

Deuteronomy 6-8, 15, 18, 29-30, 34

Deuteronomy as an Ancient Near Eastern Vassal Treaty

Many scholars recognize that Deuteronomy is constructed after the manner of Ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties.¹ The text has a structure similar to these treaties with a 1) historical prologue (1.6-4.40), 2) insistence on exclusive loyalty to the suzerain (5-11), 3) Covenantal rules (12-26), 4) Invocation of witnesses (4.26; 30.19; 31.29), 5) blessings and cursings (28), 6) Oaths and a deposition of the covenantal text (29.9-28).

The match is not perfect: the elements appear in a slightly different order and form, and Deuteronomy as a whole is much longer than any extant suzerainty treaty.² Still, the presence of the same basic elements has convinced many scholars that **the resemblance cannot be a matter of chance**. Many scholars note that Assyrian domination engendered a gradual socio-religious acculturation in which Judean scribes assimilated and modified the structure of Assyrian ideology within the framework of their own tradition.³

That supposition has been bolstered by a number of close verbal ties between, specifically, the words of warning in Leviticus and Deuteronomy and similar warnings appended to a number of ancient Near Eastern treaties. For example:

The sky over your head shall be copper, and the earth under you iron. - Deut. 28:23

I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper. - Lev. 26:19

May all the gods . . . turn your ground into iron, so that no one may plow it. Just as rain does not fall from a bronze sky, so may rain and dew not come upon your fields and meadows. -Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon 528–31⁴

Similarly:

The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way. - Deut. 28:28–29

May Shamash . . . deprive you of the sight of your eyes, so that they will wander about in darkness. - Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon 422–24

¹ Moshe Weinfeld, "The Emergence of the Deuteronomistic Movement: The Historical Antecedents," in *Das Deuteronomium*, 76-98. Joshua A. Berman, "CTH 133 and the Hittite provenance of Deuteronomy 13," *JBL* 130 (2011), 25-44; Joshua A. Berman, "Histories Twice Told: Deuteronomy 1-3 and the Hittite Treaty Prologue Tradition," *JBL* 132 (2013), 229-250; Bernard M. Levinson and Jeffrey Stackert, "Between the Covenant Code and Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty: Deuteronomy 13 and the Composition of Deuteronomy," *JAJ* 3 (2012), 123-140.

² James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*, Free Press, 2008, p. 348.

³ Joshua A. Berman, "CTH 133 and the Hittite provenance of Deuteronomy 13," *JBL* 130 (2011), 25. See also: Bernard Levinson, *"The Right Chorale": Studies in Biblical Law and Interpretation*, FAT 54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, p. 138.

⁴ Kugel, p. 348.

You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit . . . Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, while you look on. - Deut. 28:30–32

May [the deity of the star Venus], the brightest of stars, make your wives lie in your enemy's lap while your eyes look on. . . . May your sons not be masters of your house. May a foreign enemy divide all your goods. - Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon 428–30

She who is the most refined and gentle among you . . . will begrudge food . . . *to her own daughter*, begrudging even the afterbirth that comes out from between her thighs, and the children that she bears, because she is eating them *in secret* for lack of anything else, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in your towns . . . - Deut. 28:56–57

A mother will lock her door against her daughter. In your hunger, eat the flesh of your sons! In the famine and want, may one man eat the flesh of another. - Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon 448–50⁵

The first discourse of Moses: Deut. 1.1 - 4.43

1. Editorial headnote – Deut. 1.1-5.
 - a. Right away the text is telling us that this is written from another place and time separated from Moses. Deut. 1.1 reads “These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan.”⁶
2. Historical Review – Deut. 1.6-3.29.
3. Exhortation to obey the Torah – Deut. 4.1-40.

The second discourse of Moses: Deut. 4.44-26.68

1. Introduction – Deut. 4.44-49.
2. Deut. 5: A prologue to the laws: The Theophany and Covenant at Horeb.
 1. Moses reiterates that the “Lord made a covenant with us in Horeb” – Deut. 5.2.
 2. The Decalogue – Deut. 5.6-18.
 - a. No other gods – Deut. 5.6-7.
 - b. Prohibition of idols – Deut. 5.8-10.
 - c. False oaths – Deut. 5.11.
 - d. Observing the Sabbath and “keeping” it – Deut. 5.12-15.
 - i. There is a distinction between the Hebrew of the Sabbath Day commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The Sabbath is to be

⁵ Kugel, p. 349.

⁶ This introductory text **refers to Moses in the third person**, and **attributes the book to him**, and locates the book historically and geographically. “On the other side of the Jordan, designating the land east of the Jordan River (Transjordan), where the Israelites have stopped, awaiting entry to the land. **That geographical frame of reference places the speaker west of the Jordan and thus already in Canaan!** According to the narrative line, however, the Israelites have not yet reached the promised land and Moses never does. From this and similar anachronisms, a small number of medieval Jewish commentators already recognized that not all of the Torah could be attributed to Moses (see also 2.12 n.; 3 . 1 1 n.); **this is the modern consensus as well.** [The Jewish Study Bible](#), p. 363. See also: Mike Day, [On the Other Side of Jordan](#).

remembered “to their holiness” in Exodus (*not* “to keep it holy”), and in Deuteronomy they are told “To keep the Sabbath Day holy” (Deut. 5.12).⁷

- e. Honoring parents – Deut. 5.16.
 - f. Prohibition of Murder – Deut. 5.17.
 - g. Prohibition of Adultery – Deut. 5.17.
 - h. Prohibition of Theft – Deut. 5.17.
 - i. Prohibition of false testimony – Deut. 5.17.
 - j. Prohibition of coveting -Deut. 5.18.
3. An Elaboration of the First Commandment – Deut. 6.4-25.
- 1. Undivided loyalty required – Deut. 6.4-9.

⁷ Deut. 5.12 starts with *שָׁמֹר אֶת-יְוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ* “**Keep/Guard** the Sabbath Day to sanctify it.” Exodus 20.8 reads: *זָכוֹר אֶת-יְוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ* “Remember the Sabbath Day, **to sanctify it.**” The distinction between the two is important. The Deuteronomists inserted the idea of keeping or guarding the day as opposed to simply sanctifying it. Kugel gives context:

“Even this minor difference was a problem for ancient interpreters: if the Torah was perfect in all its details, then the two versions ought to match each other perfectly. Of course, it was possible to claim that, in reviewing things, Moses (or God speaking to Moses) had purposely changed a few things to drive home a new message. Still, why would it say “remember” first and “keep” second —logically, the Torah ought to have told people to *keep* the sabbath in Exodus and then *reminded* them in Deuteronomy.

Considering, however, the extraordinary circumstances that accompanied the giving of the Torah—a great divine voice speaking to all of Israel simultaneously—it occurred to some interpreters that the apparent conflict between “remember” and “keep” might not be an inconsistency at all, but a hint as to the extraordinary thing that went on that day (and was never repeated): in addressing the people directly, God had actually uttered both words simultaneously, and they had somehow absorbed both—something that is certainly impossible in normal, human-to-human communication:

“Remember” and “keep”—these two words were said [by God] in a single word. - *Mekhilta deR. Ishmael, Yitro 7.*

That still begged the question of why. To some interpreters it seemed that, if the word “keep” was understood in its other sense of “**guard,**” then **the Torah might actually be adding some specific teaching by its use of that word:** not only was one to “remember” the sabbath and observe all its rules during the twenty-four hours it was in effect, but one ought as well to cease weekday activities a little before the sabbath, in effect, **guarding its beginning** lest any forbidden work be done inadvertently after the start of the sabbath:

No one shall do work on Friday from the time **when the sphere of the sun is distant from the gate** [by] its [the sun’s] full size, for this is why it is said, “**Guard the sabbath** day to sanctify it” [Deut. 5:12]. – Damascus Document 10:14-17.

Other interpreters extended this idea, **suggesting that a little time be added to the sabbath at both ends, fore and aft:**

“Remember” and “guard”—*remember* before [the sabbath starts] and *guard* it after [the sabbath is over]. From this it was deduced that one is to add [time] from the profane [that is, from the rest of the week] to the sacred [that is, the sabbath]. - *Mekhilta deR. Ishmael, Yitro 7.*” Kugel, [How to Read the Bible](#), p. 343-344.

- a. The Shema: A proclamation of Monotheism by the Deuteronomistic Reformers.⁸
 - b. Many recite these words daily: “Two times each day, at dawn and when it is time to go to sleep, let all acknowledge to God the gifts that He has bestowed upon them.” – Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.212-13.⁹
2. Do not allow prosperity to make you forget the Lord – Deut. 6.10-15.
 3. Do not test, God, but keep his commandments – Deut. 6.16-19.
 4. Explaining the Commandments to one’s children – Deut. 6.20-25.
4. Exhortations concerning the conquest of the Promised Land – Deut. 7.1-8.20.
1. Destroying the Canaanite and their religious artifacts – Deut. 7.1-6.
 2. An appeal to avoid complacency and observe the commandments – Deut. 7.7-16.
 3. Israel need not fear the Canaanites despite their overwhelming numbers – Deut. 7.17-26.
 4. Remember your dependence on God keep the commandments – Deut. 8.1-20.
 - a. Man does not live by bread alone – Deut. 8.3.¹⁰
 - b. “When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land which he has given you” – Deut. 8.10.¹¹
5. An argument against self-righteousness - Deut. 9.1-10.22.
1. Victory is no proof of virtue – Deut. 9.1-5.

⁸ The Shema, which refers to two specific lines in Deuteronomy 6.4-5), became a daily prayer in Ancient Israelite tradition. The Shema is equivalent to the Lord's prayer (“Our Father which art in heaven...”) in traditional Christianity. The Shema gets its name from the first Hebrew word of the prayer in Deuteronomy 6.4: **שמע** “Hear Israel! Yahweh our God/Elohim is **one** LORD!” It is important to note that (according to some scholars) **the Shema did not stress monotheism**. Indeed, even as stated by the authors of the *Jewish Study Bible*, the Shema called for exclusive loyalty to God, without denying the existence of other deities. This falls into line with other ancient Near Eastern treaties that were written at the time the text of Deuteronomy was put together. **These treaties required that a vassal swear allegiance to a single political monarch** (6.4-g n.). **But once radical monotheism became the Jewish norm in the Second Temple period, under the influence of exilic prophecy, the original “Israelite” view gradually became “foreign” and unintelligible.** The *Shema* could only be understood as affirming the later “truth” of Jewish monotheism. This authentically Israelite religious language seems to have become so alien that the Hebrew text was “corrected” in several cases to bring it into conformity with later Jewish theology. See: [The Jewish Study Bible](#), Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 360.

Jeffrey Tigay stresses that the Shema did not stress monotheism: “He alone is Israel’s God. This is not a declaration of monotheism, meaning that there is only one God. That point was made in 4.35 and 4.39, that states “YHWH alone is God.” Deut. 6.4, by adding the word “our,” focuses on the way Israel is to apply that truth: though other peoples worship various beings and things they consider divine, Israel is to recognize YHWH alone.” Tigay, p. 76.

⁹ James Kugel, [How to read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now](#), Free Press, 2007, p. 342. Kugel gives the following insight: This practice is maintained to this day in Judaism: day and night, the verses of the Shema are recited by religious Jews. Christians as well accord Deut. 6.5 special attention, since it was singled out in the Gospels as the “first commandment”: One of the scribes . . . asked him [Jesus], “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” Mark 12:28–30 (also Matt. 22:35–38; Luke 10:25–28)

¹⁰ See also: Exodus 16; Numbers 11.7-8.

¹¹ When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God serves as the rabbinic justification for reciting the grace after meals (b. *Ber.* 21a). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 385.

2. A history of provocations – Deut. 9.6-24.
3. Moses gives an intercessory prayer – Deut. 9.25-29.
4. New tables are constructed – Deut. 10.1-5.¹²
5. The death of Aaron – Deut. 10.6-7.
6. The election of the Levites and permission to continue on to the Promised Land – Deut. 10.8-11.
7. God’s requirements – Deut. 10.12-22.
 - a. “Now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and **to love him**, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” – Deut. 10.12.¹³
 - b. “Loving God” in this context has some interesting connections to the ancient world.¹⁴

¹² Although God would inscribe the new tablets, they would be man-made, unlike the first ones, which were made by God (Ex. 21.16). Tigay, p. 104.

¹³ וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָהוּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַקֵּת בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וּלְאֲהַבָּהוּ אֹתוֹ וְלִעֲבֹד אֶת-יְהוָה וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ “And now, Israel, what the Lord your God asks of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, **and to love him**, and to **serve/ebed** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all **your being**.”

¹⁴ The meaning of “loving” God in the various passages cited from Deuteronomy may seem self-evident; but is it really? In 1963, an American Jesuit teaching in Rome published an article that, in its own way, gave the world of biblical scholarship another jolt. William L. Moran was part of that vanguard of Roman Catholic scholars who emerged after the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), the first papal document that encouraged Catholics to become thoroughly trained in the ways of modern biblical research. Moran studied with W. F. Albright at Johns Hopkins and ultimately specialized in ancient Akkadian texts and their relationship to the world of the Bible. While teaching at the Pontifical Biblical Institute at Rome, Moran was struck by something in the same Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon mentioned above. Esarhaddon had apparently been eager to insure that his vassals would continue to be loyal to his successor, Assurbanipal. At one point in his treaty, therefore, he commanded his vassals: “You shall love Assurbanipal as yourselves.” This struck Moran as an odd choice of language: love? Surely the vassals were not being told to become enamored of the future king’s winning personality! It seemed to Moran as if love here must have less to do with emotion than with loyalty, political loyalty. Although the Akkadian word for love came from a different Semitic root, Moran set out to investigate the various ways in which the Hebrew word for love, *’ahab*, was used in the Bible. What he found was that *’ahab* was indeed sometimes used for emotion: Jacob loves Rachel and so goes to work for her father for seven years (Gen. 29:18). At other times, however, people in the Bible seem to love more in the Esarhaddon way. This seemed especially true of the book of Deuteronomy, where loving God is often directly juxtaposed to serving God and keeping his commandments:

So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, **to love Him**, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and His decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. - Deut. 10:12

You shall love the LORD your God, therefore, and keep His charge, His decrees, His ordinances, and His commandments always. -Deut. 11:1

If you will only heed His every commandment that I am commanding you today—**loving the LORD your God**, and serving Him with all your heart and with all your soul . . . - Deut. 11:13

If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you, **loving the LORD** your God, walking in all His ways, and holding fast to Him . . . - Deut. 11:22

6. Conquering and keeping the Promised Land depends on Israel's loyalty to the Lord - Deut. 11.1-25.

1. Love and obey God, for you have seen the consequence of disobeying him – Deut. 11.1-9.
2. Enduring to the Promised Land depends on loyalty and obedience to God – Deut. 11.20-21.
3. Obedience to God ensures a successful conquest of the Promised Land – Deut. 11.22-25.
4. A blessing and a curse – Deut. 11.26-30.
 - a. Moses sums up the preamble to the laws (Deut. 5.1-11.28). All that he has said in the preceding chapters culminates in a choice between two futures, a blessed one if the people obey the terms of the covenant, and a curse if they do not.¹⁵

Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, **loving the LORD your God**, obeying Him, and holding fast to Him . . . - Deut. 30:19–20

Remarkably, Moran found, although Deuteronomy sometimes compared the relationship of God to Israel to that of a father to his son (Deut. 8:5; 14:1), the word for love was not invoked there, where one would expect some expression of emotional attachment. Instead, Israel was commanded to love God only in the ways seen above, where love is virtually a synonym of “fear,” “obey,” “serve,” and the like. And come to think of it, **how can you command someone to love someone else? If the word means anything like “love” in our sense, that would seem to be impossible.** (See: William L. Moran, “[The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy](#),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 77-87. See also: [Love and Hate in Helaman 5](#).)

Esarhaddon was not the only ancient Near Eastern potentate to demand “love” from his servants. A Canaanite vassal of Pharaoh writes in one of the El-Amarna letters: “My lord, **just as I love the king my lord**, so [does] the king of Nuhašše [love him, and] the king of Ni’i . . .—all these kings are servants of my lord.” Here, apparently, to love is to be a servant. Another ancient king described a civil war in these terms: “Behold the city! Half of it loves the sons of ‘Abd-Aširta, half of it [loves] my lord.”

Thus, the peoples of the ancient Near East would probably have been puzzled by the observation attributed to Talleyrand, “Nations do not have friends; they have interests.” National interests in the ancient Near East were often presented precisely in terms of friendship (that is, love). Thus, Hiram of Tyre is called David’s “friend” (1 Kings 5:1— from the same root, *’ahab*), but they were really only political allies. In 2 Sam. 19:6–7, Joab accuses David of **“loving those who hate you and hating those who love you,”** that is, crying over the death of Absalom, his political opponent; David’s “friends” are referred to in the next verse as “your servants.” “All Israel and Judah loved David,” it says in 1 Sam. 18:16, but this was not a matter of love so much as of political support, and the rest of the sentence goes on to make clear why: “for it was he who went out and came in” (“going out and coming in” is a biblical idiom meaning “to lead,” often, as here, to lead the army).

In short, Moran’s article suggested that when the Shema said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,” it had in mind nothing like the all-out, deep-in-the-heart devotion understood by later interpreters, loving God with one’s inclination to evil as well as to good, or loving God so profoundly as to feel gratitude to Him no matter which “measuring cup” He uses to measure out one’s portion. And it certainly had nothing to do with the *unio mystica* of medieval adepts, nor yet with Spinoza’s *amor Dei intellectualis*. All the verse meant was to do God’s bidding. The point is made clear time and again in Deuteronomy: “And so, if you carefully heed My commandments, which I am commanding you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul . . .” (Deut. 11:13). **Here too, loving and serving are said in the same breath because they are essentially the same thing.** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, p. 353-355.

¹⁵ Tigay, p. 116.

- b. Mount Gerizim (the mount for the blessings) and Mount Ebal (the mount for the cursings) are mountains that face each other on the eastern approach to modern Nablus.¹⁶

7. The Laws given in Moab (The Legal Corpus) – Deut. 12.1-26.19.

Following the prologue and the preamble in Deuteronomy 5-11, Moses turns to the laws themselves. **They constitute the core of Deuteronomy** and its lengthiest section, and continue on into chapter 26. The laws begin with regulations concerning the place of worship. Evidence has been given to demonstrate that many of the changes to the religion of the people living in and around Jerusalem at the time of Josiah were connected to the theological shifts portrayed in the text of Deuteronomy by what scholars call “The Deuteronomists” or the “Deuteronomistic Historian.” **In modern biblical studies the term “Deuteronomist/s” refers to a group of authors, redactors and/or editors of part of the Bible.** The Deuteronomistic books of the Bible are generally said to be Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. When read in sequence and isolation, these books provide a complete history of Israel from Moses and the Sinai covenant to the Babylonian captivity, presented with a shared theological perspective. **These books as a collection are generally called the Deuteronomistic History.**¹⁷

Specific Negative Theological Changes Challenged by Book of Mormon First Israelite Temple Prophets¹⁸

Both Lehi and Nephi give us clues as to how their beliefs about God differed from those of the Deuteronomists. Of course, the text of the Book of Mormon never uses the phrase “The Deuteronomists,” but it does tell us that Lehi and Nephi were at odds with “the Jews” of their time and that their ideas did not completely harmonize with these people. Some of the things that the Jews of Lehi’s day¹⁹ disagreed with were:

¹⁶ The Samaritan peoples see [Mount Gerizim as the holiest place on earth](#) and the place where their temple existed until 112 BCE, as the religious rivalry between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Samaritans led the Samaritan temple to be destroyed under the order of [John Hyrcanus](#). Even after the destruction of the Samaritan temple, the site was a holy place as it is even mentioned in [John 4](#) in the exchange between the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus.

¹⁷ Hamblin, [“Vindicating Josiah,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 4 \(2013\), p. 166.](#) Hamblin takes the position that a unified theology at the time of the Deuteronomists did not exist and that the negative changes that Bible scholar Margaret Barker attributes to the 7th century Deuteronomists were actually connected to the 2nd century apostasy of the Hasmonean dynasty and their oppression of the local populace in matters of religion. Perhaps it is a combination of multiple forces, for I see the direct challenges to the Deuteronomists being addressed in the very opening of the text of the Book of Mormon. See Neal Rappleye’s arguments for this in “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellion of Laman and Lemuel,” [*Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 16 \(2015\): 87-99.](#) I work to put some of these arguments together in Mike Day, [How did Josiah change the religion of the Jewish nation?](#)

¹⁸ It is important to note that the theological beliefs of the prophets that wrote in the Book of Mormon were distinctly different from those of the Deuteronomists (both sets of redactors, those before and after the Exile) as well as those that assembled the Hebrew Bible after the Jewish return to the Holy Land following the Exile. The Book of Mormon prophets testified of a dying and rising Messiah, a God who would come to earth, be crucified, resurrected, and then draw all men unto him. See 1 Nephi 19.10.

¹⁹ At least the ones in power, as Laban seems to have been, as one of the “elders of the Jews,” see: 1 Nephi 4.22. John A. Tvedtnes has observed that “Jerusalem was a royal city and, consequently, its elders were public officials in the service of the king.” That Laban would be associated with these elders is understandable given how he is

1. Lehi's teachings about a **suffering Messiah** seem to cause the Deuteronomists anger (1 Nephi 1:19, 1 Nephi 10:1-15).
2. The Deuteronomist text stresses the idea that **God is not seen**. This is in direct conflict with Lehi's experience of **standing in the council of God** and beholding him.²⁰ (Deuteronomy 4:12, 1 Nephi 1:8-15).²¹
3. The prophecy of Jerusalem's coming destruction (1 Nephi 1:4, 18-19).²²
4. Lehi's construction of an altar outside of the Jerusalem Temple (1 Nephi 2:7).²³
5. The **visionary experiences of Lehi and Nephi** (1 Nephi 2:11).²⁴

presented in Nephi's record: as an aristocratic military official who commanded a small garrison and had access to a private "treasury" (1 Nephi 3-4). In this position, Laban would undoubtedly have had connections with Jerusalem's elites, including the city elders who could influence royal policy and oversaw both civil and religious administrative bureaucracies. See: John A. Tvedtnes, "The Elders at Jerusalem in the Days of Lehi," in *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar*, Salt Lake City, UT: Cornerstone Publishing, 1999, 59-75. See also: [Book of Mormon Central, KnoWhy #464](#), accessed 4.7.2022.

²⁰ Deuteronomy 32 was purposefully edited to take away this teaching. See: [Mike Day, Deuteronomy 32.8-9 and the Sons of God](#).

²¹ Deuteronomy reports God speaking saying, "Ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: **ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice**" (Deut. 4.11-12. Deuteronomy stressed the importance of a God that is not seen. Compare [Exodus 33.11](#), where Moses spoke to God "face to face." My literal translation of the beginning Ex. 33.11, "And spake Yahweh unto Moses **face to face**" **וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים**)

²² Seely and Woods explain, "The reforms of Josiah — in conjunction with Judah's perception of the invincibility of their city promised in the Davidic covenant and the miraculous deliverance of the city during the reign of Hezekiah — reinforced the people's belief that the great city of Jerusalem could not be destroyed." (Seely and Woods, "How Could Jerusalem 'That Great City,' be Destroyed?" in [Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem](#), p. 605.) Hezekiah, who instituted reforms similar to Josiah's about a century earlier, is Josiah's most immediate ideological forbears. Meanwhile, in the Deuteronomist history, Josiah "is depicted as a second David" and "touted as the ideal Davidic king." (Mordechai Cogan, "Into Exile: From the Assyrian Conquest of Israel to the Fall of Babylon," in [The Oxford History of the Biblical World](#), ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 342, 345.) Laman and Lemuel, "like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem," did not believe that their father's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem could ever happen.

²³ Compare this with the command to not build any sacred altars outside of the place where Yahweh "shall choose to place his name" (Deut. 12.5, 11).

²⁴ One of the accusations Laman and Lemuel make against Lehi at this time is that he was a "visionary man," who followed the "foolish imaginations of his heart" (1 Nephi 2:11; cf. 1 Nephi 5:9; 17:20). According to Kevin Christensen, the Deuteronomist ideology rejected visions as a means of knowing the Lord's will, and not only did Lehi receive visions, but some of the content of his visions specifically reflected old beliefs the Deuteronomists were trying to eradicate. (Christensen, "The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker," in [Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem](#), FARMS, 2004, p. 452-457.) Both John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper have noted that "visionary man" is an appropriate translation of the Hebrew **חֹזֶה** (*hōzeh*). Roper adds that the pejorative usage of "visionary man" by Laman and Lemuel was more than mere ridicule or name-calling — **it was actually the strong accusation that he was a false prophet**. (See John A. Tvedtnes, "A Visionary Man," in [Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s](#), ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 29-31; Matthew Roper, "Scripture Update: Lehi as a Visionary Man," *Insights* 27/4 (2007): 2-3.) Deuteronomists would have regarded a prophet like Lehi — who claimed to have seen the divine council and received the mysteries (see 1 Nephi 1:8-14) — as a false prophet. Thus Laman and Lemuel calling their father a "visionary man" would be a direct result of their acceptance of the Deuteronomistic interpretation of what a proper prophet should be. They were declaring that their father, by definition of seeing visions, should not be accepted as a true prophet. Nephi appears to counter, however, by proof-texting from

6. The **struggle over the mysteries**.²⁵ Deuteronomy, it could be argued, prohibited them. Compare [Deut. 29.29](#) with [1 Nephi 1.1](#) where Nephi openly opposes the Deuteronomistic prohibition.²⁶
7. Lehi and Nephi taught that it is **not the law that saves a person, rather it is Jesus Christ**, the Messiah, that has the power to save (1 Nephi 17:22).

Deuteronomistic Themes also Coincided with Book of Mormon Ideas. Areas where Lehi's beliefs were consistent with the Deuteronomist were:

1. Lehi's teaching did coincide with Deuteronomic teaching in that he stated that obedience brings blessings and disobedience brings cursing (Deuteronomy 28, 2 Nephi 1:20).
2. Lehi and Nephi stressed the importance of keeping the Law of Moses, yet they balanced this idea with the knowledge that it is Christ that saves us, not the law (2 Nephi 11:4, 25:24-25).
3. Both Deuteronomy and the Book of Mormon stress the use of temples.
4. Both recite past history.
5. Both have covenant renewal ceremonies.
6. Both have authors writing for their own time and for the future.
7. Both contain warnings about future destruction.
8. Both contain the idea that their discovery brings about religious reform.
9. Both are purported as lost, hidden, to be discovered at a later time.
10. Both texts are self-referential literature.²⁷

The arrangement follows this general outline:

1. The sanctuary and other related matters – Deut. 12.2-16.17.
 - a. Centralization of the Temple in Jerusalem – Deut. 12.1-13.1. **Deuteronomy 12 contains a religious reformation**²⁸ that includes the provision that sacrifices may be offered to the Lord only in a single sanctuary, one chosen by Him for

Numbers 12:6, which explicitly declares "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." Nephi, it seems, draws on this passage just before introducing his brothers' complaints, writing, "the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream" (1 Nephi 2:1). Hence, as Nephi sets up the narrative, he has already subtly refuted the charge that his father was a false prophet by the time the reader is exposed to it. See: Rappleye, [The Deuteronomist Reforms, p. 92-93](#).

²⁵ Margaret Barker has written about this subject extensively. On the survival of pre-exilic temple mysteries, see: *Older Testament; Lost Prophet; The Gate of Heaven; The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God; Hidden Tradition and the Kingdom of God; Temple Mysticism: An Introduction; The Mother of the Lord*. On New Testament Christianity as a restoration of the pre-exilic temple mysteries, see: *The Great Angel, 162-232; On Earth as it is in Heaven; Revelation; Temple Theology; Hidden Tradition, 77-130; The Secret Tradition*.

²⁶ "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and **the mysteries of God**, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days" (1 Nephi 1.1, emphasis added).

²⁷ One author writes, "Deuteronomy is an example of self-referential literature. The Book of Mormon is a book about itself as a book." [Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon](#), accessed 4.6.2022. The author continues: Deuteronomic words, phrases and allusions in the Book of Mormon include: 1. "prophet like Moses" 1 Nephi 22:20; 2. "heavens and earth bear witness" Alma 1:15, Helaman 8:24; 3. "death of Moses" Alma 45:19; 4. "commandments, statutes, judgments" 2 Nephi 5:10, 3 Nephi 25:4 citing Malachi 4:4; 5. "poor and needy" Alma 4:13, Mormon 8:37; 6. "forget the Lord" Alma 46:8, Helaman 11:36; 7. "cleave to the Lord" Helaman 4:25.

²⁸ Mike Day, [How did Josiah change the religion of the Jewish nation?](#)

that purpose. The historical narrative in 2 Kings 23 and its parallel in 2 Chronicles 34 describe how **King Josiah** (640-609 B.C.E.) enforced this law in 633 B.C.E. by **destroying all other sanctuaries** and restricting sacrifice to the Temple in Jerusalem.²⁹ Approximately a century earlier a similar reform was carried out by King Hezekiah (late eighth-early seventh century B.C.E.), though there is no indication that he, likewise, was motivated by Deuteronomy. **The law is the singular, and one of the most pervasive, of all the laws in Deuteronomy. It is also one of the most puzzling laws in the Bible.** It transferred virtually all of the important activities that were previously performed at sanctuaries throughout the country- sacrifice, festivals, rites of purification, and certain judicial activities- to the central sanctuary in the religious capital... The law must have been extraordinarily disruptive to popular religion since most of the public lived far from the Temple and could not often travel there, and would have to decrease, delay, or forgo vital services that it provided for them.³⁰

1. Destroy the Canaanite sanctuaries – Deut. 12.2-3.
 2. The single place of sacrifice, the place where “God shall choose to put his name” – Deut. 12.4-7.³¹
 3. “thither thou shalt come” means, “make pilgrimages” – Deut. 12.5.
 4. Explication of the Law of Centralization – Deut. 12.8-28.
 5. Prohibition of sacrificing elsewhere and permission for non-sacrificial slaughter – Deut. 12.13-16. “Thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates” allows for local slaughter of animals.
 6. Sacrificial food may be eaten only at the chosen place – Deut. 12.17-19.
 7. Details about secular slaughter – Deut. 12.20-25.
 8. “eat not the blood” – Deut. 12.23.
 9. Details about sacrificial slaughter – Deut. 12.26-28.
 10. Avoid Canaanite practices – Deut. 12.29-13.1.
2. Unconditional loyalty – Deut. 13.2-19.
 3. Obligation of holiness – Deut. 14.1-29.
 4. Remission of debts and manumission of slaves – Deut. 15.1-18.
 5. Sacrifice of firstlings – Deut. 15.19-23.
 6. The festival calendar – Deut. 16.1-17.
 7. Civil and religious authorities – Deut. 16.18-18.22.
 - a. The four main authorities were judges, kings, priests, and prophets.

²⁹ [Margaret Barker](#) explains, “We now recognize that King Josiah enabled a particular group to dominate the religious scene in Jerusalem about 620 BC: the Deuteronomists. **Josiah’s purge was driven by their ideals, and their scribes influenced much of the form of the Old Testament we have today**, especially the history in 1 and 2 Kings.” (Margaret Barker, “[Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion](#),” p. 71.) All of this is likely within the lifetime of Lehi, and the efforts at reform, and the social tensions they created no doubt would have continued into the reign of Zedekiah in 597 BCE.

³⁰ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1996, p. 459.

³¹ This is an interesting concept. Rather than “dwelling” in the Tabernacle, as explained in other texts where God is portrayed as anthropomorphic, (see [Exodus 25.8](#)) the temple is the place where God shall choose to cause his name to dwell. See: Deut. 6.6; 12.5, 11, 21; 14.23-24; 16.6.

- b. The law of the king, limiting his powers – Deut. 17.14-20.³²
 - c. The Levitical priesthood – Deut. 18.1-8.
 - d. The prophet – Deut. 18.9-22.
- 8. Cities of refuge – Deut. 19.1-13.
- 9. Boundary markers – Deut. 19.14.
- 10. The integrity of the judicial system - Deut. 19.15-21.
- 11. Rules for waging holy war – Deut. 20.1-20.
- 12. Atonement for unsolved murder – Deut. 21.1-9.
- 13. Miscellaneous laws, mostly civil and domestic – Deut. 21.10-25.
- 14. Two liturgical declarations – Deut. 26.1-15.
- 15. Formal conclusion: the reciprocity of the covenant – Deut. 26.16-19.
- 16. Ceremonies at Shechem upon entry to the land – Deut. 27.1-16.
- 17. The consequences of obedience or disobedience: blessings & cursings – Deut. 28.1-68.
 - a. These curses are modeled after ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties.³³

Moses' third discourse: exhortations to observe the covenant made in Moab: Deut. 29-30

- 1. The basis of the covenant – Deut. 29.1-8.

³² Deuteronomy's conception of the kingship entails an extraordinary restriction of royal authority. Whereas generally Near Eastern monarchs like Hammurabi themselves promulgated law, here the monarch is subject to the law and required to read the Torah daily (v. 19). Conventionally the monarch was assigned a crucial role in the administration of justice, serving as a court of last appeal to defend the rights of the oppressed (Ps. 72. 1-4) .. Deuteronomy remarkably denies the king any role whatsoever in justice, granting the local courts and the central sanctuary complete jurisdiction. The king is also denied his customary Near Eastern role in supervising the public cultus. This law far more emphasizes what the king may not do than what he may do. The remarkable subordination of the king to this Teaching (v. 18) Deuteronomistic Torah- thus envisions something like a constitutional monarchy. This notion exists in some tension to the views of the Deuteronomistic historian, who returns the king to his public religious function as Josiah leads the national Passover celebration (2 Kings 23.21-23), and to the royalist concerns of the Chronicler. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 405. I would add that these concerns fit in line with a second redaction of the Deuteronomist historian's work, as the Jews reflected on why they had lost Yahweh's favor, and why their temple was destroyed by Babylon. Perhaps this was a reworking of the scribes during the exile after the first form of Deuteronomy was constructed in 640 BCE. Richard Nelson places the laws restricting the king with pre-exilic interests. See: [The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The Case is Still Compelling, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 29, Issue 3, March, 2005, p. 325-26.](#) He writes, "(the pre-exilic Deuteronomistic historian) has the figure and reforms of Josiah in mind in its presentation of Joshua (Nelson 1981b). Joshua is to obey Deuteronomy's law of the king by meditating on the book of the law day and night (Deut. 17.18-19; Josh. 1.7-8). Josiah fulfills the law of the king by reading and obeying the book of the law (2 Kgs 22.16; 23.2, 24-25). According to 2 Kgs 22.2, only Josiah fulfills perfectly the command not to deviate from the law 'to the right or to the left', something that is also included in the charge laid on Joshua (Josh. 1.7; cf. Deut. 17.20). Like Josiah, Joshua conducts a covenant ceremony by reading the law to the people in accordance with Deut. 27.2-8 (Josh. 8.30-35; 2 Kgs 23.1-3). Like Josiah, Joshua observes the Passover in the proper way (Josh. 5.10-12; 2 Kgs 23.21-23).

³³ The Mosaic covenant specifies a series of blessings and curses that follow upon national obedience or disobedience to the law. These are modeled after ancient Near Eastern state treaties, in which the consequences of breach of the treaty are spelled out at its conclusion; this chapter has several close parallels to the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon (VTE), a Neo-Assyrian treaty dating to 672 BCE. The present strong disproportion between the sections devoted to blessing (vv. 1-14) and to curse (vv. 15-68) most likely reflects the actual historical experience of the Babylonian conquest, deportation, and exile of Judah (597 and 586 BCE), here recast as a prophetic warning. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 427.

2. The covenant ceremony – Deut. 29.9-20.
3. The aftermath of punishment – Deut. 29.21-27.
4. Conclusion to Moses' warning – Deut. 29.28.
5. The possibility of restoration – Deut. 30.1-10.
6. Conclusion to the summons to the covenant – Deut. 30.11-20.

Epilogue: Moses' last days: Deut. 31.1-34.12

1. Preparatory acts – Deut. 31.1-30.
 - a. Moses announces his replacement – Deut. 31.1-6.
 - b. Moses appoints Joshua – Deut. 31.7-8.
 - c. The writing and reading of the teaching – Deut. 31.9-13.
 - d. Preparations for the appointment of Joshua – Deut. 31.14-15.
 - e. God has Moses give a poem describing Israel's future apostasy and its consequences – Deut. 31.16-22.
 - f. The appointment of Joshua – Deut. 31.23.
 - g. Moses gives the teaching to the priests and assembles the people to hear the poem – Deut. 31.24-30.
2. Moses' poem – Deut. 32
 - a. Hear o heavens, let the earth hear the words I utter! – Deut. 32.1-3.
 - b. History of God's relationship with Israel – Deut. 32.4-18.
 - c. "When the Most High יי'לֵיֵן *'elyōn* divided³⁴ to the nations their inheritance, he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" – Deut. 32.8.³⁵ God's decisions – Deut. 32.19-42.

³⁴ Elyon (Hebrew: יי'לֵיֵן *'Elyōn*) is an epithet of the God of the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible. *'Ēl 'Elyōn* is usually rendered in English as "God Most High", and similarly in the Septuagint as ὁ Θεός ὁ ὑψιστος ("God the highest"). Reference is made above to *'El-Elyon*, creator of heaven and earth', where this deity is depicted as the pre-Israelite, Jebusite god of Jerusalem. *Elyon* also occurs elsewhere as a divine name or epithet a number of other times in the Old Testament (e.g. Num. 24.16; Deut. 32.8; Ps. 18.14, 46.5, 78.17, 35, 56, 82.6, 87.5; Isa. 14.14; Dan. 7.22, 25, 27). There is dispute as to whether *Elyon* was originally the same deity as El or not. Philo of Byblos (c. 100 CE) depicts *Elioun*, as he calls him, as a separate god from EL. Interestingly, he refers to *Elioun* (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10.15) as the father of Heaven (*Ouranos*) and Earth (*Ge*), which is reminiscent of the creator god El, and also strongly supports the idea that the reference to El-Elyon as 'Creator of heaven and earth' in Gen. 14. See: John Day, *Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, Sheffield Academic, 2000, p. 21.

³⁵ There is quite a bit going on in Deuteronomy 32, perhaps more than meets the eye when it is first read. First of all, it is worth noting that this text has a few variations and for good reason. Here are three versions of this text:

Dead Sea Scrolls: "When Elyon gave the nations as an inheritance, when he separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the **sons of God** (*bene elohim*). For Yahweh's portion was his people; Jacob was the lot of his inheritance."

Septuagint (LXX): "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the **angels of God** (*aggelōn theou*). And his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, Israel was the line of his inheritance."

Masoretic Text (MT): "When Elyon gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the **sons of Israel** (*bene yisrael*). For Yahweh's portion was his people, Jacob was the lot of his inheritance."

- i. God's decision to punish Israel – Deut. 32.19-25.
 - ii. God's decision to limit Israel's punishment and to punish the enemy – Deut. 32.26-42.
- d. A celebration of God's deliverance of Israel – Deut. 32.43.
- e. Conclusion to the poem – Deut. 32.44-52.
 - i. Moses' final exhortation to observe the teaching – Deut. 32.45-47.
 - ii. God summons Moses to his "death" – Deut. 32.48-52.
- 3. Moses' farewell blessings of Israel: Deut. 33.1-29.
 - 1. Tribal blessings – Deut. 33.6-25.
 - a. Reuben – Deut. 33.6.
 - b. Judah – Deut. 33.7.
 - c. Levi – Deut. 33.8-11.
 - d. Benjamin – Deut. 33.12.
 - e. Joseph – Deut. 33.13-17.
 - f. Zebulun and Issachar – Deut. 33.18-19.
 - g. Gad – Deut. 33.20-21.
 - h. Dan – Deut. 33.22.
 - i. Naphtali – Deut. 33.23.
 - j. Asher – Deut. 33.24-25.
 - 4. The "Death" of Moses: Deut. 34.1-12.³⁶
 - 1. Moses ascends Mount Nebo and sees the Promised Land – Deut. 34.1-4.
 - 2. Moses' "death and burial" – Deut. 34.5-7.³⁷

Mark Smith, in his book [The Origins of Biblical Monotheism](#), works to illustrate that the Semitic peoples of the times that the Old Testament books were written believed in a pantheon of gods, a concept which is foreign to modern readers... Later redactors of Old Testament texts were uncomfortable with the polytheistic nature of earlier Hebrew texts. Deuteronomy 32:8-9 is a text which emphasizes the idea that a council of divine beings existed, with tiers or rankings of these divine beings. As Smith asserts:

The traditional Hebrew text (Masoretic Text, or MT) perhaps reflects a discomfort with this polytheistic theology of Israel, for it shows not "divine sons" (*bene elohim*), as in the Greek and the Dead Sea Scrolls, but "sons of Israel" (*bene yisrael*). Emanuel Tov labels the MT text here an "anti-polytheistic alteration." The texts of the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls show Israelite polytheism which focuses on the central importance of Yahweh for Israel within the larger scheme of the world; yet this larger scheme provides a place for the other gods of the other nations in the world. See: Mark Smith, [The Origins of Biblical Monotheism](#), Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 45-46. See also: Emanuel Tov, [Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible](#), Fortress Press, 2011, 269. Tov regards the change of *bene Elohim*, "divine beings," in Psalm 29:1 to *misphehot ammim*, "families of the people," in Psalm 96:7 as another example of such an "anti-polytheistic alteration." See also: Mike Day, [Deuteronomy 32:8-9 and the Sons of God](#)

³⁶ The enigmatic passage in Deuteronomy about the death of Moses gave rise to numerous Jewish and Samaritan stories. These have been the object of research by many scholars during the last century. "The death of Moses," writes Samuel Loewenstamm, "occupied the mind of apocryphal and midrashic writers unceasingly. They never tired of seeking new and innovative ways to understand it. See: Samuel Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," in [Studies in the Testament of Moses](#), ed. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., Society of Biblical Literature, 1973, 185.

³⁷ After many years of preaching to the people of Nephi, the prophet Alma counseled with his sons, prophesied about the future, and blessed the Church. After reporting these details, Mormon notes the peculiar circumstances regarding Alma's disappearance: "And when Alma had done this he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to

3. The people mourn and Joshua succeeds Moses – Deut. 34.8-9.
4. Praise for Moses' prophetic leadership – Deut. 34.10-12.

go into the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of" ([Alma 45.18](#)). Mormon then gives the following explanation:

Behold, this we know, that [Alma] was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. But behold, the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial. ([Alma 45.19](#))

The description of Moses being "buried by the hand of the Lord" seems to be a reference to the account in Deuteronomy which reads,

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day ([Deuteronomy 34.5–6](#)).

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, tells us that Moses ascended:

"Now as soon as they were come to the mountain called Abarim (which is a very high mountain, situated over against Jericho and one that affords to such as are upon it, a prospect of the greater part of the excellent land of Canaan), he dismissed the senate: and as he was going to embrace Eleazar and Joshua, and was still discoursing with them, a cloud stood over him on the sudden, and he disappeared in a certain valley, although he wrote in the holy books that he died, which was done out of fear lest they should venture to say that, because of this extraordinary virtue, he went to God." Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 4, Chapter 8, verse 48, in *The Works of Josephus*, ed. and trans. William Winston (Hendrickson: 1980), 115.

A Samaritan text, the *Memar Marqah*, relates that when Moses ascended the mount that he was surrounded by clouds and angels, and subsequently given an expansive vision of the earth and the future: "How great the hour at which the great prophet Moses stood on the top of Mount Nebo, and all the heavenly angels were doing him honour there. His Lord exalted him and He unveiled the light of his eyes and showed him the four quarters of the world. Great was the joy that was in Moses' heart when He revealed to him the sequel to the Day of Vengeance, so that he did not fear death. **Great was the joy that abode in Moses' heart when he saw the angels standing about him, on his right and on his left, behind and before him.** The great Glory took him by his right hand, embracing him and walking before him. **The great Glory took him by his right hand, embracing him** and walking before him. The great prophet Moses raised his eyes and saw Mount Gerizim. He prostrated and went down on his face; when he arose from his prostration he saw the entrance to the Cave opened before him. When he saw the mouth of the Cave opened, he wept for mankind and praised Him to whom belonged everlasting life. Great was that moment when the great prophet Moses lowered his head and entered the Cave. He turned his face toward Mount Gerizim and lay down on the ground, looking straight in front of him. **God made a sleep to fall upon him** and his soul departed without difficulty without him knowing." See: John Macdonald, ed. and trans., *Memar Marqah: The Teaching of Marqah* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1963), 2:206. From this text, I see a combination of death and the taking of Moses into heaven in an apotheosis, a rising up towards God, similar to the ending lines of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, [lines 1585-1666](#). For more on this topic, see: [Book of Mormon Evidence: Translation of Moses, Evidence Central](#), accessed 4.7.2022.