



*Jesus Feeding the 5000*, photograph by Cody Bell, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

The Priestly Blessing gives us a clear view of what that priestly type looked like to ancient Israelites.

# *Scripture Note: Alma's and Helaman's Priestly Blessings, Jesus's Divine Acts in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30*

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A few years ago, Matthew J. Grey drew renewed<sup>1</sup> attention to the language of 3 Nephi 19:25 as reflecting the language of Numbers 6:24–27,<sup>2</sup> a text sometimes called the Priestly Blessing. As far as I am aware, no study has thus far examined the influence of the Priestly Blessing in the Book of Mormon beyond 3 Nephi 19. Nevertheless, it appears that such influence exists. In this brief study, I examine how the influence of the Priestly Blessing in the Book of Mormon extends beyond Mormon's description of Jesus's priestly ministration at the temple in Bountiful to at least three other short blessings in the Book of Mormon pronounced by high priests of the Nephite church—two by Alma the Younger and one by his son Helaman. (This thesis assumes that the text of Numbers 6:24–27 existed in some form upon the plates of brass,<sup>3</sup> as on the silver scrolls of Ketef Hinnom,<sup>4</sup> and that Hebrew continued as a major part of the spoken and written language resources of the Nephites.)<sup>5</sup> It further appears that, along with Nephi's statement in 1 Nephi 12:10–11, Alma's blessing upon the people of Gideon may have influenced Mormon's description of Jesus's blessing and the "whiteness" of the disciples' garments in 3 Nephi 19:25. Although the Melchizedek Priesthood appears to have been

comparatively widespread in Nephite society and the Aaronic Priesthood less so, this Aaronic Priesthood blessing appears to have exerted its power on Nephite writers as late as Mormon. Chronologically speaking, 3 Nephi 19:25 represents the last of the Priestly Blessing texts, and Mormon there demonstrates how thoroughly the Savior can fulfill all that earlier priestly types and scriptures express in terms of hopes for “good things to come” (Hebrews 9:11; 10:1). This study will focus more on how the Book of Mormon’s ancient prophets and authors used the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24–27 in their writings, rather than on how the Nephites used Priestly Blessings as a matter of everyday religious praxis.

### The Significance of the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24–27 and Jesus’s Actions in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30

A side-by-side comparison of these texts reveals the clear textual dependence of 3 Nephi 19:25, 30 on Numbers 6:24–27:

3 Nephi 19:25, 30	Numbers 6:22–27
<p>And it came to pass <b>that Jesus blessed them</b> as they did pray unto him. And <b>his countenance</b> [cf. Heb. <i>pānāw</i>] <b>did smile upon them</b>, and <b>the light</b> [cf. Heb. <i>’ūr</i>] <b>of his countenance</b> [cf. <i>pānāw</i>] <b>did shine</b> [cf. Heb. <i>hē’ir</i>; from <i>’wr</i>] <b>upon them</b>. And behold, they were as white as <b>the countenance</b> [cf. <i>pēnē</i>] and also the garments of Jesus. And behold, the whiteness thereof did exceed all whiteness; yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.<sup>6</sup> . . .</p> <p>And he did smile upon them again. And behold, they were white,<sup>7</sup> even as Jesus.</p>	<p>And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise <b>ye shall bless</b> [<i>tēbārākū</i>] <b>the children of Israel</b>, saying unto them, <b>The Lord bless thee</b> [<i>yēbārekēkā yhw̄h</i>], and keep thee:</p> <p><b>The Lord make his face</b> [<i>pānāw</i>] <b>shine</b> [<i>yā’ēr</i>] <b>upon thee</b>, and be gracious unto thee:</p> <p><b>The Lord lift up his countenance</b> [<i>pānāw</i>] <b>upon thee</b>, and give thee peace.</p> <p>And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and <b>I will bless them</b>.</p>

In Mormon’s presentation of Jesus’s blessing his Lehite disciples as “children of Israel” (Numbers 6:24), Jesus—Jehovah himself—acts in his capacity as Priest and High Priest *par excellence*. In so doing, Jesus dramatically fulfilled an earlier priestly type. The Priestly Blessing gives us a clear view of what that priestly type looked like to ancient Israelites. Nili S. Fox notes that it was the “duty of priests . . . to bless the community of Israel (Lev. 9.22–23; Deut. 10.8; 21.5) or individual Israelites (1 Sam. 2.20) in the name of the Lord. The three-part [priestly] blessing . . . invokes God’s mercy and divine favor toward the

children of Israel for the sake of their well-being, 'shalom.'"<sup>8</sup> Put another way, Jehovah was the source of the blessing of Numbers 6:24–27 in whose “name” the priests as intermediaries pronounced it (per Deuteronomy 10:18 and 21:5). As intermediaries, the priests in their vestments reflected the “glory of the Lord,” as when Moses and Aaron “blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people” (Leviticus 9:23; cf. Alma 13:2). The use of language from the Priestly Blessing in the Psalms (e.g., Psalms 31:16; 80:3), “the hymns of the temple,”<sup>9</sup> helps us appreciate how temple-connected this blessing was. And yet the “blessing” context of Alma's and Helaman's Priestly Blessings and their strong lexical affinities with Numbers 6:24–27 suggest their textual dependence on the latter rather than on the Psalms.

Additionally, what makes the Priestly Blessing concept so significant for our present discussion is that in the Hebrew text of Numbers 6:24–27, this blessing is expressed using language with a jussive mood, or sense expressing volition (or will),<sup>10</sup> the priest invoking the blessing as an earthly intermediary. In 3 Nephi 19:25 (see also verse 30), Jehovah—Jesus Christ—is actually present, functioning as the person of the Priest as “messenger of the covenant” (Malachi 3:1; 3 Nephi 24:1) or “messenger of salvation” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:8) and intermediary between God the Father and the people and making them *at-one* (see 3 Nephi 19:23, 28–29). Here the Priestly Blessing is not an invoked wish. Jesus is physically present with the people and performing what the blessing verbally invokes.

A key term in the Priestly Blessing is the Hebrew term *pānīm*. The basic meaning of *pānīm*, a “plural of extension,”<sup>11</sup> is “face” or “front,” and this word forms an important part of numerous Hebrew idioms,<sup>12</sup> including the more abstract notion of “presence.”<sup>13</sup> The English words “countenance” and “face” in the King James Version of Numbers 6:24–26 both represent the Hebrew word *pānīm* in translation. In 3 Nephi 19:25, the Lord's *presence* is not just ritual or cultic. Jehovah's actual *countenance* or *face* is *there*. Jesus literally fulfilled the expectation of Leviticus 9:4: “to day [today] the Lord will appear unto you.” Everything that Numbers 6:24 expresses, in terms of *willing* certain blessings, literally comes to pass at the temple in Bountiful.

As we proceed to an examination of earlier instances in which Alma the Younger and his son Helaman (both priests) dismissed their audiences with a blessing, whether physically present (see Alma 7:25, 27; 38:15) or present as an individual reader (see Alma 58:41), we can further appreciate Jesus's actions in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30 as the apex of all priestly blessings—the priestly

“hopes . . . of all the years”<sup>14</sup> —met in Jesus Christ. John Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas observe, “In the ancient world blessings and curses were believed to have a power all their own that would result in their fulfillment. This blessing is probably one that the priests were to give to someone leaving the sanctuary after participating in some ritual.”<sup>15</sup> If this is the case, it is probably no small detail that Alma uses the language of Priestly Blessing at the conclusion of a sermon to the people at Gideon and at the conclusion of fatherly counsel to his son Shiblon and that Helaman, Alma’s older son, uses it to conclude his letter to Moroni. These dismissals with a blessing resemble the apostolic blessings with which most Latter-day Saints are familiar.

### Alma’s Priestly Blessings on the Saints in the City of Gideon and on Shiblon

Alma the Younger, then the high priest of the church in all the lands of the Nephites, gave a sermon to the righteous church members who lived in the city of Gideon (Alma 7), a sermon in which he ultimately commended them for their righteousness (see, e.g., Alma 7:3–6, 17–19, 28). At the end of the sermon, Alma dismissed the people by pronouncing a short blessing on them that draws on language from the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:24–26:

#### Alma 7:25, 27; 38:15

And **may the Lord bless you** [cf. Heb. *brk*], **and keep** [*šmr*] **your garments spotless**, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets which have been ever since the world began, **having your garments spotless—even as their garments are spotless**—in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out. . . .

And now **may the peace** [cf. *šālôm*] of **God rest upon you** and upon your houses and lands and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children, according to your faith and good works from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen. (Alma 7:25, 27)

**And may the Lord bless** [cf. Heb. *brk*] **your soul** and receive you at the last day into his kingdom to sit down **in peace** [cf. *šālôm*]. (Alma 38:15)

#### Numbers 6:24–26

**The Lord bless thee** [*yēbārekēkā*], **and keep thee** [*wēyišmērekā*]:

The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

**The Lord** lift up his countenance upon thee, and **give thee peace** [*šālôm*].

Alma's blessing begins with a near-verbatim repetition of the opening line of the Priestly Blessing, including the use of verbs corresponding to "bless" (Heb. *bārak*) and "keep" (*šāmar*). Moreover, Alma's blessing expands the idea of "keeping" to "keep[ing] . . . garments spotless."<sup>16</sup> Alma's descriptions of "garments" which are "spotless" appear to have influenced Mormon's description of Jesus's countenance and "garments" being "white" and the garments of his disciples being similarly "white." Unlike the nouns "countenance"/"face" and "light" and verbs corresponding to "bless" or "shine," the verb "keep" does not show up in 3 Nephi 19:25. Nevertheless, it appears that Mormon shows that Jesus fulfills the "the Lord . . . keep thee" aspect of the priestly blessing in the otherworldly "whitening" of the disciples "garments." From a literary perspective, regardless of how actual events transpired in their fullness at the temple in Bountiful, Alma's blessing to people, "may the Lord . . . keep your garments spotless," in Alma 7:25 plausibly signaled to Mormon a remarkable way of showing how the Lord "kept" his disciples in fulfillment of the Priestly Blessing: the unparalleled whiteness and spotlessness of their clothing is comparable to the "whitening" of Jesus's "raiment" on the Mount of Transfiguration.<sup>17</sup>

The idea of having spotless or white garments (*bēgādīm*) is a priestly concept.<sup>18</sup> Nephi, in his vision of the tree of life, was shown the "twelve ministers" that Jesus would choose from among the people at the temple in Bountiful, and his angelic informant described the whitening of their clothing: "And behold, they are righteous forever, for because of their faith in the Lamb of God, their garments are made white in his blood. . . . These are made white in the blood of the Lamb because of their faith in him" (1 Nephi 12:10–11). Mormon's description of the "whiteness" of their garments as Jesus pronounced the priestly blessing in 3 Nephi 19:25 is decidedly an allusion to that passage from Nephi's vision and a demonstration of its fulfillment as prophecy ("And behold, they were white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus," 3 Nephi 19:25 ≅ "their garments were white, even like unto the Lamb of God," 1 Nephi 12:11). Moreover, Mormon, who takes a keen interest in sermons that he includes in his record, helps us concretely visualize what "keep[ing] . . . garments spotless" and "garments spotless—even as [the] garments [of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] are spotless" (Alma 7:25) looks like.

The conclusion of Alma's blessing, "may the peace of God rest upon you," alludes to the concluding line of the Priestly Blessing: "[may] the Lord . . . give thee peace" (Numbers 6:27). Again, Alma extends the scope of the blessing

beyond the person blessed to also include “houses,” “lands,” “flocks,” “herds,” “possess[ions],” “women [wives],” and “children.” This blessing would be commensurate with personal “faith” and “good works.” Just prior to the blessing, Alma had listed the “good works” or duties that Alma 7:27 associates with receiving it: “And now I would that ye should be humble and be submissive and gentle, easy to be entreated, full of patience and long-suffering, being temperate in all things, being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times, asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal, always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, then ye will always abound in good works” (Alma 7:23–24).

Although the location of Alma’s sermon to the people of Gideon is never mentioned, it is reasonable to surmise that he gave it at the local sanctuary. Alma’s sermon concludes with a priestly blessing upon the people, or what Brant Gardner frames as something analogous to “an apostolic blessing.”<sup>19</sup> The faithful people of Gideon would need to go forth from that sermon and continue “in the paths of righteousness” (Alma 7:19) in order to claim Alma’s priestly blessing.

At the end of his brief fatherly *paraenesis*<sup>20</sup> to his second son, Shiblon (Alma 38), in which he commends his son for his faithfulness, Alma dismisses Shiblon with a brief blessing that echoes the language and themes of the Priestly Blessing. Alma’s blessing again commences with a near-verbatim quotation of the blessing’s opening line (“[may] the Lord bless you” = “may the Lord bless your soul”) and concludes similarly with a blessing of “peace” (see Alma 38:15). Corresponding to the Priestly Blessing’s concepts of “keeping,” divine approval, divine favor, and divine presence, Alma blesses Shiblon to be “receiv[ed] at the last day into [the Lord’s] kingdom. In so doing, Alma draws on the notion of the divine “presence” (i.e., the “kingdom” is the ultimate place of the divine presence) and more broadly on the related theme of at-one-ment with the Lord to which ancient temple architecture (veils, furniture, and other symbols of the divine presence) and temple ritual ultimately point (cf. “the arms of safety” in Alma 34:16). The language of divine reconciliation (atonement) and the temple are fitting for a father lovingly dismissing his son for perhaps the last time—a son that would faithfully “walk uprightly **before** [cf. Heb. *lipnē*<sup>21</sup>] **God**” (Alma 63:2)—i.e., in God’s “presence” (cf. Heb. *pānīm*).<sup>22</sup> Gardner rightly concludes, “It is a wonderful blessing for a faithful son.”<sup>23</sup>

## Helaman's Priestly Blessing on Captain Moroni

Helaman's blessing exhibits similarly strong lexical and grammatical links (e.g., again, verbs with jussive meaning) to the Priestly Blessing. At the conclusion of a lengthy letter<sup>24</sup> to Moroni, in which he reported on the state of "the affairs of the people in that quarter of the land"<sup>25</sup> during the Lamanite war and the heroic deeds of faith performed by the two thousand and sixty sons of Ammon's Lamanite converts, Helaman pronounces a short "blessing on Moroni"<sup>26</sup> in Alma 58:41. Here too, a side-by-side comparison of Alma 58:41 with Numbers 6:24–26 reveals the lexical and grammatical affinities, including the verbs that match Hebrew *šmr* and *hnn* from the Priestly Blessing:

Alma 58:41	Numbers 6:24–26
<p>And now my beloved brother Moroni, that <b>the Lord our God</b>, who has redeemed us and made us free, <b>may<sup>27</sup> keep you</b> [cf. Heb. <i>wěyišmērekā</i>] <b>continually in his presence</b> [cf. Heb. <i>lēpānāw</i> (or <i>lēpānāyw</i>)], yea, and that <b>he may favor</b> [cf. <i>hnn</i>] this people, even that ye <b>may have success</b> [cf. <i>šālôm</i>] in obtaining the possession of all that which the Lamanites hath taken from us, which was for our support.</p>	<p><b>The Lord bless thee, and keep thee</b> [<i>wěyišmērekā</i>]:  The Lord make <b>his face</b> [<i>pānāw</i>] shine upon thee, and <b>be gracious unto thee</b> [<i>wḥunnekā</i>]:  The Lord lift up <b>his countenance</b> [<i>pānāw</i>] upon thee, and give thee peace [<i>šālôm</i>]</p>

Helaman employs a verb with a jussive mood or sense corresponding to Hebrew *šamar*, "keep" (cf. Helaman retains the emphasis on the Lord's "face"/"countenance" (*pānīm*, *pānāw*, "his face/countenance"). However, Helaman uses a term comparable to *pānāw* in the more abstract sense of "his presence."<sup>28</sup> Helaman's combining of "keep" and "presence" here reflects a deft command of the language of the biblical Priestly Blessing.

Added to that, Helaman employs a verb with a jussive sense corresponding to biblical Hebrew *wḥunnekā* ("and may he favor you/be gracious unto you") from the Hebrew verb *ḥānan*, which has "to favour (someone)"<sup>29</sup> as its most basic meaning. It can also be rendered "be gracious"<sup>30</sup> as the KJV translators do in Numbers 6:25.

Finally, Helaman's blessing that Moroni and all under his command "may have success in obtaining possession of all that which the Lamanites hath taken from us" can be seen as reflecting the word *šālôm* ("peace") from the Priestly Blessing. The noun *šālôm* can also be translated "prosperity, success" as Koehler and Baumgartner regard it to mean in Numbers 6:26 and a limited



number of other attestations in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>31</sup> As they note, *šālôm* is “a general idea with an extremely wide circle of associated meanings in almost all its occurrences” and that “it has something of an enigmatic character.”<sup>32</sup>

In any case, a restoration of those lost things would be required for a state of *šālôm*—not simply “peace,” but “intactness”<sup>33</sup>—to exist. The terms “presence,” “favor,” and “success” in the English translation of Alma 58:41 are even more significant in that they reflect a wider semantic range of the lexemes in the Hebrew text of Numbers 6:24–26 than their rendering in the KJV translation.

## Conclusion

A clear intertextual<sup>34</sup> relationship exists between the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:24–27 and the Savior’s priestly blessing upon his disciples as recorded in 3 Nephi 19:25. When we compare other blessings pronounced by high priests Alma (Alma 7:25, 27; 38:15) and Helaman (Alma 58:41) with Numbers 6:24–27, we also see clear but more subtle affinities between these blessings and the biblical Priestly Blessing. These subtler lexical, phraseological, and grammatical links appear to show the Book of Mormon’s ancient authors adapting the Aaronic Priestly Blessing in simple yet sophisticated ways for their own immediate needs.

We should note in closing that these blessings were all pronounced upon a faithful, righteous community of Israelites (the people of Gideon) and faithful, righteous individuals (Shiblon and Moroni), reflecting priests’ “duty . . . to bless the community of Israel . . . or individual Israelites.”<sup>35</sup> We can thus appreciate the jussive language of Numbers 6:24–27 reflected in the jussive language of Alma 7:25, 27; 38:15; and 58:41 (“may the Lord bless you and keep your garments spotless”; “may the peace of God rest upon you”; “may the Lord bless your soul and receive you . . . to sit down in peace”; “may [he] keep you continually in his presence”; “may [he] favor this people”) as expressing the very type of righteous wishes and hopes that the Savior demonstrates his power to fulfill to the utmost in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30. Indeed, as the author of Hebrews states it, “We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1).

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## Notes

The author would like to thank Scott Esplin, Devan Jensen, and Cara Nickels.

1. The connection between 3 Nephi 19:25 and Numbers 6:25 (23–27) was already explicitly made in the footnotes of the 1981 Latter-day Saint edition of the Book of Mormon.
2. Matthew J. Grey, “Jesus Blessed Them . . . and His Countenance Did Shine Upon Them’: Understanding Third Nephi 19 in Light of the Priestly Blessing” (address at the September 2008 conference, “Third Nephi: New Perspectives on an Incomparable Scripture,” held at Brigham Young University). See further, Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did Jesus Allude to the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6? (3 Nephi 19:25)” *KnoWhy* #212 (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2016). <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/knowhy-212-why-did-jesus-allude-priestly-blessing-numbers-6-3-nephi-1925>.
3. I.e., I assume that that the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24–27 was extant within “the five books of Moses” on the brass plates as mentioned by Nephi in 1 Nephi 5:11.
4. Regarding the Ketef Hinnom scrolls and the Priestly Blessing, John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000], 147) write, “Two small silver scrolls (about one inch long) have been found in the area known as Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem. They were amulets in a burial cave from the sixth or seventh century B.C., and they contained this benediction [i.e., the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24–27]. At present they represent the oldest example of any text of scripture.” The silver scrolls appear to confirm that the Priestly Blessing was a scriptural text known and used during the time of Lehi, thus increasing the plausibility that this blessing was also known and used among Lehi’s descendants.
5. See 1 Nephi 1:2 and Mormon 9:33. This assumption grants that various changes and developments in language occurred throughout the course of Nephite history, as is common to all languages, and yet allows that major elements remained discernably Hebrew.
6. Book of Mormon citations will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
7. “White” here has no reference to race or skin color.
8. Nili S. Fox, “Numbers,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Mark Zvi Brettler, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 282.
9. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 45.
10. Bruce M. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 566 (§34.2.1a). They note that “in the Aaronide blessing, only two of the six verbs are formally jussives, yet all have the same volitional sense.” Thus, “all the verbs are to be taken as jussives.” Such jussive language “convey[s] a distinctive pragmatic force.”
11. Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 120 (§7.4.1c).
12. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 938–944. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.
13. On the significance of this term in earliest Nephite history, see Jennifer C. Lane, “The Presence of the Lord,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision* (2011 Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 119–34.
14. Phillips Brooks, “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 208.
15. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *Old Testament*, 146–47.

16. Cf. the idiom that John uses in Revelation 16:15: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and *keepeth* [tērōn] his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

17. Matthew 17:2: “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light”; Luke 9:29: “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.”

18. See, e.g., Exodus 40:12–14; Isaiah 52:1 (cf. Doctrine and Covenants 113:7–8); Zechariah 3:3–5; Haggai 2:11–12. Compare and contrast the paradoxical sacred staining of clothing in Exodus 29:21; Isaiah 63:1–3. On “washing” or “whitening” garments in the “blood of the Lamb,” see Revelation 7:14; 1 Nephi 12:11; Alma 5:21; 13:11; 34:36; Mormon 9:6; Ether 13:10–11.

19. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 4: Alma* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 136–37.

20. Paraenesis (paranesis or parenesis, from Greek *parainesis*) is a rhetorical term designating speech or discourse containing advice, counsel, or exhortation, particularly of a religious nature.

21. On the idiom “walk before” God, see, e.g., Genesis 17:1; 1 Samuel 2:30; 1 Kings 2:4; 3:6; 8:25; 9:4; 2 Kings 20:3; Psalms 56:13 [MT 14]; 116:9; 2 Chronicles 6:14, 16; 7:17; 1 Nephi 16:3; Mosiah 18:29; Alma 45:24; 53:21. In Psalms 56:13 [MT 14], the idiom “walk before God” is attested as *lēbithallēk lipnē ’ēlobīm*.

22. Mormon’s abridgment of the material in Alma 63:1–13 and his note in Alma 63:17 seem to indicate that Shiblon became the leader of the Church after the death of his elder brother Helaman.

23. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:524.

24. I.e., Helaman’s letter to Moroni comprises most of Alma 56–58.

25. Alma 56:1–2.

26. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:734.

27. See Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 491, 776. The jussive sense is even more evident with “may” closer to “keep” as in the original manuscript, printer’s manuscript, and 1830 edition.

28. On the polysemy (multiple senses) of Hebrew *pānīm* as reflected elsewhere in the Book of Alma, see Matthew L. Bowen, “Cut Off from the Face and Presence: Alma’s Use of Hebraistic Idioms to Teach the Fall,” *Religious Educator* 21, no. 2 (2020): 157–69.

29. *HALOT*, 334.

30. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 335–336.

31. *HALOT*, 1507. Koehler and Baumgartner hold the meaning “prosperity, success” for Leviticus 26:6; Numbers 6:26; Deuteronomy 23:7; Isaiah 48:18, 22; 52:7; 57:21; 60:17; Nahum 6:26; and Jeremiah 29:7, 11.

32. *HALOT*, 1507.

33. *HALOT*, 1507.

34. Intertextuality is “the need for one text to be read in the light of its allusions to and differences from the content or structure of other texts; the (allusive) relationship between esp. literary texts.” [www.oed.com/view/Entry/240987](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/240987).

35. Fox, “Numbers,” 282.