



The Four-Part Pattern in Prophecies

by David Lamb

Scattered throughout the Old Testament writings are accounts of holy prophets who deliver specific messages from God to particular groups of people. Though these prophecies are numerous and varied, there is a basic pattern which emerges that is common to all. Whatever the specific warnings and instructions given by the various prophets through the ages, their messages always consist of four primary parts.

These four parts can be outlined in simple fashion:

1. Identification of sin
2. Need for repentance
3. Judgment of God (if people do not repent)
4. Future in Jesus Christ

1. It is common for a prophet to begin his message by telling the people about their **sin**. Usually specific detail about applicable transgressions are given.

2. The prophet then instructs the people in the need for **repentance** of these specified transgressions.

3. Next, he informs the people about God's coming **judgment** which would befall them if they do not repent.

4. Lastly, the prophet always ends his message in a positive manner by telling the people about their **future salvation through Jesus Christ**.

If this is a true prophetic pattern, one would also expect to find this same four-part message being delivered by the Book of Mormon people in the New World. A close examination of messages given by Book of Mormon prophets reveals that this pattern is indeed present in the Book of Mormon as well as in the Bible. In fact, due to its clarity, these four primary parts are often easier to identify in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible.

MESSAGE OF SAMUEL THE LAMANITE

Samuel the Lamanite's prophetic message from the wall of Zarahemla is a classic example of a prophet's four-part message. The Lamanite prophet even goes so far as to

summarize the purpose of his message as found in Helaman 5:65-66:

I have come up upon the walls
of this city
That ye might hear and know
the **judgments of God**
which do await you **because**
of your iniquities,
And also that ye might know the
conditions of repentance.
And also that **ye might know of**
the coming of Jesus
Christ. . .
That ye might believe on his
name.

MESSAGE OF ALMA II

Another beautiful example of this prophetic pattern is found in Alma's message to the people of Ammonihah (Alma 7-10). Alma originally enters Ammonihah as a missionary but is rejected and driven out by the people. However, he shortly returns as a prophet to deliver a prophetic message at the command of an angel of the Lord. Alma follows the pattern in true prophetic form as he begins his message:

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by Shirley R. Heater

*Another witness of the purpose
of the Book of Mormon:*

Lehi's Blessing To His Son Joseph

s mentioned in ZR #41, from time to time we will share insights gained from work on the *Study Book of Mormon* project. In the course of

Nephi must have deliberately chosen Joseph's blessing to be included in this book. . .

working in Second Nephi we have discovered that Lehi's blessing to his son Joseph (Chapter 2) is a beautiful chiasmic structure (see fig. 1).

Remember that a chiasm is the repetition of words in reverse order with a center or turning point. The center of the chiasm is the most important point and is a key to understanding the intent of the writer.

The chiasmic center point

The center point of chapter two is found in verses 22 and 23. In the verses just preceding these, the Lord is telling Joseph of Egypt that his seed will write and Judah's seed will write and the two shall be joined together "unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace" among the seed of the tribe of Joseph. The center or main point is

then found in the next two verses:

And bringing them [remnant] to **the knowledge of their fathers** in the latter days,
And also to **the knowledge of my covenants**, saith the Lord; (emphasis added)

Lehi is probably reading this prophecy to his son Joseph directly from the brass plates. As pointed out in David Lamb's article on the meaning of the name of Mormon, Hebrew children were often given a name of significance and then reminded by their parents to live up to the name. In this case, Joseph was undoubtedly named for Joseph of Egypt after Lehi discovered his lineage was through Manasseh, the son of Joseph of Egypt.

In his final blessing to his son Joseph, Lehi thought it appropriate to remind him of his namesake and of the prophecies connected with the tribe of Joseph which were to be fulfilled at a future time. By reading this prophecy which was originally given to Joseph of Egypt directly by the Lord, Lehi is transmitting the promises given to the first Joseph to his son Joseph. It is exciting to realize that Lehi designed the center point of his last message to his son Joseph to be a restatement of the covenant made by the Lord to Joseph of Egypt: his seed would be restored to a knowledge of the covenants of the Lord as well as their heritage as part of the house of Israel.

In light of the fact that 1) the title page of the Book of Mormon clearly indicates that the main purpose for the book is to restore the remnant of the house of Israel (Lamanites/Nephites) to a knowledge of the covenants of the Lord and 2) the meaning of the name of the Book of Mormon is "Book of the Restoration of the Covenant," Lehi's chiasmic arrangement of Joseph's blessing emphasizing the same theme is a third witness to the purpose and promise of this record written by the seed of Joseph of Egypt.

This is a clear example of how understanding the "learning of the Jews" (chiasmus) leads to the correct interpretation of disputed passages.

In fact, Nephi must have deliberately chosen Joseph's blessing to be included in this book because the chiasmic center point emphasizes the main message of Second Nephi: the restoration of the knowledge of the covenants to Nephi's seed in the latter day.

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2 Nephi 2: Lehi's Blessing to Young Joseph

Verse #	
1	A speak
3	B thy brethren
4	C Joseph
	D may the Lord bless thee
	E thy seed shall not be utterly destroyed
6	F covenants
	G Joseph
	H Joseph
8	I remembered in the covenants
9	J unto them
	K in the latter days
10	L a seer shall the Lord my God raise up who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins
11	M Thus saith the Lord unto me
15	N Moses
	O I have said I would raise up
16	P Moses
17	Q power
	R bring forth my word
19	S fruit of thy loins
21	T confounding
22	U bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers
23	U' and also to the knowledge of my covenants
26	T' confounded
27	S' fruit of thy loins
30	R' the thing which the Lord shall bring forth
	Q' power
31	P' Moses
32	O' the Lord hath said I will raise up
	N' Moses
36	M' the Lord said unto me also
	L' I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins and I will make for him a spokesman
40	K' after many generations have gone
	J' by them
43	I' remembering of my covenant
44	H' Joseph
	G' my father
45	F' covenant
	E' thy seed shall not be destroyed
48	D' blessed art thou
	C' Joseph
49	B' thy brother
49	A' spoken

Fig. 1. The chiastic center point (U & U') emphasizes the covenant made to the seed of Joseph of Egypt.

Lehi's Blessing of Joseph

Second Nephi 2

CHAPTER 2

D The Blessing of Joseph, 2:1-50

1 Lehi addresses Joseph, 2:1-9

- 1 And now I speak unto you, Joseph my last born:
- 2 Thou wast born in the wilderness of mine afflictions,
Yea in the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee;
- 3 And may the Lord consecrate also unto thee this land, which is a most precious land, for thine inheritance
And the inheritance of thy seed with thy brethren, for thy security for ever,
If it so be that ye shall keep the commandments of the Holy One of Israel.
- 4 And now, Joseph my last born whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions,
May the Lord bless thee for ever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed;
- 5 For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins,
And I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt;
- 6 And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph,
Wherefore Joseph truly saw our day;
- 7 And he obtained a promise of the Lord that out of the fruit of his loins
The Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel;
- 8 Not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off,
Nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord,
- 9 That the Messiah should be made manifest unto them 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 Lehi quotes the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt, 2:10-47

10 For Joseph truly testified, saying:

“A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.”

11 Yea, Joseph truly said:

- “Thus saith the Lord unto me:
A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins,
And he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins;
- 12 And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren,
Which shall be of great worth unto them,
Even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers;
- 13 And I will give unto him a commandment that he shall do none other work
Save the work which I shall command him;
- 14 And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work;
- 15 And he shall be great like unto Moses whom I have said I would raise up unto you,
To deliver my people, O house of Israel;
- 16 And Moses will I raise up to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt;
- 17 But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins;
And unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins;
- 18 And not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord,
But to the convincing them of my word which shall have already gone forth among them.
- 19 “Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write;
And the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write;
- 20 And that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins,

- And also that which shall be written by the fruit of
the loins of Judah,
Shall grow together
- 21 Unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying
down of contentions
And establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins,
- 22 **And bringing them to the knowledge of their
fathers in the latter days,**
- 23 **And also to the knowledge of my covenants,
saith the Lord;**
- 24 And out of weakness he shall be made strong
In that day when my work shall commence among
all my people,
Unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the
Lord.”
- 25 **And thus prophesied Joseph, saying:**
- “Behold, that seer will the Lord bless;
And they that seek to destroy him shall be con-
founded;
For this promise of which I have obtained of the
Lord of the fruit of thy loins shall be fulfilled;
Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise;
And his name shall be called after me,
And it shall be after the name of his father;
And he shall be like unto me,
For the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his
hand by the power of the Lord
Shall bring my people unto salvation.”
- 31 **Yea, thus prophesied Joseph:**
- “I am sure of this thing even as I am sure of the
promise of Moses,
For the Lord hath said unto me, I will preserve thy
seed for ever;
And the Lord hath said, I will raise up a Moses;
And I will give power unto him in a rod;
And I will give judgment unto him in writing.
Yet I will not loose his tongue that he shall speak
much,
For I will not make him mighty in speaking;
But I will write unto him my law by the finger of
mine own hand
And I will make *one* a spokesman for him.
- 36 “And the Lord said unto me also:
I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins and I will
make for him a spokesman;
- 37 And I, behold I, will give unto him that he shall
write the writing of the fruit of thy loins
Unto the fruit of thy loins;
And the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it;
- 38 And the words which he shall write shall be the
words which *is* expedient in my wisdom should go
forth unto the fruit of thy loins;
- 39 “And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried
unto them from the dust, for I know their faith;
40 And they shall cry from the dust, yea even repen-
tance unto their brethren,
Even after many generations have gone by them.
- 41 “And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go
even according to the simpleness of their words
because of their faith;
42 Their words shall proceed forth out of my mouth
unto their brethren who are the fruit of thy loins;
43 And the weakness of their words will I make strong
in their faith,
Unto the remembering of my covenant which I
made unto thy fathers.”
- 44 **And now behold, my son Joseph, after this manner
did my father of old prophesy:**
- 45 “Wherefore, because of this covenant thou art
blessed, for thy seed shall not be destroyed,
For they shall hearken unto the words of the book;
46 And there shall raise up one mighty among them
who shall do much good, both in word and in
deed,
Being an instrument in the hands of God with
exceeding faith,
47 To work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is
great in the sight of God,
Unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the
house of Israel and unto the seed of thy breth-
ren.”
- 3 ***Lehi blesses his son Joseph, 2:48-50***
- 48 And now blessed art thou, Joseph;
49 Behold, thou art little;
Wherefore, hearken unto the words of thy brother
Nephi
And it shall be done unto thee even according to the
words which I have spoken.
- 50 Remember the words of thy dying father. Amen.

Fig. 2 A poetry-like arrangement of the text by Ed Faunce from the *Study Book of Mormon* project. The chiastic center-point of the second chapter is found in verses 22 and 23. The shaded verses (10,11, 25, 31, 44) indicate Lehi’s interjections within the prophecy to Joseph of Egypt as found on the plates of brass. Italicized words (vv. 35 and 38) are manuscript corrections.

Chiasmus settles the question

The Hebrew nature of the Book of Mormon continues to validate the authenticity of the book. Over the past few years new insights have been gleaned by identifying the ancient literary forms of the Hebrew

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style of writing. One such form which has been used is chiasmus, a type of Hebrew poetry.

What shall be presented in this article is a testimony of how the recognition and study of chiasmus aids in deciphering the speaker in controversial passages in Lehi's blessing of Joseph as well as the blessing of unity of thought, when two are asking and do not ask amiss.

Shirley Heater had been studying Joseph's blessing (2 Nephi 2) in preparation for work on the second volume of the *Study Book of Mormon*. Shirley asked if I would also make a study of the same chapter. We decided to work independently and then later collaborate our findings.

As I began my initial study of Joseph's blessing, I approached the chapter as if I were reading the words for the first time. I did not rely on any previous works of

research, for I did not want to be biased by others' findings.

In the course of the study, I felt I needed to identify the speaker of each passage. (Careful study will reveal this sequence of speakers: Lehi, the Lord to Joseph of Egypt, and Lehi.)

I felt I was gaining insight to the identification of the speakers, yet one passage (vv. 44-47) continued to be the exception. Where did the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt end? Where did the words of Lehi, directed to his young son, begin?

On the morning that Shirley and I had agreed to share our findings I was still laboring over verses 44-47. As I again approached verse 43, I was nearing frustration because I knew the enlightenment was so close, yet I could not "see."

After reading verse 43, my mind was diverted by the ringing of the telephone. Upon answering the call, I recognized the voice of one of my student's parents. (I teach second grade.) The call was an invitation to attend his son's baptism. In the course of our conversation, I acknowledged the fact that making a covenant was very important. Then following other words of exchange, the call ended.

As I hung up the phone, I thought about the timing of the call and cried out, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me?"

As I went back to my desk to resume studying, the word *covenant* in verse 43 seemed to leap out before

me. With "new" eyes I saw a small chiasm contained within the entire chiastic second chapter:

- 43 A And the weakness of their words will I make strong in their faith,
Unto the remembering of my **covenant** which I made unto thy fathers.
- 44 B *And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did my father of old prophesy:*
- 45 A Wherefore, because of this **covenant**, thou art blessed, . . .

Recognizing the chiasm identified the speakers of verses 44-47. Verse 43 was the words of the Lord to Joseph of Egypt and verse 44 was the words of Lehi. I saw that verses 45-

In that reflective moment, few words were exchanged. We realized the Lord had directed us, independently, in our study.

47 were a continuation of the Lord speaking to Joseph of Egypt.

Verse 44 was inserted by Lehi to refocus young Joseph's attention. I feel this is so because when I teach young children, I often use statements to refocus their attention

when important words are going to be presented. The insertion of verse 44 caused me to refocus upon the word "covenant" in the preceding (v. 43) and following verse (45).

As I prepared to meet with Shirley, I prayed that if my conclusions were correct, our findings would reinforce one another and we would have unity of thought.

Shirley and I met at the Zarahemla office and I proceeded to share the results of my work. After elaborating over my intent and process used in studying, I began to relay my experience with the word "covenant."

Shirley nodded in agreement and showed me her copy of the chiasm with special emphasis upon the word "covenant." In that reflective moment, few words were exchanged. We realized the Lord had directed us, independently, in our study. Juxtaposed with seeking, chiasms were keys in unlocking our understanding of the written word.

The blessings received from this study experience were two fold. Firstly, I gained a greater appreciation for the Hebrew structure of the Book of Mormon because once again the Hebrew literary style of writing validates the authenticity of the book. Secondly, because of the blessing of unity of thought which I had sought, I can claim the promise contained in Matthew 18:19:

If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they ask, that they may not ask amiss, It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

ZRF

We're Sorry!

This issue of the *Record* is late due to a computer breakdown.

The Editors

BLESSING cont'd from pg. 2

A small chiasm clarifies who is speaking

From time to time in the process of reading Joseph of Egypt's prophecy, Lehi inserts his own words to his son. In figure 2, which is the poetic arrangement of the entire text of chapter two, the highlighted phrases are Lehi's interjections. They are easily identified in verses 10, 11, 25, 31 and 44. However, verse 45 to the end has usually been ascribed to Lehi. A careful comparison of verses 43 and 45, however, shows that the subject of the covenant is being continued. Therefore, verses 45 thru 48 are the concluding words of Joseph of Egypt. Lehi concludes his blessing to little Joseph in verses 48 to 50.

In the process of trying to determine who was speaking throughout the chapter, I noticed that the word "covenant" in verses 43 and 45 stood out, linking the message of the two verses together. This small chiasm, which was discovered independently by Linda Rowland, confirms that verses 45-47 are a continuation of the words of Joseph of Egypt. (Italics indicate Lehi's words.)

- A And the weakness of their **words** will I make strong in their faith,
Unto the remembering of my
B **covenant** which I made unto thy fathers.
C *And now behold my son Joseph, after this manner did my father of old prophesy:*
B' Wherefore, because of this **covenant** thou art blessed,
For thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall
A' hearken unto the **words** of the book.

What is the significance of identifying three verses, 45-47, as the words of Joseph of Egypt?

- 1) It broadens the promise to the seed not being destroyed (v. 45) to the entire tribe of Joseph (including both Ephraim and Manasseh).
- 2) The one mighty who shall do much toward restoring the knowledge of the covenants to the seed of the tribe of Joseph may be from either Ephraim or Manasseh. If these were Lehi's words, the one mighty would be restricted to the tribe of Manasseh.

This is a clear example of how understanding the "learning of the Jews," e.g. chiasmus, leads to the correct interpretation of disputed passages.

Lehi's careful chiastic structuring of his son's blessing confirms to us once again that understanding the Hebrew nature of the Book of Mormon is indeed a key to understanding the message of the book!

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New Archaeological Site Reveals Massive Fortifications

The *Los Angeles Times* of August 14, 1989, announced the discovery of a heavily fortified Maya site in the lowlands of Guatemala near the Mexican border. Arthur Demarest of Vanderbilt University is head of the one million dollar archaeological project funded by National Geographic Society and the Guggenheim Foundation. The massive fortifications of the site dating around AD 825 surpass anything found in Maya archaeology to date. The Book of Mormon description in Mormon 4:10 is being confirmed.

PROPHECIES cont'd

from pg. 1

1. **Identification of Sin:** (Alma 7:8) "And I [Alma] stood with boldness to declare unto them [people of Ammonihah]. . .how have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers; yea, how soon ye have forgotten the commandments of God."

2. **Need for Repentance:** (Alma 7:13) "Behold, now I say unto you, that he [God] commandeth you to repent. . ."

3. **Judgment of God (if people do not repent):** (Alma 7:24) "But behold, I say unto you, that if ye persist in your wickedness, that your days shall not be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you."

4. **Future in Jesus Christ:** (Alma

7:40) "And not many days hence, the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father: full of grace, equity, and truth; full of patience, mercy and long suffering; quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers."

MESSAGES OF LEHI AND ABINADI

Additional examples of the prophetic pattern can be found in the account of Lehi's prophecy to the people of Jerusalem, and also in Abinadi's message to the people of King Noah in the land of Nephi. These examples are referenced below:

Lehi's message to the people of Jerusalem:

1. Identification of sin (I Nephi 1:19)
2. Need for repentance (I Nephi 1:3)
3. Judgment of God (I Nephi 1:12)
4. Future in Jesus Christ (I Nephi 1:20)

Abinadi's message to the people of King Noah in the land of Nephi:

1. Identification of sin (Mosiah 7:31)
2. Need for repentance (Mosiah 7:31, 46)
3. Judgment of God (Mosiah 7:35, 48-56)
4. Future in Jesus Christ (Mosiah 8:89-91; 9:1)

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