verbal parallels. As we recognize these markers, we identify the referent text to which the Book of Mormon alludes. Once the two texts are identified, the literary allusion allows us to reinterpret the Book of Mormon text by incorporating the literary allusion as a rhetorical device indicating authorial intent.

### Quotations

In general, we consider quotation to be an exact and usually explicit movement of text from one source to another. In studies involving ancient texts, such a definition is proven to be too narrow for three major reasons. First, texts are often translated across language barriers, eliminating exact quotations. Second, texts are often changed through transmission errors and editing; quotations may be inexact because extant copies of a text may not correctly represent an earlier version, which has been quoted. Third, ancient writers were generally not as explicit, either in identifying a source or an author, as we are today. This makes identifying a source text much more difficult. Within the field of ancient textual studies, a broader definition of quotation is used. As Konrad Schaefer explains:

Quotations occur when an author reproduces the words or formulation of a literary source which is traceable from his choice of words or of turns of phrase. This involves deliberate borrowing of significant and sufficient wording and phrasing "in a form which one would *not* have used them had it not been for a knowledge of their occurrence in this particular form in another source." A quotation can be attested when there are collateral indicators pointing the interpreter to an original context.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, a text that does not provide an explicit statement, and that is not necessarily exact, may still be identified as a quotation.<sup>26</sup> This expanded definition is particularly important when working with the Book of Mormon—a text for which only Joseph Smith's 1829 translation exists.

### *Structural Parallels*

Paulien defines structural parallels as existing when material in the local text and material in the source text occur in the same order. I would add that structural parallels are also seen in poetic structures and in narrative dialogue. This evidence becomes stronger as the structure is extended over a larger body of text, and generally functions as a more effective indicator than thematic or verbal parallels.

### *Thematic Parallels*

Thematic parallels occur when both the local and the source texts exist within a common theme that usually extends far beyond the boundaries of the allusion or the context of the quotation. However, like the allusion itself, “In the case of thematic parallels, significant verbal affinities ‘are to be distinguished from “stock language” or themes which have moorings in particular genres of previous literature.’”<sup>27</sup> In doing so, we recognize the conscious effort to use the source text to evoke a desired response in the reader of the local text.

### *Verbal Parallels*

Verbal parallels are the weakest of these criteria. A verbal parallel requires that “at least two words of more than minor significance are parallel between a passage.”<sup>28</sup> I would add that in some instances an arguably unique verbal contact can be seen in a single word.<sup>29</sup> Taken by itself, a verbal parallel can only be reasonably seen as an echo allusion and not as an indicator for textual reliance. However, particularly when identified along with other parallels, these can be a further indicator of probability that a local text has been successfully identified as a conscious allusion. While their presence does not by itself indicate contact between texts, a lack of verbal parallels may present a serious problem to a proposed allusive relationship between a local text and a source text.

## **APPLICATION OF THE METHOD AND DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT**

### **Identification of Markers**

The first step in the recognition and analysis of literary allusion in the Book of Mormon is to identify the markers that trigger the intertextual con-

nection between 1 Nephi 3:31–4:19 and 1 Samuel 17. The most effective allusive markers in the narrative in 1 Nephi are the thematic parallels. While these are not the only markers, the thematic parallels provide us with a useful framework to introduce the various elements that make up the signs with their markers.

### *Identification of the Marker and Marked Text*

The first thematic parallel occurs with the introduction of the antagonist. In the Book of Mormon text, this role is filled by Laban.<sup>30</sup> In the Old Testament parallel, we have the Philistine Goliath.<sup>31</sup> The second set of cast members includes Laman and Lemuel in the Book of Mormon and faithless Israel—“Saul and all Israel”—in the Old Testament text. This thematic parallel will be strengthened throughout the entire literary section. The antagonist is introduced in terms of his military prowess. Goliath, first seen on the field of battle, is the champion of the Philistines. Laban is introduced as the commander of fifty in the Jerusalem garrison (and described as being able to kill fifty). And, the response of everyone but the protagonist is fear.

When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.<sup>32</sup>

Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying: How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?<sup>33</sup>

Following the fearful response to the threat of the antagonist, the protagonist is introduced. In the Book of Mormon narrative, the protagonist is Nephi.<sup>34</sup> In the Old Testament text, it is David.<sup>35</sup> At this first appearance, the protagonist encourages those around him—faithless Israel and Laman and Lemuel—in their task, stating that there is nothing to fear and that he is willing to challenge the antagonist.

Both protagonists cite miracles as the basis for their faith. David cites instances from his own life,<sup>36</sup> and Nephi cites one from the history of Israel and one from his own life.<sup>37</sup> They each then conclude by remarking that just as God performed those miracles, God will deliver them from the hand of their antagonists. Again, we have close thematic parallels





Better That One Man Should Perish by Scott Snow. © Scott Snow.

in the two accounts. In this case, we also get a series of verbal parallels: the phrases in the Old Testament account are “The Lord that delivered me” and “he will deliver me,”<sup>38</sup> relative to Nephi’s “the Lord is able to deliver us.”<sup>39</sup>

A second thematic parallel also occurs in David’s suggestion that “thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.”<sup>40</sup> This suggests (prophetically) that what happened to the lion and the bear will also happen to the Philistine. In Nephi’s parallel account, he speaks of a similar fate awaiting Laban: “The Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians.”<sup>41</sup> What is particularly interesting about this phrase in the Book of Mormon is that it foreshadows Laban’s death. In making an oracular

statement here about what will happen, Nephi has already determined that Laban will be destroyed “as the Egyptians.” This is much more explicit than the reference to Laban’s death given by an angel earlier in 1 Nephi 3:29. Just as in the historical Exodus, Nephi’s point is clear: God will help fight their battles.<sup>42</sup> The parting of the sea is also significant, as it serves to show God destroying the enemies of Israel while they are leaving for their promised land. The actual reference is an explicit reference to Old Testament events. This runs parallel to Nephi’s description of Lehi’s journey into the wilderness as a second exodus, and functions as a brief comparison between Laban (and his tens of thousands) and the might and armies of Egypt, as an obstacle that stood between Israel and their promised land.<sup>43</sup>





*David Slaying Goliath*, by Peter Paul Rubens. Courtesy The Norton Simon Foundation.

In the next section of both texts, we have the confrontation between the antagonist and the protagonist. We have a distinctive point of verbal contact (perhaps even a quotation) in the phrase “delivered thee into mine hand.”<sup>44</sup> It is also a thematic parallel. Nephi’s account may also represent a reference to Exodus 21:13.<sup>45</sup> Here, in both stories, we have the protagonist claiming that God will deliver the antagonist into his hands.

Another thematic parallel here is that David claims to be killing Goliath so that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”<sup>46</sup> In Nephi’s account, Laban is killed so that Nephi’s posterity will know the God of Israel:

Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should

dwindle and perish in unbelief. And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise. Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.<sup>47</sup>

Both narrative units then end with the death of the antagonist and the subsequent removal and keeping of his armor. While the thematic parallels are strong, the verbal parallels are striking. David “ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith.” Nephi



writes that he “beheld his sword, and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof; . . . and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword.” The protagonist takes the sword belonging to his incapacitated opponent and decapitates him with it.<sup>48</sup>

This strikingly similar description functions as the climax of both narrative units. The Book of Mormon then transitions to a new narrative section as Nephi took “the garments of Laban” and put them upon his “own body,”<sup>49</sup> while David “put his [Goliath’s] armour in his tent.”<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the marking elements discussed above, we see another pattern: All of the thematic parallels exist in the same order in both narratives. First, we have the introduction of the antagonist, who is described in terms of his feats of strength and who inspires fear. Then the protagonist responds, claiming that there is no need to fear—the God who has historically acted on the protagonist’s behalf will again act to destroy this threat, not only to save the protagonist, but also to ensure that God is recognized in the future. Next the antagonist and protagonist meet, and the text announces to us that the antagonist is delivered into the hands of the protagonist by God. Finally, the antagonist is reduced to a helpless state, and the protagonist takes his enemy’s sword, pulls it from its sheath, decapitates the antagonist, and then gathers his foe’s armor as his own.

#### Parallel Passages in 1 Samuel and 1 Nephi

1 Samuel 17:4–7, 11	1 Nephi 3:31
1 Samuel 17:32	1 Nephi 4:1
1 Samuel 17:34–37	1 Nephi 4:2–3
1 Samuel 17:45–46	1 Nephi 4:6, 10–12, 17
1 Samuel 17:51	1 Nephi 4:9, 18
1 Samuel 17:54	1 Nephi 4:19

The thematic elements follow a relatively simple structural parallel. This parallel being sustained throughout the entire narrative text is a strong indicator that the Book of Mormon narrative is reliant on the biblical text.

## Interpretation of the Texts

### Discussion of the Local Interpretations

When we first read the text in 1 Nephi—before we recognize the signs with their markers that signal the literary allusion—the story is one we are generally familiar with. As the narrative unfolds, we see Laman and Lemuel are afraid of Laban. Not only is Laban himself capable of killing them, but Laban also commands fifty men who are also capable of killing them (3:31). Nephi places his faith in the Lord who has commanded them to retrieve the plates of brass from Laban (4:1).<sup>51</sup> Nephi tells us that the Lord is greater than Laban, Laban’s fifty, or even Laban’s ten thousand. Nephi then recalls Moses and the Israelite exodus from Egypt in an attempt to persuade his brothers to have faith. Specifically, he recounts the parting of the Red Sea and the subsequent death of the Egyptians who followed the Israelites. This, along with the angel who had just recently appeared to all of them to confirm the will of the Lord in retrieving the plates, serves as reminders of the power of the Lord in accomplishing his will. The brothers, still angry and fearful, agree to go to Jerusalem for another attempt to gain the plates. Nephi enters the city alone, heading toward the house of Laban with no plan as to how he would acquire the brass plates. As he approaches the house of Laban, he finds Laban incapacitated on the ground. He feels constrained by the Spirit to kill Laban, but he hesitates because he does not want to kill a man. The Spirit tells Nephi that God has “delivered Laban into thy hands” so that Nephi will kill him and thus be able to retrieve the brass plates. Nephi also considers the fact that Laban had on the previous encounter tried to have Nephi killed and that Laban was (in Nephi’s estimation) a wicked man who did not keep the commandments of God. The Spirit then enjoins Nephi a third time to kill Laban, calling Laban wicked and explaining that the price of Laban’s death was justified in the purposes of God. Nephi, recognizing the importance of the brass plates, obeys the Spirit, takes Laban’s sword, and executes him with it.

Within this narrative we reach several conclusions. First, Nephi’s faith is rightly placed in God. Second, God does not require money or might to achieve his objectives, merely that his servants place their faith in the Spirit. Third, the wicked who

attempt to thwart God will fail. Fourth, to those with faith, God reveals his will through the Spirit.

#### *Discussion of the Referent Text*

Once the signs with their markers have been recognized, we are pointed toward another text, this one in 1 Samuel. In this narrative, all of Israel is under threat of destruction or enslavement at the hands of the Philistines, represented particularly in their champion Goliath. All of Israel is afraid of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4–11), except for David.

He [Saul] and his army are disarmed by fear and completely helpless. David is able; or rather he is *uniquely* able, since the rest of Israel is powerless. There is nothing deficient, however slightly so, about David's courage; there is nothing tentative about his resolution. . . . Only to Yahweh does he appeal for assistance, and here again his conduct is impeccable: his confidence in the power of god is absolute.<sup>52</sup>

David shows no fear because of the results he had previously experienced when placing his faith in the Lord (1 Samuel 17:32–36). David takes the field of battle and is victorious—first incapacitating the Philistine and then decapitating him with his own sword. These occurrences are evidence of Saul's fall from favor. Because of Saul's sin, Saul has been rejected as king of Israel.<sup>53</sup>

So in the middle chapters as a result of Saul's sin, his dynasty is not established; another house is destined to take its place.<sup>54</sup>

Although Samuel had previously anointed David as the next king,<sup>55</sup> it is because of his success against the Philistines (and Goliath in particular) that David supplants Saul and Jonathan, first as the premier warrior in Israel<sup>56</sup> and then later as the king.<sup>57</sup> The concept that God has delivered Goliath into the hands of David is a sign that God is with David and, ultimately, a signal that God has chosen David as king.

#### **Reinterpretation of the Local Text**

Having recognized the literary allusion, we now reinterpret the Book of Mormon text through the lens of the David and Goliath narrative. Nephi can be seen as the heir apparent. He will be king. The others may not recognize his kingship, but, in "delivering into his hand" the antagonist, the enemy

of true Israel, God has demonstrated his preference. (This, of course, simply reinforces 1 Nephi 3:30, prior to the beginning of the narrative, where Nephi, like David, has already been chosen). Laman and Lemuel are representative of Saul and the rest of faithless Israel. They are afraid, in a way that prevents them from taking action, and their own wickedness has precluded them from being favored by God (and so precluded either of them from becoming king). Nephi's calculated language shows that he was not guilty of murder in the case of Laban (at least by his own estimation) and that he considered Laban to be guilty of theft, of attempted murder, and of the larger crime of wickedness before God. As a result, God's "delivering him" into Nephi's hands both alleviates the guilt that might have normally come upon Nephi and suggests the miraculous nature of its occurrence. Nephi overcomes not only Laban (Goliath) but also by extension his fifty or, like David, his tens of thousands (perhaps intended in Nephi's remarks in 1 Nephi 4:1). Regardless, Nephi takes the sword from fallen Laban and decapitates him. It is with this graphic image that the narrative unit closes. Nephi has proven his faith in God, and will return victorious to his people.

#### *Development of Extended Links*

Noel Reynolds discusses the two major issues covered in Nephi's writings: his reign and his ministry:<sup>58</sup>

The two messages of the book are tied together in such a way that whoever accepts the teachings of Christ accepts that Nephi was a legitimate ruler, and vice versa. . . . Nephi carefully constructed what he wrote to convince his own and later generations that the Lord had selected him over his older brothers to be Lehi's successor. Thus, one interesting way to read the account is as a political tract produced to show that his rule was authoritative. . . . What we tend to read as a story of flight from Jerusalem is really a carefully designed account explaining to his successors why their religious faith in Christ and their political tradition—the kingship of Nephi—were both true and legitimate.<sup>59</sup>

Despite Reynolds's explorations, the extent to which Nephi developed his political arguments has largely gone unrecognized. Once we recognize the literary

allusion here in this narrative unit, several things become clear. First, Nephi's intent in including the narrative of his killing Laban has significant implications for his kingship (but not necessarily for his ministry). In 2 Nephi 5:18, Nephi records that he was asked to accept the role of king over the fledgling colony. He recorded his response as follows:

And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power.

According to the text, Nephi accepts the role of king over the people. Jacob verifies this in the following chapter when says he was “consecrated by [his] brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector.”<sup>60</sup> Jacob (like Nephi) seems to show some hesitancy here in calling Nephi a king over the people. But certainly by the time Nephi has passed away and Jacob has assumed the role of spiritual leader of the people, there were no such reservations.<sup>61</sup> However, the kingship of Nephi was a particularly divisive issue between the two separate factions of Lehi's children. And the issue of who had the right to be king is brought up frequently in the text.

For Nephi, this position of authority is foreshadowed by prophecy. He is told by the Lord that “inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren.” Later, in the trip back to Jerusalem to recover the brass plates, Nephi's older brothers are told by an angel “Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities?”<sup>62</sup>

Laman and Lemuel are consistently portrayed by Nephi as being jealous and outraged that he would usurp their natural right of inheritance and leadership. This is repeated through the narrative, but is perhaps best spelled out in 1 Nephi 16:37–38:

And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren. Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lies unto us; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away,



Laman and Lemuel. Illustration by Joseph Brickey.

he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure. And after this manner did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger.

We, as the readers of the text, can appreciate the irony in Laman's comments. After all, Laman was present when the angel came to them in the cave. Laman seems to be guilty of several of the points of which he accuses Nephi. This theme of jealousy and anger is repeated in 1 Nephi 18:10 and



in 2 Nephi 5:3, 19. In the latter passage, this issue becomes the reason that Lehi's descendants split into two groups—the Lamanites and the Nephites. And, at the time that Nephi began writing his small plates, it seems to have been one of the most critical issues. As Noel Reynolds noted, “Nephi carefully constructed what he wrote to convince his own and later generations that the Lord had selected him over his older brothers to be Lehi's successor.”<sup>63</sup> It is only natural then that we should expect to see portions of Nephi's record deal with the political environment in which Nephi wrote. In following Reynolds's observations, not only is Nephi selected to succeed his father, he is also chosen to found a

new dynastic kingship—one that would remain intact for almost 600 years.

Nephi established his kingship through his narrative, to be passed on to his children, and his children's children. And it was not just Nephi's kingship. Through this narrative we also see the legitimizing of a new dynasty. The Lehite offshoot of Israel no longer has a Davidic king. They have Nephi.<sup>64</sup> Just as importantly, like the relationship between Saul and David, this narrative presents and explains the source of Laman and Lemuel's enmity with Nephi.

### *The Death of Laban*

John Welch has argued that Nephi's phrase “the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands”<sup>65</sup> refers back to Exodus 21:13. He suggests:

The crucial question, however, is whether or not the law of Exodus 21:13–14 would have applied to the case of Nephi's killing of Laban.<sup>66</sup>

I believe that this is the wrong question. Whether or not we believe the law in Exodus applied to Nephi is to some extent irrelevant to what Nephi believed. The fact that he includes several distinct references to the passage would suggest that he did, in fact, think it was applicable. So, we should be asking in what way Nephi thought it applied to his situation, not whether in fact it applied at all. In asking whether or not the law applies in this specific case, we are not developing a textual interpretation but rather providing an apologetic for a modern and probably incorrect understanding of the text. We want to justify Laban's death. The better approach (although from an apologetic perspective perhaps less satisfying, since we still are faced with the issue of whether or not Nephi was justified in killing Laban) is to ask how Nephi felt that the law applied to him—that is to say, how does he justify the killing of Laban within the context of the Mosaic law. Dealing with intent in the technical fashion that Welch does is problematic, since the text itself states that this narrative is written long after the events occurred, and the text twice gives a foreshadowing of Laban's demise (first from the angel and then later from Nephi himself). If we accept the chronology provided in the text literally, then there is a real issue of whether or not Nephi entered the city fully expecting to kill Laban. Additionally, Nephi uses the phrase to “shed blood.” While Welch briefly



*Saul Attempts the Life of David*, by Gustave Doré.

discusses this phrase, it was used in the Old Testament to reference violent killings that violated cultic purity and required a response to keep the land from being tainted.<sup>67</sup>

While the Hebrew text of Exodus 21 allows for the accidental (or even happenstance) occurrence of homicide, the 1 Samuel text allows for the intentional and divinely mandated killing of an enemy<sup>68</sup> (as was the case with Goliath and David). Nephi is also making it clear that he views Laban (even though he is an Israelite) as an enemy—both to himself and to God—and thus ultimately deserving of the fate which he receives. This is essential if Nephi wishes to portray Laban as Goliath and their encounter as one of the foundational events establishing Nephi's dynasty.

### Evaluation

In answering Hays's questions, some can be easily addressed. Was the Samuel text available to the authors and readers of the text? Certainly, if we accept the narrative as reasonably accurate, the brass plates would seem to be the source of the biblical material used. More than this, the members of the Nephite community show an awareness of several aspects of David's history, notably his polygamy as mentioned in Jacob 2.

The strengths of the argument for textual reliance lie in (1) the significant number of markers, (2) the shared structure of both narratives, and (3) that the literary allusion strengthens a rhetorical argument that Nephi makes consistently in his writings. The first two points argue for an acceptance of the proposed allusion and answer the questions of volume and recurrence. The final point emphasizes the argument Nephi forwards. This allusion seems to be intended to convince its readers that Nephi is a legitimate king and that there was a dynastic shift from the Davidic line of kings. This argument follows reasonably on Reynolds's proposals.

The questions of historical plausibility and historical interpretation are less clear. It seems possible that the Nephites did accept these events as intended (although not necessarily because of the text). **The sword of Laban becomes a symbol of authority for the Nephite kings.**<sup>69</sup> In terms of the short history of the English translation, LDS authors have noted the similarities between Nephi's killing of Laban and David's killing of Goliath,

however none has made the suggestion that this is an allusion or deliberate mimesis.

The final question is that of satisfaction. **Does the proposed reading make sense?** From my personal perspective, this reading does do just that. And it helps to place this narrative within a context that allows us to understand why Nephi might include this episode along with its particular details in his small plates.

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCOVERIES

**As I mentioned in the introduction, any study that deals with intertextuality and authorial intent will always remain hypothetical.** However, in providing a methodology and a criteria for identifying the signals with their markers, along with a way of evaluating our proposal, we can be more confident that a literary allusion is being used in the Book of Mormon text. It has been the intent of this paper to demonstrate that the number of parallels between the texts and the structural connection between

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the two texts suggest that the Book of Mormon contains a literary allusion to the biblical narrative of David and Goliath. It is, however, the rhetorical purpose served by this allusion—a purpose that fits the internal statements of purpose and intent and enhances an understanding of the Book of Mormon narrative on a larger scale—that provides an indication that our hypothesis is correct and that the



new meaning we find in the text brings us closer to understanding the intent of Nephi.

I selected this particular episode in the Book of Mormon as the case study for literary dependency for several reasons. First, most LDS members are familiar with both narratives. This allows for minimal discussion and interpretation of the two sources prior to the introduction of the literary allusion. It also allows us to address the modified local interpretation without having to detail each point as it is made. Second, there have been several proposals examining connections between the Nephite exodus and the Israelite exodus from Egypt under Moses. The passages discussed here lie outside the typical comments we find regarding these parallels. Third, this passage had some unique applications in the arena of textual criticism of the Old Testament, which I feel reflect on the authenticity of the Book of Mormon as a historical text.

If the assessment of literary dependency holds true, we have discovered a unique source of insight into the formation of the traditional text of the Bible, as well as into the contents of the brass plates. There has been a long-standing debate with regard to the original composition of the Samuel texts. This debate has lingered because of the differences between various manuscripts and textual families. For the purposes of this study, this is particularly significant because, as Johan Lust writes, "As far as the Books of Samuel are concerned, the story of David and Goliath is by far the most important of the contexts in which several manuscripts of the Septuagint, among which the early majuscule B, differ considerably from the present Hebrew text. The Greek version . . . is much shorter than the Hebrew. It omits 1 Samuel 17, 12–31.41.48b.50.55–18,6a.10–12.17–19.21b.30."<sup>70</sup> Lust further asks: "Which text is to be preferred, the longer or the shorter one? Which criteria allow us to make a proper choice?"<sup>71</sup> The contribution of this study with regard to these questions is to note that the specific markers that Nephi uses within the Samuel text fall exclusively within the shorter source. Nephi only references 17:4–7, 11, 32, 34–37, 45–46, 51, and 54. The notable omission of the longer (and arguably later)<sup>72</sup> additions to the text may well represent the notion that the text of Samuel contained in Nephi's brass plates did not include these additions. This might also suggest some degree of confirmation for the idea that perhaps the earlier text of the account of David and

Goliath stemmed from a northern source. The brass plates, belonging to the descendants of the northern tribe of Manasseh, may represent such a source.<sup>73</sup>

There is also the phrase in 1 Nephi 4:13: "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief." Much has been said about the close connection between this phrase and the text of John 11:50: "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." While nothing conclusive can be said about this passage, the narrative in 1 Samuel would certainly offer a plausible scenario in which such a statement might occur. When the Philistine champion appears to Israel, he shouts to their assembled armies:

Why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *am* not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.<sup>74</sup>

Despite Saul's reluctance and his suggestion that David cannot possibly defeat the giant, he still agrees to send David forth. How we apply the narrative is again based on a purely theoretical imposition. But the idea is that one or the other will die and, in theory, this will spare the armies of the two nations.<sup>75</sup> Rather than losing its armies and its strength, Israel sends forth David as a sacrifice for the rest of Israel. Even Goliath recognizes this when he declares: "*Am* I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?"<sup>76</sup> Much more work remains to be done.

In detailing exactly the process by which I justify this identification, I hope to encourage discussion and critical input. The Book of Mormon as a repository of intertextual material has not begun to be explored. It will take patience and significant effort to reexamine the text and to produce an exegesis that more closely resembles the intent of its authors. A study of the intertextuality of the Book of Mormon will help us not only find better meaning within the text, but also better understand the texts that the Book of Mormon authors reference in their writings. ■

## Notes

1. This study is a substantially modified and expanded version of a paper delivered at the third annual FAIR apologetics conference in 2001, entitled *Nephi and Goliath, a Reappraisal of the Use of the Old Testament in First and Second Nephi*.
2. John W. Welch, "Approaching New Approaches," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 146.
3. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the overall formation and literary structure of the Book of Mormon (or even of First Nephi). Nor will I attempt to catalog or identify the sources for other instances of intertextuality apart from those relevant to the case study.
4. Antti Laato argues that "methodology is one of the most problematic aspects of every academic discipline. On the one hand, the ability to make sound methodological judgments is a necessary prerequisite for scholarly competence. On the other hand, in order to evaluate current issues in scientific methodology one must have experience in applying scientific methods to the solution of concrete problems. The whole point of learning methodology in the first place is that of enabling the scholar to make informed, critical, and conditional judgments." Antti Laato, "Psalm 132: A Case Study in Methodology," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61/1 (1999): 24. Later in the same article he notes, "The literary-critical and redaction-critical methods developed during the seventeenth to twentieth centuries were based solely on theoretical models without any empirical corroboration. As a result, the conclusions reached by scholars adopting a literary- and redaction-critical approach were themselves theoretical. This does not mean that the theory was in no way descriptive of historical reality, but theory without any empirical model runs the risk of being too one-sided or restricted for describing the process of transmitting texts. Empirical models are needed to complement the purely theoretical speculations which are so popular in literary- and redaction-critical investigations" (p. 25).
5. Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 105–28.
6. Others have written on this topic, using similar approaches. For a few additional significant contributions, see Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger," *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996): 479–89; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Michael Fishbane, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies of Interpretation in Ancient Israel" in *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3–15; Yair Zakovitch, *An Introduction to Inner-Biblical Interpretation* [Hebrew] (Even-Yehuda: Reches, 1992); Gershon Hepner, "Verbal Resonance in the Bible and Intertextuality," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 96 (2001): 3–27; W. H. Schniedewind, "Are We His People or Not? Biblical Interpretation during Crisis," *Biblica* 76 (1995): 540–50; W. Dennis Tucker Jr., "Psalm 95: Text, Context, and Intertext," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 533–41.
7. A reader who is familiar with the referent text is considered competent while a reader who is unfamiliar with the referent text (and by extension unable to recognize the reference or allusion) is not.
8. Ben-Porat, "Poetics of Literary Allusion," 107.
9. Sommer takes exception to this idea, noting: "This distinction between intertextuality, on the one hand, and allusion and influence, on the other, is basic to contemporary theoretical discussions of the relations between texts, though many readers continue to confuse them." Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 8. The distinction that Sommer makes is between intertextuality, which does not attempt to establish which text is the source and which is the borrower, and the study of allusion or reference, which does. While Sommer finds these narrow and technical definitions useful in his study, I find them less so in mine. I am using *intertextuality* in a broader sense—it is inclusive of allusion and literary allusion. These are then examples of directionally defined intertextuality.
10. It is not the purpose of this study to debate whether or not authorial intent can be discovered. This essay is concerned with evidence for deliberate allusion within the text. Such evidence, if it exists, can only be understood in terms of authorial intent. Following this idea, Kevin Vanhoozer, in *Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), suggests that the reader of scripture is concerned with two layers of authorship—the human author and the divine author. Vanhoozer further recognizes that the divine authorship can only be viewed through both the human author's intention and the canon representing a unified communication. The text of the Book of Mormon contains explicit descriptions of both human and divine purpose. This fact, that authorial intent is expressed within the text, is highly significant and should be taken into consideration when dealing with the discovery of allusion and rhetorical strategies within the text. Given this perspective, it is my intent to demonstrate enough evidence for a deliberate use of intertextuality (through demonstrated literary allusion) to silence the argument for an accidental grouping of syntax and theme. I avoid the intentional fallacy by not going outside of the text to search for meaning. For a discussion on this see W. K. Wimsatt, "Genesis: An Argument Resumed," in *Day of the Leopards: Essays in Defense of Poems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 11–39; see also Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).
11. The extent to which these texts resemble our current biblical texts is open to debate. However, there is no question that the Book of Mormon quotes extensively from a biblical source, more explicitly in the large sections taken nearly verbatim from the King James text of Isaiah and less noticeably in the minor passages quoted from a range of biblical texts including Deuteronomy, Numbers, and Psalms. This borrowing can be seen consistently and shows a deliberate usage of the biblical text consistent with the application being discussed here.
12. This kind of special application is often seen in discussing inner biblical textual reliance. For example, it is seen in the claims that Deuteronomy both quotes Jeremiah and is quoted by Jeremiah. These arguments rely on a hypothetical proto-Deuteronomy text that is used by Jeremiah, and then a later final version of Deuteronomy that uses Jeremiah. See, for example, William L. Holladay, "Elusive Deuteronomists, Jeremiah, and Proto-Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66/1 (2004): 55–77. It also occurs when texts have been translated and are not known (or are incomplete) in their original languages, as is the case with the Psalms of Solomon, eighteen poems originally written in Hebrew that now exist only in Greek and Syriac texts. These kinds of issues are dealt with, for example, in Joseph L. Trafton, *The Syriac Version of the Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Evaluation* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1985).
13. T. V. F. Brogan, ed., *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 14.
14. For a more detailed description of the process see Ben-Porat. In this regard, Schaefer notes: "The essence of the conscious allusion is the author's intention to recall previous oracles with their context; once the reader recognizes the reference, the horizons for comprehension are expanded. The author, who 'is fully conscious of the source as well as of its relevance to his composition,' writes for the reader who presumably knows the source and of the author's intention to refer to it. In this case, the source alluded to can be fully understood only in the light of its context within the original work." Konrad R. Schaefer, "Zechariah 14: A Study in Allusion," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57/1 (1995): 69. Schaefer quotes Jon Paulien, "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic

- Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” *Biblical Research* 33 (1988): 40.
15. Schaefer, “Zechariah 14,” 69.
  16. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29–32. Hays does not distinguish between an echo and an allusion for the purpose of these questions; his concern is only in identifying instances of intertextuality in Paul. This broader use does not seem to exclude the narrow aim I have here for demonstrating the directional movement of material. I am only providing the questions here. For further discussion on their implications see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*.
  17. See for example the use of Psalm 95:8–11 in Jacob 1:7.
  18. Ben-Porat, “Poetics of Literary Allusion.”
  19. Ben-Porat, “Poetics of Literary Allusion,” 107–8.
  20. Ben-Porat, “Poetics of Literary Allusion,” 109–10.
  21. Ben-Porat uses a system of abbreviations to work with the various elements of a literary allusion. I have followed this system in the footnotes. The abbreviations are defined here to assist the reader who wishes to reconstruct the process:  
MA: marking elements in the alluding text  
(the signal of the allusion)  
MR: marked elements in the referent text
  22. Wills set forth four distinct categories of repetition in Latin poetry: genimation, polyptoton, parallelism, and modification. See Jeffrey Wills. *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). The work is comprehensive. For the first two categories, for example, he attempts to identify every instance in Latin poetry through Juvenal. For the other two, which are much more common, he still produces a substantial set of representative instances. While the categories he has chosen work especially well for his subject material, they are less useful for mine, and I have turned instead to a different classification of the types of textual indicators for allusion.
  23. Schaefer, “Zechariah 14,” 66–91.
  24. Paulien, “Elusive Allusions,” 37–53.
  25. Schaefer, “Zechariah 14,” 68. Within the citation, Schaefer cites L. P. Trudinger, “Some Observations concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1996): 82n1.
  26. Schaefer provides the following example: “In Zechariah 14 we cannot properly speak of ‘exact quotations,’ although the construction וְנִשְׁטוּ הַבָּתִּים וְהַנְּשִׁים תִּשְׁלָנָה ‘the houses plundered, the women raped’ (v 2), is quoted from Isa 13:16, an identification bolstered by numerous other parallels between Zechariah 14 and Isaiah 13.” Schaefer, “Zechariah 14,” 68. The identification of Book of Mormon citations of biblical texts is much more speculative, but again, if we can produce adequate textual parallels, an argument for quotation and not reference or allusion can be established.
  27. Schaefer, “Zechariah 14,” 70. Schaefer quotes Paulien, “Elusive Allusions,” 43.
  28. Paulien, “Elusive Allusions,” 41.
  29. See, for example, Terrence L. Szink, “To a Land of Promise (1 Nephi 16–18),” in *1 Nephi to Alma* 29, vol. 7 of *Studies in Scripture*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 60–72. Szink discusses similarities between the Book of Mormon use of the word *murmur* parallel to the Old Testament accounts of the Exodus.
  30. 1 Nephi 3:31 (MA).
  31. 1 Samuel 17:1–11 (MR).
  32. 1 Samuel 17:11 (MR).
  33. 1 Nephi 3:31 (MA).
  34. 1 Nephi 4:1 (MA).
  35. 1 Samuel 17:32 (MR).
  36. 1 Samuel 17:34–37 (MR).
  37. 1 Nephi 4:2–3 (MA).
  38. Both in 1 Samuel 17:37 (MR).
  39. 1 Nephi 4:3 (MA).
  40. 1 Samuel 17:36 (MR).
  41. 1 Nephi 4:3 (MA).
  42. The reference here to the Exodus inserts another perspective that does not deal directly with this interpretation. On the one hand, Laban is Goliath, and defeating him will defeat the rest of the forces waiting to carry out their will on Nephi and his brothers.
  43. We also might take the parallels further—Moses was the instrument of the miraculous parting of the sea; Nephi was the instrument of God in completing their mission. However, the development of the exodus theme here, along with this idea of Nephi as Moses, seems to be secondary and not essential to the meaning of the text. In this case, it is unlikely that such a meaning (while valid within the context) is the primary intent of the author. Nephi has been portraying Lehi as the Moses figure early in the text (e.g., the use of Numbers 12:6, particularly in 1 Nephi 2:1).
  44. 1 Samuel 17:46 (MR) and 1 Nephi 4:11–12, 17 (MA).
  45. See John W. Welch, “Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban,” *JBMS* 1/1 (1992): 119–41. Welch also argues that “precise words and technical concepts used by Nephi show that he wrote this story with biblical laws in mind that justifiably cast this episode in favorable light.” In light of the allusion here, we get a glimpse of how Nephi understood the biblical passage that he quotes in his own defense, and we see at least a partial confirmation of Welch’s arguments. I explore this further in the discussion below.
  46. 1 Samuel 17:46 (MR).
  47. 1 Nephi 4:13–15 (MA).
  48. 1 Samuel 17:51 (MR) and 1 Nephi 4:9, 18 (MA).
  49. 1 Nephi 4:19 (MA).
  50. 1 Samuel 17:54 (MR).
  51. Nephi stresses this point earlier when the journey to retrieve the plates is first introduced in 1 Nephi 3:2, 4–5, 7, 15–16, 21. It is specifically called the commandment of the Lord seven times prior to this verse.
  52. P. Kyle McCarter Jr. *1 Samuel* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 295.
  53. See 1 Samuel 15:24; see also vv. 26 and 35.
  54. Dominique Barthélemy, David W. Gooding, Johan Lust, and Emanuel Tov, *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 63.
  55. See 1 Samuel 16:12–13. It has been suggested that this passage is a part of the later narrative of David and Goliath, and as such should probably not be used as evidence for the literary allusion. However, if it is not present in the text which Nephi had before him, its absence does not alter the premise that the David and Goliath narrative deals with the theme of replacing one dynastic rule with another. Of particular interest with regard to this study is David Jobling’s article “Saul’s Fall and Jonathan’s Rise: Tradition and Redaction in 1 Samuel 14:1–46,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95/3 (1976): 367–76. There, Saul is first diminished while Jonathan is elevated. Some of the same phrases familiar to us from the narrative of David and Goliath and of Nephi and Laban also appear in that text. See, for example, 14:12: “for the Lord hath delivered them [the Philistines] into the hand of Israel.” Jobling proposes a reading of “into *our* hands” here (p. 373).
  56. See for example 1 Samuel 18:7 where David and Saul are greeted by the women on their return from the field of battle: “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.”
  57. In 1 Samuel 18: 8–9 we see Saul realizing for the first time that he will be supplanted: “They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?” See also 18:16 and 18:30.
  58. See 1 Nephi 10:1.
  59. Noel B. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Political Testament,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 220–21.
  60. 2 Nephi 6:2.
  61. Jacob 1:11 reads: “Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would.” This is fol-

- lowed in verse 15 by the comment: “And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, . . .”
62. 1 Nephi 2:22; 1 Nephi 3:29.
  63. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Political Testament,” 221.
  64. As a side note, all of Nephi’s successors, the text notes, are called Nephi as well (Jacob 1:11). This perhaps reflects a tradition that parallels the concept of a Davidic king. In 2 Samuel 7:15–16, David is told: “But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” This is a common theme, and it seems to have been taken to heart by the Nephite people.
  65. 1 Nephi 4:11, but see also 1 Nephi 3:27, 4:12, and 4:17.
  66. Welch, “Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban,” 123.
  67. For discussion, see Donald F. Murray, “Under YHWH’s Veto: David as Shedder of Blood in Chronicles,” *Biblica* 82/3 (2001): 457–76.
  68. The phrase in Exodus is וְדִיל הָנָא מִיְהִלָּאָהוּ while the phrase in 1 Samuel is יְדִיב הוּוּי דְרַגְסִי. The Book of Mormon translation follows the term used in 1 Samuel for deity (Lord—YHWH) as opposed to the Exodus translation of God (*elohim*). For these reasons, I reject Welch’s suggestion that the Book of Mormon translates the rare Hebrew *innah* from Exodus and instead translates the more common *cagar*.
  69. See Mosiah 1:16 and Words of Mormon 1:13.
  70. Lust, *Story of David and Goliath*, 5. This source presents a fairly comprehensive overview of the debate, and is written by four individuals with different opinions on the subject as a series of position papers and responses. Briefer discussions of the topic can be found in most scholarly commentaries.
  71. Lust, *Story of David and Goliath*, 5.
  72. Lust, *Story of David and Goliath*, 5. Lust, Tov, and Gooding all represent the longer text as an addition to the shorter text. Tov and Gooding are both more explicit in their arguments that these are later additions to the text, while Lust begins with the notion that they may be equally old traditions. Barthelémy argues that the LXX represents a harmonizing reduction of an earlier unified text.
  73. John L. Sorenson first forwards this theory in his article “The ‘Brass Plates’ and Biblical Scholarship,” *Dialogue* 10/4 (1977): 31–39.
  74. 1 Samuel 17:8–10.
  75. After Goliath’s defeat, however, the Israelite armies rout the Philistine forces. This results in the triumphant return of David and Saul, with the women praising Saul for the thousands he has defeated, while praising David for his tens of thousands.
  76. 1 Samuel 17:43. Also see vv. 42–43 where Goliath expresses his contempt because they send a boy (“a youth”) to do battle with him.