

King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles

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A portion of the brass plates brought by Lehi to the New World contained the books of Moses (1 Nephi 5:10-13). Nephi and other Book of Mormon writers stressed that they obeyed the laws given therein: “And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10).

But aside from sacrifice² and the Ten Commandments,³ we have few explicit details regarding the Nephite observance of the Mosaic code. One would expect, for example, some mention of the festivals which played such an important role in the religious observances of ancient Israel. Though the Book of Mormon mentions no religious festivals by name, it does detail many significant Nephite assemblies.

One of the more noteworthy of the Nephite ceremonies was the coronation of the second Mosiah by his father, Benjamin.⁴ Some years ago, Professor Hugh Nibley outlined the similarities between this Book of Mormon account and ancient Middle Eastern coronation rites.⁵ He pointed out that these rites took place at the annual New Year festival, when the people were placed under covenant of obedience to the monarch. My own research further explores the Israelite coronation/New Year rites, and aims to complement other scholarly studies of the ceremonial context of Benjamin’s speech.

THE SABBATICAL FEASTS

In the sacred calendar, the Israelite new year began with the month of Abib (later called Nisan), in the spring (end March/beginning April).⁶ This month encompassed the feasts of Passover (beginning at sundown on the fourteenth day) and Unleavened Bread (fourteenth through twenty-first days), and included “holy convocations,” analogous to the Latter-day Saint April general conference (Leviticus 23:4-8). In the Holy Land, this is the early harvest following the rainy season, and hence is associated with joy and thanksgiving to God. It also commemorates the Exodus from Egypt.⁷

The other festivals in the sacred year also followed the sabbatical system.⁸ Every seventh day was a Sabbath, or day of rest, commemorative of the creation and perhaps also the Exodus from Egypt.⁹ From the gathering of the first fruits at Passover, the Israelites counted a “sabbath of weeks” to the fiftieth day, called Shavu’ot (“weeks”) in the Old Testament¹⁰ and Pentecost (“count of fifty”) in Acts 2:1.

The most sacred month was the seventh, Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2), later called Tishri, which fell at the end of September/beginning of October.¹¹ The first day of the month, now called Rosh ha-Shanah (“beginning of the year”), was marked by the blowing of trumpets.¹² The tenth day, Yom Kippur (“day of atonement”), was the most sacred of all days, devoted to fasting, repentance, prayer, and sacrifice.¹³ Finally, the week of the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the seventh month was the Feast of Ingathering, or of Sukkot (“booths” or “tabernacles”).¹⁴ At this time, the Israelites were to construct rough temporary living quarters, called *sukkôt* (singular *sukkah*), or “booths,” in order “that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 23:43).

In addition to these annual feasts, every seventh year was a sabbatical year, during which time it was forbidden to engage in agricultural pursuits.¹⁵ At the end of seven sabbatical years came the fiftieth year, called the jubilee,¹⁶ a

year of renewal wherein Hebrew slaves were freed and ownership of the land was returned to the families originally in possession thereof.¹⁷ Both the sabbatical year and the jubilee were proclaimed in the seventh month, rather than the first,¹⁸ since the seventh month begins a new agricultural cycle with the first rainfall, which usually occurs within a month after the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁹

SUKKOT

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), like the Feast of Unleavened Bread/Passover, began and ended with a day of rest, including a “holy convocation” (Heb. *miqra’ qôdes*, “holy reading,” or “holy calling”) and a “solemn assembly” (Heb. *‘aseret*, “council”).²⁰ During the week of the feast, the Israelites would gather together and build for each family a booth or tabernacle.²¹ Special sacrifices were also ordained (Numbers 29:12-38).

According to Jewish tradition, the first Sukkot was celebrated at the foot of Mount Sinai, six months after the Exodus from Egypt.²² The last day of the feast has come to be known as Simhat Torah (“joy of the Torah”), in commemoration of the revelation of the Pentateuch or Law (Heb. *Tôrâh*, lit., “teaching”) at Sinai.²³ In a sense, Sukkot symbolizes the creation of the world. As God made a covenant with Adam, renewed with Noah after the flood,²⁴ so, too, he covenanted with Israel at Sinai.

Because they reappear in connection with other known Sukkot assemblies, we shall examine the elements of the first Sukkot, found in Exodus 24:

1. Moses recited *God’s commandments*, which he wrote in a book (vss. 3-4).
2. “All the people answered *with one voice*, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do” (vs. 3).²⁵
3. An *altar* was constructed, along with “twelve *pillars*,” in token of the covenant (vs. 4).²⁶
4. Sacrifices of *burnt and peace offerings* followed (vs. 5).
5. The *blood* of the sacrificial animals was sprinkled on the *altar* (vs. 6).
6. Moses *read to the people from the book of the covenant* (vs. 7).
7. The people repeated their *covenant of obedience* (vs. 7).
8. The *blood of the covenant* was sprinkled on the people, sealing the bargain (vs. 8).
9. The Israelite leaders went up on the mount, where they saw God, *ate and drank* (vss. 9-11).
10. The Lord called Moses up to give him the law and the commandments, *written on stone tables* (vss. 12-13).
11. A cloud and the *glory* of the Lord (described as fire) covered Mount Sinai for six days (vss. 15-17).
12. On the *seventh day*, the Lord called to Moses from the cloud (vs. 16).

About forty years later, as the Israelites were preparing to enter the land of Canaan,

Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests . . . and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose [i.e., the temple in Jerusalem], thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God (Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy was evidently used anciently as the basis for the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles, as we shall see below.

The gathering together of the people at the Feast of Tabernacles provided the backdrop for several special ceremonies in ancient Israel, including (a) thanksgiving for the fall harvest, (b) prayers for rain to begin the new agricultural year, (c) a rehearsal of the law of God and a public commitment to obey his commandments, (d) coronation of a new king or a renewal of the kingship, (e) celebration of the end of the season of war (due to rainy weather) and the establishment of peace, and (f) dedication of the temple. In the third year, tithes of farm produce were collected for the Levites and the poor (Deuteronomy 14:27-29; 26:11-14; Amos 4:4), with a call for special help to the poor during the seventh year (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

Perhaps the most notable celebration of Sukkot was when Solomon assembled the people at the dedication of the newly completed temple (1 Kings 8:1-3; 2 Chronicles 5:2-4). The ark of the covenant was brought by the priests and placed in the temple, along with sacred vessels borne by the Levites (1 Kings 8:1, 3-9; 2 Chronicles 5:2, 4-10; 6:11). Sacrifices and burnt offerings were then made by the priests (1 Kings 8:5; 2 Chronicles 5:6), while some of the Levites played music, praised the Lord, and spoke of his mercy (2 Chronicles 5:12-13). When the priests left the holy place, a cloud filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:11, 13-14; cf. 6:1). The presence of the cloud may have been the symbol of God's promise of rain.²⁷

Solomon, standing atop a brazen scaffold (2 Chronicles 6:13), then blessed the congregation, who stood to receive him (1 Kings 8:14-21; 2 Chronicles 6:3-11). He spoke of the Exodus from Egypt (1 Kings 8:16, 21; 2 Chronicles 6:5) and emphasized that both he and his father David had been chosen by the Lord (1 Kings 8:15-20; 2 Chronicles 6:4-10). The king then knelt at the altar, spread forth his hands, and offered the dedicatory prayer (1 Kings 8:22-54; 2 Chronicles 6:12-42). The elements of his prayer are found in other Sukkot observances:

Addressing God, he mentioned the *covenant* and God's *mercy* toward the obedient (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chronicles 6:14).

He spoke of God's promise of kingship to David's posterity (1 Kings 8:24-26; 2 Chronicles 6:15-17). God had told David that his children should "take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me" (1 Kings 8:25; cf. 2 Chronicles 6:16).

He asked God to answer the prayers of the faithful addressed toward the temple (1 Kings 8:28-30, 33-39; 2 Chronicles 6:19-21, 24-30, 37-40) and mentioned that *oaths* were to be offered at the temple altar (1 Kings 8:31-32; 2 Chronicles 6:22-23).

He asked the Lord to help the people in their *wars* (1 Kings 8:33, 37, 44-50; 2 Chronicles 6:24, 28, 34-35) and, should they be removed from their land by the enemy, to bring them back to their land (1 Kings 8:34; 2 Chronicles 6:25).

He asked the Lord to answer prayers for *rain* (1 Kings 8:35-36; 2 Chronicles 6:26-27) and to save the people from *famine*, *pestilence*, and insect infestations (1 Kings 8:37-39; 2 Chronicles 6:28-30).

He noted that the people were to *fear God* (1 Kings 8:40; 2 Chronicles 6:31), that *strangers* were to be blessed (1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:32-33), and that repentant sinners would be forgiven (1 Kings 8:33-36, 39, 46-48, 50; 2 Chronicles 6:24-27, 30, 36-39).

The *Exodus* from Egypt was again mentioned briefly (1 Kings 8:53).

Several Sukkot elements were combined in references to priestly clothing, salvation, and rejoicing: “Let thy priests, O Lord God, be *clothed* with *salvation*, and let thy saints *rejoice* in goodness” (2 Chronicles 6:41).

He asked the Lord to remember the king, “thine anointed” (2 Chronicles

Following the prayer, Solomon again blessed the congregation (1 Kings 8:55), expressing the hope that the Lord would deal with Israel as with their fathers (1 Kings 8:56-57) and that the people would be obedient to his commandments (1 Kings 8:58, 61). This was followed by more burnt offerings and peace offerings (1 Kings 8:62-64; 2 Chronicles 7:4-5, 7), to musical accompaniment by the Levites, who praised the Lord and spoke of his mercy, while priests sounded trumpets (2 Chronicles 7:6). Fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the glory of the Lord filled the house (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). Upon seeing this, the people bowed down with their faces to the ground and praised the Lord, saying, “He is good; for his *mercy* endureth for ever” (2 Chronicles 7:3).

There is no mention that a covenant was made, and the Law was not written as a testimony, probably because the two tables of the Law were already present in the ark (1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chronicles 5:10). Solomon had been seven years in building his temple (1 Kings 6:37-38), which may mean that it was begun and dedicated in sabbatical years. The temple dedication took place during seven or fourteen days,²⁸ with a solemn assembly on the eighth (1 Kings 8:65-66; 2 Chronicles 7:8-9).²⁹ On the eighth day of the festival (1 Kings 8:66), the twenty-third day of the month (2 Chronicles 7:10), the people were sent away to their tents, after blessing the king. Shortly thereafter, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and charged him to keep the commandments, lest there come curses and no rain (1 Kings 9:2-9; 2 Chronicles 7:12-22).

David's Role

It was David, Solomon's father, who had laid the plans for the Jerusalem temple (2 Samuel 7:1-17; 1 Chronicles 17:1-15). He gathered together the building materials (1 Chronicles 22). He also organized the priests and Levites for temple service (1 Chronicles 6:31; 9:22; 16:1-7) and wrote some of its liturgy in the form of psalms.

Even before the temple site had been revealed to him,³⁰ David had brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, in what may have been the renewal of the kingdom at Sukkot. His first attempt was unsuccessful, and the ark was left in the care of villagers not far from the Holy City (2 Samuel 6:1-11). On the second attempt, David and the Israelites brought the ark with great joy to Jerusalem, accompanied by singing, dancing, shouting, and the sound of

trumpets.³¹ There were also sacrifices along the way (2 Samuel 6:13; 1 Chronicles 15:26), and burnt and peace offerings in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:17-18; 1 Chronicles 16:2). The king then blessed the people and distributed food for the feast (2 Samuel 6:18-19; 1 Chronicles 16:2-3). David's divine kingship is mentioned explicitly, thus giving reason to believe this may have been a renewal ceremony (2 Samuel 6:21). In his speech to the assembly, David cited a number of psalms dealing with God's covenant.³² "And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord" (1 Chronicles 16:36). After the people departed for home (1 Chronicles 16:43), the Lord commanded David to build him a house (1 Chronicles 17). The activities described in connection with this celebration suggest that the events occurred at Sukkot.

A ROYAL FESTIVAL

Of special significance is the fact that it was the king, Solomon, who dedicated the temple, and not the high priest or one of the prophets. Indeed, the site had been purchased by his father, David, and it was David who had organized the priests and Levites and who laid plans for building the temple. It is therefore not surprising that, in ancient Israel, it was the king who presided at the Feast of Tabernacles.³³

The Sukkot assembly of the seventh year was a renewal of the Law given at Sinai. It was, in another sense, the reenactment of Yahweh's enthronement as king of the universe and controller of the elements, with the people entering into a covenant to obey him.³⁴ In later years, it was the king who stood in the place of God to accept the homage of the people.³⁵ Various points of the Law were read publicly in the Temple court. The rite as practiced by the exiled Jews in Babylon in the tenth century A.D. was described by Rabbi Nathan the Babylonian, in a letter which was appended to the *Seder Olam*.³⁶

In the days of Rabbi Nathan, the Jewish community of Babylon was led by a descendant of David, the exilarch. During the Feast of Tabernacles, he performed the functions formerly assigned to the kings of Israel, then Judah. On one occasion described by Rabbi Nathan, a new exilarch had just been approved by the Jewish community. A ceremonial procession set out on the Sabbath from the house of one of the prominent Babylonian Jews, a court banker, and made its way to the synagogue in Baghdad. Every detail of the ceremony which followed had been laid out in advance. A choir was concealed beneath a wooden tower, with a multicolored cover. The exilarch hid beneath the tower, from which he made his entrance during the recitation of a prayer.

When the exilarch made his appearance, all the people rose to their feet. The exilarch sat in a seat placed in the middle atop the tower. Then the heads of the Sura Yeshiva and the Pumbedita Yeshiva followed behind and took their seats on his right and left hands, respectively, after bowing to the ruler, who acknowledged them by the same token. The people then took their seats and the reading from the Torah or Law of Moses began. The cantor then chanted the blessings for the exilarch in a low voice, so that they could be heard only by those seated around the tower and the youths concealed beneath it. The youths responded by shouting "Amen."

In the Mishnah, we have a partial description of the Sukkot celebration of Second Temple times:

After what manner was the paragraph of the king? After the close of the first Festival-day of the Feast [of Tabernacles], in the eighth year, after the going forth of the Seventh Year,³⁷ they used to prepare for him in the Temple Court a wooden platform on which he sat, for it is written, *At the end of every seven years in the set time.* . . .³⁸ The minister of the synagogue used to take a scroll of the Law and give it to the chief of the synagogue, and the chief of the synagogue gave it to the Prefect, and the Prefect gave it to the High Priest, and the High Priest gave it to the king, and the king received it standing and read it sitting. King

Agrippa received it standing and read it standing, and for this the Sages praised him. And when he reached *Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee which is not thy brother*,³⁹ his eyes flowed with tears; but they called to him, 'Our brother art thou! our brother art thou! our brother art thou!' He read from the beginning of Deuteronomy to *Hear, [O Israel]*; and the paragraphs *Hear, [O Israel]* . . .⁴⁰ and *And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken* . . .⁴¹ . . . and *Thou shalt surely tithe*⁴² . . . and *When thou hast made an end of tithing*⁴³ and the paragraph of the king,⁴⁴ and the Blessings and the Cursings,⁴⁵ until the end. With the same blessings with which the High Priest blesses them, the king blesses them, save that he pronounces the blessing for the Feasts instead of the blessing for the forgiveness of sin.⁴⁶

Royal Sukkot Liturgy

The choice of the Deuteronomic passages for the liturgy of the festival was most deliberate. The book of Deuteronomy is a unitary reiteration of the Law. It has the fluency and eloquence of a ceremonial speech and, as such, is appropriate for recitation by the king during the festival. The king would first read Deuteronomy 1:1-6:10. Some of the principal elements of this passage are:

1. A recital of *God's dealings with Israel* during the Exodus (Deuteronomy 1:6-3:29; 5:6).
2. *Reading from the Law* (Deuteronomy 4:1-9, 11-25; 5:6-21).
3. An exhortation to *teach the Law to subsequent generations* (Deuteronomy 4:9-10).
4. Recalling the *covenant and assembly* at Sinai (Deuteronomy 4:10-13, 36; 5:1-5, 22-31), including (a) *a recitation of the law* (Deuteronomy 4:14-19), (b) a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:20, 34, 37-38), (c) a threat that if the people break the covenant, they will be *driven from the promised land* (Deuteronomy 4:25-27), while if they keep the commandments *their days will be prolonged therein* (Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:31-33), and (d) mention of the *law being written on tablets of stone* (Deuteronomy 5:22). Many of these features are repeated in Moses' exhortation.
5. Heaven and earth called to witness the pronouncing of *curses for disobedience* (Deuteronomy 4:26-39).
6. A promise of *prosperity and long life* for obedience to the Law (Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:32-6:3).
7. The people being sent back to their *tents* (Deuteronomy 5:30).
8. The conclusion, or *Shema*^c (Deuteronomy 6:4-10), which teaches that (a) *God must be loved and honored* (Deuteronomy 6:5), (b) *children should be taught the Law* (6:7), (c) the law should be *written down*, and (d) that God will reward obedience by *prosperity* (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).⁴⁷

In the subsequent verses, which were not included in the ritual reading according to the Mishnah, further mention is made of oaths (Deuteronomy 6:13), obedience (Deuteronomy 6:17), God's promise of assistance against Israel's enemies (Deuteronomy 6:17-18), the Exodus from Egypt (Deuteronomy 6:20-22), and the promise of life through obedience (Deuteronomy 6:24-25). These elements are found in other examples of Sukkot assemblies.

Next, the king would read from the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, which begins with a transitional exhortation to *love and obey God* (Deuteronomy 11:1) and notes that the speech is directed to the adults, *not the children* (Deuteronomy 11:2).⁴⁸ The text then proceeds: one must *love and serve God* (Deuteronomy 11:13), after which he will send *rain and prosperity* (Deuteronomy 11:14-15, 17). The Law must be *taught to the children* who are too young to understand (Deuteronomy 11:19), and, for this purpose, *it must be written down* (Deuteronomy 11:20). God will give *long life* to the covenanters (Deuteronomy 11:21), and by obedience they will *defeat their enemies* (Deuteronomy 11:22-25). Finally, the king placed before them *a blessing and a curse*, to be effective upon renewal of the covenant (Deuteronomy 11:26-32). Deuteronomy 27:15-26, also cited by the king, gives instructions for the covenant. Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the “Paragraph of the King,” outlined the monarch’s responsibilities:

When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, *whom the Lord thy God shall choose*: one from among *thy brethren* shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.⁴⁹ But he shall not *multiply horses to himself*, nor cause the people to *return to Egypt*, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he *multiply wives to himself*, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly *multiply to himself silver and gold*. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall *write him a copy of this law in a book* out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he *shall read therein* all the days of his life: that he may learn to *fear the Lord his God*, to *keep all the words of this law and these statutes*, to do them: That his heart *be not lifted up above his brethren*, and that he turn not aside from *the commandment*, to the *right hand*, or to the *left*: to the end that he may *prolong his days* in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel (Deuteronomy

The remaining passages cited by the king (Deuteronomy 14:22-29; 26:12-19) deal with tithing, collected in the third and seventh years at the time of the harvest in order to provide for the Levites and the poor. In his concluding remarks, the king would bless the people, just as Moses had blessed each of the tribes prior to the ordination of Joshua, as recorded in Deuteronomy 33.

BIBLICAL CORONATION CEREMONIES

In ancient Israel, Sukkot was an occasion for anointing a new king or for renewing the covenant between God, the king, and the people. And while it may be that not all biblical coronations took place at this festival, it is instructive to examine the various accounts for Sukkot imagery.

Saul

In 1 Samuel 10, we read of Saul’s ascension to the throne of Israel. He was designated by the prophet Samuel, upon the insistent petition of the Israelite community for a king. Samuel and the Lord opposed this move, because it detracted from God as the true King of Israel (1 Samuel 8:7; 10:19; 12:12). Saul was first met privately by Samuel, who anointed him (1 Samuel 10:1) and then gave him certain instructions, which included a forthcoming meeting at Gilgal after Saul’s waiting period of seven days, at the end of which Samuel would sacrifice burnt and peace offerings (1 Samuel 10:2-9). Saul followed most of the prophet’s instructions, but impatiently offered sacrifice before Samuel arrived (1 Samuel 10:10-16). Finally, Samuel assembled the tribes at Mizpeh before the Lord (1 Samuel 10:17), where he recited God’s dealings with Israel (1 Samuel 10:18-19) and designated Saul as king, amidst cries of “God save the king” (1 Samuel 10:20-24, KJV wording; Hebrew means “may the king live”).

The “manner of the kingdom” (1 Samuel 10:25), likely a covenant of some sort (cf. 1 Samuel 8:9), was then written in a book, and the people were sent home (1 Samuel 10:25-26).

A short time later, Samuel convened an assembly to “renew the kingdom” before the Lord, at Gilgal (1 Samuel 11:14-15), a cultic center where Joshua had erected twelve large stones after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:9, 17-22). The event took place at the wheat harvest, prior to the onset of the rains (1 Samuel 12:16-19); this would ordinarily place the event in early summer, between April and June, and hence may have taken place at Shavu^cot. Samuel, in asking God for rain as a sign that the people had sinned in asking for a king, reflects the close tie between the coronation of the king and the prayers for rain which usually took place at Sukkot.⁵⁰

Peace offerings were sacrificed with great rejoicing (1 Samuel 11:15), after which Samuel arose to speak in a manner quite reminiscent of King Benjamin’s speech when proclaiming his successor. Samuel was now old, and the king was to replace him (1 Samuel 12:1-2). He wanted to remind the people (as did Benjamin, apparently in keeping with the Paragraph of the King) that he had not taken from them anything which was not his due, and called them to witness (again, like Benjamin) on this point (1 Samuel 12:3-5). He then recited God’s dealings with Israel (1 Samuel 12:6-12) and stressed that, while Saul had been chosen by both God and the people (1 Samuel 12:13), nevertheless, it was God who was the true king (1 Samuel 12:12). Finally, he exhorted obedience to the Lord and to the king (cf. Mosiah 2:31), pronouncing the blessings and curses found in the Law (1 Samuel 12:14-15, 20-25).

David

The coronation ceremony took on new meaning with the rise of the Davidic line to replace Saul. David’s first anointing as king was performed by Samuel in a small assembly at Bethlehem, accompanied by sacrifices (1 Samuel 16:1-13). At the death of Saul, the elders of Judah anointed David king of their tribe at Hebron (2 Samuel 2:4).

After reigning seven years at Hebron,⁵¹ David was anointed king of all Israel by an assembly representing all the tribes (2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 11:1-3). We cannot know for certain that this took place at Sukkot, but it is interesting that it was seven years after his earlier anointing at Hebron, which suggests that these ceremonies may have occurred during sabbatical years. David soon moved his capital to Jerusalem, which he took from the Jebusites, and began a series of moves which would make it the cultic center of all Israel, complete with temple and priesthood. On the threshing floor of a certain Ornan or Araunah (fitting for a harvest festival), he built an altar and offered burnt and peace offerings (2 Samuel 24:16-25; 1 Chronicles 21:15-28). If this seventh year of David’s reign was the sabbatical year, the threshing-floor incident may have been a ritual marking the first harvest of the following season.

Solomon

In his old age, David seems to have lost control of affairs. His son Adonijah enlisted the help of David’s cousin Joab and the priest Abiathar to help Adonijah become king (1 Kings 1:5-7). The party repaired to a nearby spring, En-Rogel, where they offered sacrifices and feasted amid cries of “God save king Adonijah” (1 Kings 1:9, 19, 25). When word of the coronation ceremony reached the prophet Nathan, the priest Zadok, and the chief captain Benaiah, they went to David in company with the king’s wife, Bathsheba, to express their concerns and to remind David that he had promised that Solomon would succeed him (1 Kings 1:10-32).

David instructed the company to have Solomon ride on the king’s mule to the spring Gihon, where Nathan and Zadok were to anoint him amid sounding trumpets and cries of “God save king Solomon” (1 Kings 1:32-37). Oil

was brought from the nearby tabernacle, and the ceremony proceeded. After following these instructions, the multitude who had followed Solomon celebrated with music from pipes (1 Kings 1:38-46). With this turn of events, Adonijah had to renounce his claims to the throne (1 Kings 1:50-52).

In all this, we note that it was King David who was expected to name his successor (1 Kings 1:20, 30, 35). Nevertheless, after Solomon's coronation, David expressed joy that *the Lord* had made Solomon king (1 Kings 1:48).

Like Saul, Solomon was renewed in the kingdom. The account is found in 1 Chronicles 28-29. We read that David assembled the officers and stood to speak to them (1 Chronicles 28:1-2). He reminded them that God had chosen him to be king of Israel (1 Chronicles 28:4), and noted that Solomon, too, had been chosen by God (1 Chronicles 28:5-6; 29:1). He then gave a charge that Solomon and all Israel should keep the Lord's commandments, whereupon they would be blessed to possess the land (1 Chronicles 28:7-8; 29:23-24). But disobedience would bring curses (1 Chronicles 28:9). The old king then instructed Solomon to build the temple he had planned (1 Chronicles 28:6, 10-21). The temple was to be a palace for God, who is the true king of Israel (1 Chronicles 29:10-11) and the source of all possessions (1 Chronicles 29:12).

Following David's speech, the congregation "worshipped the Lord, and the king" (1 Chronicles 29:20). The following day, burnt offerings were made (1 Chronicles 29:21), and a meal was consumed (1 Chronicles 29:22). Solomon was then anointed (1 Chronicles 29:22). As in other accounts of Sukkot celebrations, we read that Solomon and all those who obeyed him prospered (1 Chronicles 29:23-24).

This account is evidently an expanded version of the one given in 1 Kings 2, where we read that David, about to go the way of the earth, gave a charge to Solomon (1 Kings 2:2). He promised his son that if he obeyed God's commandments, he would prosper (1 Kings 2:3-4).

The Divided Kingdom

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem for all Israel to make him king (1 Kings 12:1; 2 Chronicles 10:1). He was rejected, however, by the northern tribes, whose representatives returned to their tents (1 Kings 12:16; 2 Chronicles 10:16). As a consequence, Rehoboam became king of Judah, while Jeroboam, of the tribe of Ephraim, became king of Israel.⁵² In order to differentiate between the two royal houses, Jeroboam substituted the eighth month for the celebration of Sukkot (1 Kings 12:32-33).

About a century after the split in the kingdom, Omri became king of Israel. He made political marriages for his children. Ahab, his son and successor, married Jezebel, daughter of the Phoenician (Canaanite) king Ethbaal. Athaliah, Omri's daughter, married Jehoram (Joram), king of Judah (2 Kings 8:26-27). When another Jehoram (Joram), Ahab's son, became king, he waged war against the Syrians and was wounded at Ramoth-gilead. Returning to Jezreel to recover, he was visited by his cousin, Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah (2 Kings 8:28-29).

It was at this time that the prophet Elisha sent one of the other prophets to Ramoth-gilead with oil to anoint Jehu, captain of the host, as new king of Israel, and to give him a commission to destroy the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:1-10). After the anointing, Jehu's men put their garments "under him on the top of the *stairs*, and blew with *trumpets*, saying, Jehu is king" (2 Kings 9:11-13). Jehu proceeded to Jezreel, where he slew Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel (2 Kings 9:14-37). Shortly thereafter, he slew the rest of Ahab's sons (2 Kings 10:1-17). He then called for sacrifice

and a “*solemn assembly* for Baal,” during which he provided Baal’s priests with *new clothing*, then slew them (2 Kings 10:18-25).

Meanwhile, in Judah, Athaliah took advantage of her son’s death by slaying “all of the seed royal” and usurping the throne. It may be that both Jehu and Athaliah took advantage of the forthcoming renewal rite of Sukkot in the sabbatical year to usurp their respective thrones. This is evidenced by the various acts of Jehu which resemble later Sukkot practices. Further evidence may be adduced from the fact that Athaliah herself was overthrown and replaced by Joash, the rightful king of Judah, seven years later, perhaps indicating that we are dealing with sabbatical years.

Jehosheba, daughter of Jehoram and sister of the slain king Ahaziah, had hidden Joash (Jehoash), the king’s infant son, in the temple for six years, thus preserving his life (2 Kings 11:2-3). His coronation as king of Judah in the seventh year is one of the more striking examples of a royal festival. The wicked queen Athaliah had slain all the males of the royal family except the newborn Joash, who was preserved by his brother-in-law, the high priest Jehoiada, and hidden away for seven years (2 Kings 11:11; 2 Chronicles 23:1). Joash’s coronation corresponded with the seventh year of the reign of Jehu, king of Israel (2 Kings 12:1), when Joash was seven years old (2 Kings 11:21). If, as we have suggested, Jehu overthrew the house of Ahab in a sabbatical year, then Joash’s coronation also took place in a sabbatical year.

The high priest Jehoiada assembled the rulers of Judah at the temple, where they made a covenant (2 Kings 11:4; 2 Chronicles 23:1-3). The king was crowned and anointed, and the “testimony” of the Law placed in his hands, while the people clapped their hands (2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chronicles 23:11). Joash stood by a “pillar” (covenant altar) as trumpets sounded and music played, amidst rejoicing (2 Kings 11:14; 2 Chronicles 23:13). A covenant was concluded between the Lord and the king and the people.⁵³

In a similar ceremony, King Josiah later gathered the leaders of Judah to the temple (2 Kings 23:1-2; 2 Chronicles 34:29), where they read from the book of the covenant (2 Kings 23:2; 2 Chronicles 34:30). The king stood by a “pillar” as he covenanted to obey the law, and the people likewise made a covenant (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:31-32).

The Hasmoneans

When next the Jews had rulers with authority equal to kings, they were under a dynasty quite foreign to David—the Hasmoneans or Maccabees, a priestly clan. The earlier Hasmoneans did not claim royal prerogatives.⁵⁴ However, as early as 153 B.C., the Hasmonean high priest, Jonathan, presided at the Feast of Tabernacles, clad in a purple robe and wearing a gold crown (1 Maccabees 10:20-21). The description of an assembly conducted by the Hasmonean Simon (who refortified the Temple) is revealing. We read, in part:

And finishing the service at the altar, that he might adorn the *offering* of the most high Almighty, he stretched out his hand to the cup, and poured of the *blood of the grape*, he poured out at the foot of the altar a sweet-smelling savour unto the most high *King of all*.⁵⁵ Then shouted the sons of Aaron, and sounded the *silver trumpets*, and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the most High. Then all the people together hasted, and *fell down to the earth* upon their faces to worship their Lord God Almighty, the most High. The singers also *sang praises* with their voices, with great variety of sounds was there made sweet melody. And the people besought the Lord, the most High, by prayer before him that is merciful, till the solemnity of the Lord was ended, and they had finished his service. Then he [Simon] went

down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the *blessing of the Lord* with his lips, and to rejoice in his name. And they bowed themselves down to worship the second time, that they might receive a *blessing* from the most High [Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) 50:14-21; cf. 3 Nephi 19:16-17; 20:1-7].

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

Two of the ordination ceremonies described in the Bible resemble the coronation ceremonies and may have taken place during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Ordination of Aaron

The ordination of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is described in Leviticus 8-9. The ordination is, in a very real sense, like a coronation, complete with anointing, investiture, sacrifices, exhortations, and, in the case of Aaron himself, crowning. Moses gathered the congregation to the door of the tabernacle (Leviticus 8:3-4), where he washed Aaron and his sons (8:5-6). Aaron was then dressed like a priestly king, including a miter or crown (Leviticus 8:7-9). The tabernacle, its altar and vessels, were then anointed (Leviticus 8:10-11), as was Aaron (Leviticus 8:12).

Aaron's sons were then dressed, with bonnets replacing the miters (Leviticus 8:13). This was followed by the sacrifice of several animals, whose blood was put on the altar (Leviticus 8:14-21). A special "ram of consecration" was then sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8:22-29). Moses then sprinkled oil on them (Leviticus 8:30-31). The newly consecrated priests were to remain in the tabernacle for seven days (Leviticus 8:33-36), which is the period of time allotted to the Feast of Tabernacles and to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, associated with Passover.

On the eighth day, Moses assembled the new priests and the elders of Israel (Leviticus 9:1), and several more sacrifices were offered and the blood placed on the altar (Leviticus 9:2-21). Moses and Aaron then blessed the people (Leviticus 9:22-23), after which fire came down on the altar and consumed the sacrifices (Leviticus 9:24). This was followed by instructions similar to those repeated at Sukkot. Aaron was to teach the Israelites the statutes of the Lord (Leviticus 10:11), and various commandments were given by the Lord to Moses and Aaron (Leviticus 11-15).⁵⁶

Among the items discussed in subsequent chapters that are also found in the Sukkot observance are: (1) Atonement is available through the shedding of blood (Leviticus 17:11). (2) Israel should not do as Egyptians did (Leviticus 18:1-3), for the Lord had brought them out from Egypt (Leviticus 26:13). (3) God ordained the observance of various festivals (Leviticus 23), the sabbatical year and the jubilee (Leviticus 25). (4) The Lord promised that obedience would bring rain and the defeat of Israel's enemies (Leviticus 26:2-12). On the other hand, if they disobeyed, their enemies would reign over them, and the land would not yield (Leviticus 26:14-20).

Ordination of Joshua

In Deuteronomy 33, we read that Moses blessed the tribes of Israel, then ordained Joshua to be his successor. The details of Joshua's ordination are given in Numbers 22. It may be that Moses' final speech and the ordination of Joshua as his successor occurred simultaneously at the Feast of Tabernacles. Indeed, this "priestly coronation"⁵⁷ has some resemblance to subsequent coronation ceremonies in Israel. It began with God designating, through the prophet, Joshua to succeed Moses (Numbers 27:15-18). Joshua was then brought before the high priest and the

congregation for approval (Numbers 27:19, 21-22). Moses gave him a charge and ordained him (Numbers 27:18-20, 23). Other details are lacking, but it is noteworthy that the ordination of the successor appears in the midst of texts commanding the observance of sacrifices, Passover, and Pentecost (Numbers 28), and the sacrifices of the seventh month (Numbers 28-29), and, finally, of vows and oaths made before God during the sacred month (Numbers 30).

Subsequent to the invasion of Canaan, and following instructions from Moses (Deuteronomy 27), Joshua gathered the tribes to Shechem (where God had covenanted with Abraham, Genesis 12:6-7) to renew the covenant of the Law. A stone altar was constructed on Mt. Ebal, and the Law written upon it (Joshua 8:30-32; Deuteronomy 27:2-8). On this, burnt and peace offerings were made (Joshua 8:31; Deuteronomy 27:6-7). The people were divided into two companies, one on Mount Gerizim, one on the adjacent Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:33; Deuteronomy 27:11-13), perhaps symbolic of the separation of righteous and wicked onto the right and left hands of God, as alluded to in Mosiah 5:9-12. That this was intended is evidenced by the fact that the mount of blessing (Gerizim) is on the south and the mount of cursing (Ebal) on the north, and that the Hebrew words *yamîn* ("right hand") and *smô'l* ("left hand") also mean "south" and "north," respectively. The blessings and curses of the Law were then read, while the people placed themselves under covenant of obedience by saying, "Amen" (Joshua 8:34-35; Deuteronomy 27:14-26). The assembly included all Israel plus strangers (Joshua 8:35). It took place after Israel's first major battles, at Jericho and Ai, which may be evidence that it took place in the fall, when warfare typically ceased because of the rains.

In the forty-fifth year following the Exodus (Joshua 13:1; 14:7, 10), Joshua again assembled the tribes at Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was erected (Joshua 18:1; 19:51). The land was divided by lot at this time. He praised those of the trans-Jordanian tribes who kept the commandments, promising them divine rewards for continuance, promising them prosperity and victory over their enemies, then sent them "unto their tents" (Joshua 22:1-8). Soon thereafter these tribes constructed a special covenant altar (Joshua 22:10, 16, 19, 22-24, 26-29).

As Joshua's death neared (he was "going the way of all the earth" [Joshua 23:14], as was also the case with Benjamin in Mosiah 1:9), he assembled the elders (Joshua 24:1-2) to make arrangements for the continuation of the covenant (Joshua 23:1). He exhorted them to love and obey God (Joshua 23:6-8, 11), who would then assist them against their enemies (Joshua 23:3-5, 9-10). He also spoke of the curses which followed disobedience to the Law (Joshua 23:12-13, 15-16). Following these preliminary arrangements, the tribes of Israel were assembled together before God at Shechem (Joshua 24:1), where Joshua recounted to them the history of God's dealings with their forefathers (Joshua 24:2-13). He admonished them to fear God and serve Him (Joshua 24:14-15), and the people promised obedience (Joshua 24:16-18, 21). Joshua again recalled the curses which would come upon the ungodly (Joshua 24:19-20). He added, "Ye are witnesses" (cf. Mosiah 2:14), to which the people assented (Joshua 24:22). A covenant was made and written on a great stone at the sanctuary (Joshua 24:24-27), after which the people were dismissed (Joshua 24:28).

THE SUKKOT ASSEMBLY

From the descriptions we have reviewed, we may reconstruct the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles as observed in the sabbatical and jubilee years, as follows:

1. The people were (a) assembled, most often at the cult site ("before God"), where (b) they were sometimes divided into two companies. (c) Strangers were also invited to attend. (d) At the conclusion of the festival, the assembly was formally dismissed and sent home.

2. The leader (king, where applicable) delivered an address in which (a) he read from the Law of Moses and cited the blessings and curses contained therein, (b) exhorted the people to love and fear God and serve him, (c) recounted God's dealings with the fathers (especially the Exodus from Egypt), (d) designated God as creator and the source of all we have, (e) called upon the people to assist the needy,⁵⁸ (f) read (where appropriate) the "Paragraph of the King," (g) blessed the people, and (h) added such other items as necessary (notably, comments on the plan of salvation).
3. God covenanted with his people that, if they would obey his commandments, he would (a) give them prosperity in the land and longevity, (b) defeat their enemies (through the king, who was commander-in-chief),⁵⁹ and (c) send rain for the crops.⁶⁰
4. The people (a) covenanted with God to be his servants and to obey his Law. (b) To this they were called to witness. (c) The covenant (or, sometimes, the Law or the ruler's speech) was written down. (d) A "pillar" was erected as a symbol of the covenant.⁶¹
5. For purposes of sacrifice (a) an altar was constructed and (b) burnt and peace offerings were made upon it.
6. The joy of the people was expressed by praising God, music, and sometimes dance.⁶²
7. Trumpets were blown, as was usual for the seventh month.⁶³
8. The coronation ceremony stressed (a) that God was the real King of Israel, (b) that it was God who chose the earthly king—his viceroy—through a prophet,⁶⁴ with (c) the approval of the people (who use the formula "God save the king" in KJV) and the previous king. The king was then (d) anointed and (e) given a charge.
9. There were sometimes other elements, such as a communal meal. In addition, there were the features already discussed above (e.g., the presence of tents or booths, the building of a wooden platform, and the presence of strangers or foreigners).

SUKKOT IN ZARAHÉMLA

The biblical Sukkot celebration is closely paralleled by the account of King Benjamin's assembly recorded in Mosiah 1:1-6:6. Benjamin began by calling his son Mosiah to discuss with him an assembly that he wished to convene "on the morrow,"⁶⁵ and to give him a charge (Mosiah 1:2-17; 6:3).⁶⁶ The purpose of the assembly is given in these words: "I shall proclaim unto this my people . . . that thou art a king and a ruler over this people" (Mosiah 1:10-11). But it is evident, from the actual text of Benjamin's discourse, that religious instruction far outweighed the coronation ceremony itself.⁶⁷ In fact, only three verses of his speech (Mosiah 2:29-31) are devoted to the succession of the new king, and only a portion of a single verse (Mosiah 6:3) is given to Mosiah's consecration. The account begins:

And it came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had made a proclamation throughout all the land, that the people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them. And there were a great number, even so many that they did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land. And they also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses (Mosiah

Several elements here are characteristic of Sukkot. The gathering of the Nephites “up to the temple”⁶⁸ indicates the sanctity of the occasion. Regarding their sacrifices “according to the law of Moses,” it is significant to note that there are more sacrifices prescribed for Sukkot than for any of the other festivals. Likewise, the tower which King Benjamin caused to be erected corresponds to the wooden pulpit traditionally constructed for the king on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles. Another Sukkot feature is the mention of the blood of Christ (Mosiah 3:11), reminiscent of the blood of the covenant sprinkled on the people by Moses at the first Sukkot (Exodus 24:8).

Furthermore, the Nephite assembly parallels the assembly of the Jews conducted in Jerusalem by Ezra upon the return from Babylon.⁶⁹ The temple had been rebuilt, and the Jews sought to recommit themselves to the Law of Moses. For this purpose, they sanctified the seventh month.⁷⁰ On the first day of that month, Ezra began reading the Law to the congregation at the Water Gate (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5). The following day, “they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month” (Nehemiah 8:13-14). They therefore set about to construct the booths and kept the feast of Sukkot.

Benjamin’s people, too, engaged in a renewal of their observance of Sukkot. Benjamin had studied the scriptures with renewed emphasis on language and, as with Ezra, Benjamin may have felt that this observance of the feast was the first proper one which had been held for some time in the Nephite culture. The Nephites also set up their “tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them.”⁷¹ These “booths” represented the temporary dwellings used by the Israelites after leaving Egypt,⁷² and the practice of pitching tents “with the door thereof towards the temple” finds its antecedent in the camp of Israel (Exodus 33:8-10).

The parallel extends further. As King Benjamin had spoken from a tower, so too Ezra “stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose.”⁷³ Both Benjamin and Ezra spoke of God as Creator,⁷⁴ King Benjamin adding that since God gave us all we have (Mosiah 2:21, 23; 4:19-20), we have a moral obligation to be liberal toward others (Mosiah 2:16-19; 4:15-19, 22-26). Most of Benjamin’s address was concerned with exhorting his people to obey the commandments of God (Mosiah 2:22). He spoke of the curses and blessings of the Law,⁷⁵ and called upon the testimony of the written word against the people at the last day.⁷⁶ In addition, he discussed the atonement as it relates to the Law of Moses.⁷⁷ Ezra, too, read to his people from the Law of Moses, exhorting them to repentance (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-9, 13, 18; 9:3). Finally, Ezra’s words were addressed to “those that could understand” (Nehemiah 8:3), and “every one having knowledge, and having understanding” took the oath (Nehemiah 10:28-29). King Benjamin likewise spoke only to those “who [could] understand [his] words.”⁷⁸

King Benjamin’s people, hearing his words, and feeling the spirit of the occasion, fell to the ground, repented of their sins, and asked that the atonement be applied to them (Mosiah 4:1-2, 6-7), as all Israelites were expected to do for the Day of Atonement in the seventh month.⁷⁹ They then declared their willingness “to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things” (Mosiah 5:5; see vss. 2-6). Following this, King Benjamin recorded “the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments” (Mosiah 6:1-3), as he had recorded the text of his speech.

The Jews in Jerusalem, similarly moved by the words of Ezra, “were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. . . . And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one

fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God” (Nehemiah 9:1, 3). They “entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes” (Nehemiah 10:29; compare JST). Here, also, they fell to the ground (Nehemiah 8:6), and names were recorded: “because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it” (Nehemiah 9:38). Ezra’s congregation also committed their new covenant to writing (Nehemiah 9:34-38).

There are, of course, some points regarding the seventh month celebration under Ezra that cannot be fully demonstrated in the Nephite record. For example, the Jerusalem assembly also participated in a meal (Nehemiah 8:10, 12), and there were strangers present (Nehemiah 9:2). Foreigners among the Mulekites may also have been present in Zarahemla. There are some indications that the Nephite assembly may have taken place in the sabbatical or jubilee year. The sabbatical year is mentioned in Nehemiah 10:31, but there is no direct evidence that the assembly in Jerusalem took place in such a year.

As previously discussed, the Jewish Sukkot liturgy was comprised of readings from Deuteronomy and the Psalms. There are a number of parallels between the Jewish Sukkot liturgy and the speech given by King Benjamin.

Paragraph of the King

One of the primary passages read by the Israelite king at the autumn feast was the “paragraph of the King” (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), that portion of the Mosaic code relating to the king’s duties. The ideas contained in this biblical passage were fundamental to King Benjamin’s thoughts. Regarding kingship, where Deuteronomy 17:15 requires that only “one from among thy brethren” may become king, Benjamin addressed his Nephite audience as “my brethren” (Mosiah 2:9, 15, 20, 31, 36; 3:1; 4:4). He also stressed, “I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people,”⁸⁰ in conformity with Deuteronomy 17:15. He further ascribed to God the choice of Mosiah as his successor (Mosiah 2:29-30).

Concerning the abuse of office, Deuteronomy 17:16-17 warned of the tendency of monarchs to use their power to gain wealth and satisfy their own lusts.⁸¹ King Benjamin, in like manner, stressed that he had not “sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches” (Mosiah 2:12) nor had he permitted slavery (Mosiah 2:13).⁸² It is possible that the commandment regarding “multiplying” horses and wives also lies behind his statements that one should not keep his neighbor’s ass (Mosiah 5:14) and that one should not commit adultery (Mosiah 1:13; 2:13).⁸³

The king was also humble. Deuteronomy 17:20 requires “that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren.” Benjamin said: “I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man. But I am like as yourselves.”⁸⁴

Deuteronomy 17:18-19 specifies that the king should keep a copy of the Law with him, that he might always remember the commandments of God. Accordingly, King Benjamin kept the brass plates of Laban, on which was written the Law of Moses.⁸⁵ The importance of the Law is reaffirmed in Deuteronomy 17:20: “that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom.” This is the central theme of the book of Deuteronomy: obedience to God’s law will bring prosperity in the land and long life.⁸⁶ This is also a main point of King Benjamin’s speech.⁸⁷ Benjamin’s summary of this principle

(Mosiah 2:22) seems to have been directly inspired by Deuteronomy 6:2 or Deuteronomy 17:20.⁸⁸ A secondary theme found in both texts, and a feature associated with Sukkot is the exhortation to assist the needy.⁸⁹

Benjamin and Jubilee

A comparative study by John W. Welch⁹⁰ has related certain sections of Benjamin’s speech to Leviticus 25-26, suggesting the possibility that the coronation of Mosiah occurred during a jubilee year.⁹¹ Parallels between the passages in Leviticus and Mosiah are outlined as follows:⁹²

	Leviticus	Mosiah
Return possessions	25:10	4:28
Not to injure one another	25:14, 17	4:13
Render according to due	25:15-16, 50	4:13, 28
Prosperity in the land follows obedience	25:18-19	2:22
Aid the poor	25:35	4:16, 26
Use of riches	25:35-37	4:21
Peace in the land	26:6	2:31
Covenant with God	26:9	5:5-6
Lord’s dwelling	26:11	2:37
Lord to be with his people	26:11-12	2:36
Curses for disobedience, including burning	26:14-33	2:38; 3:25-27
“Walk/go contrary . . . “	26:21, 27	2:33, 36

We consistently find that Sukkot and the beginning of the jubilee year (which is announced in the same seventh month) go hand in hand. Nothing in either the attempt to identify sections in the speech that manifest affinity to jubilee, in the thesis of this article regarding tabernacles, or in Hugh Nibley’s study of Benjamin’s speech as a royal coronation for that matter is exclusive of the other. While some passages in Leviticus 25-26 are similar to Deuteronomic passages already considered (for example, the promise that rain will be sent if Israel keeps God’s commandments [Leviticus 26:3-5], and that God will defeat the nation’s enemies and establish peace [26:6-8]), the parallels between the passages in Leviticus and Mosiah have independent significance: The fact that the jubilee references are largely concentrated in two portions of the speech makes it very attractive to conclude that Benjamin chose not only Sukkot as the time for the coronation of his son but a jubilee or sabbatical year as well.

CONCLUSION

This study is not intended to be conclusive. Rather, it is just one more probe into the Old World origins of the Book of Mormon civilization and culture. While a few questions have been at least partially answered here, many more still present themselves. How would the Nephites have coped with a new climate in the celebration of a prepluvial festival? (The word “rain” does not occur in King Benjamin’s speech, though he speaks of prosperity.) Were all of the elements of the Nephite assembly based on Israelite counterparts, or did some stem from other Middle Eastern civilizations, as suggested by Dr. Nibley? Was there a Nephite Sukkot liturgy? Did Laban’s brass plates contain all of the Psalms? Can we use the Book of Mormon material to date the beginnings of the Jewish Sukkot liturgy of the Second Temple period? Although these and other questions must remain unanswered, we can now respond to the question which prompted this study: To what extent did the Nephites keep the rites of the Law of Moses? The preponderance of our evidence certainly verifies the words of Nephi: “And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10).

Notes

The first draft of the major portion of this article was prepared in Jerusalem in March 1973. This essay originally appeared in a slightly different form under the title “The Nephite Feast of Tabernacles” in the unpublished “Tinkling Cymbals: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley,” John W. Welch, ed., 1978, and was later issued as F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report TVE-78 in 1983.

1. My original article sparked considerable interest among Latter-day Saint scholars, several of whom began to search for further evidences of the observance of Jewish feasts in the Book of Mormon text. Several workshops on Nephite religious festivals were held by F.A.R.M.S., and some preliminary reports resulted. Some additional information is included here. However, a more exhaustive study is under way. Italics are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. For example, 1 Nephi 5:9; 7:22; Mosiah 2:3; Alma 34:13-14; 3 Nephi 9:17-20; 15:2-10.

3. For example, Sabbath observance in Jarom 1:5; Mosiah 13:16-19; 18:23.

4. Mosiah 1-6. Other Nephite assemblies—some perhaps of the same nature—are found in Jacob 1:17-6:13; Mosiah 7:17; 22:1-9; 25:1-18; Alma 2:5-9; 18:9; 20:9-12; 3 Nephi 3:13-14; 4:4. Note also Nephi’s speech from the tower in Helaman 7, where he outlines God’s dealings with men. Further, compare the comments on the justice of kings in Mosiah 23:8 and especially in Mosiah 29:12-14, where Mosiah is seeking a successor from among his sons.

5. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 295-310; and *Since Cumorah*, vol. 7, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 247-51. See also Hugh Nibley, “The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State,” *Western Political Quarterly* 2/3 (1949): 328-44; and “The Hierocentric State,” *Western Political Quarterly* 4/2 (1951): 225-53.

6. The Israelite calendar was lunar, with each month beginning at the new moon. The year comprised twelve months of alternating twenty-nine or thirty days. This gave 354 days, or eleven days short of the solar year. Periodically, an intercalary month (“Second Adar”) was added to bring the calendar into line with the seasons. In this manner, the month of Abib always encompassed the spring equinox. The system is still followed in today’s sacred Jewish calendar. It is reflected in the dating of Easter in the Western churches, which is defined by the Catholic Church as the Sunday closest to the full moon nearest the spring equinox. Passover, of course, falls on the full moon closest to the spring equinox, since it is halfway through the month of Abib.

7. Exodus 12-13. The Prophet Joseph Smith connected the date of April 6 with the birth and death of Christ, Passover, the Creation, and the Restoration of the Church (*HC* 1:337). The first of Abib is the day on which Noah saw that the face of the land was dry (Genesis 8:13), and Moses set up the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:2, 17). There is an obvious symbolism in beginning the year with the spring equinox, when the ground is again alive with greenery.

8. The notable exception was the New Moon, which marked the beginning of each new month (Numbers 10:10; Psalm 81:3).

9. Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 16:26-30; 20:10-11; 31:13-17; 34:21; 35:2-3; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Regarding seven-day periods, note also the cleansing rites for those touching dead bodies (Numbers 19:11-22; 31:19-24), Nazarites (Numbers 6:6-12), and lepers (Leviticus 13; 14:1-9), as also for plagues (Leviticus 14:33-42).

10. Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-10. According to Jewish tradition, the Law was received at Sinai on ^cot; see A. Chill, *The Mitzvot* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 281.
11. Just as the first month includes the spring equinox, the seventh includes the autumn equinox. The Feast of Weeks falls just short of the summer solstice, however, and the winter solstice had no known significance in Old Testament Israel.
12. Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6. Traditionally Adam's creation; Chill, *The Mitzvot*, 285.
13. Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7-11. According to tradition, this day is the anniversary of Adam's repentance of his sin, of Abraham's circumcision, and of Moses' second descent from the Mount, with the new tablets of the Law; Chill, *The Mitzvot*, 288.
14. Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:33-43; Numbers 29:12-39; Deuteronomy 16:13-15; Ezekiel 45:25.
15. Exodus 23:10-11 (note the weekly Sabbath in vs. 12); Leviticus 25:1-7, 18-22; 26:34-35; 2 Chronicles 36:21. Note Deuteronomy 15:1-8, where we find a release of debts to Hebrews, a release of Hebrew slaves, and assistance rendered to the needy.
16. From Hebrew *yôbel*, "ram's horn," used as a trumpet.
17. Exodus 21:2; Leviticus 25:8-17, 23-34; Deuteronomy 15:1-18. For Leviticus 25:23, cf. the response of Naboth to Ahab in 1 Kings 21:1-3.
18. The jubilee was announced by the blowing of trumpets on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 25:9).
19. In fact, the original purpose of the feast was probably to pray for rain (Deuteronomy 28:12). Once, during the author's eight-year stay in Israel, there was a rainstorm before Sukkot. The chief rabbis issued an official declaration that it was "*not* rain," since rain cannot come before the prayers are offered. (With the same reasoning, just prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, after ridding the house of yeast and searching under the furniture with a candle, an Orthodox Jew will declare that "if there remains any leaven in this house, it is not *my* leaven!")
20. The eighth day, with its special assembly, was originally not counted with the seven. A sukkah was not required for this last day. In 1972, I mentioned to President and Sister Harold B. Lee (then on visit to Jerusalem) that our April and October conferences corresponded with the timing of the ancient festivals of Passover and Tabernacles. Sister Lee noted that she recalled, as a little girl, that the Salt Lake Tabernacle was always decorated with tree branches during October Conference. I have been yet unable to confirm this from other sources.
21. These temporary dwellings have long-standing use in the harvest season of the Middle East, when families spend several days at a time in the fields, rather than commuting daily from the villages. In addition to providing shade for the workers during mealtime, the rough shelters keep the harvested produce out of direct sunlight.
22. The Bible does not provide this information. The Israelites arrived in the wilderness of Sinai during the third month (Exodus 19:1), and the Tabernacle was completed and set up on the first day of the first month of the second year (Exodus 40:1, 17). The law was revealed some time between these two fixed dates. Josephus noted that when Moses ascended the mount to receive the Law, the Israelites pitched their tents about the mountain and were caught in a rain storm; *Antiquities of the Jews* III, 5, 1-2.

23. Today, the annual reading cycle of the Torah ends (and begins anew) at Simhat Torah. This practice of reading assigned portions of the Law each week during each year is traditionally dated to the time of Ezra the Scribe, who renewed the celebration of Sukkot after the Babylonian Captivity (discussed below).

24. The ark landed atop the mountain on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, during Sukkot (Genesis 8:4). Note the covenant in Genesis 8:20-9:17, containing the Sukkot elements of burnt offerings and a promise of “seedtime and harvest” and the rainbow, in addition to a covenant of peace. Professor Nibley has previously intimated that the great autumnal festivals, representing renewal of the earth, were perhaps patterned after the heavenly council convened to plan the creation of the earth; *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 309.

25. It is, of course, unlikely (unless unitedly moved upon by the Spirit) that the people all said the same thing simultaneously without a script. Regarding this ritual choral recitation, see Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 303, 305.

26. The Hebrew altar (*mizbeah*, “place of slaughter/sacrifice”) was used for cooking and burning of sacrificial meat. The word is also used for incense altars, which are likewise used for offerings to God. The word generally translated “pillar” in KJV is the Hebrew *massebah* (lit., “something erected”). It is always constructed as the sign of a covenant (e.g., Genesis 28:10-22; 31:44-52), and hence could be termed a “covenant altar.”

27. 1 Kings 8:10-12; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14. Compare the cloud at Sinai (Exodus 24:16-18) and during the wanderings in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22; 40:34-38), as also the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6), and at Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:8-9). Regarding the Transfiguration, note the presence of Moses (who instituted Sukkot), of Elijah (or Elias, who had power over the rains), and of other elements (e.g., the desire of the three Apostles to build “tabernacles”). Cf. the Transfiguration and D&C 110.

28. 1 Kings 8:65 says “seven days and seven days, even *fourteen* days,” though the text notes that on the *eighth* day Solomon sent the people away.

29. Note the mention of tents (1 Kings 8:66; 2 Chronicles 7:10) and of strangers (1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:32-33), as also of the brazen scaffold (*kiyyôr nhôset*) on which Solomon stood (2 Chronicles 6:13).

30. 2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-22:1; cf. 2 Chronicles 3:1.

31. 2 Samuel 6:12, 14-16; 1 Chronicles 15:25, 27-29; 16:1.

32. 1 Chronicles 16:7-36. The Psalms cited by David on this occasion were 105:1-15, speaking of God’s covenant and his dealings with the people; 96:1-13 (96:13 = 1 Chronicles 16:33), that the Lord is to judge the earth (cf. Mosiah 3:10); and 106:47-48, which is similar to Psalm 118, which later became part of the Sukkot liturgy. Some of the Sukkot elements found in David’s recitation in 1 Chronicles 16 include: (a) an exhortation to remember the Lord’s dealings with Israel (vss. 8, 12, 24), (b) to praise the Lord (vss. 9-11, 25), (c) to “be ye mindful of his covenant” (vs. 15), (d) sacrifice (vs. 29), (e) the Lord’s role as King (vs. 31), and (f) recitation of the Sukkot formula, “Save us, O God of our salvation” (vs. 35, cf. 23). After David’s recitation, “all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord” (vs. 36).

33. In Ezekiel’s vision of the future, it is the prince of Israel (i.e., the king) who supervised the activities of both Passover and Sukkot (Ezekiel 45: 22-25).

34. For example, H. L. Jansen, “The Consecration in the Eighth Chapter of Testamentum Levi,” in *The Sacral Worship*, Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions, Rome, April 1955 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 361-62.

35. See Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 300-306. Though Sukkot was the main royal festival, note also the royal covenant of the third month in 2 Chronicles 15:10-15 (cf. vss. 12-13 with Mosiah 6:2). Note also the Passovers celebrated by Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30) and Josiah (2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35). M *Bikkurim* 3:4 informs us that it was the King who led the firstfruits procession (Deuteronomy 26), which, like Sukkot, featured the playing of pipes (flutes).

36. *Seder Olam Zuta Chronicle*, in A. Neubauer, ed., *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronicle Notes*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1887-95), 2:83; cited by H. H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 422.

37. By the days of King Agrippa (d. 44 A.D.), the seventh month was counted as the first, as today.

38. Deuteronomy 31:10-12.

39. Deuteronomy 17:15. Agrippa’s ancestors were Idumeans (Edomites), descendants of Esau. By religion, he was Jewish, by citizenship a Roman.

40. Deuteronomy 6:4-10. This is the *Shema*^c (imperative “Hear!”), most important of the Jewish prayers. It is cited by Jesus in Mark 12:29.

41. Deuteronomy 11:13-22.

42. Deuteronomy 14:22-28.

43. Deuteronomy 26:12-19.

44. Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

45. Deuteronomy 27:15-28:68.

46. M *Sotah* 7:8.

47. One of the principal themes of the Book of Mormon is the Lord’s promise that if the people keep his commandments, they shall prosper in the land, while if they disobey him, they shall not prosper (1 Nephi 2:20; 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:9, 20; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Alma 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:15, 25; 50:20; Helaman 3:20; 3 Nephi 5:22). The promise was mentioned by King Benjamin in his speech (Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31). The promise had also been made to such Israelite leaders as Joshua (Joshua 1:7) and Solomon (1 Kings 2:3; 1 Chronicles 29:23), and is repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament (2 Chronicles 24:20; 31:21; Ezra 6:14; Job 36:11; Jeremiah 22:21) and in our day (D&C 9:13).

48. Compare Mosiah 2:34, 40; 3:21; 6:2.

49. The double emphasis is perhaps because strangers were invited to attend the Sukkot festivities (in the hopes they would be converted, hearing the Law read).

50. In ancient Egypt, it was believed that the king was responsible for the onset of the Nile floods so necessary to that country's agricultural economy. Just prior to the coming of the waters (in September), the king would offer prayers to Hapi, the river god. In actual fact, of course, the king had advance information of the Nile's rising, based on special measuring marks cut into the limestone cataracts upstream.

51. 2 Chronicles 29:27. Seven and a half years according to 2 Samuel 2:11; 5:5; 1 Chronicles 3:4.

52. 1 Kings 12:19-24. Already in the time of Solomon, Jeroboam had been told by the prophet Ahijah that if he kept the commandments, Israel would be his (1 Kings 11:38).

53. 2 Kings 11:17; 2 Chronicles 23:16. The repetition of the words "and between the king also and the people" in 2 Kings 11:17 is a dittographic error committed by a later scribe.

54. In 1 Maccabees 14:41 we read: "Also that the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful priest," evidently to reestablish (in proper order), the Davidic line.

55. In later times, it was water from the Spring of Gihon (site of Solomon's coronation) the high priest poured out upon the altar during Sukkot. Water, representing expected rains, was appropriate for the festival. However, wine is also appropriate to Sukkot, which takes place just after the grape harvest.

56. Leviticus 16:1 has reference to 10:1-2 and shows that all of these chapters refer to events which occurred during the consecration ceremony. The rest of chapter 16 speaks of how Aaron was to offer the sacrifice of the day of atonement (vs. 29).

57. The true anointing is to be both a king and a priest to God. In the Bible, both the king and the high priest were called by the title Messiah (Heb. *masîah*, "anointed one"). See also Jansen, "The Consecration in the Eighth Chapter of Testamentum Levi," 356-65, where he compares Levi's priestly anointing, washing, investiture, and ordination with the enthronement of God as King. He speaks both of the new name (cf. Mosiah 1:11-12; 5:7-13; D&C 130:111; 133:18; Revelation 2:17, 3:12) and notes the implications of *Testament of Levi* 19:2-3 in comparison with biblical Sukkot and coronation rites. The relevant verses read: "And his sons replied, 'Before the Lord we will live according to his Law.' And their father said to them, 'The Lord is my witness and his angels are witnesses, and you are witnesses, and I am witness concerning the word from your mouth.' And his sons said, '(We are) witnesses.' " James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983-85), 1:795.

58. Based on Deuteronomy 16:14. The produce of the sabbatical year was left to the poor among the people (Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25:6).

59. Saul, Israel's first universally acknowledged king, is called, in the earlier parts of Samuel, by the term *nâgîd*, "commander" (KJV "captain"), indicating his role as leader of the army (1 Samuel 10:1; cf. 1 Samuel 11). David's troubles began when he neglected personally to lead the army of Israel in battle (2 Samuel 11, esp. vs. 1). From Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian records, we learn that it was typical for kings to accompany their armies into the field. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi personally wielded the sword of Laban in the defense of his people (Jacob 1:10), as did his successors on the throne (Jarom 1:7, 14; Omni 1:24; Words of Mormon 1:13).

60. To symbolize this, each day of the festival a priest would bring water from the Spring of Gihon and pour it in a basin on the altar, mixing some of it with wine (in the Mishnah, see *Shekalim* 6:30; *Sukkah* 4:1, 9; *Zebahim* 6:2; *Middot* 2:6.)

61. See n. 26.

62. Regarding the “pipes” (KJV) or flutes played at Sukkot, see M *Sukkah* 5:1. The dancing before the Tabernacle at Shiloh (Judges 21:19-23) apparently is for Sukkot. Compare also the Lamanite girls in Mosiah 20:1-5.

63. Probably reminiscent of the “voice of the trumpet” which announced God’s appearance on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-20). Trumpets also announced each New Moon (Numbers 10:10; Psalm 81:3), and were used to assemble the congregation in the wilderness (Numbers 10:7-8).

64. Compare Saul’s rejection as king by God. See also 2 Chronicles 24:20-21; cf. Mosiah 2:18-19.

65. Mosiah 1:10. One wonders how King Benjamin could have assembled all of his people “on the morrow.” While it is possible that the Nephites lived in a very small area, over which messages could be sent one day and an assembly held the next, it is likewise possible that the assembly was calendared by the annual clock and that the people were already planning to come to Zarahemla from whatever distance to participate in the Feast of Tabernacles. The “proclamation” need not imply that it was an unscheduled event. In ancient Israel, the King also issued a proclamation for the Passover, though it was a set festival (2 Chronicles 30:1-11; cf. Exodus 32:5).

66. Compare David’s charge to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:1-9. Several ancient Egyptian documents comprise admonitions to kings and princes.

67. The royal nature of the Sukkot celebration makes it unnecessary to minimize Mosiah’s coronation. The Mishnaic reference to Sukkot as a royal festival, and the nature of Israelite assemblies generally, substantiates the heavily religious nature of coronation rites in Israel.

68. See Mosiah 1:10, 18; 2:1-3, 5.

69. Nehemiah 8-10; see esp. 7:73-8:1, 13. Regular provision for sacrifice was also made at that time (10:34-36).

70. This assembly was represented as the first proper observance of the festival since Joshua (Nehemiah 8:17). Actually, the first company of Jews returning from Babylon had celebrated Sukkot by building an altar and making burnt offerings (Ezra 3:1-6). But enemies hindered the rebuilding of the Temple. About 520 B.C., encouraged by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews resumed work on the Temple (Ezra 4:24-5:1). One of Haggai’s prophecies was given on the first day of Sukkot (Haggai 2:1-9), evidently in memory of Solomon’s Temple. Much of the prophecy of Zechariah deals with the future restoration of the monarchy at the time of Sukkot. These are, in effect, messianic prophecies, some of which were fulfilled by Jesus at his first coming, while others will be fulfilled when he returns to Jerusalem. For example, coming seated on an ass (9:9), the blood of the covenant (9:11), the blowing of the trumpet (9:14), and the new wine (9:15-16). In Zechariah 9:16, we read that “in that day” the Lord shall save. There is mention of clouds and of rains (10:1) and a threat to smite horses (9:10; 12:4; 14:15), reminiscent of the Paragraph of the King. There is also mention of the tents of Judah (12:7; 14:15). Each family is apart (12:12-14). A new fountain, to accompany the rains, is to come forth from the Temple (13:1; 14:8). A covenant will be made with the Lord’s people (13:9), and Jerusalem will then be cut in half by the enemy (14:2; the two bodies of people at Sukkot?—cf. Mosiah 25:1-4). But the Lord will defeat Israel’s enemies (14:3). At the critical

moment, he will appear to reign on earth as King (14:9, 16-17; cf. the crown in 9:16). The Feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated (14:16, 18-19), along with sacrifices (14:20-21). Those who do not come to celebrate the feast and make covenant with God will not receive the promised rains (14:17).

Jesus' hesitation to attend the Sukkot festival in Jerusalem (John 7:1-13) was perhaps because the time for his coming in glory was not yet (John 7:6). His first coming in triumph was just before Passover (on what has come to be known as "Palm Sunday"), and his second will be at Sukkot. When, at length, he did attend the Sukkot festival, Jesus spoke of the "living water" (John 7:37-38), probably an allusion to the water poured on the altar during the festival (cf. Zechariah 13:1; 14:8; Ezekiel 47:1-12). There are other allusions to Sukkot in statements made by Jesus at that time.

71. Mosiah 2:5-6. Each tent contained one family. Israel also pitched tents by families in the wilderness (Numbers 2:34). They dwelt in tents at the time they covenanted with God at Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:27-31).

72. The Hebrew *'ohel*, "tent," has a semantic range including "dwelling, habitation" (Genesis 9:27; 1 Kings 8:66; Job 8:22; Psalm 84:10; Jeremiah 10:20; 30:18).

73. Nehemiah 8:4. The Hebrew word is *migdal*, generally translated "tower," rather than "pulpit" as here in KJV. Compare the "brazen scaffold" of Solomon and the "stairs" (*ma'aleh*, "ascent") in Nehemiah 9:4, from which, in Second Temple times, the Levites sang the "Psalms of Degrees" (Hebrew "ascents") and the priests sounded their trumpets on the last day of Sukkot. Many aspects of the "Psalms of Degrees" and the "Hallel Psalms" sung during Sukkot are also reflected in King Benjamin's speech.

74. Mosiah 2:20-21, 23, 25; 4:9, 21; Nehemiah 9:5-6.

75. Mosiah 1:13-14; 2:22, 24, 33, 36-41; 3:14-15, 25-27; 5:14-15.

76. Mosiah 3:24. Moses, Joshua, and Ezra had likewise made records as testimonies or witnesses, as discussed below.

77. Mosiah 2:34-35; 3:1-16. Regarding the atoning blood, see Mosiah 4:2.

78. Mosiah 2:40. Compare Mosiah 2:34; 3:21; 6:2. Moses also excluded the children (Deuteronomy 11:2).

79. This is still practiced in Judaism. Indeed, Yom Kippur is the only time when Jews prostrate themselves on the ground for prayers. The normal practice is to pray standing or sometimes sitting, but not kneeling.

80. Mosiah 2:11; cf. 1:10.

81. Similarly, when prevailed upon by Israel to anoint the first king, the prophet Samuel was told by the Lord that the king would use his position to his own advantage, taking from the people their children, their riches, and their properties (1 Samuel 8:4-22). This did, in fact, come to pass in the days of Solomon and thereafter (e.g., 1 Kings 4:7, 22-23, 26-28; 10:23-29; 11:1-8).

82. He also called the people to witness (Mosiah 2:14), as had Samuel and Joshua. He had a clear conscience (Mosiah 2:15, 27).

83. In any case, these ideas are part of the Law of Moses. See the jubilee, below.

84. Mosiah 2:10-11. Compare Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 301-3.

85. Mosiah 1:2-7. These plates were passed on to Mosiah at the time of the ceremony, and later to the judges. The large plates of Nephi had apparently always been in the hands of the kings (Omni 1:11).

86. For example, Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 26, 40; 5:33; 10:12-13; 11:21-22.

87. For example, Mosiah 1:7; 2:31, 36; 4:15; 6:6.

88. In the former passage, it refers to the people as a whole, while in the latter it refers to the king only. Both Deuteronomy passages were part of the Sukkot liturgy.

89. Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 14:29; 26:12-13, 17-19; Mosiah 4:16-19. I have cited only passages known to have been read by the king at Sukkot.

90. John W. Welch, "Benjamin's Speech (Mosiah 2:9-5:15): A Textual Analysis with Commentary," unpublished manuscript, 1 January 1973, 52-53, and John W. Welch, compiler, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report, 1985, 58-63.

91. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the sabbatical and jubilee years. Both are marked by the release of debts (Deuteronomy 15:1-3; Leviticus 25:33-37) and by the prohibition against agricultural pursuits (Leviticus 25:2-8, 11-12, 20-22). Only in the jubilee does land return to its original owners (Leviticus 25:8-10, 13-6, 23-34; 27:17-24; Numbers 36:4). The procedure for the release of Hebrew slaves is troublesome. Contrast Exodus 21:1-11 with Deuteronomy 15:1, 12-18 and Leviticus 25:39-55.

92. I follow Welch here with a few additions.