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“This Son Shall Comfort Us”: An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs

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“THIS SON SHALL COMFORT US”: AN ONOMASTIC TALE OF TWO NOAHS

Matthew L. Bowen

*ABSTRACT: From an etiological perspective, the Hebrew Bible connects the name Noah with two distinct but somewhat homonymous verbal roots: *nwh* (“rest”) and *nhm* (“comfort,” “regret” [sometimes “repent”]). Significantly, the Enoch and Noah material in the revealed text of the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis (especially Moses 7–8) also connects the name Noah in a positive sense to the earth’s “rest” and the Lord’s covenant with Enoch after the latter “refuse[d] to be comforted” regarding the imminent destruction of humanity in the flood. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, connects the name Noah pejoratively to Hebrew *nwh* (“rest”) and *nhm* (“comfort” and “repentance” [regret]) in a negative evaluation of King Noah, the son of Zeniff. King Noah causes his people to “labor exceedingly to support iniquity” (Mosiah 11:6), gives “rest” to his wicked and corrupt priests (Mosiah 11:11), and anesthetizes his people in their sins with his winemaking. Noah and his people’s refusal to “repent” and their martyring of Abinadi result in their coming into hard bondage to the Lamanites. Mormon’s text further demonstrates how the Lord eventually “comforts” Noah’s former subjects after their “sore repentance” and “sincere repentance” from their iniquity and abominations, providing them a typological deliverance that points forward to the atonement of Jesus Christ.*

“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.” (Isaiah 49:13)

Part I

The “Rest” that “Comforts”: The Literary Treatment of Noah’s Name in Genesis

Evidence from the Book of Mormon (Ether 7:14–15; 18–21) further suggests that the biblical name *Noah*, in one form or another, antedates biblical Hebrew. However, to those for whom Biblical Hebrew became a written and spoken language, “Noah” would have connoted “[divine] rest.”¹ The biblical account that tells the story of the patriarch Noah and the Flood interplays the form *nōah* with forms of the related root *nwh* (to “rest”)² and the partly homonymous and partly synonymous but distinct verbal root *nḥm* (to “regret” or “be sorry”; “console oneself,” or “comfort” someone)³ throughout the Flood narrative. The narrator explains that Noah (*nōah* “[divine] rest”) was so named because he would “comfort” (*yěnahāmēnū*) his forefathers concerning their work and toil (Genesis 5:29). This etiological, midrashic⁴ etymology interplays with the Lord’s “regretting” (*wayyinnāhem*, *nihamtī*) his having created humanity (Genesis 6:6–7). The wordplay then shifts from *nḥm* to *nwh* (“rest”), with the ark coming to “rest” (*wattānah*, Genesis 8:4), the dove’s attempting to find “rest” (*mānōah*, Genesis 8:9), and the “sweet savour” (*rēah hannihōah*) of the sacrifice that appeased the Lord after the flood (Genesis 8:21).⁵

Terrence Szink has identified “wordplay” on Noah in terms of “rest” in Moses 7.⁶ In this study, I aim to extend Szink’s observations to show

1. As Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 685, put it, the name Noah belongs to “a personage from pre-Israelite tradition whose name sounded to Israelite ears like the verb [*nūah*].” Hereafter this work is cited as HALOT.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 688–89.

4. I use the term *midrashic etymology* — i.e., (creatively) interpretive etymology — rather than popular etymology or “folk-etymology.” There is little or no evidence that the biblical etiologies which incorporate onomastic wordplay relied on or incorporated “folk-etymology.” Many of these wordplays exploit the names in sometimes solemn, sometimes playful, and often ironic ways.

5. Isaac M. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman, et al. (NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1123–24. See also Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gal, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 203–04.

6. Terrence L. Szink, “The Vision of Enoch: Structure of a Masterpiece,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17/1–2 (2008): 13–14, 18.

that the inspired restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis has an even richer and more sophisticated nexus of wordplay on the name Noah, involving both the *nḥm* and *nwh* roots — “comfort” and “rest.” Moreover, I will expand on my own previous observations⁷ on the evidence of pejorative wordplay on the name Noah in Mosiah 11–12 to show that the narrator — Mormon or his source, Alma the Elder — used wordplay on the roots *nḥm* and *nwh* to create a negative inversion of the positive biblical wordplay on the name Noah to emphasize just how catastrophic his reign had been for his people.

The sophisticated nature of the proposed onomastic wordplay on the name Noah has important implications for Joseph Smith as translator. The restored text of the Enoch narrative from JST Genesis (now canonized in the Book of Moses), like the Book of Mormon itself, offers internal evidence that *both documents* are better understood as translations/restorations of — and windows on — real ancient texts rather than as mere 19th century pseudepigrapha.

“I Will Refuse to Be Comforted” (Moses 7:44)

One of the remarkable features of the Enoch material in JST Genesis (i.e., Moses 6–7) is Enoch’s vision of his descendant Noah, which is given to Enoch before Noah’s birth. It is here, well before an explicit etiological explanation for the name Noah is offered (as in Genesis 5:29/Moses 8:9), that the narrative’s direct wordplay on the name Noah begins.

And Enoch also saw Noah, and his family; that the posterity of all the sons of Noah should be saved with a temporal salvation; Wherefore Enoch saw that Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand; but upon the residue of the wicked the floods came and swallowed them up, And as Enoch saw this, he *had bitterness of soul*, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: *I will refuse to be comforted*; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look. And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed,

7. These observations regarding pejorative wordplay on the name Noah are found in Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And He Was a Young Man’: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay,” *Insights* 30 (2010): 2–3.

that all they that *mourn* may be sanctified and have eternal life? (Moses 7:42–45)

The collocation “refuse to be comforted,” as used here by Enoch, is abundantly attested throughout the Hebrew Bible. The Psalmist recalls, “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: *my soul refused to be comforted* [mē’ānā hinnāhēm napšî]” (Psalms 77:2 [MT 77:3]).⁸ Similarly, Jeremiah records the Babylonian destruction of Ramah in the tribal land of Benjamin, just north of Jerusalem at the time of the exile: “Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel [Rachel] weeping for her children *refused to be comforted* [mē’ānā lēhinnāhēm] for her children, because they were not” (Jeremiah 31:15).⁹ Nearer the Noah story in Genesis, at the beginning of the Joseph cycle, we note Jacob’s making a similar declaration after his son Joseph’s apparent demise: “And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to *comfort him* [lēnaḥāmō]; *but he refused to be comforted* [wa-yēmā’ēn lēhitnaḥēm]; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him” (Genesis 37:35).

In the context of the narrative, Enoch’s declaration “*I will refuse to be comforted*” clearly anticipates the formal etiology subsequently proffered in Genesis 5:29/Moses 8:9: “And he called his name Noah, saying: This [son] *shall comfort us* [Hebrew yēnaḥāmēnû] concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed” (see further below). Enoch’s “refus[al] to be comforted” thus frames Noah’s story in an entirely new way and helps us understand the “comfort” which Lamech foresees (and which the Lord shows Enoch) Noah will bring. Noah and his posterity — specifically his descendant Jesus Christ — will eventually bring “comfort” and “rest” to the earth in a manner that vastly transcends the idea that the patriarch Noah would merely give “comfort” as a winemaker (see below). Noah’s seed would include the Messiah,¹⁰ who would atone so that “all they that mourn may be

8. For those who wish to draw additional connections between the figure of Ut-Napishtim and Noah, the phrase “bitterness of soul” (*mārat nāpeš*, *mārat nepeš*, or *mār nepeš* [etc.] 1 Samuel 1:10; Job 7:11; 10:1; 21:25; Isaiah 38:15) will make an interesting point of comparison. The Hebrew word *nepeš* (“soul,” “life,” “throat”) is cognate with Akkadian *napištu(m)*. The name Ut-Napishtim means “he has found life.”

9. Matthew cites the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:5 with Herod’s slaughter of male infants in Matthew 2:18.

10. Moses 7:53.

sanctified" (Moses 7:45) — i.e., "comforted" (Isaiah 61:2; Matthew 5:4; 3 Nephi 12:4).

"When Shall I Rest"? (Moses 7:48–49)

In response to Enoch's question "When shall the blood of the righteous [i.e., the Messiah] be shed, that *all they that mourn* may be sanctified and have eternal life?" (Moses 7:45), the Lord responded: "It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance" (Moses 7:46). Enoch was then shown those days: "And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his *soul rejoiced*, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me" (Moses 7:47). Enoch's previous "bitterness of soul" is here replaced by "his soul[s] rejoic[ing]." Enoch's soul rejoiced, not at the Son of Man's atoning suffering (of course), but at what his death meant for Enoch and his people. The at-one-ment that Enoch and Zion would experience with the Father and the Son, described here as a divine embrace, would be effected by the suffering Son of Man — the Righteous, the Lamb — and his being "lifted up."

Nevertheless, Enoch's weeping swiftly returns when he hears a voice from a most unexpected source:

And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. *When shall I rest* and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? *When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest* and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? And when Enoch heard *the earth mourn*, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? *Wilt thou not bless the children of Noah?* (Moses 7:48–49)

Enoch hears the voice of the Earth herself — the *'ādāmā* — the mother (*'ēm*) of men (*'ādām*). Enoch had rejoiced at the atonement, because it meant the sanctification of the righteous, including his Zion. But the earth remained unsanctified and under a curse.¹¹ Thus when

11. See, e.g., Genesis 3:17 (Moses 4:23); Genesis 5:29 (Moses 8:9); Moses 5:56; 7:8a; 8:4; 2 Nephi 1:7; Jacob 2:29; Jacob 3:3; Enos 1:10; Alma 37:28, 31; 45:16; 3 Nephi 3:24; Deuteronomy 29:27; Helaman 13:17–36; Mormon 1:17–18; Ether 7:23; 9:28; 11:6; cf. Genesis 8:21; Ether 9:16; D&C 38:18; 61:17.

Enoch hears the earth herself declaring that she is “pained” and “weary” because of the wickedness of the human family and hears her “mourn,” he weeps again. Just as Enoch had asked the Lord regarding when the atonement would be effected so that “all that they who mourned might be sanctified and have eternal life,” so now the earth herself asks, “When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest ...?” Or in other words: when will my Creator fully *atone* me¹² that I may rest?

The twofold repetition of “rest” with the name “Noah” (“rest”) in Moses 7:48-49 constitutes yet another play on the meaning of the name Noah. The earth’s “sanctification” and “rest” are bound-up with the destiny of the “children of Noah.” The time of the earth’s rest is proleptically withheld at this point in the text. However, the wordplay on “Noah” in terms of “rest” reminds us that the promises to Enoch reside and abide in Noah and “the children of Noah.”

“When the Son of Man Cometh Shall the Earth Rest?”

Enoch’s petitioning of the Lord does not cease with these questions but rather intensifies. Enoch adjures the Lord on behalf of his descendant Noah and Noah’s posterity:

And it came to pass that Enoch continued his cry unto the Lord, saying: *I ask thee, O Lord, in the name of thine Only Begotten, even Jesus Christ, that thou wilt have mercy upon Noah and his seed*, that the earth might never more be covered by the floods. And the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath, that he would stay the floods; *that he would call upon the children of Noah*; And he sent forth an unalterable decree, that a remnant of his seed should always be found among all nations, while the earth should stand; And the Lord said: Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come; for he saith — I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity; whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall; wherefore, blessed are they of whom I have spoken, for they shall come forth with songs of everlasting joy. And it came to pass that Enoch cried unto the Lord, saying: *When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh, shall the earth rest*? I pray thee, show me these things. (Moses 7:50-54)

12. Cf. especially Deuteronomy 32:43: “[the Lord] *will be merciful unto [wēkipper, literally atone] his land, and to his people.*”

Enoch adjures the Lord to "have mercy upon Noah and his seed [posterity]" so that — or with the result that — the earth will "never more" be flooded. Poignantly, the narrator states that "the Lord could not withhold" and thus "covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath that he would stay the floods." The Lord also swore that he would "call upon the children of Noah" with an accompanying decree that Noah's posterity would "be found among all nations" in perpetuity. The Lord then adds the promise that the Messiah — he himself — would come into the world as the "seed" of both Enoch and later Noah.

This promise elicits the same question that the earth asked ("when shall I rest?") from Enoch which, in the context of all the foregoing, plays on the name of "Noah" ("rest") yet again: "When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh shall the earth rest?" In response, the Lord shows Enoch his own future suffering — his agony on the cross. Any forthcoming "rest" for the suffering earth will come through Noah's seed, and in particular through Messiah, his suffering descendant, but not for a very long time.

"When Shall the Earth Rest?" II (Moses 7:55–58)

Enoch's vision of the Son of Man's crucifixion is bracketed by the question "When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh shall the earth rest?" (v. 54) on the one end, and his subsequent question "when shall the earth rest?" (v. 58) on the other. The Lord's answer to the first question amounts to a "no." In fact, the earth will continue to "mourn" and "groan." Moreover, the earth's greatest suffering will be concomitant with her Creator's suffering (we recall her question, "when will my Creator sanctify me?"):

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Look, and he looked and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men; And he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and *all the creations of God mourned*; and *the earth groaned*; and the rocks were rent; and the saints arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory; And as many of the spirits as were in prison came forth, and stood on the right hand of God; and the remainder were reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. And again Enoch wept and cried unto the Lord, saying: *When shall the earth rest?* (Moses 7:55–58)

The text previously mentions that "Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man" while "the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth" (Moses 7:24). Now, conversely,

Enoch sees the “Son of Man *lifted up* on the cross” (Moses 7:55) after he has “come in the flesh” (Moses 7:47). Amid the Son of Man’s destruction of Satan’s power, the creations of God “mourn” and the earth “groan[s],” suffering just as their creator suffers.¹³ Thus, the foregoing wordplay on Noah in terms of “comfort” (*nĥm*) and “rest” is further enriched by the use of the verb “groaned.” The Hebrew verb *nĥ* (“groan”) is both homonymous with and directly related to the verb *nwh* (“rest”).¹⁴ The mourning of God’s creations and the groaning¹⁵ of the earth recall the earth’s previous mourning and pleas for “rest.”

Enoch weeps for the misery of the earth and the suffering of those spirits “reserved in chains of darkness” — misery and suffering that elicit the question “When shall the earth *rest*?” (Moses 7:58). The earth’s “groan[ing]” (*nĥ*) adds plaintive urgency to Enoch’s repetition of his earlier entreaty, and both stress the name Noah as a symbol of the Lord’s ultimate resolution of ills, which the narrative and the reader anticipate.

“And the Day Shall Come When the Earth Shall Rest” (Moses 7:59–61)

At this point Enoch sees Jesus’s ascension to the Father, a sight which, rather than comforting or consoling Enoch, elicits yet additional questions, followed by the Lord’s response:

And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father; and he called unto the Lord, saying: Wilt thou not come again upon the earth? Forasmuch as thou art God, and I know thee, and thou hast sworn unto me, and commanded me that I should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten; thou hast made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace; wherefore, I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth. And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in

13. According to Nephi, the prophet Zenos specifically referred to the concomitant suffering of the creator and creation: “And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the *groanings* [*’ānāhā* = “sighing, groaning” **’ānāhôt* “sighings,” “groanings”] of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: *The God of nature suffers*” (1 Nephi 19:12). On *’ānāhā*, see HALOT, 71. Cf. Lamentations 1:22.

14. HALOT, 70–71.

15. Cf. Paul’s statement in Romans 8:22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

the days of wickedness and vengeance, *to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah*; And the day shall come that the earth shall *rest*, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve. (Moses 7:59–61)

The Lord takes an additional oath (“as I live”)¹⁶ that he will “come in the last days, the days of wickedness and vengeance” — days mirroring the “wickedness and vengeance” of Enoch’s and Noah’s own times — thus confirming the oath that the Lord had previously sworn to Enoch “concerning the children of Noah.” The Lord finally states that after his coming, “the day shall come that the earth shall rest.” The close juxtaposition of the name Noah with the word “rest” reiterates the foregoing (and ongoing) wordplay on Noah in terms of *nwh* and emphasizes the fulfillment of the Lord’s covenant with Enoch regarding Noah and his posterity. The Lord’s Second Coming would fulfill his oath to Enoch, and that oath pertained directly to Noah and his righteous posterity. The earth’s “rest” will ultimately fulfill that oath and covenant.

“A Thousand Years the Earth Shall Rest” (Moses 7:62–64)

The Lord finally answers Enoch’s repeated question “when shall the earth rest?” (and the earth’s question “when shall I rest?”). The answer comes at the end of a compact description of the winding-up scenes of human history on earth (sometimes called the *eschaton* by theologians),¹⁷ when Enoch’s Zion returns from above and is “at-oned” with Zion from beneath:

And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their

16. The solemn oath formula: *hay X* – “as I live” = *hay-’ānī*. See, e.g., Numbers 14:21, 28; Isaiah 49:18; Ezekiel 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11; Jeremiah 22:24; 46:18; Zephaniah 2:9. Nephi evidently invokes this formula 1 Nephi 4:32.

17. *Eschaton* is the neuter singular form of Greek *eschatos* = “last.”

loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and *for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest*. (Moses 7:62)

The at-one-ment of the “righteousness [sent down] out of heaven” and the “truth [sent forth] out of the earth” heralds the forthcoming of the great at-one-ment of heaven and earth — of heavenly Zion and earthly Zion. All of this, the Lord declares, will inaugurate the earth’s “rest” for which Enoch has been petitioning: “And for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest.” The verbal phrase “shall rest” comes at the very end of the final sentence of a very long sequence, creating another climactic play on the name Noah (*nōah*, “rest”). Isaiah had reference to this eventuality when he prophesied: “The whole earth is *at rest* [*nāḥā*], and is quiet [*šāqā*]: they break forth into singing” (Isaiah 14:7; 2 Nephi 24:7).

The land-sabbath laws of Exodus 23:10-12, can be seen as an anticipatory type of the time when the earth and everything on it shall “rest”:

And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year *thou shalt let it rest* [*tišmēṭennā*] *and lie still* [*ūnēṭaštāh*]; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and *on the seventh day thou shalt rest* [cease, *tišbōt*; cf. Sabbath]: that thine ox and thine ass *may rest* [*yānūah*], and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may *be refreshed* [*wēyinnāpēš*]. (Exodus 23:10-12)

The Lord will eventually fulfill everything that he covenanted and swore to Enoch regarding Noah and his posterity. The final fulfillment of

this covenant will be the binding of Satan¹⁸ and the “whole earth [being] at rest [*nāḥā*]” (Isaiah 14:7).¹⁹

“This [Son] Shall Comfort Us Concerning Our Work and Toil of Our Hands” (Genesis 5:29/Moses 8:9)

In the Book of Moses, the wordplay on “Noah” in the expanded JST Genesis Enoch narrative meshes seamlessly with the wordplay on Noah in the extant biblical narrative. In Moses 8:8 (cf. Genesis 5:29), the birth of Noah is finally reported: “And he called his name *Noah* [*nōah*], saying: This [son] shall comfort us [*yěnaḥmēnū*] concerning our work [*mimma’ēšēnū*] and toil [*mē’iṣ*] of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed” (Moses 8:5). As Isaac Kikawada points out, this wordplay makes “Noah the bringer of comfort (*nḥm*) from labor (derived from *śh*) and toil (derived from *śb*).”²⁰

On one level, as Moshe Garsiel further points out, “the explanation of ‘Noah’ in terms of *n-ḥ-m* ... expresses his father’s expectation of consolation and an easing of the many difficulties of working ground cursed by God.”²¹ On still another level, the JST text greatly expands the foregoing interpretive notion of “labor” and “toil.” Moses 6 presents the “labor” and “work” of Noah’s ancestors as the work of evangelization in a wicked world ripening for destruction. In other words, it was the preaching of the gospel by “preachers of righteousness” who attempt to save the world. Moreover, we should note here that the explanatory phrase “this son shall comfort us” must be understood within the context of Enoch’s agonized declaration “I will refuse to be comforted” (Moses 7:44).

Etymologically speaking, the etiological explanation for Noah in Genesis 5:29 and Moses 8:9 would better fit the names Naham (*naḥam*,

18. See, e.g., Revelation 20:2; D&C 43:31; 45:55; 84:100; 88:110. See especially 1 Nephi 22:26.

19. The context of “the whole earth [being] at rest” in Isaiah 14:7 is the fall of the king of Babylon, called *hēlēl ben-šāḥar* — i.e., “Lucifer, son of the morning” or “shining one, son of dawn.” The fall of the king of Babylon is “likened” (cf. the “proverb,” “parable,” or “likening” [*hammāšāl*] mentioned Isaiah 4:4) to the fall of the premortal being called *hēlēl ben-šāḥar*, otherwise known to Latter-day Saints as “Lucifer,” now Satan. See especially 2 Nephi 2:17; 9:8; D&C 29:31–36; 76:25–29; Moses 4:3–4; Abraham 3:27–28.

20. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” 1123.

21. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 204.

“comfort”),²² Nahum (*naḥûm* = “[God] comforts” or “comforter”),²³ Menachem (Menahem, *měnaḥēm* = “comforter”),²⁴ or Nehemiah (“Yahweh has comforted”),²⁵ etc.²⁶ However, scientific etymology is usually not the point of biblical Hebrew etiology, nor is it the point here in the Book of Moses/JST Genesis. The narrative endeavors to show the various ways in which the name Noah is appropriate for its bearer. The Book of Moses/JST Genesis helps us appreciate the meanings latent in the name Noah within the widest context of earthly salvation history.

“If Men Do Not Repent”

Another important dimension of the wordplay that revolves around Noah’s name is the “repentance” theme. In the biblical version of the Noah story, Yahweh “repents” (*wayyinnāḥem, niḥamtî*, Genesis 6:6-7) for having made humanity. In the JST Genesis (Book of Moses) version of this account, the “repentance” motif is greatly expanded. Both Noah and humankind become the subjects of the verb “repent.” First, Noah is informed that the impending flood is contingent on a general failure to “repent”:

And the Lord said unto *Noah*: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he shall know that all flesh shall die; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years; and *if men do not repent*, I will send in the floods upon them. And in those days there were giants on the earth, and *they sought Noah to take away his life*; but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him. (Moses 8:17)

Implicit in the statement “if men do not repent” is a final call to repentance for which Noah himself will be the Lord’s mouthpiece. The giants’ (*něpilîm*) seeking Noah and his life augurs a now-inevitable failure of humankind to repent. Nevertheless, the “Lord [was] with Noah,” and his “power ... was upon him” as he preached repentance a final time.

22. HALOT, 689. See 1 Chronicles 14:9.

23. HALOT, 685.

24. See, e.g., Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928), 222; HALOT, 601.

25. Noth, *Personennamen*, 175; HALOT, 689.

26. See also the *nḥm*-derived names *Nahamani* (*naḥmānî*) and *Tanhumeth* (*tanḥumet*).

“Noah Called upon the Children of Men That They Should Repent”

JST Genesis (Book of Moses) records that Noah received a priesthood ordination after his “mission call” and prior to his going forth to preach. The Lord commissions Noah to preach the gospel in the same way that “it was given unto Enoch”:

And the Lord *ordained Noah after his own order*, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch. And it came to pass that *Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent*; but they hearkened not unto his words. (Moses 8:19-20)

First, the account of Noah’s ordination in D&C 107 provides additional details about the ordination of Noah, as “written in the Book of Enoch”:

Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah. Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel. And *the Lord administered comfort* unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, *being full of the Holy Ghost*, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time. (D&C 107:52-57)

Significantly, this passage gives us additional insight into the meaning of Noah’s birth etiology, “this [son] shall comfort us” (Genesis 5:29; Moses 8:9). Noah was the one through whom Adam’s righteous “posterity” would continue (see also Moses 7:52; 8:2). In other words, the Lord’s promise that “I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, [etc.]” was specifically fulfilled in and

through Noah, and this was the “comfort” that the Lord administered to him. Perhaps this suggests that the *nōah/nwḥ/nḥm* etiology has its origins in the aforementioned “Book of Enoch,” portions of which the JST Genesis/Book of Moses text restores, and is “to be testified of in due time.”

The JST Genesis/Book of Moses text also makes clear in Moses 8:20 that the people rejected Noah’s preaching outright: “but they hearkened not unto his words.” Ironically, Noah’s message of repentance would have truly “comforted” the “residue of the people” who rejected it (cf. Genesis 5:29/Moses 8:9) and would have given them “rest.” As it was, the Lord would “shut them up” in “a prison” that he had “prepared for them” (Moses 7:38), and “misery [would] be their doom” (Moses 7:37).²⁷ Nevertheless, Noah’s descendant, Jesus Christ, “suffereth for their sins” and his atonement would eventually expiate their sins “inasmuch as they [would] *repent*” (Moses 7:39).

“Believe and Repent of Your Sins and Be Baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ ... and Ye Shall Receive the Holy Ghost”

Importantly, JST Genesis (Book of Moses) situates the kerygma of “repentance” within what Nephi called “the doctrine of Christ.”²⁸ In Moses 6:23 we learn that Noah was one of several “preachers of righteousness [who] spake and prophesied, and called upon all men, everywhere, to *repent*; and *faith* was taught unto the children of men.” Moses 6:27 mentions that Noah’s ancestor Enoch’s prophetic career began with a commission to declare: “*Repent*, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off.” Later, the Lord recommissioned Enoch: “And the Lord said unto me: Go to this people, and say unto them — *Repent*, lest I come out and smite them with a curse, and they die. And he gave unto me a commandment that I should *baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son*, which is full of grace and truth, *and of the Holy Ghost*, which beareth record of the Father and the Son” (Moses 7:10).

27. See also Moses 7:41.

28. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets,” *BYU Studies* 31 (Summer 1991): 31–50; idem, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 26–56; see also idem, “How to Come unto Christ,” *Ensign* 22 (September 1992): 7–13; and most recently, idem. “The Gospel According to Nephi: An Essay on 2 Nephi 31,” *Religious Educator* 16/2 (2015): 51–75.

Noah similarly preached a kerygma that included faith and repentance, the first principles of the gospel,²⁹ but also baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost, the first ordinances:

And it came to pass that *Noah continued his preaching* unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words; *believe and repent of your sins and be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not. (Moses 8:23–24)

The promise that Noah affixes to their obedience (“hearken[ing] and giv[ing] heed”) to these is the reception of the Holy Ghost, elsewhere named “the Comforter.”³⁰ Noah’s promise that the repentant will receive the Holy Ghost takes us back to the content of Enoch’s preaching and the promise attached to his teaching:

Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; *the Comforter* [Hebrew *mēnahēm* from *nām*] the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. (Moses 6:61)

We again hear echoes of Noah’s name and the promise of “comfort” that his name was thought to embody (from Genesis 5:29 and Moses 8:9). We are reminded also that Enoch’s soul “refused to be comforted” at the destruction of the people during Noah’s time, but also that “comfort” and rest were administered to him through the promise of Noah and his seed, especially the Messiah.³¹ As an additional point of irony, baptism by water would have helped the people avert the total inundation from

29. Cf. Articles of Faith 1:4.

30. See, e.g., Moroni 8:26; Alma 17:10; John 14:26; 15:26; D&C 35:19; 36:2; 39:6; 50:14, 17; 88:3; 124:97. Cf. Acts 9:31; Philippians 2:1.

31. There is perhaps another reminiscence here of something mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 107:55–57 as belonging to the Book of Enoch: “And *the Lord administered comfort unto Adam*, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, *being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation*. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time.”

which they would not be “pulled.”³² It was foreseeing this refusal to repent by the “residue of the wicked” that “the floods came and swallowed them up,” which caused Enoch such “bitterness of soul,” and “to weep over his brethren” and “refuse to be comforted” (Moses 7:43-44).

“It Repented Noah” (Moses 8:25-26)

As noted above, one of the interesting emendations or restorations that the JST Genesis version of the Noah story offers is a shift from the Lord as the focus of the verb *nḥm* (“repent,” “regret”) to Noah himself.

Genesis 6:6-7	Moses 8:25-26
And <i>it repented</i> [wayyinnāḥem] the Lord that <i>he had made</i> [‘āśā] man on the earth, and <i>it grieved him</i> [wayyit‘aṣṣēb] at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for <i>it repenteth me</i> [niḥamtī] that I have made them. (Genesis 6:6-7)	And <i>it repented Noah</i> , and his heart was pained that the Lord <i>had made</i> man on the earth, and <i>it grieved him at the heart</i> . And the Lord said: I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for <i>it repenteth Noah</i> [*niḥam nōaḥ] that I have created them, and that I have made them; and he hath called upon me; for <i>they have sought his life</i> [*biqšū ‘et-napšō]. (Moses 8:25-26)

As Kikawada notes, the roots *nḥm*, *šh/šy*, and *šb* occur here in precisely the same order as they do in the etiology for Noah’s name in Genesis 5:29 (cf. Moses 8:9).³³ Moses 8:25 preserves the same word order. On one level, the Genesis text suggests that the Lord himself now sought “comfort” or “rest” from the emotional toil imposed by the wickedness of the human family.

According to the JST Genesis account, however, it was Noah, rather than the Lord, whom “it repented,” or it was Noah who “regretted” that

32. Cf. the explanation for Moses’s name in Exodus 2:10 and Moses’s role as “drawer” or “puller” in Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

33. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” 1123.

the Lord had created humanity.³⁴ Thus, on another level Noah joins his forefathers — including Enoch, Methuselah, and his father Lamech — in seeking “comfort” and “rest.” In fact, it is because of Noah’s “repentance” or “regret” (*nḥm*) that the Lord finally decrees the destruction of the wicked, this coupled with the fact that the “giants ... they sought Noah [**biqšû ’et-nōah*] to take away his life [**lāqahat ’et-napšō*]” (Moses 8:18) and those to whom Noah has been preaching “have sought [Noah’s] life [**biqšû ’et-napšō*]”³⁵ — i.e., sought to kill him (compare Elijah’s lament in 1 Kings 19:10, 14: “I only, am left; and *they seek my life* [*wayēbaqēšû ’et-napšī*], to take it away”).³⁶

Part II

King “Rest,” King of Labor

The narrative that deals with King Noah and his priests intends that we see a picture of monarchic excess that stands in gross violation of the “Law of the King” in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. To that end, we find the narrative use of wordplay on the name Noah in terms of the roots *nwh* and *nḥm* in the lead-up to Alma’s story, similar to what we find in the biblical flood narrative and its restored form in JST Genesis (see Moses 7-8). However, the Book of Mormon narrative caricatures King Noah and his priests as the moral obverse of the biblical Noah.

34. This emendation or restoration is theologically consistent with Numbers 23:19: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent [*wēyitnehām*]: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”; and with Samuel’s statement 1 Samuel 15:29: “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent [*yinnāhēm*]: for he is not a man, that he should repent [*lēhinnāhēm*].” But compare the Lord’s statement to Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:11: “*It repenteth me* [*nihamtī*] that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night.”; as well as Psalm 106:45: “And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented [*wayyinnāhēm*] according to the multitude of his mercies.”

35. Cf. *biqšû napšû* (“[They] seek after my soul,” KJV; i.e., “they seek my life”) in Psalm 54:3.

36. Nephi’s language in 1 Nephi 1:20 reflects the Hebrew idiom [*biqqēš ’et-nepēš X*] when he states: “And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

Far from “comforting” his people or giving them “rest,” as his father Zeniff had surely hoped, King Noah immediately began to “burden” his people with sin and taxes:

And now it came to pass that Zeniff conferred the kingdom upon *Noah*, one of his sons; therefore *Noah* began to reign in his stead; and he did not walk in the ways of his father. For behold, he did not keep the commandments of God, but he did walk after the desires of his own heart. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness. And he *laid a tax of one-fifth part of all they possessed*, a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain. And *all this did he take to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines*; thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom. (Mosiah 11:1-4)

The Deuteronomic “law of the king” or “law of the kingship” specifically warned against kings multiplying wives and multiplying gold: “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:17). King Noah “had many wives and concubines,” which practice, in Abinadi’s words, “cause[d] [King Noah’s] people to commit sin” (Mosiah 12:29; cf. Mosiah 29:9, 30).

The narrator (Mormon) further suggests that Noah and his priests were guilty of idolatry, a capital offense in Deuteronomy (see Deuteronomy 13): “Yea, and thus they were supported in their *laziness*, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; *thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity*” (Mosiah 11:16; see also Mosiah 29:35). Whereas in the Hebrew Bible “Noah [was] the bringer of comfort (*nḥm*) from labor (derived from *śh*) and toil (derived from *šb*),”³⁷ King Noah in the Book of Mormon is the bringer of toil, the bondage of sin, and eventually physical bondage. Thus, the juxtaposition of the name Noah (“rest”) with the phrase “the people [did] labor exceedingly to support iniquity” constitutes an emphatic, pejorative play on the meaning of King Noah’s

37. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” 1123.

name. Rather than “comfort[ing]” his people “concerning the work and toil of [their] hands” (Genesis 5:29; Moses 8:9), Noah had given them more work and caused them to sin.

Mormon wishes his audience to see a distinct contrast between Noah’s kingship and the earlier kingship of King Benjamin, who summed up his reign thus: “And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne — and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day” (Mosiah 2:14).

Mormon continues with a description of King “Rest’s” massive, Solomon-like building projects, including a “great-and-spacious-building”-like palace/temple:

And it came to pass that king *Noah* (“rest”) built many elegant and spacious buildings; and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and of all manner of precious things, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of brass, and of ziff, and of copper; And he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof, all of which was of fine wood and was ornamented with gold and silver and with precious things. *And he also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work* within the walls of the temple, of fine wood, and of copper, and of brass. (Mosiah 11:8-10)

This palace/temple was evidently dedicated to himself (“he ... built *him* a spacious palace”). The statement that Noah “caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work” dramatically reemphasizes what kind of “rest” that King Noah was providing his subjects: he was the bringer of toil (like Amulon will be later in the narrative, see below). However, he offered his priests an entirely different kind of “rest.”

A Breastwork for “Rest”

In stark contrast to the image of “workmen ... work[ing] all manner of ... work,” Mormon’s narrative juxtaposes the image of King Noah’s “enthroned” priests — not priests who are content to sit and pontificate on religious matters in the royal court, but priest’s whose bodies are given “rest” by a breastwork constructed for that purpose:

And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold;

and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, that they might *rest their bodies* and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people. (Mosiah 11:11)

The image of King Noah's priests lazing about on the ornate breastwork that he had built so "*that they might rest* [cf. Hebrew **wayyannihū*] their bodies and their arms upon [it] while they should speak lying and vain words to his people" (11:11) borders on satire. The narrative thus indicates that the only physical "rest" that King Noah gave to anyone was to decadent priests who, beyond cultic functionaries, were loyalist court bureaucrats and propagandists who taught "vain words" rather than the law of Moses. He gave physical "comfort" to his people in the form of winemaking (see below). In terms of spiritual "rest" and "comfort," King Noah was leading his people into bondage³⁸ — "hard bondage" ([*ha*]ʾābōdā [*haq*]qāšā, Exodus 1:14; Deuteronomy 26:6; Isaiah 14:3).³⁹

"Except They Repent in Sackcloth and Ashes"

Abinadi's prophetic messages to King Noah and his people revolve around the theme of "repentance." According to Mormon's abridged record of these events, Abinadi's first message includes the phrase "except they repent" (or a variation thereon) four times, with the warning of specific judgments to follow if the conditions of repentance are not met:

And it came to pass that there was a man among them whose name was Abinadi; and he went forth among them, and began to prophesy, saying: Behold, thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me, saying, Go forth, and say unto this people, thus saith the Lord — Wo be unto this people, for I have seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms; and *except they repent* I will visit them in mine anger. And *except they repent and turn* to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and *they shall be brought into bondage*; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies. And it shall come to pass that they shall know that I am the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of my people. And it

38. See Mosiah 7:11, 20; 22-23 (esp. v. 22, 28, 33); 11:20-22.

39. The allusion to "hard bondage" in Isaiah 14:3 is partly an allusion to the "hard bondage" that was a part of Israel's experience in Egypt (Exodus 1:14; Deuteronomy 26:6).

shall come to pass *that except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God*, they shall be brought into bondage; and none shall deliver them, except it be the Lord the Almighty God. Yea, and it shall come to pass that when they shall cry unto me I will be slow to hear their cries; yea, and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies. And *except they repent in sackcloth and ashes, and cry mightily to the Lord their God*, I will not hear their prayers, neither will I deliver them out of their afflictions; and thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me. (Mosiah 11:20–25)

Abinadi's use of the collocation "repent in sackcloth and ashes," used only here (Mosiah 11:25) and in Matthew 11:12 and Luke 10:13 (which reflect a common source), seems to be related to the phrase "and [I] repent [*wěnihamtī*] in dust and ashes" in Job 42:6. The term for *repent* there is *nihamtī*. This suggests that that same term (*niham*) stands behind or represents *repent* at least in some instances in this passage, since the collocation is one of mourning and self-abasement. In other words, one does not "turn" into dust and ashes. If so, the motif of repentance (or lack thereof) in this account revolves around the name Noah as a play on *nōah/niham*, just as the story itself revolves around the word *repent*.

It should be the KJV collocation "repent and turn yourselves [*šūbū wěhšībū*]" — literally, "turn and cause (yourselves) to turn" — which occurs twice as a polyptoton on *šūb* in Ezekiel 14:16; 18:30. While this expression or something similar perhaps stands behind "repent and turn [to/unto the Lord]" here in Mosiah 11, the phrase "except they repent in sackcloth and ashes" suggest that *niham* is the underlying verb in at least one case, and perhaps all. In Jonah 3:9, *niham* and *šūb* also occur together: "Who can tell if God *will turn* [*yāšūb*] and repent [*wěniham*], and *turn away* [*wěšāb*] from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Or, as JST Jonah 3:9 emends it: "Who can tell if we will repent, and *turn* unto God, but *he will turn away* from us his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Just as Moses 8 (JST Genesis) makes Noah rather than God the focal point of the verb "repent" in Moses 8:25–26, JST Jonah 3:9 changes the subject of the verb *niham* and one instance of the verb *šūb* from God to the Ninevites.

Indeed, the juxtaposition of *niham* ("repent," "be sorry") and *šūb* ("turn") is not uncommon in scripture (see, e.g., Exodus 32:12 [12, 14]; Jeremiah 4:28; 18:8; 26:3; 31:19; Jonah 3:9–10). A good example of the use of both verbs to describe personal repentance can be found in Jeremiah 31:19 [MT 31:18]: "Surely after that *I was turned* [*šūbī*], I repented

[*niḥamtī*]; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” Similarly, Jeremiah elsewhere laments the lack of personal *niḥam* in Judah during his days: “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of [*niḥam*] his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned [*šāb*] to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle” (Jeremiah 8:6).

All of the above suggests that the narrative’s emphasis on “repentance” in Abinadi’s prophesying as a play on the name (or meaning of the name) Noah in terms of *nḥm* is a strong possibility. We will see further evidence for this idea as this motif resurfaces later in the narrative cycle.

“And King Noah Hardened His Heart ... and Did Not Repent of His Evil Doings”

Mormon wishes us to see that King Noah was a complete failure both in terms of his personal righteousness/worthiness, but also in terms of “repentance”:

Now when *king Noah* had heard of the words which Abinadi had spoken unto the people, he was also wroth; and he said: Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction? I command you to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him, for he has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people; therefore I will slay him. Now the eyes of the people were blinded; therefore *they hardened their hearts against the words of Abinadi*, and they sought from that time forward to take him. And *king Noah hardened his heart against the word of the Lord*, and *he did not repent* of his evil doings. (Mosiah 11:26–29)

Here, Mormon emphasizes the similarity between King Noah and the pharaoh of Israel’s exodus (with whom the idolatrous, wealth-and-wife-multiplying King Solomon is also compared). Like the pharaoh of the exodus (Exodus 5:22), King Noah asks the dismissive and disrespectful question “Who is the Lord?”⁴⁰ And just as the text of Exodus states that Pharaoh hardened his heart (see, e.g., Exodus 8:15,

40. Cain also asks the same dismissive question: “And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject

19, 32; see also 1 Samuel 6:6),⁴¹ so Pharaoh's hardness of heart brought extreme negative consequences upon himself and his people during the Lord's deliverance of Israel from bondage; King Noah's hardness of heart would bring extreme negative consequences upon himself and his people, including bringing them into bondage from which only the Lord could deliver them. The costs of refusing to "repent" would be steep.

"They Have Repented Not"

Hardness of heart and a lack of repentance in King Noah, of course, exacerbates the hardness of heart and a lack of repentance in his people (cf. Mosiah's later allusions to Noah, "behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction," Mosiah 29:17; "he has his friends in iniquity," Mosiah 29:21).⁴² Consequently, the Lord sends Abinadi again to the people of King Noah:

And it came to pass that after the space of two years that Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy among them, saying: Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying — Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people, for they have hardened their hearts against my words; they have repented not of their evil doings; therefore, I will visit them in my anger, yea, in my fierce anger will I visit them in their iniquities and abominations. (Mosiah 12:1)

Divine judgment would, of necessity, come upon King Noah's people in direct consequence of their unabated "hard[ness] of heart" and continuous failure to "repent." They felt no regret for their evil doings, and thus did not turn from them.

"Except They Repent" II

Abinadi's second prophetic tour-of-duty among King Noah's people once more includes the language "except they repent" with the promise of divine judgment attached:

And it shall come to pass that *except they repent* I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth; yet they shall

his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: *Who is the Lord that I should know him?*" (Moses 5:16).

41. See also JST Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13-14, 22; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10 14:4, 8, 17.

42. Mosiah 29:16-24 constitutes a telling commentary on how King Noah's reign was viewed by King Mosiah and widely in Zarahemla after the return of Alma's and Limhi's groups.

leave a record behind them, and I will preserve them for other nations which shall possess the land; yea, even this will I do that I may discover the abominations of this people to other nations. And many things did Abinadi prophesy against this people. (Mosiah 12:8)

In this instance, however, the temporal scope of Abinadi's prophecy goes well beyond the lifespans of King Noah and his people — his immediate audience. Mormon, who is keen to show the fulfillment of earlier prophecy when such fulfillment occurred, recognized the clear fulfillment of Abinadi's prophecy during his own time.

Mormon begins his description of the fulfillment of this prophecy in Mormon 2:8: "notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land." When the Nephites finally "began to repent of their iniquity" (Mormon 2:10), "there began to be *a mourning and a lamentation* in all the land ... more especially among the Nephites" (Mormon 2:11). Mormon, for his part, "saw their lamentation and *their mourning* and their *sorrow* before the Lord, [and his] heart did begin to rejoice within [him]" (Mormon 2:12), but he soon recognizes that "*their sorrowing was not unto repentance*, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather *the sorrowing of the damned*, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin" (Mormon 2:13). Moreover, "they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die" (Mormon 2:14). Thus, Mormon states, "*my sorrow did return unto me again*, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually" (Mormon 2:15). Indeed, he laments, "*my heart has been filled with sorrow* because of their wickedness, all my days; nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day" (Mormon 2:19).

King Noah's priests, whose lifestyle Abinadi's preaching directly criticized and thus threatened, lead the effort to discredit and destroy Abinadi. They record⁴³ and repeat Abinadi's denunciations of the people and of King Noah in particular. They recognize the sum and substance of Abinadi's prophecies, as evident in this preserved statement to King Noah: "And he saith all this shall come upon thee *except thou repent*,

43. Zeniff's court apparently had a well-developed scribal system and royal archive, both of which continued under his son Noah and grandson Limhi. For some evidence of these practices, see, e.g., John Gee, "Limhi in the Library," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 54–66.

and this because of thine iniquities" (Mosiah 12:12). Conceivably, the phrase "except thou repent" is specifically recalled during Abinadi's arraignment because the priests recognized an onomastic reference to the name "Noah" in terms of the verb *nḥm*. Noah's priests, of course, assert their own and the king's innocence (see Mosiah 12:13-15). Notably, it is at this point that King Noah's priests raise the issue of the identity of the messenger of "peace" in Isaiah 52:7-10; it's the implied question "what is a prophet?"; and their belief that the "the Lord ha[d] comforted Zion" (Isaiah 52:9).

"The Lord Hath Comforted His People" (Mosiah 12:23; 15:30)

When one of King Noah's priests — possibly Alma the Elder⁴⁴ — quotes Isaiah 52:7-10 and interrogates Abinadi as part of a dramatic exchange in King Noah's courtyard, he would have inevitably used the "Noah"-associated verb *nḥm* from Isaiah 52:9: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord *hath comforted* his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem" (quoted in Mosiah 12:23).⁴⁵ The irony seems not to have been lost on Abinadi, who recognized that Noah and his priests were bringing Noah's people into bondage.

Neither Noah nor his priests understood their role in achieving Isaiah's prophetic promise "*the Lord hath comforted [niḥam]* his people" (Isaiah 52:9), an idea integral to the midrashic meaning of Noah's name: ("This same *shall comfort us* [yēnaḥmēnū] concerning our work and toil of our hands," Genesis 5:29) and to Zeniff's hopes for his son and his people (cf. Mosiah 10:22).

Near the end of his long exchange with Noah's priests, having identified Jesus Christ himself narrowly and the prophets and saints more broadly as the messenger(s) of salvation of whom Isaiah testified, Abinadi prophesied that "the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 15:28). He then quotes the original scripture: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for *the Lord hath comforted [niḥam]* his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem" (Mosiah 15:30). Abinadi's return to these words at this moment in the exchange between Noah's priests and himself is poignant. Abinadi knows that Noah, who has already brought his people into spiritual bondage, is bringing them into temporal bondage as well: he has *not* comforted them. But Abinadi's

44. See Aaron P. Schade and Matthew L. Bowen, "'To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?' Part 1," *Religious Educator* 16/2 (2015): 91-112.

45. The unnamed priest quotes Isaiah 52:7-10 in Mosiah 12:20-24.

testimony — testimony that Alma remembered and preserved — was that the Lord had comforted and would comfort and redeem Israel, both temporally and spiritually.

All this helps us to appreciate the staggering degree to which King Noah (King “Rest”) failed to live up to the obligations latent in the meaning of his name. He had not only refused Abinadi’s call to personal repentance but also had caused his people to harden their hearts and to not repent. The “comfort” wherewith King Noah would “comfort” his people was the apparent “comfort,” “rest,” and ease of sin — sin that would eventuate in bondage.

“Comfort”? Two Noahs and Their Winemaking

In the short term, however, Noah was able to “comfort” — or anesthetize — his people in their sins with “wine in abundance” (Mosiah 11:25). The narrator sardonically mentions King Noah’s winemaking activities, which recall the single major (recorded) blemish in Noah the patriarch’s life: the winemaking and drunkenness that leads to problems within his family (see Genesis 9:20–27). The name Noah is connected with winemaking in Genesis 9 and again here in Mosiah 11.

As noted previously, the name Noah (*nōah*) is etiologized in terms of the semantically rich verb *nĥm*: “And he called his name *Noah* [*nōah*], saying, This same *shall comfort us* [*yěnahāmēnū*] concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed (Genesis 5:29). Biblical exegetes frequently connect this etiological explanation with the later narrative statement regarding Noah’s postdiluvian occupation: “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken” (Genesis 9:20–21). As also mentioned previously, the interpretation of the name Noah in terms of *nĥm* “expresses [Noah’s] father’s expectation of consolation and an easing of the many difficulties of working ground cursed by God and the later phrase ‘Noah was a man of the ground (=farmer, [*’iš hā’ādāmā*]) eventually finds a convenient solution; he plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on the results” (Genesis 9:20–21).⁴⁶

To help the reader fully appreciate the deficiencies of the “rest” and “comfort” that King Noah administered, the narrator mentions his winemaking activities, which at once recall the patriarch Noah’s winemaking activities: “And it came to pass that he [King Noah] planted vineyards round about in the land; and he built wine-presses, and made

46. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 204.

wine in abundance; and therefore he became a winebibber [cf. Hebrew *sōbē' yāyin*],⁴⁷ and also his people" (Mosiah 11:15). The winemaking and winebibbing served as a kind of spiritual anesthesia for King Noah and his people, who grew increasingly proud, self-sufficient, and overconfident, this in addition to delighting in the shedding of blood (see Mosiah 11:16-19). All these sins would be required at their hands.

Later in the narrative cycle, Mormon revisits Noah's winemaking theme in an ironic way following the latter's death and during the reign of his son Limhi. The Lord enables Limhi and his people to convert their winemaking bane into a boon for their temporal salvation: "And king Limhi caused that his people should gather their flocks together; and he sent the tribute of wine to the Lamanites; and he also sent more wine, as a present [cf. Hebrew *minhâ*] unto them; and they did drink freely of the wine which king Limhi did send unto them" (Mosiah 22:10). Here we detect an additional wordplay on the name Noah in terms of "rest." The word "present" in this contexts suggests the Hebrew noun *minhâ* = "gift, present"⁴⁸ which takes on the sense of "tribute."⁴⁹ The noun *minhâ* derives from the verbal root *nwh* ("rest") — i.e., as in something that "appeases" or propitiates wrath (cf. Genesis 33:10).⁵⁰ The wordplay here perhaps underscores the point that Noah could only give his priests "rest" and his people "comfort" in the most negative senses, and the Lord was able to turn one of Noah's distinct negatives into a positive for his people once they began to repent.

47. See Proverbs 23:20-21.

48. HALOT, 601.

49. Ibid. See, e.g., Judges 3:15, 17-18; 2 Kings 17:3-; Hosea 10:6; and 2 Chronicles 17:11 where the KJV translators render Hebrew *minhâ* (*nwh*) into English with the word "present"/"presents." In 2 Samuel 8:2, 6 (1 Chronicles 18:2, 6) and 2 Chronicles 26:8 the KJV translators use the word "gifts."

50. Genesis 33:10: "And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present [*minhātī*] at my hand: for therefore *I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.*" We can compare this to Enos's concluding statement: "And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that *in him I shall rest.* And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and *shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure,* and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen." (Enos 1:27; cf. 1:17).

The Iniquity That “Caused Me Sore Repentance”: Alma’s Deep Regret

After Alma and his people’s escaped from King Noah and his armies, Alma gave an important speech in their newly established settlement in the land of Helam, in which he acknowledged and explained his life of sin previous to his conversion. Wordplay on the name “Noah” in terms of “repentance” — i.e., regret — is evident:

But remember the iniquity of *king Noah* [*nōah*] and his priests; and I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me *sore repentance* [i.e., sore regret, sorrow; cf. Hebrew *n̄hm*, *nōham* = “sorrow, repentance”;^{51*} *niḥûmîm*, “repentings”⁵²]. Nevertheless, *after much tribulation* [distress],⁵³ the Lord did hear my cries, and did answer my prayers, and has made me an instrument in his hands in bringing so many of you to a knowledge of his truth. (Mosiah 23:9–10)

Alma and Noah’s other lazy priests “resting” their bodies on the ornate breastwork in the court of King Noah’s palace-temple subsequently becomes “sore repentance” — i.e., the deepest regret — for Alma. The only other attestation of the phrase “sore repentance” occurs in Alma 27:23, which states that Ammon’s Lamanite converts “fear[ed] to take up arms against their brethren lest they should commit sin; and this their great fear came because of their *sore repentance* which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness.” These converts felt the deep regret for their sins that Alma had experienced a full generation earlier.

Alma’s autobiographical statement in Mosiah 23:9–10 regarding the personal sins and abominations which “caused [him] sore repentance”

51. The noun *nōham* is a *hapax legomenon* (“spoken once”) attested once in Hosea 13:14. Some lexica [e.g., Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), hereafter BDB] and translations gloss this term as “repentance” (KJV); others (e.g., HALOT) gloss it as “compassion.” However, the latter seems to be a context-based glossing, and it is not clear on what philological basis this rendering can be made. The etymological evidence suggests “sorrow” or “repentance.”

52. Like Hosea 13:14, Hosea 11:8 uses a plural form of a **n̄hm* derived noun “*my repentings* [*niḥûmāy*] are kindled together.” To render this expression adequately in English is exceptionally difficult.

53. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:30; Judges 10:14; 1 Samuel 10:19; 26:24.

apparently serves as the source for Mormon's earlier biographical statement regarding Alma: "And now, it came to pass that Alma, who had fled from the servants of king *Noah*, *repented* of his sins and iniquities, and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi" (Mosiah 18:1). Alma himself would later face having to deal with members of his church who would "not repent of their iniquities" (Mosiah 26:11). His divine commission was to "baptize unto repentance" (Mosiah 26:22); and it was his responsibility to forgive the one who "repenteth in the sincerity of his heart" (Mosiah 26:29). It was Alma, significantly, who received the revelation: "Yea, *and as often as my people repent* will I forgive them their trespasses against me" (Mosiah 26:30). And it was Alma who was tasked with discerning true repentance among the Lord's people and numbering the repentant or blotting out the unrepentant on that basis (see Mosiah 26:31-36). Alma's role as declarer of, baptizer unto, and ecclesiastical judge regarding repentance is particularly poignant against the backdrop of King Noah and his people's failure to repent and Alma's history in King Noah's court.

"To Comfort Those Who Stand in Need of Comfort"

Alma's baptismal covenant speech at the waters of Mormon contains language that pertained not only to their past under King Noah's oppressions but also to their future toiling under Amulon. King "Rest" (cf. Mosiah 11:11) had caused them "to labor exceedingly to support iniquity" (Mosiah 11:6), and Amulon would impose "burdens" upon them (Mosiah 24:14-15, 21) in fulfillment of Abinadi's prophecy ("Yea, and I will cause that they shall have *burdens* lashed upon their backs; and they shall be driven before like a dumb ass," Mosiah 12:5).⁵⁴ Alma declared:

[Ye] are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light. Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, *and comfort those that stand in need of comfort*, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.

54. On how this prophecy was fulfilled in the lives of Limhi's people, see Mosiah 21:3, 13, and 15.

Alma and his people's baptismal covenant echoes the messianic declaration of Isaiah 61:1–4, in particular the concern “to comfort [lěnahēm] all that mourn” (Isaiah 61:2). Alma and his people were, in effect, covenanting to do something that King Noah and his priests had failed to do, and to do something that they themselves had failed to do as his subjects: to administer true “comfort.”

However, in order for Alma's people “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places,” the people would themselves have to experience burdens regarding which only the Lord himself could “comfort” them and from which only the Lord himself could redeem them. The Lord's “easing [their] burdens” would enable them to fulfill the covenant “to stand as witnesses” (Mosiah 18:9) and to “stand as witnesses for [the Lord] hereafter” (Mosiah 24:14).

“Lift Up Your Heads and Be of Good Comfort”

Alma and his people had repented of their sinful living under King Noah. Notwithstanding this repentance, they remained subject to Abinadi's prophecies regarding King Noah and his people,⁵⁵ though not without mitigation. The reality of Abinadi's prophecies regarding Noah's people being brought into bondage sets in on Alma's people in Mosiah 24, when the Lamanites occupy the land of Helam and Noah's ex-priest “Amulon began to exercise authority over Alma and his brethren, and began to persecute him, and cause that his children should persecute their children” (Mosiah 24:8). This, Mormon informs us, happened in part because “Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king's priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king, and therefore he was wroth with him; for he was subject to king Laman, *yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters* [cf. Hebrew *sārê missîm*⁵⁶ and *nōgěšîm*⁵⁷] over them” (Mosiah 24:9–10).

By using the terms “tasks” and “task masters,” the narrator compares Amulon to the Pharaoh of the exodus.⁵⁸ Moreover, the narrator seems to

55. Although Alma had repented at the preaching of Abinadi, those who later joined Alma's church had not. Thus, they were of necessity subject to the decreed consequences of Abinadi's prophecies, the latter having “sealed” his testimony — i.e., “the truth of his words” — “by his death” or with his own blood (compare Mosiah 17:20 with Limhi's statement in Mosiah 7:28; cf. also D&C 135:3; 136:39).

56. *sārê missîm* = literally, “masters of burdens.” See, e.g., Exodus 1:11.

57. *nōgěšîm* = literally, “drivers.” See, e.g., Exodus 3:7 (once); 5:6–14 (4 x).

58. See, e.g., Alan Goff, “Historical Narrative, Literary Narrative — Expelling Poetics from the Republic of History,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1

create a midrashic meaning for the name Amulon in terms of *‘āmāl/‘āmēl*, “toil,” “trouble,” or “travail,” i.e., “man of toil,” “man of trouble” (*‘āmāl* + appellative – *ōn* “man/person of, see especially Mosiah 24:8-11).⁵⁹ Amulon thus created a situation in which the Lord could and would act on behalf of Alma’s repentant community to “comfort” them, because they were now keeping the covenant.

Isaiah’s prophetic declaration that “the Lord hath comforted his people” (Isaiah 52:9), quoted by one of Noah’s priests (perhaps Alma himself) to Abinadi (Mosiah 12:23), which was accomplished only in the worst sense under King Noah before his erstwhile subjects were brought into bondage, is finally fulfilled in the lives of Alma’s repentant people:

And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: *Lift up your heads and be of good comfort*, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage. And I will also *ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders*, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions. And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his *brethren were made light*; yea, *the Lord did strengthen*⁶⁰ *them that they could bear up their burdens with ease*, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord. And it came to pass that so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying: *Be of good comfort*, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage. (Mosiah 24:13-16)

The Lord finally “comforts” in legitimate fulfillment of Isaiah 52:9, in ironic fulfillment of Mosiah 12:23; and in confirmation of Abinadi’s reiteration of this prophecy in Mosiah 15:30-31. This “comfort” came in the form of an easing of the burdens that came in consequence of their

(1996): 97-99.

59. Cf. the entries for *‘āmāl* and *‘āmēl* in HALOT, 845. See also BDB, 765-66. See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Were Moved with Compassion’ (Alma 27:4; 53:13): Toponymic Wordplay on Zarahemla and Jershon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 242.

60. Cf. *comfort* < Late Latin *confortare* = “to strengthen” – *cum/com/con* (intensifying preposition) + *fortis* (“strength”).

refusal to hear Abinadi's message. Eventually, their "burdens were made light" until they could not "feel them upon [their] backs" with the result that they could "submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord. Finally the word of "comfort" came again: "Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage."

"Lift Up Your Heads and Be Comforted"

Mormon's inclusion of a speech given by Limhi at the temple in the city of Lehi-Nephi, uses a subtle play on the name Noah — a pun that is fully apparent not only in view of what *has* transpired in terms of the timeline of events, but also in what *will* happen in terms of the ordering and progression of the text:

And it came to pass that when they had gathered themselves together that he spake unto them in this wise, saying: O ye, my people, lift up your heads and *be comforted*; for behold, the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies, notwithstanding our many strugglings, which have been in vain; yet I trust there remaineth an effectual struggle to be made. (Mosiah 7:18)

King Limhi attempted to administer to his people the divine "comfort" that his father, Noah, was responsible to administer, but had failed to administer. Moreover, it is especially important to recall Limhi's statement "lift up your heads and be comforted" in terms of the exchange between King Noah's priests and Abinadi over the meaning of Isaiah 52:7-10, including the phrase "the Lord *hath comforted* [*niḥam*] his people" (quoted in Mosiah 12:21-24).

At the end of the narrative that describes the fate of Limhi's people, we see the form of the "comfort" which the Lord administers begin to take shape:

And now the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities; nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to *ease their burdens*; yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage. (Mosiah 21:15)

Just like Alma's people (their former co-patriots), King Limhi's people became subject to Abinadi's prophecy regarding King Noah's people: "Yea, and I will cause that they shall have *burdens* lashed upon their backs; and they shall be driven before like a dumb ass" (Mosiah 12:5). This prophecy was fulfilled in Mosiah 21:3, 13, and 15. Like Alma's

people, they would experience the contrast between Noah's false "rest" and "comfort" and the Lord's "rest"⁶¹ and "comfort."

"Because of Their Sincere Repentance": The Regret of King Noah's Former People

Just as Alma the Elder experienced "sore repentance" and "tribulation" because of his participation in "the iniquities of King Noah and his priests" (Mosiah 23:9) which led him to "do many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord" or, in other words, to commit many "sins and iniquities" (Mosiah 18:1), both Alma's people and Limhi's people as Noah's former subjects had to experience "godly" sorrow before they could be fully comforted and then saved and redeemed from bondage:

Yea, remember king *Noah*, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage. And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and *this because of their sincere repentance*, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now. (Mosiah 29:18-19; cf. 27:28)

For those who had lived under King Noah's reign, the consequences of that reign ultimately produced "sincere repentance" (cf. *nḥm*) — that is, sincere sorrow and regret that produced "a mighty change of heart" (Alma 5:12-14). Mormon here places emphasis on the emotional response to their sins ("sincere repentance"), not just the important act of "turning" from their sins. In other words, "repentance" in the text here appears to represent the condition of *nḥm* rather than simply the act of *šûb*, although the necessity of the latter is inevitably implied.

"The Waters of Noah unto Me": Pragmatics and Conclusion

In JST Genesis (the Book of Moses) we find positive treatment of the name Noah in terms of the Hebrew roots *nwh* ("rest") and *nḥm* ("comfort,"

61. Cf. especially Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." On some of the symbolism evident in Christ's "yoke," see Jeff Lindsay, "The Yoke of Christ: A Light Burden Heavy with Meaning," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 171-217.

“regret,” “repent”) and a pejorative treatment of the name Noah in Mosiah 11–29 in terms of the very same roots. In the Enoch material in the Book of Moses, we see that the wordplay revolves around Enoch’s refusal to be “comforted,” the earth’s “groaning,” the Lord’s promise concerning the eventual “rest” because of Noah and his seed and the “comfort” that this brought to Noah’s forebears, including Enoch himself. In the Noah cycle in the Book of Mormon, the name Noah stands as a sign of the false “comfort” and “rest” and the hard bondage that sin brings. The Lord does eventually “comfort” King Noah’s former subjects — Alma and Limhi and their peoples — but only after their “sore repentance” (Mosiah 23:9; 29:19). The failure to “repent in sackcloth and ashes” (Mosiah 11:25) inexorably leads to the “hard bondage” of sin (cf. Exodus 1:14; Deuteronomy 26:6; Isaiah 14:3).

The Lord’s promise regarding the earth’s eventual “rest” that would come because of and through Noah’s posterity — specifically Jesus Christ, but also *us* — should still “comfort” all of us. It is worth noting the Lord’s placing Adam in the paradisiacal sacred space (temple)⁶² of the Garden of Eden is described in terms of giving him “rest”: “And the Lord God took the man, and *put him* [*wayyanniḥēhū*, literally, “rested him” or “gave him rest”] into [or, in] the garden –of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15; Moses 3:15). Our destiny and the earth’s destiny is to be “given rest” again: “And it shall come to pass in the day that *the Lord shall give thee rest* [*hāniah*] from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve” (Isaiah 14:3); “*the whole earth is at rest* [*nāḥā*] and is quiet: they break forth into singing” (Isaiah 14:7).

However, we cannot not be spiritually anesthetized by the thought — as were King Noah, his priests, and his people — that the Lord will “comfort” Zion in her sins.⁶³ That road leads unavoidably to painful regret;⁶⁴ and, if we are as fortunate as the people of Alma and Limhi, to “sore repentance.” Rather than inviting us to “lift up [our] heads in wickedness,” the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us to “lift up [our] heads

62. Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 126–151.

63. The principle that the Lord’s people cannot be “saved” while “in their sins” is taught powerfully in Alma 11:34–37; Helaman 5:10; and in Mosiah 11–29.

64. See, e.g., D&C 1:3: “And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.”

and [to] be of good comfort" (Mosiah 24:3),⁶⁵ "for the Lord *shall comfort* [*niḥam*] Zion: he will comfort [*niḥam*] all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3; 2 Nephi 8:3).

Last, the Nephites who had experienced the cataclysmic disasters concomitant with the death of Christ (cf. the Flood), and whose ancestors had lived under oppressions of King Noah and had been delivered from subsequent hard bondage, would have especially appreciated Jesus's quotation of Isaiah 54:8–13:

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this, *the waters of Noah* [*mê-nōah*] unto me.⁶⁶ For as I have sworn that *the waters of Noah* [*mê-nōah*] should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall *the covenant of my peace* be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and *not comforted* [*lō' nuḥāmā*]! Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. (3 Nephi 22:8–13; cf. Isaiah 54:8–13)

Arguably, Isaiah's words from the mouth of the Savior himself at the temple in Bountiful, contain the ultimate promise of "comfort" and consolation to Zion. Isaiah's text contains a wordplay on Noah in terms of *nḥm*⁶⁷ which would not have been missed by this (or perhaps any) ancient Israelite audience. This wordplay not only recalls the Flood epic and the wordplay on *nḥm* and *nwh* there, but also specifically invokes the covenant the Lord made with Noah and his posterity then (see Genesis 9).

65. Cf. Jacob's similarly worded admonition in Jacob 3:2: "O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever."

66. Following Royal Skousen, ed. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2009), 626.

67. Kikawada, "Noah and the Ark," 1127.

The Lord has always “comforted Zion.”⁶⁸ He will always “comfort Zion”⁶⁹ through the Comforter — and even through the second Comforter⁷⁰ — but he does so only to the degree that Zion’s inhabitants are willing to repent, even “repent in sackcloth and ashes” if necessary, and only to the degree that they (we) come out of the bondage of sin (see especially Isaiah 52:9–12). Our most pressing work, therefore, is to repent.⁷¹

[This article is dedicated with love to the memory of Paul Martinson and to his wife Valerie, and to their family, in anticipation of that time when we will sing songs of everlasting joy with him again.]

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68. Cf. Jesus’s twofold citation of Isaiah 52:9 in 3 Nephi 16:19; 20:34.

69. Zechariah 1:7; D&C 101:16. See also Isaiah 40:2; 66:13; Ezekiel 14:22.

70. See, e.g., Moses 7:16, 62–64; D&C 88:3–4.

71. See especially Alma 24:10–11; D&C 11:9, 20.

