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CAPTIVITY AND LIBERTY IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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THE CONTRAST OF CAPTIVITY AND LIBERTY is a common theme in the Book of Mormon. Significantly, the Hebrew terms behind words like *deliverance* and *redemption* are used in the Bible as both sociopolitical and religious terms,¹ and the Lord is said to deliver people from both their mortal enemies and the devil. The dual application of these terms to the condition of human beings makes it possible for Book of Mormon writers to liken temporal captivity and liberty to spiritual captivity and rescue. This, in part, explains the Nephite record keepers' emphasis on the cyclical nature of their history and teaches that disobedience brings captivity while obedience brings freedom.

Lehi prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that many of its inhabitants would be carried away captive into Babylon (see 1 Nephi 1:13). Lehi's son Nephi also wrote that "the day must surely come that they must be destroyed, save a few only, who shall be led away into captivity. Wherefore, the Lord commanded my

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father that he should depart into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 17:43–44).

The Lord’s deliverance of Lehi and his family from the coming Babylonian invasion resembles the deliverance of the Israelites from captivity at the time of Moses. Nephi admonished his brothers, “Let us be strong like unto Moses; . . . the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 4:2–3; see also 17:23–25; 19:10). Nephi also prophesied that the Lord would “bring [Israel] again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel” (1 Nephi 22:12).

Of those whom the Lord would bring to the New World, Lehi prophesied that “if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever” (2 Nephi 1:7).²

Lehi was the first Book of Mormon prophet to tie the captivity and deliverance of Judah to the coming of the Messiah, saying, “That after they should be destroyed, even that great city Jerusalem, and many be carried away captive into Babylon, according to the own due time of the Lord, they should return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance. Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:3–4).

Lehi cited a prophecy of his ancestor Joseph to the effect that “the Messiah should be made manifest unto [his posterity] in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom” (2 Nephi 3:5).

NEPHI'S VISION OF CAPTIVITY AND DELIVERANCE

Nephi's use of the captivity theme resembles his father's because they shared a common revelatory experience. When Nephi asked the Lord to confirm his father's vision of the tree of life, the Lord responded by sending an angel who explained the vision and showed him many other things regarding the future of Lehi's posterity and others who would interact with them. The angel told him of an abominable church "which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity" (1 Nephi 13:5; see also 13:9).

As the vision progressed, Nephi saw Gentiles who "went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters" (1 Nephi 13:13; see also 13:16, 19, 29) and came to the New World. He learned that these "Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity" possessed a book (the Bible) from which parts had been removed, causing them to "stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them" (1 Nephi 13:29; see also 13:30). He wrote of "the captivity of the devil" (1 Nephi 14:4), tied to the "great and abominable church, which was founded by the devil and his children" (1 Nephi 14:3). The Lord will rescue people from this church after which "they shall be no more brought down into captivity" (1 Nephi 14:2).

"For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken" (1 Nephi 14:7).

CAPTIVITY OF THE DEVIL

Near the end of his life, Lehi expressed a fear that his own posterity might be "led according to the will and captivity of the devil" (2 Nephi 1:18) and gave them instructions "that [they] may not

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come down into captivity” (2 Nephi 1:21). He noted that because of the Atonement, “men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Jacob, another of Lehi’s sons, took up the theme of deliverance from the devil’s captivity: “O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

“And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

“And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel. O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel!” (2 Nephi 9:10–12).

Lehi and his sons may have borrowed the concept from Isaiah 5:13–14, which is quoted in 2 Nephi 15:13–14: “Therefore, my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.”

Mormon similarly wrote of the captivity of the devil, saying that “the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell” (Alma 30:60).

Speaking of the wicked, Alma told his son Corianton that “the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of

their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil. Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness” (Alma 40:13–14). On the other hand, the righteous “are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness” (Alma 41:7). Alma cautioned his son, “Suffer not the devil to lead away your heart” (Alma 39:11).

Amulek, who served as Alma’s missionary companion in the wicked city of Ammonihah, warned the people to repent while in mortality, after which “cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.” He warned the unrepentant that the “same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.

“For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked” (Alma 34:33–35).³

WICKED KINGS AND CAPTIVITY

The Book of Mormon also notes that captivity sometimes resulted from the wickedness of kings.⁴ Alma fled the city of Lehi-Nephi with his converts and settled in a city they named Helam. When the people besought him to be their king,⁵ Alma reminded them that he had been “caught in a snare” of iniquity (Mosiah 23:9). He described the situation they had fled, saying that they had “been oppressed by king Noah, and [had] been in bondage to him and his priests, and [had] been brought into iniquity by them; therefore ye were bound with the bands of iniquity. And now as ye have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you” (Mosiah 23:12–13).

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Alma stressed the captivity brought by sin by using the term “bands” or “bonds of iniquity” here and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 27:29; Alma 41:11), and Mormon later borrowed the term (see Mormon 8:31; Moroni 8:14). Later generations of Nephites remembered Alma’s admonition to “stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free,” which was twice cited by Pahoran in his letter to Moroni (see Alma 61:9, 21).

Recounting the history of Alma’s time, Mormon noted that his people again “were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob. And it came to pass that he did deliver them” (Mosiah 23:23–24). The Lamanites and Amulonites oppressed Alma’s people, forbidding them even to pray to God. During this time of oppression, the Lord promised that He would “deliver them out of bondage” (Mosiah 24:13; see also 24:14–17). The Lord caused the Lamanites to fall into a deep sleep, “and Alma and his people departed into the wilderness” (Mosiah 24:20). Pausing in a valley, “they poured out their thanks to God because he had been merciful unto them, and eased their burdens, and had delivered them out of bondage; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God” (Mosiah 24:21).

When Alma’s people arrived in the land of Zarahemla, their brethren welcomed “those that had been delivered out of bondage [and] they were filled with exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 25:8). The refugees who came with Alma were reunited with the people of Limhi, whom Alma reminded that they had also “been delivered out of bondage, that they should remember that it was the Lord that did deliver them” (Mosiah 25:16). This Nephite colony had been brought into Lamanite bondage because of their sins (see Mosiah 7:15, 20–22; 8:7; 9:10–12; 11:21–23; 12:2; 20:22; 21:13–15). Limhi promised them that the Lord, who had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and Lehi from Jerusalem, would rescue them as well (see Mosiah 7:19–20, 33; 21:36–22:4; see also Alma 1:8).

Near the end of his reign, King Mosiah introduced a more democratic system of government, whereby the people could choose their own leaders, known as judges. He declared, “And now

I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike” (Mosiah 29:32; see also 29:39–41).⁶ The responsibility of the judges was “to judge righteously, and to keep the peace and the freedom of the people, and to grant unto them their sacred privileges to worship the Lord their God” (Alma 50:39).

Mosiah’s actions were prompted by two things that had recently come to his attention. One was the fact that the Nephites, who had recently arrived from the land of Nephi, had been led astray by King Noah. Addressing the people, Mosiah said:

“Yea, remember king Noah, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage.

“And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now.

“But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage” (Mosiah 29:18–20).

The second factor in the decision to abolish the monarchy was Mosiah’s recent translation of the Jaredite record known as the book of Ether.⁷ When the first generation of Jaredites asked that a king be chosen to govern the people, “the brother of Jared said unto them: Surely this thing leadeth into captivity” (Ether 6:23). A major theme in the book of Ether is the captivity in which vanquished kings were forced to serve (see Ether 7:5, 7; 8:3; 10:14, 30; 11:9, 18, 23; 13:23).

The establishment of a more democratic government among the Nephites was not universally accepted. From time to time, there arose dissenters who wanted to replace the judges with a king. The Book of Mormon stresses that their actions would have brought the Nephites into bondage and deprived them of their liberty (see Alma 8:15–18; 43:4–8, 29; 46:28, 35; 48:4; 49:25–26; 50:28–32; 51:5–8,

13–21; 59:13; 60:16, 27, 30; 61:2–17; 62:2–11; Helaman 1:1–8; 3 Nephi 2:12; 3:2; 6:30).

DELIVERANCE FROM ONE'S ENEMIES

The Book of Mormon frequently notes the deliverance of the Nephites from their enemies, the Lamanites, usually during wartime.⁸ King Benjamin stressed that it was the Lord who delivered them (see Mosiah 1:14; 2:31–33).⁹ He noted that this deliverance came from obedience, saying, “As ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son, or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him, ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have no power over you” (Mosiah 2:31). He then warned them not to obey the evil spirit (see Mosiah 2:33).

Other Nephites also noted that God had delivered them from the Lamanites. Zeniff, who led a group of people back to their ancient homeland in the land of Nephi, was able to repel attacking Lamanites and attributed the deliverance of his people to the Lord (see Mosiah 9:17). Though the Lamanites ultimately subdued the Nephite colony, more immediate bondage came through Zeniff's wicked son, Noah. In his day, the Lord sent the prophet Abinadi to warn that if the people did not repent, “I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and they shall be brought into bondage; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies” (Mosiah 11:22). He warned that “except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God, they shall be brought into bondage; and none shall deliver them, except it be the Lord the Almighty God. Yea, and it shall come to pass that when they shall cry unto me I will be slow to hear their cries; yea, and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies” (Mosiah 11:23–24). He also spoke of the “bands of death” that would be broken by the Lord through His resurrection (Mosiah 15:8–9, 20, 23; 16:7).

During the lengthy series of wars between the Nephites and

Lamanites, Mormon informs us that the Nephites were fighting for freedom from bondage, including the freedom to worship the Lord (see Alma 43:9–10, 29–30, 45–50; 44:5; 46:10; 48:10–11; 51:6; 53:17; 58:40–41; 60:36; 61:9, 14; 62:5; see also 3 Nephi 2:12). Moroni prepared a banner, the title or standard of liberty, which reminded the Nephites of the blessings of liberty they enjoyed (see Alma 46:12–24, 36; 51:20; 62:4). The people acknowledged it was the Lord who delivered them from their enemies (see Alma 45:1; 46:7; 50:22; 56:47; 58:11–12; 61:12–13).¹⁰

During one of the battles, Moroni said to the Lamanites, “Behold, we have not come out to battle against you that we might shed your blood for power; neither do we desire to bring any one to the yoke of bondage. But this is the very cause for which ye have come against us; yea, and ye are angry with us because of our religion” (Alma 44:2; see also 49:7). He warned them to lay down their arms, saying, “And now, if ye do not this, behold, ye are in our hands, and I will command my men that they shall fall upon you, and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies, that ye may become extinct; and then we will see who shall have power over this people; yea, we will see who shall be brought into bondage” (Alma 44:7). Indeed, it was Moroni’s practice to release any captured Lamanites who promised to never again attack the Nephites (see Alma 44:8–11, 14–15, 19–20; 46:35; 62:15–17; Helaman 1:33; 3 Nephi 5:4–5; 6:3).¹¹ Subsequent Nephite generations followed this practice with captured Gadianton robbers (see 3 Nephi 5:4).

THE DELIVERANCE OF ALMA

The concept of God’s deliverance of His people in both spiritual and temporal matters was championed by Alma, the son of Alma. The terms he used to describe sociopolitical oppression and the Lord’s intervention to rescue His people from their oppressors were also used to describe man’s captivity by the devil and deliverance by God. Alma did not initially follow his father’s lead. Instead, he and his friends, the sons of King Mosiah, rebelled against the teachings of their youth, trying to destroy the religion of their

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fathers. An angel appeared to them and told Alma, “Go, and remember the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam, and in the land of Nephi; and remember how great things he has done for them; for they were in bondage, and he has delivered them. And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off” (Mosiah 27:16).

Alma fell into a comalike state, during which he envisioned himself in eternal torment until he called on Christ to rescue him (see Alma 36:12–23). After three days, he awoke and testified, “My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more” (Mosiah 27:29). His use of the term “bonds of iniquity” suggests a very real bondage, not of the body, but of the spirit. When he later described the scene to his son Helaman, he said that he was “in the gall of bitterness, and [was] encircled about by the everlasting chains of death” (Alma 36:18), here substituting “chains” for “bonds.”

Following this remarkable experience, Alma made it a point to obey the angel’s instructions to “remember the captivity of thy fathers” (Mosiah 27:16). He declared, “Yea, and I also remember the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage, and by this did establish his church; yea, the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did deliver them out of bondage. Yea, I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians did deliver them out of bondage” (Alma 29:11–12).¹² He admonished his eldest son, Helaman, “I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions” (Alma 36:2). He added:

“And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered

me from prison, and from bonds [see also Alma 14:28], and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.

“And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory; yea, and I will praise him forever, for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, and he has swallowed up the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and he led them by his power into the promised land; yea, and he has delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time.

“Yea, and he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity, from time to time even down to the present day; and I have always retained in remembrance their captivity; yea, and ye also ought to retain in remembrance, as I have done, their captivity” (Alma 36:27–29).

To Alma and other Book of Mormon prophets, it was important to remember the Lord’s deliverance of His people throughout history—something that could be learned only through study of the scriptures.¹³ They considered the Lord to be the Redeemer or Deliverer, whose saving efforts involved the rescue of His people from temporal bondage as well as from death (see Alma 62:50). This became Alma’s principal theme during his ministry. Thus, to the people in Zarahemla, he taught that those Nephites who followed his father “were delivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God. And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word.” Alma then asked penetrating questions about his listeners’ faith in the Lord’s deliverance: “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers?¹⁴ Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?”

“Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the

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midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them. . . .

“And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed” (Alma 5:4–7, 9).¹⁵

Later, during his missionary efforts in the city of Ammonihah, Alma asked the people, “Do ye not remember that our father, Lehi, was brought out of Jerusalem by the hand of God? Do ye not remember that they were all led by him through the wilderness? And have ye forgotten so soon how many times he delivered our fathers out of the hands of their enemies, and preserved them from being destroyed, even by the hands of their own brethren?” (Alma 9:9–10). He reminded them that they had “been delivered of God out of the land of Jerusalem, by the hand of the Lord; [had] been saved from famine, and from sickness, and all manner of diseases of every kind; and they [had] waxed strong in battle, that they might not be destroyed; [had] been brought out of bondage time after time, and [had] been kept and preserved until now” (Alma 9:22). After describing their redemption from mortal bondage and dangers, Alma turned to spiritual matters, noting that “if they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ; and if they have been evil they shall reap the damnation of their souls, according to the power and captivity of the devil” (Alma 9:28).

Following Alma’s discourse, his companion, Amulek, took up the same theme, saying that the wicked lawyers were “laying the foundations of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God” (Alma 10:17).¹⁶ He asked, “Why hath Satan got such great hold upon your hearts? Why will ye yield yourselves unto him that he may have power over you, to blind your eyes, that ye will not understand the words which are spoken, according to their truth?” (Alma 10:25).

A lawyer named Zeezrom unsuccessfully tried to trap Amulek in his words. Alma declared that this was Satan’s plan, a “snare of

the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity” (Alma 12:6). He then explained that the wicked “are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell” (Alma 12:11). He taught that the Lord “has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance” but that the wicked “shall be chained down to an everlasting destruction, according to the power and captivity of Satan” (Alma 12:15, 17).

SUMMARY

The mortal trials and tribulations suffered by the Nephites became a type of the sufferings of the wicked in the world to come. From the Book of Mormon, we learn that disobedience to God’s commandments brings spiritual captivity and can result in physical bondage as well. On the other hand, obedience brings liberty here and in the hereafter. Adam’s disobedience brought about both a physical and a spiritual death (see 2 Nephi 2:5–7; Alma 12:16; 42:2–14; D&C 29:40), which Jacob termed death and hell. The atonement of Christ brings us release from these two deaths by providing a physical resurrection and a deliverance of our spirits from bondage (see 2 Nephi 9:12–13; Helaman 14:15). Lehi summed it up this way:

“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

“And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

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“And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom” (2 Nephi 2:27–29).

We have, then, a choice between the path of righteousness and freedom and the path of wickedness and captivity. Of all creatures on the earth, only we humans are capable of becoming “devils, angels to a devil,” as Jacob said (2 Nephi 9:9; see Jacob 3:11), or gods, or anything in between. May God help us to choose His plan of happiness and freedom and, through our example and teachings, help others do the same.

NOTES

1. See the discussions in Corbin T. Volluz, “Cry Redemption: The Plan of Redemption as Taught in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 148–69; and Jennifer Clark Lane, “The Lord Will Redeem His People: Adoptive Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1993), 39–62.

2. The Jaredite prophet Ether said of the New World, “Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written” (Ether 2:12).

3. For a discussion, see John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew P. Roper, “Do Not Procrastinate the Day of Your Repentance,” *Insights*, October 2000.

4. When Lamoni was allowed by his father, who was king over all the Lamanites, to be free from his suzerainty, Lamoni’s people became free under a righteous king (see Alma 21:21–23).

5. Nephi had also denied his people’s request that he serve as king (see 2 Nephi 5:18).

6. During the democratic rule by judges, dissenters from the Nephite religion sometimes argued that the civil and religious leaders were keeping the people “in bondage” (see Alma 30:23–28; 31:17).

7. For a discussion, see John A. Tvedtnes, “King Mosiah and the Judgeship,” *Insights*, November 2000.

8. For a discussion, see “In the Strength of the Lord,” chapter 34, in John A.

Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999).

9. The Lamanites typically made captives of Nephites, even during times of peace (see Alma 17:20).

10. Some of the Lamanites also believed that “the Great Spirit . . . had ever delivered [the Nephites] out of their hands” (Alma 19:27).

11. For a discussion, see “Oaths in the Book of Mormon,” chapter 33, in Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book*.

12. Alma’s son Shiblon had also been “in bonds,” from which the Lord delivered him (see Alma 38:4).

13. See the discussion in Louis C. Midgley, “To Remember and Keep: On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 95–137.

14. A generation later, chief captain Moroni, evidently relying on the teachings of Alma, wrote, “Have ye forgotten the commandments of the Lord your God? Yea, have ye forgotten the captivity of our fathers? Have ye forgotten the many times we have been delivered out of the hands of our enemies? Or do ye suppose that the Lord will still deliver us, while we sit upon our thrones and do not make use of the means which the Lord has provided for us?” (Alma 60:20).

15. The “bands of death” are also mentioned in Alma 4:14; 7:12; 11:41–42; 22:14 and derive from the Old Testament (Psalms 73:4; 107:14).

16. The concept of Satan’s traps and snares is common in the scriptures and other ancient Jewish and Christian literature but cannot be discussed here.