
ABINADI ON THE FATHER AND THE SON: INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

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An important part of drawing nearer to God is coming to know and understand Him through the scriptures He has given us (see John 5:39; Jacob 4:8)—especially the Book of Mormon, since it contains many plain and precious truths missing from our current Bible. Although most Book of Mormon passages are easy to understand, some are more difficult, such as Abinadi’s teachings about the Father and the Son in Mosiah 15:2–5. Yet Mormon’s inclusion of these words in his abridgment suggests that the Lord wants us to have these teachings and wants us to understand them.¹ Accordingly, many have written about *what* Abinadi taught—that Jesus Christ is the Father and the Son—and have provided valuable insights and explanations.² In these discussions, however, a satisfactory explanation of *why* Abinadi spoke this way appears to be unaddressed.³ Abinadi’s teachings can help us know God better and thereby draw nearer to Him if we (1) correctly interpret the *why* and *what* of his message and (2) apply his teachings in our study of the scriptures.

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INTERPRETATION: WHY AND WHAT

Abinadi was brought before King Noah because he had prophesied of the Nephites' forthcoming bondage and destruction (see Mosiah 11:20–25; 12:1–9). After some initial questioning, King Noah ordered his priests to slay Abinadi (see Mosiah 12:18–13:1), but he was protected by divine power and spoke “with power and authority from God” (Mosiah 13:6). In this setting, Abinadi taught the true meaning of the law of Moses, quoted Isaiah 53, and then spoke about the Father and the Son.

Abinadi taught about Jesus Christ as the Father and the Son immediately after quoting the entire chapter of Isaiah 53 (see Mosiah 14). This sequence is significant. Abinadi declared that Moses prophesied “concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people” and that “even all the prophets . . . [have] spoken more or less concerning these things” (Mosiah 13:33). Furthermore, he stated, “Have [the prophets] not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?” (Mosiah 13:34–35).

Abinadi, on trial for his life, then turned to Isaiah 53 to prove his words (see Mosiah 14:1). Isaiah 53 declares that the Messiah would be “despised and rejected of men” (v. 3) and “wounded for our transgressions” (v. 5), and even though He would be “cut off out of the land of the living” (v. 8), He would “prolong his days” (v. 10). Certainly, quoting Isaiah was a powerful defense and second witness of Abinadi's assertions that the Messiah would be oppressed and afflicted and would bring about the Resurrection. Yet what about Abinadi's statement that God Himself would come down among men as the Messiah? Does Isaiah 53 support this doctrine? Let us turn to the Hebrew behind Isaiah's prophecy to answer this important question and uncover why Abinadi next spoke of Jesus Christ as the Father and the Son.

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible regularly reads “the LORD” or “GOD” (small caps) where the Hebrew reads “Jehovah.”⁴ If we identify Jehovah and the Messiah in Isaiah 53 where indicated by

the Hebrew or the appropriate pronoun, we find that “the LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on him [the Messiah] the iniquities of us all” (v. 6), that “it pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise him [the Messiah],” that “he [Jehovah] hath put him [the Messiah] to grief,” and that “the pleasure of the LORD [Jehovah] shall prosper in his [the Messiah’s] hand” (v. 10).

In light of the context and the meaning of the words in Hebrew, these verses actually appear to contradict Abinadi’s statement that God Himself, the great Jehovah, will come down to redeem His people. The text reads as if Jehovah and the Messiah are two different individuals— as if Jehovah will *send* the Messiah but not that He will *be* the Messiah.⁵

This apparent contradiction is the key to understanding Abinadi’s subsequent teachings.⁶ Immediately after quoting Isaiah 53, Abinadi declares again that “God himself shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 15:1), evidently to ensure his audience understands that Jehovah Himself will come down as the Messiah. In fact, it appears that Abinadi specifically taught about “the Father” and “the Son” after quoting Isaiah 53 to explain how Jehovah and the Messiah are actually the same person.⁷

To interpret Abinadi’s teachings, we first need to review the ways Jesus Christ is properly referred to as “the Father.” From an official statement by the First Presidency and the Twelve,⁸ we understand that Jesus is (1) the Father as the Creator of all things, (2) the Father of mankind’s spiritual rebirth, and (3) the Father when acting for Elohim⁹ by divine investiture of authority. Significantly, all three of these reasons why Jesus is the Father can be identified in Abinadi’s message: (1) Jesus is the Creator, “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” (Mosiah 15:4); (2) Jesus is the Father of His seed, or posterity, begotten through the Atonement (see Mosiah 15:10–13); and (3) Jehovah speaks as Elohim in Isaiah 53 by divine investiture of authority (see vv. 6, 10). In addition, some have understood that Abinadi taught of Jesus as the Father in yet another way—that He inherited Elohim’s attributes and capacities so He could perform the Atonement.¹⁰

The common theme for all of these senses in which Jesus is the Father is that they are directly tied to His status as God. It is because Jesus is God that He is the Father of heaven and earth. It is because

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Jesus was God while in the flesh that He was able to perform the Atonement (see D&C 19:15–20) and become the Father of those who are spiritually reborn. It is because Jesus is God that He is the Father, representing Elohim by divine investiture of authority. Therefore, we will interpret Abinadi's teachings as an explanation that Jehovah and the Messiah are the same person because Jesus acted in His role of *Father* as Jehovah (God)" and in His role of *Son* as Christ (Messiah).

Abinadi begins his explanation by reinforcing his earlier statement that Jehovah will come to earth: "I would that ye should understand that God himself [Jehovah] shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people" (Mosiah 15:1). Then he explains that Jehovah will subject His mortal flesh as Christ to His divine will as Jehovah. He says, "And because he [Jehovah] dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God [Christ], and having subjected the flesh [Christ] to the will of the Father [Jehovah], being the Father [Jehovah] and the Son [Christ]" (v. 2).

Next he explains that Jehovah will come to earth and maintain His status as Father, or God, because He will be begotten by Elohim, but He will also be Christ, or Son, because of the mortal flesh He will inherit from Mary. Therefore, Jesus is "the Father [Jehovah], because he was conceived by the power of God [Elohim]; and the Son [Christ], because of the flesh [mortality inherited from Mary]; thus becoming the Father and the Son [Jehovah and Christ]—And they [Jehovah the Father and Christ the Son] are one God [Jehovah-Christ], yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth" (vv. 3–4).

Now Abinadi returns to the idea that Jesus will subject His mortal flesh to His divine spirit: "And thus the flesh [Christ] becoming subject to the Spirit [Jehovah], or the Son [Christ] to the Father [Jehovah], being one God [Jehovah-Christ], suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his own people" (v. 5).

Abinadi emphatically finishes his message about Jesus as the Father and the Son by declaring that Isaiah's prophecy of the Atonement will be fulfilled: "After working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he [Jehovah-Christ] shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so

he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh [Christ] becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son [Christ] being swallowed up in the will of the Father [Jehovah]. And thus God [Jehovah] breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son [Christ] power to make intercession for the children of men” (Mosiah 15:6–8).¹² Truly, Abinadi’s teachings are both profound and powerful, and they directly support one of the major purposes of the Book of Mormon—to convince all that Jesus is “the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD” (title page), or in other words, both Jehovah and the Messiah.

APPLICATION: OUR SCRIPTURE STUDY

Now that we have explored an interpretation of Abinadi’s teachings, how can we benefit from understanding and applying it in our study of the scriptures? First, Abinadi’s teachings can strengthen our faith in God. Scripture study should build faith, leading us to eternal life by increasing our knowledge of God (see John 17:3). Instead of being confused or troubled, we can identify when the scriptures are speaking of Jesus’s dual roles as the Father and the Son. Second, making the effort to apply Abinadi’s teachings to other scriptures can deepen our comprehension of the doctrine he taught.

Similar Old Testament Passages

In addition to clarifying the meaning of Isaiah 53, Abinadi gave us a necessary key to interpret many other potentially confusing Old Testament passages. The table below contains a few examples of applying Abinadi’s teachings, focusing on instances where cross-references in the New Testament or latter-day scripture make it appear that Jehovah and Christ are two different persons.¹³

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGE	CROSS-REFERENCE
The LORD thy God [Jehovah the Father] will raise up unto thee a Prophet [Christ the Son] from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like	Behold, I [Jesus] am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet [Christ] shall the Lord your God [Jehovah] raise up unto you of your

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OLD TESTAMENT
PASSAGE

CROSS-REFERENCE

unto me [Moses]; unto him ye shall hearken. (Deuteronomy 18:15)

I will declare the decree: the LORD [Jehovah the Father] hath said unto me [Christ the Son], Thou [Christ the Son] art my [Jehovah the Father's] Son; this day have I [Jehovah the Father] begotten thee [Christ the Son]. (Psalm 2:7)

The LORD [Jehovah the Father] said unto my Lord [Christ the Son], Sit thou at my right hand, until I [Jehovah the Father] make thine [Christ the Son's] enemies thy footstool. (Psalm 110:1)

The LORD [Jehovah the Father] hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou [Christ the Son] art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110:4)

And the spirit of the LORD [Jehovah the Father] shall rest upon him [Christ the Son] . . . the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD [Jehovah the Father]; and shall make him [Christ the Son] of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD [Jehovah the Father]. (Isaiah 11:2-3)

brethren, like unto me [Moses]; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. (3 Nephi 20:23)

And we declare . . . that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God [Elohim] hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou [Christ] are my [Elohim's] Son, this day have I [Elohim] begotten thee [Christ]. (Acts 13:32-33)

For David . . . saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God [Elohim] hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:34-36)

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he [Elohim] that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he [Elohim] saith also in another place, Thou [Christ] art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (Hebrews 5:5-6)

Who is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. (D&C 113:1-2)

 OLD TESTAMENT
PASSAGE

The Spirit of the Lord GOD [Jehovah the Father] is upon me [Christ the Son]; because the LORD [Jehovah the Father] hath anointed me [Christ the Son] to preach good tidings unto the meek; he [Jehovah the Father] hath sent me [Christ the Son] to bind up the brokenhearted. (Isaiah 61:1)

 CROSS-REFERENCE

And when he [Jesus] had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, [Isaiah 61:1–2a quoted]. . . . And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:17, 21)

Jesus Teaches during His Mortal Ministry

Two fascinating comparisons to Abinadi's teachings are found in the New Testament. The first example is the King James Version record of Jesus saying that "no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (Luke 10:22). Interestingly, the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of this verse reads, "No man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it." It is as if the JST reveals the doctrine hinted at in the KJV. In at least one sense, "the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son" because Jesus is both Jehovah and Christ. Truly, no one knows that Jesus is the Father and the Son except by revelation, the kind of revelation received and taught by Abinadi.

The second New Testament example comes from the setting of the Last Supper. Jesus said to His Apostles, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:7). Philip then asked to be shown the Father, and Jesus responded, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Here "the Father" could refer to Elohim, but it may also refer to Jehovah. To see Jesus is to see the Father because He is Jehovah the Father, acting for and representing Elohim.

The Brother of Jared Sees Jehovah

The brother of Jared saw God in a way others previously had not (see Ether 3:15). In this setting, Jehovah revealed Himself by saying,

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son” (Ether 3:14). Here “the Father” is understood to mean Jesus as the Father of mankind’s spiritual rebirth since He next said that those who believe “shall become my sons and my daughters” (v. 14). Even so, Jesus may also be identifying Himself as both Jehovah and Christ. Jehovah’s name is “I am” (see Exodus 3:14), and this phrase is found three times in verse 14. Significantly, “I am” is emphasized in connection with Jesus being the Father in a revelation referring to the experience of the brother of Jared. Jesus says, “I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am [Jehovah]; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father [Jehovah], I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world” (Ether 4:12). Certainly “the Father” who sent Christ is Elohim, but in light of Abinadi’s teachings, Jesus may also be referring to Himself as Jehovah who sent Christ.

Nephi Sees the Condescension of God

When the angel asks Nephi if he knows the “condescension of God” (1 Nephi 11:16), it is generally assumed that “God” here refers to Elohim because we read that the virgin whom Nephi saw was “the mother of the Son of God” (1 Nephi 11:18). Consequently, verses 16–25 are traditionally interpreted as referring to the condescension of God the Father and verses 26–33 as referring to the condescension of God the Son.¹⁴ Another possibility is that Nephi’s vision was focused on the condescension of Jehovah. This is suggested by three important readings, all found in the original manuscript, the unedited printer’s manuscript, and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In these texts, we read that the angel called Mary “the mother of God” (instead of “the mother of the Son of God”; v. 18), that the angel called Jesus “the Eternal Father” (instead of “the Son of the Eternal Father”; v. 21), and that Nephi saw Jesus as “the Everlasting God” (instead of “the Son of the everlasting God”; v. 32) being judged by the world.¹⁵ The manuscripts and 1830 edition speak of Jesus as both Jehovah (“God,” “Eternal Father,” “Everlasting God”) and Christ (“Son of the Most High God,” “Son of God,” “Lamb of God”), similar to and consistent with the teachings of Abinadi and the angel who visited King Benjamin.¹⁶ Thus,

it is possible that the “condescension of God” Nephi was shown was actually the condescension of Jehovah.

Nephi Receives Revelation the Night before Jesus’s Birth

The words of Jehovah came to Nephi the night before His birth, saying, “Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh” (3 Nephi 1:14). At first this revelation may seem confusing, but when we apply Abinadi’s teachings, it becomes clear and takes on added meaning: “Behold, I [Jehovah] come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I [Jehovah] have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father [Jehovah] and of the Son [Christ]—of the Father because of me [Jehovah], and of the Son because of my flesh [Christ].” While the two occurrences of “the Father” in this verse can be interpreted as references to Elohim, the wording “of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh” suggests Jesus was identifying His roles as Jehovah the Father and Christ the Son, using language very similar to Abinadi’s.

Jesus Teaches the Nephites

An examination of how Jesus quoted the Old Testament when He visited the Nephites also yields insights related to Abinadi’s teachings. To see this, two verses from Isaiah that Jesus quoted twice are compared in the following table:

OLD TESTAMENT	JESUS’S FIRST QUOTATION	JESUS’S SECOND QUOTATION
Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD [Jehovah] hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD [Jehovah]	Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord [Jehovah] hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord [Jehovah] hath made	Then shall they break forth into joy— Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Father

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hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:9–10)	bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salva- tion of God. (3 Nephi 16:19–20)	hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one. (3 Nephi 20:34–35)
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Analysis of the table reveals that the first time Jesus quoted Isaiah, the verses were essentially the same as found in our current Old Testament, suggesting that our current Hebrew text is accurate. However, the second time that Jesus quoted Isaiah He substituted “the Father” where the Hebrew identifies “Jehovah.” This is also true for some other Old Testament passages that Jesus quoted,¹⁷ and we find that He described Jehovah’s revelation to Malachi as having come from “the Father” (3 Nephi 24:1). It appears that Jesus wanted His listeners to understand why He substituted “the Father” for “Jehovah” because after doing so, He added the profound statement, “And the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 20:35).

We can interpret Jesus’s declaration to mean “the Father [Elohim] and I [Jehovah] are one [because I am Jehovah the Father, acting for and representing Elohim].” In addition, since Jesus specifically equated “Jehovah” with “the Father,” another meaning could be “the Father [Jehovah] and I [Christ] are one [the same person]” (see also D&C 93:3–4 and associated discussion below for more support of this).

Revelation to Joseph Smith

In a profound revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jesus promised that “every soul” who complies with certain conditions “shall see my face and know that I am” (D&C 93:1; see also D&C 67:10). Here again is emphasis on Jehovah’s name “I am,” and we read that whoever sees Him will know “that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one” (D&C 93:3). While “the Father” here is understood to mean Elohim, there also appears to be reference to Jehovah, as evidenced by the wording of the next verse: “The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle” (D&C 93:4). Here “the Father”

refers to Jesus and is similar to what Abinadi taught. Jesus is the Father because “he [Elohim] gave me [Jehovah] of his fulness” and the Son because “I [Jehovah] was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle [as Christ].” Significantly, this revelation expands on Abinadi’s teachings by explaining that Jesus is the Father *because* He and His Father are one. In fact, the concepts that Jesus is the Father and that Jesus is one with His Father are really two expressions of the same doctrine.

CONCLUSION

Abinadi’s teachings concerning the Father and the Son in Mosiah 15:2–5 can best be understood when interpreted in their context. Abinadi quoted Isaiah 53, but it seems to contradict his own statement that God Himself, the great Jehovah, would come to earth as the Messiah. It appears that Abinadi’s purpose for explaining how Jesus is both the Father and the Son was to show that Jehovah and Christ are the same person. Application of this doctrine can help us understand potentially confusing scriptures, such as those that represent Jehovah and the Messiah as two different persons. In addition, we can discover insights into other scriptures that speak of Jesus’s dual roles as the Father and the Son. By correctly interpreting Abinadi’s teachings and applying them in our study of the scriptures, we can better understand God and His word, thereby drawing nearer to Him.

NOTES

1. “The Holy Scriptures—all of them, both ancient and modern—speak of many things that are hard to understand without an over-all knowledge of the plan of salvation and without the enlightening power of the Holy Ghost. . . . We cannot brush [these teachings] aside as though they were an unnecessary part of revealed writ. The mere fact that the Lord has preserved them for us in the scriptures is a sufficient witness that he expects us to ponder their deep and hidden meanings so that we shall be as fully informed about his eternal laws as were the saints of old” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 6, 8).

2. For example, see George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Philip C. Reynolds (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955–61), 2:164–71; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:29; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel*

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Questions (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957–66), 4:177–80; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 92–95; Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 301–9, 528–30; Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 227–28; Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 183–86; McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 369–73; Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 207–8; Rodney Turner, “Two Prophets: Abinadi and Alma,” in *Studies in Scripture: Volume Seven, 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 240–60; Joseph F. McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92), 2:225–30; Robert L. Millet, “The Ministry of the Father and the Son,” in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 44–72; Monte S. Nyman, “Abinadi’s Commentary on Isaiah,” in *Mosiah: Salvation Only through Christ*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 161–86; John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon,” in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: 1991 Sperry Symposium on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 230–31; Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.v. “Jesus Christ, Fatherhood and Sonship of”; Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 179–93; Paul Y. Hoskisson, “The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement,” *Religious Educator* 1 (Spring 2000): 71–80; Andrew C. Skinner, “Jesus Christ as the Father in the Book of Mormon,” in *The Fulness of the Gospel: Foundational Teachings from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 144–46; Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), s.v. “Jesus Christ, role of, as Father and Son.”

3. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s comment concerning one of Jesus’s parables applies here: “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable? . . . To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 276–77).

4. The Hebrew actually reads *YHWH*, which is the proper name of the God of Israel. Thought to have been pronounced “Yahweh” anciently, the Jews would not speak this sacred name aloud but would substitute the Hebrew word *’Adonai*, a plural first person possessive form understood to mean “Lord.” When vowels were added to the Hebrew text during the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., *YHWH* was given the vowels of *’Adonai* to remind the reader of the necessary substitution, but this also produced an impossible Hebrew word (see J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959], 23). The English pronunciation “Jehovah” comes from *YHWH* with the vowels of *’Adonai* and was apparently first introduced in A.D. 1520, although it was disputed as grammatically and historically incorrect (see Francis Brown, Stephen R. Driver,

and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000], 218). Even so, “Jehovah” is the way *YHWH* was rendered by the KJV translators, and it became the common English way to pronounce the name of the God of Israel. Evidently, this usage is acceptable to the Lord since “Jehovah” is found in all the standard works, the Joseph Smith Translation, and the teachings of latter-day prophets. Therefore, “Jehovah” is the rendering used in this paper for the Hebrew *YHWH*.

5. The English “Messiah” (from the Hebrew *mashiach*) and “Christ” (from the Greek *christos*) are synonyms, both meaning “anointed one.” “In the preserved Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), however, the noun *mashiach* is never explicitly used as a title for Jehovah (the premortal Jesus). . . . Because the term *mashiach* is not clearly preserved as a title for Jehovah in the Hebrew Bible nor in the minimal corpus of Israelite inscriptions, it is not possible to determine how many Israelites in Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah and Lehi (about 600 B.C.) knew or believed that Jehovah himself would come to earth as the anointed Son of God, the Messiah” (Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, s.v. “Messiah”).

6. While almost all the scriptures and teachings of latter-day prophets identify Jehovah as Jesus Christ, some may take the position that Jehovah also refers to Jesus’s Father. This subject is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note that if references to Jehovah in Isaiah 53 were to Jesus’s Father, this would actually add to the apparent contradiction between Abinadi’s statement and Isaiah’s prophecy. In this paper it is assumed that Jehovah refers exclusively to Jesus Christ.

It may be that the legal allegation brought against Abinadi was that he contradicted the scriptures in declaring that Jehovah would come down to earth as the Messiah. King Noah said, “Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death. For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death” (Mosiah 17:7–8; see also Mosiah 7:27–28).

7. The approach taken here assumes that Abinadi knew Isaiah’s writings spoke of Jehovah and the Messiah as if they are two different individuals and that he anticipated this same understanding by his audience. While this assumption cannot be proven, it is consistent with the text. We know there was a written copy of at least some of the information on the brass plates among Noah’s people and that this was available to both Noah’s priests and Abinadi (see Mosiah 12:20–24, 27–28; 13:11). Since the brass plates were written in the “language of the Egyptians” (Mosiah 1:4), the texts available to Noah’s people may have been written in some form of Egyptian or translated and written in some form of Hebrew, or perhaps something else. In any case, the representation of Jehovah and the Messiah as two different persons in Isaiah 53 is evident to the careful reader, regardless of the language of the text. In addition, since the translation of the Book of Mormon follows the customs of the KJV, it is reasonable to assume that the content of the Isaiah text Abinadi quoted was essentially equivalent to our current Hebrew text where the wording of Mosiah 14 agrees with KJV Isaiah 53.

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Therefore, the lack of information about the language of the written texts available to Abinadi and the priests does not detract from an appeal to the Hebrew where Jehovah is clearly identified in Isaiah's writings.

8. See the doctrinal exposition on "The Father and the Son," in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 5:24-34.

9. Following the current practice in the Church, "Elohim" is used in this paper exclusively to refer to God the Father, meaning the Father of Jesus Christ. It is important to note that 'Elohim, a plural Hebrew form, is used in several ways in our current Hebrew Bible (see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 43-44). These uses include: (1) as a generic title for God, most often referring to Jehovah as God (for example, replace "God" with "Elohim" and "the LORD" with "Jehovah" in Exodus 3:4-14); (2) in reference to false "gods" (see Exodus 12:12); (3) in combination with YHWH (the English phrase "the LORD God" is "Jehovah Elohim" in Hebrew); and (4) rarely to refer to mortals (see Psalm 82:6) or judges who represent God (see Exodus 21:6; 22:8-9).

10. See Millet, "The Ministry of the Father and the Son," 62-65; McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 2:229; Hoskisson, "The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement," 71-80; Skinner, "Jesus Christ as the Father in the Book of Mormon," 144-46; Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, s.v. "Jesus Christ, role of, as Father and Son."

11. For scriptures that describe Jehovah as Father, see Exodus 4:22-23; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Isaiah 9:6; 63:16; Jeremiah 31:9.

12. "Begotten of an immortal Father and a mortal mother, Jesus possessed *two natures* (one divine, one human) and, therefore, *two wills* (that of the Father, and that of the Son). . . . Abinadi described Jesus' submission as 'the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.' (Mosiah 15:7; see also Luke 22:42; 3 Nephi 11:11.) In a sense, it was not the Son *as* Son, but the Father *in* the Son who atoned. That is, Jesus not only did the will of his Father *in heaven*, but the will of the Father *in himself*. The Father and the Son—being 'one God'—came to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. 'God himself'—in perfect unity—atoned for the sins of the world" (Turner, "Two Prophets: Abinadi and Alma," 245-46).

The interpretation of "God," "Father," and "Spirit" in Mosiah 15:6-8 as identifications of Jehovah is not intended to be restrictive. Since Jesus as the Father represents Elohim in all things, it is also correct to associate certain occurrences of "Father" in these verses with Elohim.

13. There is no revealed explanation as to why various Old Testament scriptures speak of Jehovah and Christ as two different individuals. However, we do know that at Mount Sinai, the Israelites rejected the higher priesthood and law (see Joseph Smith Translation; Exodus 34:1-2; D&C 84:19-25), and specifically asked that God not speak directly to them (see Exodus 20:18-19). Jehovah agreed to this request and said He would raise up a prophet among them instead (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Since Israel did not want to hear directly from Jehovah, apparently He chose to come among them disguised as the Messiah. Perhaps this is part of the "plainness" God took away from His "stiffnecked people" (Jacob

4:14) but that He revealed to those who held the higher priesthood, such as the righteous in the Americas (see Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, s.v. “Priesthood among the Nephites”).

Abinadi’s teachings also help us to understand the many instances where New Testament or latter-day scriptures speak of Elohim the way the Old Testament speaks of Jehovah (compare Exodus 3:15 to Acts 3:13; Exodus 20:2–3 to 1 Corinthians 8:5–6; Deuteronomy 4:35 to John 17:3; Deuteronomy 6:4–5 to D&C 59:5; and Psalm 16:8–10 to Acts 13:35–37).

14. For example, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 155; McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 1:77–85; Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, s.v. “Condescension of God.”

15. Joseph Smith made these changes when he revised the printer’s manuscript for the second (1837) edition of the Book of Mormon. The most probable explanation is that the original readings are an accurate account of the angel’s words and Nephi’s understanding of what he saw but that the Prophet changed the text to avoid a misinterpretation. If this is correct, the additions of “the Son of” can be thought of as clarifications rather than the primary readings (see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1* [Provo, UT: FARMS, Brigham Young University, 2004], 4:230–33).

16. Assuming “the Lord” is equivalent to “Jehovah,” the angel who visited King Benjamin specifically identified Jehovah as Christ at least five times (see Mosiah 3:5–8, 12, 17, 18, 19).

17. Compare Micah 5:10 to 3 Nephi 21:14–16 and Isaiah 52:12 to 3 Nephi 21:29.