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Priests and Teachers

by David Lamb

Recently while thumbing through *The Jewish Kids Catalog*, by Chaya M. Burstein, the following inscription caught my eye: "This book is dedicated to the memory of my *parents and teachers*, [emphasis added] Benjamin and Rivka Malamud . . ." I smiled because contained within this tender sentence of dedication is a Hebrew attitude toward teaching and authority which has survived the ages.

From the beginning of Israel's history the home was the center of education. Both parents shared in this task (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20), though the father was primarily responsible for the instruction of the children (Deuteronomy 11:19). In Jewish tradition, the home was the center for learning, and the parents, as authoritative figures of the household, were considered to be teachers as well as parents. This idea was so firmly established within Israelite society that parents were addressed and referred to as "parents and teachers." As can be seen from the example cited above, this traditional perspective of intertwining authority and teaching has survived through many generations.

This traditional relationship between authoritative figures and teaching is not exclusive to the Jewish home, but can be found

throughout Jewish society. To the Hebrew mind, education and learning are of the essence. Therefore, leaders of the community, whether civil or religious, were to be knowledgeable and mature individuals capable of conveying their wisdom and experience to others. Thus influential members of Jewish society were considered to be teachers as well as leaders and were referred to as such.

Examples of this Jewish perspective are documented throughout the Bible. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra is often referred to as "a priest, a scribe" (note, a scribe is a teacher of the law). The reference to "pastors and teachers" in Ephesians 4:11 follows this same pattern. The role of a pastor is to teach as well as shepherd his people. However, the ultimate example is found in John 13:13-14 as Jesus acknowledges his position of authority to his disciples (students), "Ye call me *Master and Lord*; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your *Lord and Master*, have washed your feet . . . [emphasis added]" (note, the Greek word for "Master," *Didaskalos*, means "Teacher.")

As can be expected, the Book of Mormon has several examples of this interconnecting relationship between leadership and teaching.

These examples not only give evidence that the Book of Mormon is indeed a Hebrew book written by Hebrew authors, but recognition of this tradition can provide proper interpretation for certain verses of scripture which have previously been misinterpreted due to our lack of Hebraic understanding.

In First Nephi 1:56 we find that Nephi is referred to as a "ruler and a teacher" over his brothers:

And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments,
Thou shalt be made a *ruler and a teacher* over thy brethren
[emphasis added].

This same terminology is also found in First Nephi 5:48 and Second Nephi 4:30. The words of King Benjamin in Mosiah 1:67, provide us with another example:

. . . I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together that I might declare unto you that I can no longer be *your teacher nor your king*
[emphasis added].

Perhaps the most interesting and misunderstood usage of this traditional imagery is found in Second Nephi 4:42:

. . . that they (the remnant of the house of Israel) may know the covenants of the Lord . . .

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Needed: A Revelation About Types

Looking for types in the word of God is a very fruitful and exciting way to study. It is also a necessary form of study if we want to obtain everything possible from the word of God. The discovery of types will not only provide you with additional prophecy that you did not know was in the word of God, but this revelation will also give you assurance that God really is in control.

What do we mean when we say a certain passage of scripture is a type? We mean that it is a pattern for future events. The *American College Dictionary* says a type is "a prefiguring symbol as an Old Testament event prefiguring an event in the New Testament." Therefore, we can also say that a type is a prophecy because it prefigures or foretells future events. A type is a likeness. Consider this verse about types:

And, behold, all things have their *likeness*;
And all things are created and made to bear record of me:
Both things which are temporal, and things which are
spiritual;
Things which are in the heavens above, and things which
are on the earth,
And things which are in the earth, and things which are
under the earth, both above and beneath,
All things bear record of me [emphasis added]. Genesis 6:66

If the physical world is a type for the Creator, then certainly the word of God can also be a type. I believe that every significant event that will happen between now and the beginning of the millenium is in the word of God. Many of these events are in type form. If this statement is true and if we have our own revelation as to its truthfulness, then our scripture study will become more exciting as we expectantly look forward to unlocking the prophecies hidden in types.

How do we discover types? By pondering the story line. Nephi wanted to know the meaning of his father's vision. As he sat pondering in his heart, God gave him the vision and the meaning of it (1 Nephi 3:37-38).

Lehi's vision tells us there are four responses to the word of God. The top response includes pondering. Psalm 1 is the Bible version of Lehi's vision. Psalm 1:2 gives us the top response:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord;
And in his law doth he *meditate* day and night [emphasis added].

To meditate means to ponder, therefore, choosing the top response means that we are constantly pondering

the word of God.

Of the four responses, the top response is the only one that bears fruit. The other three responses all end up rejecting the word of God.

In Lehi's vision, the second best response is partaking of the fruit and then becoming ashamed. If we do not want to become ashamed of the word of God then we must make the top response like Nephi did and not be ashamed. We do this by refusing to listen to the advice of unbelievers and by keeping our covenant.

The conclusion to all of this is that if we do respond properly we will ponder and we will discover the types God has put into his word. Not only that, but the promises of Psalm 1:3 will be fulfilled in our lives:

And he shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

If you want to prosper, start pondering.

Most Book of Mormon believers do not know its story line very well. The more we learn about types, the greater will be our motivation to become acquainted with the stories in the Book of Mormon with an eye to unlocking the prophecies in the types.

The purpose principle says that what is in the Book of Mormon is there for a purpose. This is a valid principle which is well documented in the Book of Mormon. This means there is a purpose for everything in the Book of Mormon including the story line. Nephi tells us:

Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the
truth of the coming of Christ;
For, for this end hath the law of Moses been given;
And all things which have been given of God from the
beginning of the world are the typifying of him.

2 Nephi 8:7-9

Lehi's Wilderness Journey a Type

Let's take a look at the story of Lehi and his group in their journey from Jerusalem to the land of promise. We are told in Alma 17:80 that this journey is a type for the life of the believer until we enter our land of promise:

And now I say,
Is there not a type in this thing?
For just as surely as this director did bring our father, by
following its course, to the promised land

Shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course,
Carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of
promise.

God warns Lehi to flee from Jerusalem. Jerusalem represents the wicked world. As believers we, like Lehi, are warned by God to flee from the ways of the wicked world. After three days they make camp. They are told to go back to obtain the plates of brass. We, like Lehi and his group, need the word of God to guide us on our journey to the land of promise. In Mosiah 1:4-7 we read about the plates of brass and how Lehi and the rest would have dwindled in unbelief without the word of God. Lehi had to journey through a wilderness. The wilderness journey is part of the life of every believer as a test of our belief in the word of God. We, like Lehi, have a compass (the word of God) to guide us in a direct course through the wilderness. If we are slothful, our wilderness journey will be longer than necessary. Remember that the children of Israel spent forty years in the wilderness when a direct course would have led them to the promised land in less than two weeks. It took Lehi eight years to pass through the wilderness. They could have passed through sooner as we read in Alma 17:76-77:

They were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and
diligence,
And then those marvelous works ceased and they did not
progress in their journey.
Therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a
direct course,
And were afflicted with hunger and thirst because of their
transgression.

This type has a powerful message for us. Do not be discouraged by the wilderness journey. You will get through it if you give heed to the compass—the word of God. Our discussion has not by any means exhausted this type so study it yourself for further insights.

Nephites/Lamanites a Type

Another type emerges from this story. We know that Nephi exercised belief and that Laman and Lemuel exercised unbelief. Throughout the Book of Mormon the Nephites are a type for the believers and the Lamanites are a type for the forces of Satan. The only exception to this is when the Lamanites were converted. The problems the Nephites had with the Lamanites were in inverse proportion to their diligence in keeping the word of God. This is a very fruitful type which we all need to study in order to learn how to handle the spiritual opposition in our lives.

Warfare a Type

Another major type in the Book of Mormon comes from warfare. Physical warfare in the Book of Mormon is a type for spiritual warfare. I have heard several

people say they were turned off by the Book of Mormon because of the warfare. The purpose principle tells us that the warfare was there for a purpose, as it is in the Bible. It is the description of the warfare that gives us information about geography. However, now we can add that the warfare, as a type, gives us much valuable information on how to fight spiritual battles.

The following example was brought to my attention by David Lamb. In Alma 20:49 we see that the Lamanites slew many of the Nephites by cutting their head-plates in half, piercing their breastplates and cutting off their arms. This sequence is not coincidental but is a type telling us how Satan overcomes us. First, he attacks our head, or in other words, he puts a thought in our mind. If we entertain the thought and do not cast it out it will enter into our heart or our spirit. At this point Satan is piercing our breastplate. As we continue to rebel by following Satanic thoughts the Holy Spirit begins to withdraw from us and we become spiritually weak. This is like having our arms cut off, meaning that we no longer have power to do God's will. This is the outcome of those who entertain incorrect thoughts. As with the other types mentioned, we should all be motivated to study the warfare in the Book of Mormon to unlock the spiritual types.

158-Year Type

In the *Zarahemla Record* #46 is a discussion of another major type called the *158 years. The 158 years covers the time from 124 B.C. when Mosiah II became king to A.D. 34, the year of the coming of Jesus Christ. The books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman and Third Nephi cover this period. The 158 years are a small part of the 1,021 years of Nephite history, but they make up a large part of the Book of Mormon. Because Mormon was directed what to put in the Book of Mormon, we know that so much information about such a short period of time was part of a deliberate plan by God. This period is, in fact, a type dealing with the gathering, the gospel going to all the world, the tribulation and the coming of Christ in glory, followed by the millenium.

It is very revealing to note that in the book of Helaman, which is in the middle of the tribulation, there are periods of great prosperity for the believers when tens of thousands of people join the church. Also in Third Nephi 2 we have the story of Lachoneus who defeated the Gaddianton robbers (the forces of Satan) by gathering all non-robbers into one place with provision for seven years. It should be pointed out that at the three-and-a-half-year point of the seven years they had the greatest battle ever in the life of the Nephites. This type correlates with Revelation 9:16 that speaks of the greatest battle ever in the history of mankind at the three-and-a-half-year point of a seven-year sequence.

This discussion has only touched a few points of some of the types in the Book of Mormon. I hope this information will help you to obtain your own revelation of the

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph,
That they should be *priests and teachers* over the land of my people [emphasis added].

In this usage, the reference to "priests and teachers" is not a reference to two separate priesthood offices. It is a traditional Jewish perspective of intertwining teaching with authority. Nephi consecrated both of his brothers to be priests, whose primary duty was to teach the people. This is verified by Jacob 1:18-19:

For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph, had been consecrated *priests and teachers* of this people by the hand of Nephi.
And we did magnify *our office* unto the Lord,
Taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads,
If we did not *teach* them the word of God with all diligence [emphasis added].

Note that the reference to "our office" is singular. Jacob and Joseph were both consecrated to the office

of priest with the primary duty of teaching the word of God to the people.

Recognition of this Jewish perspective concerning teaching and leadership provides us with correct interpretation of these verses.

To reiterate, in this usage the reference to "priests and teachers" is not a reference to two separate priesthood offices, but reflects a traditional Jewish custom of identifying leadership with the function of teaching.

With the exception of Mosiah 1:67, this imagery is exclusive to the writings of Nephi.

The discussed relationship between authoritative figures and teaching is a Jewish tradition which has survived through the ages and is evidenced in contemporary Jewish literature as well as in ancient texts.

Recognition of this Hebrew perspective within the Book of Mormon not only validates that it is indeed a Hebrew book, but understanding of this traditional concept provides proper interpretation for certain scriptural passages as well.

The key to fully understanding the scriptures is truly in understanding "the learning of the Jews." ZRF

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importance of types and motivate you to look at the Book of Mormon with renewed expectation and excitement.

In summary, types are a pattern found in scripture which foretell future events. Types are only gleaned by those who "feast" on the word of God. Pondering and meditating on the stories in scripture gives powerful understanding about how to apply to our personal lives the principles found in the word of God. ZRF

*Additional information regarding the 158-year type can be found in the Survey of the Book of Mormon, an eight-hour audio tape set with handout. Available from ZRF for \$20 plus \$3.00 postage and handling.

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