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“FOR THEIR GOOD HAVE I WRITTEN THEM”: THE ONOMASTIC ALLUSIVITY AND LITERARY FUNCTION OF 2 NEPHI 25:8

Matthew L. Bowen

***Abstract:** Nephi’s writings exhibit a distinctive focus on “good” and divine “goodness,” reflecting the meaning of Nephi’s Egyptian name (derived from *nfr*) meaning “good,” “goodly,” “fine,” or “fair.” Beyond the inclusio playing on his own name in terms of “good” and “goodness” (1 Nephi 1:1; 2 Nephi 33:3–4, 10, 12), he uses a similar inclusio (2 Nephi 5:30–31; 25:7–8) to frame and demarcate a smaller portion of his personal record in which he incorporated a substantial portion of the prophecies of Isaiah (2 Nephi 6–24). This smaller inclusio frames the Isaianic material as having been incorporated into Nephi’s “good” writings on the small plates with an express purpose: the present and future “good” of his and his brothers’ descendants down to the latter days.*

The terms “good”¹ (or “goodly”)² and “goodness”³ recur with sufficient frequency within Nephi’s writings as to constitute a key term therein. While admittedly not all these instances bear the same thematic weight, some have clear, specific contextual connections to Nephi himself, his people, his writings, or to all three. Of these, several appear to have special significance because of their placement within the structure of Nephi’s writings.

The two books of Nephi on Nephi’s small plates begin and end with wordplay on the name *Nephi*⁴ (Egyptian *nfr*⁵ = “good, fine, goodly” in addition to “beautiful, fair”)⁶ in terms of “good” and God’s “goodness.” See 1 Nephi 1:1, which contains the terms “goodly” and “goodness,” and 2 Nephi 33:4, 10, 12, which contain the terms “good” and “goodness.” This onomastic wordplay creates an *inclusio* — a bracketing or bookending device — around the entirety of Nephi’s small plates writings.⁷ This *inclusio* frames the books of 1 and 2 Nephi (originally, both titled “the

Book of Nephi”⁸) as a single book — the book of God’s goodness — emphasizing God’s covenant “goodness,”⁹ Nephi’s good upbringing from “goodly” parents, and the “good” contained in the doctrine of Christ, all of which have their source in God as the supreme Good.

In this short study, I will propose an additional instance of wordplay on the name *Nephi*, both as a personal name and the gentilic eponym¹⁰ (or *demonym*)¹¹ of those who became Nephi’s people, the Nephites — the “good” or “fair ones”: “I know that they [the words of Isaiah] shall be of great worth unto them [Nephi’s people] in the last days, for in that day shall they understand them. Wherefore for their **good** have I written them” (2 Nephi 25:8).¹² Moreover, similar to the wordplay on Nephi in terms of God’s “goodness” that begins and concludes the former’s writings, this wordplay functions as a closing bracket for a smaller but crucially important literary unit consisting of Jacob’s Isaiah-based covenant sermon in 2 Nephi 6–10, Nephi’s witness statement in 2 Nephi 11, Nephi’s great Isaiah block in 2 Nephi 12–25, and Nephi’s keys to understanding Isaiah in 2 Nephi 25:1–7.¹³ The closing bracket of the *inclusio*, 2 Nephi 25:8, functions in tandem with the opening bracket, 2 Nephi 5:30–31 — “thou shalt engraven many things upon them **which are good** in my sight for the profit of thy people.” This unit envelopes the largest concentration of the words of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and defines one of its major purposes: the “good” of Nephi’s and his brothers’ descendants in the last days.

“For Their Good”:

A Twofold Onomastic Allusion to Nephi and Nephites

The Book of Mormon name Nephi is best explained as the Egyptian word *nfr*,¹⁴ meaning “good,” “goodly,” “fine,” or “fair,”¹⁵ and pronounced nay-fee, neh-fee,¹⁶ or nou-fee.¹⁷ The complete shift in pronunciation of final *-r* to final *-y/i* in *nfr* is evident in the orthography of at least one Demotic papyrus document (P Berlin 6750, 5/7) where it is written as *nfy*, in the phrase *nfy ntr* (the “good god”).¹⁸ Egyptologist James Allen believes the masculine adjectival form came to be pronounced “something like **nafi*.”¹⁹ Regarding the pronunciation shifts in Egyptian words characteristic of *nfr* to *nfy*, Allen further notes that “[t]he hieroglyphic system had no regular way of indicating such vocalic endings. In writing these words, scribes could ignore the sound changes and use traditional spelling — in the same way that standard English still writes *light* even though the *gh* sound is no longer pronounced. Often, however, a scribe

would attempt to ‘modernize’ the spelling.”²⁰ The spelling *nfy* constitutes an example of this phenomenon.

Nfr occurs as a common element in Egyptian personal names and as a personal name in its own right.²¹ John Gee has further shown that “Nephi is an attested Syro-Palestinian Semitic form of an attested Egyptian man’s name dating from the Late Period in Egypt.”²² Nephi makes several direct allusions to the meaning of his name throughout his small-plates writings, beginning with the autobiographical introduction that commences his record: “I **Nephi** having been born of **goodly** parents ... yea, having had a great knowledge of the **goodness** and the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 1:1, see further below).²³ Concluding his adumbration of five “keys to understanding Isaiah’s words,”²⁴ Nephi offers a statement of purpose for his large-scale incorporation of Isaiah’s writings and Jacob’s Isaiah-based covenant sermon:

But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy according to my plainness, in the which I know that no man can err. Nevertheless in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled, men shall know of a surety at the times when they shall come to pass. Wherefore they are of worth unto the children of men. And he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly and confine the words unto mine own people, for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days, for in that day shall they understand them. Wherefore **for their good** have I written them. (2 Nephi 25:7–8)

Nephi’s use of “good” (Egyptian *nfr* or Hebrew *tôb*) here, as in other instances within his writings, has reference to his own name. It also has reference to his people, “the people Nephi,” whose “good” or welfare he labored for all his days (cf. Jacob 1:10). Nephi’s people had, in his own time, taken upon them the name of “Nephi” and bestowed that name on their land and capital: “And my people would that we should call the name of the place **Nephi**; wherefore we did call it **Nephi**. And all they which were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of **Nephi**” (2 Nephi 5:8–9). “Likening” Zenos’s allegory or parable to themselves, as Zenos invited his ancient Israelite audience to do,²⁵ the Nephites might have recognized themselves as the “good” people — or “that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit” living in the “good” place or the “good spot of ground” (see Jacob 5:25–26, 40, 43, 45–46), as Jacob (at the very least) seems to have done.²⁶ They were the “fair ones” (see 1 Nephi 13:15; Jacob 2:32 Mosiah 19:13–14; 3 Nephi 2:16;

8:25; 9:2; 4 Nephi 1:10; Mormon 6:17–19; 9:6; cf. 2 Nephi 5:21).²⁷ We should note here that *Nephites* as “*fair*” and “*fair ones*” might have no racial implications at all.²⁸ Further, if the range of meaning for “*fair*,” as representing Egyptian *nfr*, is wide enough to include “open; frank; honest; hence, equal; just; equitable”²⁹ as reflecting “lawful,”³⁰ the Lamanites and Nephites *becoming* “*fair*” would instead have direct reference to their righteousness and conformity to God’s law (see especially 2 Nephi 5:8–10; 25:24; Jarom 1:5, 11; Helaman 13:1; 15:5; 4 Nephi 1:10–12).

However, Nephi’s vision for the “good” of his people extended well beyond their welfare during his own time. Nephi’s writing of Isaiah’s words, in which his soul so greatly “delighte[d],”³¹ was calculated for the “good” of his descendants and those of his brethren — to help them become “good” again in the latter days.

Another “Good” *Inclusio*: Nephi’s Framing of Two Isaiah Blocks

Nephi’s small plates record, which consists of two books both titled “the book of Nephi,”³² begins and ends with an emphasis on “good” and the “goodness of God”:

Opening Bracket: 1 Nephi 1:1	Closing Bracket: 2 Nephi 33:3–4, 10, 12
<p>I Nephi [Egyptian <i>nfr</i> = good] having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father. And having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days, yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.</p>	<p>But I Nephi have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. ... And the things [words]³³ which I have written in weakness will he make strong unto them, for it persuadeth them to do good. It maketh known unto them of their fathers. And it speaketh of Jesus and persuadeth men to believe in him and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.</p> <p>... And now my beloved brethren and also Jew and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ. And if ye believe not in these words, believe in Christ; and if ye shall believe in Christ, ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ. And he hath given them unto me, and they teach all men that they should do good.</p> <p>... And you that will not partake of the goodness of God and respect the words of the Jews and also my words and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.</p>

By the conclusion of Nephi’s writings on his small plates, readers have a thorough sense of his character, motivations, and commitment to God. In 2 Nephi 33:3–4, 10, Nephi recalls the wordplay that made his “good” name and character attributable to the teaching of his parents, with a statement that his writings “persuade ... to do good” and “teach all men that they should do good.” These writings thus suit their “good” author and perpetuate a legacy of good among Nephi’s and his brothers’ descendants by inculcating good — especially obedience to the doctrine of Christ. Nephi’s people, contemporary and latter-day, thereby become “good.”

At the outset of his record, moreover, Nephi lists among his reasons for making his record the fact that he had acquired “a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God.” Nephi returns to this concept a final time at the end of his record when he declares that those who are not willing to “partake of the goodness of God” will be condemned by three scriptural witnesses at the final judgment (meeting the requirements of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses for capital cases in Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15).³⁴ All of the foregoing constitutes an *inclusio*, clearly framing Nephi’s entire small plates text (1–2 Nephi) and demarcating the unifying theme and purpose for all his writings: the promotion of the divine “good” and “goodness” available through Jesus Christ and his atonement.

Significantly, this unifying theme and purpose underlie Nephi’s incorporation of the lengthiest quoted blocks of Isaiah writings within Nephi’s writings. Nephi uses another *inclusio* centered upon divine “good” to frame Jacob’s covenant sermon³⁵ with its quotation of Isaiah 49:22–52:2, Nephi’s witness declaration in 2 Nephi 11, and Nephi’s lengthy quotation of Isaiah 2–14. Thirty years after Lehi and his family had left Jerusalem and more than twenty years after they had arrived in the land of promise,³⁶ Nephi records the revelation in which the Lord commanded him to make a second set of plates beyond those that he had already made and upon which he been faithfully keeping a record.³⁷ A comparison of this revelation (2 Nephi 5:30–31) with Nephi’s statement of purpose in 2 Nephi 25:8 helps us see how closely aligned Nephi’s purposes in his incorporation of the prophecies of Isaiah were with the Lord’s vision for the contents of Nephi’s small plates:

Opening Bracket: 2 Nephi 5:30–31	Closing Bracket: 2 Nephi 25:7–8
<p>And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight for the profit of thy people. Wherefore I Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things.</p>	<p>But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy according to my plainness, in the which I know that no man can err. Nevertheless in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled, men shall know of a surety at the times when they shall come to pass. Wherefore they are of worth unto the children of men. And he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly and confine the words unto mine own people, for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days, for in that day shall they understand them. Wherefore for their good have I written them.</p>

In 2 Nephi 5:30–31, Nephi clearly delineates the Lord’s purpose in Nephi’s keeping the small plates: “And thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight.” This statement appropriately alludes to Nephi’s personal name as the author of a second set of plates called “the plates of Nephi” or the “plates of *good*”:

And now as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold, they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people, for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore they are called the plates of Nephi after mine own name. And **these plates also are called the plates of Nephi.**
(1 Nephi 9:2)

Nephi then, even in naming his record, hews closely to the Lord’s stated intent for the small plates when he avers regarding the prophecies of Isaiah that he has just written on the small plates, “wherefore for their [my own people’s] **good** have I written them.” The Lord’s former statement in 2 Nephi 5:30–31, which comes just prior to Jacob’s Isaiah 49:22–52:2-based sermon, acts in tandem with Nephi’s latter declaration in 2 Nephi 25:7–8 to form an *inclusio* around the largest body of Isaianic material in Nephi’s writings and in the Book of Mormon as a whole.

It is not difficult to hear the echoes of 2 Nephi 5:30–31 and 2 Nephi 25:7–8 in 2 Nephi 33:3–4:

But I Nephi have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth and especially unto my people. ... And the things [words] which I have written in weakness will he make strong unto them, for it **persuadeth them to do good.** It maketh known unto them of their fathers. And it speaketh of

Jesus and persuadeth men to believe in him and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

The things “good in [the Lord’s] sight” that Nephi has written and the “good” of his people for which he is writing them ultimately cannot be separated from the “good” that these writings persuade people to do — especially the doctrine of Christ (including believing in him and enduring to the end in faith, hope, and charity, which Noel Reynolds has demonstrated constitutes the equivalent of coming unto Christ).³⁸ Becoming good requires doing good. Becoming like Christ requires living the doctrine of Christ and helping others to do so.

“He Doeth That Which Is Good ... and He Inviteth Them All to Come unto Him and Partake of His Goodness”:

Nephi’s Use of Isaiah 55:1–2 as Evidence for His Framing

More evidence for Nephi’s seeing and framing the words of Isaiah in terms of the “good” of his people emerges in Nephi’s exegetical interpretation of Isaiah 55:1–2, which follows soon after the 2 Nephi 5:30–31 and 25:7–8 *inclusio*. This interpretation also roots this “good” in the “goodness” of God. In explaining the Lord’s perfect righteousness and the selfless motivation for doing all that he does, Nephi uses the language of Isaiah 55:1–2 to explain the following:

He doeth not any thing save it be for the benefit of the world, for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him; wherefore he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me! Behold, I say unto you: Nay. But he saith: Come unto me, all ye ends of the earth; buy milk and honey without money and without price. (2 Nephi 26:24–25)

In giving this explanation of the Lord’s love for humankind, Nephi clearly offers an interpretation of Isaiah 55:1–2 in terms of coming unto Christ, which he equates with the fifth principle of the doctrine of Christ:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and **eat ye that which is good** [Hebrew *tôb*], and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Interestingly, Nephi’s interpretation changes “wine” (Hebrew *yayin*) to milk, perhaps in a deliberate allusion to the stereotyped description of the promised land as a “land flowing with milk and honey,”³⁹ emphasizing the covenant nature of the blessings enumerated in both his and Isaiah’s texts. In any case, Nephi clearly understands the symbolic and spiritual character of the waters, wine/milk, honey, bread, and olive oil (or “fatness”) as sustenance: it is that which is truly “good.”

The KJV phrase “eat ye that which is good” (Hebrew *wě’iklû tôb*) from Isaiah 55:2 could just as well be translated “partake ye of that which is good.” This phrase emerges in the English translation of Nephi’s quotation of the phrase as “partake of . . . goodness.” Nephi continues to interpret Isaiah 55:2 as he asks, “Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not **partake of his goodness**? Behold I say unto you: Nay. But all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:28).

Then Nephi’s exegesis of Isaiah 55:1–2 culminates in one of the great statements on the universal availability of God and the equality of all humankind before him in all of scripture. Nephi emphasizes the Lord’s doing “good” and his “goodness.” The source again is Isaiah’s invitation to “come” and “eat that which is good”:

For he doeth that which is good among the children of men. And he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men. And he **inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness**. And he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen. And all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. (2 Nephi 26:33)

Nephi knew that partaking of the goodness of God and partaking of his salvation would enable his people — and all humankind — to become truly good.

Conclusion

Nephi’s writings on the small plates exhibit a distinctive focus on “good” and divine “goodness.” This focus appropriately reflects the meaning of Nephi’s Egyptian name, which derives from Egyptian *nfr*, meaning “good,” “goodly,” “fine,” or “fair.” Nephi frames his writings on the front end (1 Nephi 1:1) and the back end (2 Nephi 33:3–4, 10, 12) with an *inclusio* involving wordplay on his own name in terms of “good” and “goodness,” but he also uses a similar *inclusio* (2 Nephi 5:30–31;

25:7–8) to frame and demarcate a smaller portion of his personal record in which he incorporated a sizeable portion of the prophecies of Isaiah (2 Nephi 6–24). This smaller *inclusio* frames the Isaiah material as having been incorporated into Nephi’s “good” writings on the small plates for the present and future “good” of his and his brothers’ descendants down to the latter-days.

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Endnotes

- 1 See 1 Nephi 17:25; 18:4; 2 Nephi 2:5, 11, 18, 23, 26, 30; 3:24; 5:30; 9:29; 15:20; 17:15–16; 25:8; 26:33; 27:14; 28:16, 20; 33:4, 10.
- 2 See 1 Nephi 1:1.
- 3 See 1 Nephi 1:1; 14; 5:4; 2 Nephi 1:10; 4:17; 9:10; 26:28, 33; 33:14.
- 4 Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95; see also Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City and Orem, UT: Eborn Books and Interpreter Foundation, 2018), 1–15.
- 5 See John Gee, “A Note on the Name Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 189–91.

- 6 Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1999), 131–32. See also Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 2:252–63.
- 7 Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio”; Bowen, *Name as Key-Word*, 1–15.
- 8 Royal Skousen, *The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 42–43.
- 9 Noel B. Reynolds, “The Goodness of God and His Children as a Fundamental Theological Concept in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 46 (2021): 131–56, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-goodness-of-god-and-his-children-as-a-fundamental-theological-concept-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.
- 10 An *eponym* (Greek *epi* + *onyma* [*onoma*], ‘name’) is a name derived from the name of a particular person or place. *Gentilic* (Latin *gentilis*, ‘nation,’ ‘tribe’) as an adjective relates to the name of a nation, tribe, or people.
- 11 A *demonym* (Greek *demos*, ‘people’ + *onyma* [*onoma*] ‘name’) is the name of a people, tribe, clan, etc.
- 12 Bolded emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine. Book of Mormon citations will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 13 On Nephi’s “keys” to understanding Isaiah, see Donald W. Parry, “Nephi’s Keys to Understanding Isaiah (2 Nephi 25:1–8),” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 47–65.
- 14 Gee, “A Note;” see also John Gee, “Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 1–5.
- 15 Faulkner, *Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 131–32.
- 16 Gee, “A Note,” 191.
- 17 Gee, “Four Suggestions,” 2.

- 18 See Janet H. Johnson, ed., *The Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vol. 11, N (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 74.
- 19 James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 223.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Hermann Ranke cites numerous examples of *nfr* as personal name in its own right. Hermann Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen* (Glückstadt, J. J. Augustin, 1935), 1:194.
- 22 Gee, “A Note,” 191.
- 23 Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 22, no. 11 (2002): 2.
- 24 Parry, “Nephi’s Keys.”
- 25 Jacob 5:3. Nephi and Jacob may owe their concept of “likening” to Zenos himself (cf. 1 Nephi 19:23–24; 2 Nephi 11:2, 8).
- 26 The implications of Jacob 5:25–26, 40, 43, 45–46 for Nephite self-understanding will be the subject of a forthcoming study.
- 27 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi,” *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 23, no. 6 (2003): 2; Matthew L. Bowen, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’ — Revisited,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 315–45, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/o-ye-fair-ones-revisited/>. See also more recently Matthew L. Bowen, “Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors,” FAIR Conference, FAIR, accessed August 26, 2022, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2019/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words>.
- 28 See, e.g., Amy Easton-Flake, “Lehi’s Dream as a Template for Understanding Each Act of Nephi’s Vision,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 188–89; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of*

Mormon, vol. 5, *Helaman through 3 Nephi* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 126–27; and Bowen, “Laman and Nephi as Key-Words.”

- 29 Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. “fair,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/fair>.
- 30 Faulkner, *Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 131.
- 31 2 Nephi 11:2–6; 25:4–5; cf. 2 Nephi 4:15–16; 25:13; 31:3.
- 32 Skousen, *Critical Text*, 4:1:42–43.
- 33 On the original reading “things” (vs. “words”), see Royal Skousen, *Critical Text*, vol. 4, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, Part Two: *2 Nephi 11–Mosiah 16* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 924–25. In Hebrew and Egyptian, the word for “word” and “thing” are represented by a single lexeme — *dābār* and *mdw/md.t/mt.t*, respectively. Therefore, the translation would stand correct with either reading. Paul Hoskisson has pointed out that “word(s)” and “thing(s)” can be used interchangeably in numerous places in the Book of Mormon text. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Straightening Things Out: The Use of ‘Strait’ and ‘Straight’ in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 58–71, 114–17, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol12/iss2/7/>.
- 34 On Nephi’s use of the law of witnesses in 2 Nephi, see Bruce A. Van Orden, “The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi,” in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1989), 307–21; Bruce A. Van Orden, “‘We Prophecy of Christ’: The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi,” *Ensign* 20, no. 2 (February 1990): 22–25.
- 35 On this covenant sermon, see John S. Thompson, “Isaiah 50–51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6–10,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 123–50.
- 36 2 Nephi 5:28: “And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.”
- 37 2 Nephi 5:29: “And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far.”
- 38 Noel B. Reynolds, “‘Come unto Me’ as a Technical Gospel Term,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*

31 (2019): 1–24, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/come-unto-me-as-a-technical-gospel-term/>.

39 See, e.g., Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Numbers 13:27; 14:8; 16:13–14; Deuteronomy 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5; 32:22; Ezekiel 20:6, 15. Cf. D&C 38:18.

