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The Bands of Death, the Chains of Hell, and the Seed Motif

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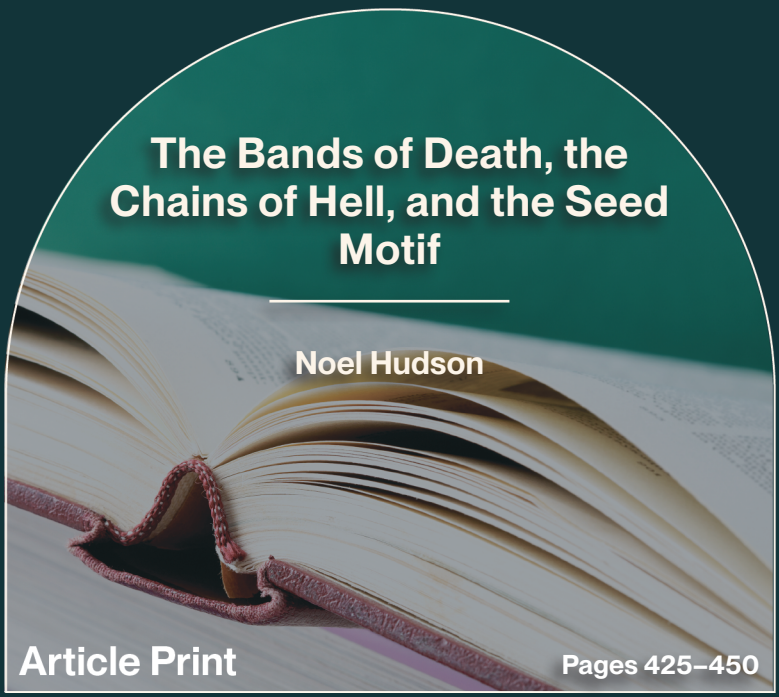

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The Bands of Death, the Chains of Hell, and the Seed Motif

Noel Hudson

Abstract: *This article continues a discussion of the imagery, words, and phrases that make up a specific* leitmotif*, called the seed motif. Two instances of the seed motif found in Alma are discussed as a seemingly intentional diptych in which one narrative reflects the other, but in the negative. Five specific examples from the motif are examined in greater detail, with a look at their origin and usage throughout the record. The narrative of Abinadi is presented as a unique iteration of the seed motif wherein the concept of the bands of death is introduced. The paper concludes by discussing the relationship between authorship of the Book of Mormon, the seed motif, and the metaphor of the bands of death and the chains of hell.*

In a previous article, I presented evidence that a motif found in the two stories of the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the story of Cain is used as a framework for structuring the narratives of conflicts between the followers of the devil and the followers of God.[1] This motif occurs throughout the Bible and in Restoration scripture. This follow-up paper is a companion piece to that earlier article. In the appendix at the end of this study is a summary of the key concepts presented in the previous article that will aid the reader to understand this paper. This background will help the reader as this article explores two more instances of the seed motif that make use of two short phrases

1. Noel Hudson, "The Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman in the Standard Works," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 63 (2025): 1–50, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-seed-of-the-serpent-and-the-seed-of-the-woman-in-the-standard-works/.

used as lead-words: the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell* (Alma 5; 9–14). (The term *lead-word* is defined in the appendix.) The article investigates the origin and usage of these two phrases, which will provide some insights into the authoring and editing process of the Book of Mormon. Along the way, it will review other literary links, which are also related to the seed motif.

One specific theme of the seed motif, which has been developed from its early usage to an area of particular emphasis by $Alma_2$, is that of *captivity.* His in-depth emphasis on this theme is likely due to his own intimate personal experience. $Alma_2$ develops the themes of bondage and dominion to a greater extent than other prophets as he preaches in Zarahemla and Ammonihah and as he teaches his sons. He encourages his various audiences to retain a remembrance of the captivity of their fathers. This is a theme he returns to time and again (for example, Alma 5:6, 29:12, 36:2). This repetition may be because $Alma_2$, like his father, $Alma_1$, had been in bondage to the Amulonites (Mosiah 24:8–13) and also had been subjected to spiritual bondage during his rebellion against the Church. He refers to this state as being "encircled about by the everlasting chains of death" (Alma 36:18). Other authors discuss this same theme, but $Alma_2$ not only places greater emphasis on it, he ties the theme of bondage to the phrase the *chains of hell*. This latter phrase is used as a lead-word that sometimes associates doctrinal discussions about death with the theme of captivity.

$Alma_2$'s use of the seed motif highlights the contrast between good and evil that is inherent in the seed motif. Gordon Thomasson has commented on the dialectic that features prominently in the construction and narration of stories in the Book of Mormon.[2] $Alma_2$'s use of the seed motif accentuates that dialectic as he employs it at many different levels in his preaching. Contrasting elements are placed adjacent to one another in the record and range from individual contrasting verses to the contrast inherent in the seed motif to contrasting stories with similar situations but opposite outcomes. I term $Alma_2$'s usage of the seed motif in this fashion a *diptych*, which is a term drawn from the usage of contrasting matching images in the art world.

One fascinating aspect of the seed motif is the way in which it can be adapted by different authors to fit varying circumstances, concerns, and themes. By tracing the origin and development of the lead-words

2. Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 32–34, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss1/3.

the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell*, the different ways in which the terms are employed provide insight into the ability of Book of Mormon authors to work with the imagery and themes that make up the seed motif — all while still providing a very individualized treatment of several highly important topics. As one example of this, while $Alma_2$ places great emphasis on the doctrinal impact of the themes of captivity and dominion within the seed motif, in the chapters that deal extensively with *war* in the latter part of the book of Alma, the same themes are instead discussed in the context of *political freedom*. Perhaps the change in focus is related to the different sensibilities of Mormon, the general, when compared with $Alma_2$, the high priest.

$Alma_2$, the Bands of Death, and the Chains of Hell in the Seed Motif

The seed motif consists of a set of themes, symbols, phrases, and lead-words (see appendix), that serve to focus attention on a set of attributes and behaviors of the protagonists (the seed of the woman) and antagonists (seed of the serpent) in important stories. The attributes and behaviors are listed in table 1.

Table 1. The seed of the serpent compared to the seed of the woman.[3]

The Seed of the Serpent	The Seed of the Woman
Rejects the Counsel of the Lord	Hearkens to the Word of the Lord
Chooses Satan to Rule Over Them	Chooses to Follow God
Ambushes, Sets Snares, and Deceives	Is Honest and Forthright
Focuses on This Life Only	Looks forward to the future with faith
Kills for Gain or Power, Sets Their Heart on Riches	Sets their heart on the things of God
Seeks to Exercise Dominion and Bring the Seed of the Woman into Bondage	Seeks Freedom and Agency for Themselves and Others
Is Cursed, Marked, and Cast Out	Is Blessed and Protected by God
Is Trampled, has His Head Crushed, or is Utterly Subdued	Is Lifted Up, Either Literally or Metaphorically

The seed motif is used frequently throughout the Book of Mormon, but it doesn't show up in every book. A question that naturally arises is, what is the relationship of the usage of the seed motif across the various Book of Mormon authors and editors?

3. Hudson, "Seed of the Serpent," 1–50.

The seed motif is first used by Lehi, as cited by Nephi shortly after the arrival of the family group in the promised land. It also shows up in quotations attributed to Nephi's brother, Jacob. The motif is used later by Mosiah, $Alma_2$, Abinadi, and others. The close match in the structure of narratives such as that of Nephi and Laban with the story of David and Goliath[4] suggests that Nephi intentionally built his narrative in a way that reflected the usage of the seed motif by ancient Hebrew prophets in the Bible or, more accurately, in the record that Nephi obtained from Laban, the brass plates.[5] While an in-depth study of where the motif is used and where it is absent is beyond the scope of the current article, an answer to this question may yield new insights into the relationships between the works of the various authors and editors whose work is found in the Book of Mormon. Jeff Lindsay has done research on many different types of intertextual relationships and discusses many of the possibilities for the source of the intertextuality ranging from the editorial efforts of Mormon to an unintentional commonality of language used in translation.[6] I will explore many of these ideas as they relate to the seed motif in a future article.

For the purpose of the study at hand, some insights may be gained by examining the origin and evolution of two phrases that develop into a *leitwort* used within the context of the seed motif by $Alma_2$. These phrases are the *chains of hell* and the associated metaphor, the *bands of death*. Tracing the evolution of these phrases may help to resolve a question that Book of Mormon scholars have debated that has come to be known as the *discontinuity theory*. Scholars such as Brent Metcalfe, Rebecca Roesler, Grant Hardy, and others have proposed that the concepts taught in the small plates of Nephi such as the prophecies of the coming of Christ may not have been seamlessly transmitted to king Benjamin, $Alma_2$, and other prophets in the middle period of the Book of Mormon.[7] The shared usage of the *leitworter* the

4. Val Larsen, "Killing Laban: The Birth of Sovereignty in the Nephite Constitutional Order," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 36, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol16/iss1/5.
5. Hudson, "Seed of the Serpent," 40–43.
6. Jeff Lindsay, "An Update to Strong Like Unto Moses," unpublished manuscript.
7. Matthew Scott Stenson, "According to the Spirit of Revelation and Prophecy": $Alma_2$'s Prophetic Warning of Christ's Coming to the Lehites (and Others)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 55 (2023): 107–68, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/according-to-the-spirit-of-revelation-and-prophecy-alma2s-prophetic-warning-of-christs-coming-to-the-lehites-and-others/.

chains of hell and the *bands of death* between early and later Book of Mormon prophets may indicate that there is continuity between early and later prophets that has previously been overlooked. Other shared concepts that are also used by the prophets examined here in iterations of the seed motif strengthen the likelihood of a continuity of concepts that presents challenges for the discontinuity theory.

To trace the usage of the concepts in question, I begin in the early part of the ministry of $Alma_2$. In two early examples of his preaching, $Alma_2$ addresses the people of Zarahemla and the people of Ammonihah. In the context of his preaching to these two different audiences, $Alma_2$ describes the Church in Zarahemla as being in a state of great unbelief (Alma 7:6) and says of the people of Ammonihah that "Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people" (Alma 8:9). These two groups both contain a population of people who had distanced themselves from the Church. A significant portion of both groups are described as possessing the characteristics of the seed of the serpent, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the seed of the serpent in two groups.

Seed of the Serpent	People of Zarahemla	People of Ammonihah
Rejects the Counsel of the Lord	O ye workers of iniquity . . . a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice! (Alma 5:37)	Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah; therefore they would not hearken unto the words of Alma. (Alma 8:9)
Chooses Satan to Rule Over Them	I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil? (Alma 5:20)	O ye wicked and perverse generation, why hath Satan got such great hold upon your hearts? Why will ye yield yourselves unto him that he may have power over you? (Alma 10:25)
Ambushes, Sets Snares, and Deceives	Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day. . . (Alma 5:17)	For ye are laying the foundations of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God. (Alma 10:17)

Seed of the Serpent	People of Zarahemla	People of Ammonihah
Focuses on This Life Only	Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life. (Alma 5:28)	Believest thou that there is no God? I say unto you, Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him. (Alma 11:24)
Kills for Gain or Power, Sets Their Heart on Riches	Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness? (Alma 5:23)	Therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings, and all manner of disturbances and wickedness, that they might have more employ, that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them. (Alma 11:20)
Seeks to Exercise Dominion and Bring the Seed of the Woman into Bondage	And again I say unto you, is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions? (Alma 5:30)	And they did withhold food from them that they might hunger, and water that they might thirst; and they also did take from them their clothes that they were naked; and thus they were bound with strong cords, and confined in prison. (Alma 14:22)
Is Cursed, Marked, and Cast Out	I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent. (Alma 5:56)	And they spit upon him, and cast him out from among them, and also all those who believed in the words which had been spoken by Alma and Amulek; and they cast them out, and sent men to cast stones at them. (Alma 12:3)*
Is Trampled, has His Head Crushed, or is Utterly Subdued	Can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet. (Alma 5:53)*	And the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof. (Alma 14:27)

* There is a reversal in which the seed of the woman suffers the fate we expect for the seed of the serpent. This type of reversal may be a literary tool that may be discussed in a subsequent article.

$Alma_2$ and the bands of death and the chains of hell

When $Alma_2$ preaches to the people of Zarahemla, he uses the phrase the *bands of death* together with the metaphor of grasping chains, which he calls the *chains of hell*. When $Alma_2$ discusses the bands of death and the chains of hell, he is apparently dealing with the themes of sin, guilt, captivity, liberation, and the Atonement. Jeff Lindsay has previously noted an intertextual linkage between the preaching of Abinadi and several discourses of $Alma_2$ concerning the meaning and need for the Atonement. This linkage is based on the recurring phrase "the bowels of mercy."[8] Here $Alma_2$ uses a couple of short phrases that create a very similar set of intertextual linkages. He begins his discourse with a discussion of the theme of bondage in the context of the people in the time of his father, $Alma_1$, who were in captivity to the Lamanites:

> And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word; and we were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also. And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? (Alma 5:5–6)

As his preaching continues, $Alma_2$ links the concepts of both death and hell to his theme of captivity. He says:

> Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them. (Alma 5:7)

For $Alma_2$, the physical captivity of his people reflects their spiritual captivity. In his account, he and his father were triply bound, first by the

8. Jeff Lindsay, "Was the Sacrifice of the Messiah Really Needed? How the Book of Moses + Book of Mormon May Help Remove a Stumbling Block," *Arise from the Dust* (blog), 4 February 2025, arisefromthedust.com/was-the-sacrifice-of-the-messiah-really-needed-how-the-book-of-moses-book-of-mormon-may-help-remove-a-stumbling-block/.

bands of death, second by the chains of hell, and third by their captivity to the Lamanites. However, all of these bindings were loosed:

> And again, I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved. (Alma 5:9)

$Alma_2$ and Amulek also touch upon these same metaphors in their preaching in Ammonihah, and they expand upon them by providing clear definitions for each one. Amulek is discussing the consequences of sin and death when he tells Zeezrom:

> Therefore, the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. (Alma 11:41)

However, when Amulek preaches that everyone will be saved from physical death, Zeezrom and the people with him "began again to be astonished" (Alma 11:46). The people of Ammonihah held a different view of things, perhaps based on the doctrines of Nehor. $Alma_2$ warns Zeezrom that his lack of understanding, which has led to his poor behavior, is a trap laid by the devil.

> And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity. (Alma 12:6)

Zeezrom begins to suspect that his previous worldview might be incorrect, based on the knowledge that $Alma_2$ and Amulek appear to have of him. He seems particularly intrigued by the concept that resurrection will be granted universally, and he asks $Alma_2$ to explain the concept further, saying:

> What does this mean which Amulek hath spoken concerning the resurrection of the dead, that all shall rise from the dead, both the just and the unjust, and are brought to stand before God to be judged according to their works? (Alma 12:8)

$Alma_2$ responds with the insight that what Amulek has presented is a mystery of God that requires a higher level of spiritual maturity to understand (Alma 12:9). He then goes on to define the second part of his paired phrase, the *chains of hell,* in relation to knowledge from God. He says:

> And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:11)

So, the *chains of hell*, as defined by $Alma_2$, is a concept that explains the methodology the devil uses to drag spirits into hell. These chains are congruent with an aspect of the seed motif: namely, the seed of the serpent are blissfully unaware of the danger that awaits after they die because of their conscious, intentional choice to focus on this life alone. In their pride, they dismiss the word of God since it is foolishness to them. The devil then uses their pride to grasp them with the chains of hell.

The narratives of Ammonihah and Zarahemla are connected by additional themes

In addition to the standard themes of the seed motif, which are present in the two narratives under consideration, other themes and mental images tie these two narratives together.[9] This additional imagery seems to be frequently associated with iterations of the seed motif. It may in fact make up a superset of seed motif imagery that could be added to those images and themes previously identified, as this imagery is also used in other instances of the seed motif. Many of the concepts in the preaching of $Alma_2$ in Ammonihah are explicitly placed in the context of the Garden of Eden and the events that unfolded there (Alma 12:21–33). This strengthens the connection between the seed motif presented in this narrative and the original seed motif.[10] $Alma_2$ explains the need for an atonement to overcome the effects of sin and

9. *Images* or *imagery* as I am using them here are defined as follows: In literature, *imagery* refers to words that trigger the reader to recall images, or mental pictures, that engage one of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. Imagery is one of the strongest literary techniques because it connects to the personal experiences or memories of the reader. "Imagery," Del Mar College, 13 June 2023, delmar.edu/offices/swc/elements-of-literature/imagery.html.
10. Hudson, "Seed of the Serpent," 1–50.

death. Logically and pragmatically, God needed to find a way to let men know about all of these important concepts. According to $Alma_2$, the need to disseminate knowledge was the reason for the creation of the high priesthood:

> I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. (Alma 13:1)

This discussion of the priesthood is at home in the original seed motif, which mentions the first calling of men to the holy order of the priesthood (Moses 5:50; 6:67). This concept was also preached by $Alma_2$ in Zarahemla, which he mentions four different times in his sermon (for example, Alma 5:54). The in-depth discussion of Melchizedek, and the holy order of the priesthood that $Alma_2$ presents in Ammonihah (Alma 13:1–20), is similar to a discussion that takes place at the end of the story of Cain (Moses 5:58–59). The holders of this priesthood are sanctified by the Holy Ghost:

> Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God. (Alma 13:11–12)

This teaching in Ammonihah is very similar to what $Alma_2$ taught in Zarahemla:

> I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. (Alma 5:21)

The concept of garments washed clean in blood is a paradoxical concept that is found in the writings of both $Alma_2$ and of $Nephi_1$. $Nephi_1$ associates the image with Christ, the Apostles, and those who have faith in Christ (1 Nephi 12:10–11). This is the same way that $Alma_2$ uses the concept here. He then goes on to use the contrasting image of garments filthy with blood as a symbol of murder. He asks:

> And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what

> will these things testify against you? Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness? (Alma 5:22–23)

The association of this imagery with the themes from the Cain seed motif is made based on blood serving as a testimony of murder. Blood crying out against the seed of the serpent is, of course, a bit of imagery from the narrative of the first murder (Moses 5:35–36).

Another detail that may tie these instances of the seed motif back to the early instances in the book of Genesis is a reference to the countenance of a person. Seth is described as being in the image and likeness of his father, who was in the likeness of God (Genesis 5:1–3). In contrast, Cain was of a fallen countenance (Genesis 4:6). Both narratives in $Alma_2$ have similar allusions, one in the positive and the other in the negative (a diptych-style collocation). In preaching to the people of Zarahemla $Alma_2$ asks:

> And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? (Alma 5:14)

A possible allusion to the same concept in Ammonihah occurs when the judges are questioning and abusing $Alma_2$ and Amulek. As their abuse reaches a frenzy, the judges begin "gnashing their teeth upon them, and spitting upon them, and saying: How shall we look when we are damned?" (Alma 14:21). This hellish countenance, if it may be so termed, fits in well with Cain's fallen countenance and serves as a counterpoint to receiving the image of God in one's countenance.

The Metaphor of the Bands of Death and the Chains of Hell

The incorporation of several sets of matching lead-words and metaphors into the seed motif in $Alma_2$'s preaching in these two instances seems to be meant to highlight a point of differentiation between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. This point is a consequence of the conscious choice by the seed of the serpent to reject the counsel of God. The use of the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell* in these two narratives, together with the other themes and imagery noted above, suggests that these two narratives were meant to be examined by the reader with each story to be understood in the light of the other narrative.

In other words, it appears that these two narratives were designed as a dyad that was meant for pairwise comparison. When viewed in

this way, the people of Ammonihah, who were wicked and refused to repent, serve as an excellent foil for the people of Zarahemla who were wicked but repented and turned to the Lord. There are other dyads of this type in which the characters or events in one situation serve as a foil for others in a different situation. The account of the King of the Lamanites, who hears the word of the Lord and changes his heart completely, is an excellent foil for Korihor, who rejects the word of the Lord and seeks to lead away the hearts of the people.[11] The Lamanites, who lack the gospel but later embrace it fully, may be intended as foils for the Amulonites and Amalekites who had the gospel but later rejected it utterly. Grant Hardy notes, "One of the most characteristic features of Mormon's writing is his use of parallel narratives.[12] Hardy goes on to note several examples of parallel narratives before explaining that, "there is a fair degree of variation in how Mormon employs selection, arrangement, and phrasing to construct parallel narratives."[13]

The parallel stories that Hardy asserts are linked by similarities include two different kings assembling their people to speak to them (Limhi and Benjamin) and two sons of kings (Ammon and Aaron) teaching Lamanite kings (Lamoni and his father). Val Larsen has also commented extensively on similar parallel stories.[14] However, the parallels between these stories are not examined by Hardy in greater detail. An in-depth study of linkages between stories made via *leitmotif*, *leitworter*, or other literary tools may reveal additional connections, as is the case between the stories of Korihor and the king of the Lamanites. Such connections suggest a high degree of intentionality on the part of the author (or editor) based on the explicitness and formality of the literary tools employed. The purpose of the Hebrew authors in writing parallel narratives, as Robert Alter puts it for the case of Biblical

11. Noel Hudson, "Insights into the Story of Korihor Based on Intertextual Comparisons," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 62 (2024): 223–42, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/insights-into-the-story-of-korihor-based-on-intertextual-comparisons/.
12. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 153.
13. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 155–56.
14. Val Larsen, "Prophet or Loss: $Mosiah_1$/Zeniff, Benjamin/Noah, $Mosiah_2$/Limhi and the Emergence of the Almas," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 60 (2024): 367–408, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/prophet-or-loss-mosiah1-zeniff-benjamin-noah-mosiah2-limhi-and-the-emergence-of-the-almas/.

parallelism, is for "intensifying, specifying, complementing, qualifying, contrasting, expanding the semantic material of each initial verset in its apparent repetition."[15] The same purpose for the authors in crafting parallel narratives also seems to hold true in the Book of Mormon.

The parallel narratives mentioned by Hardy are all direct parallels containing one story that plays out in the same way as another. An example of this occurs when Aaron's preaching to the king of the Lamanites plays out essentially the same as Ammon's preaching to Lamoni. Hardy finds the degree of repetition present in such narratives remarkable. However, just as frequently, we encounter parallel opposites rather than direct parallels in the Book of Mormon. In these cases, the dyads are contrasting reflections of one another with the paired characters having opposite rather than complementary qualities.

Book of Mormon scholars have noticed a tendency throughout the Book of Mormon to place contrasting narratives with differing outcomes adjacent to one another in the record. This tendency to show the extreme good and extreme evil outcomes based on how one receives God's commandments has been referred to as "The two ways,"[16] or "The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways," which is a method used in several ancient cultures of teaching youth and others the way to live their lives.[17]

In the Book of Mormon, the doctrine of the two ways is taught by using mirror-image reflections — with one image serving as the righteous or correct way to live and the other as the incorrect, wicked way to live — function something like a *diptych* (see the appendix).

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw notes that "It seems as if the telling of the stories of Moses 5–8 were deliberately structured in order to highlight the contrast between those who accepted and those who rejected the laws of heaven."[18] His observation was made concerning the

15. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 122.
16. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Nephite Metaphor of Life as a Probation: Rethinking Nephi's Portrayal of Laman and Lemuel," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 57 (2023): 231–80, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-nephite-metaphor-of-life-as-a-probation-rethinking-nephis-portrayal-of-laman-and-lemuel/.
17. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-ancient-doctrine-of-the-two-ways-and-the-book-of-mormon.
18. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 2014 ed. (Salt

chapters of the Pearl of Great Price that contain the fullest account of the original seed motif,[19] and it is equally true of the many instances of the seed motif found in the Book of Mormon. These instances function like diptychs in illustrating contrasting choices and outcomes in an attempt to teach the people to choose wisely when confronted with the option of the two ways.

$Alma_2$'s combining of the short phrases the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell* in the two cases of the narrative of $Alma_2$ at Zarahemla and at Ammonihah may suggest an intentional diptych connection between these stories. There are additional parallel elements between the two stories that strengthen the diptych hypothesis mentioned above. These include the discussion of the purpose of the order of the Son of God, the shared imagery of garments either stained in blood or else washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and the reference to countenances. In addition to these, there also appear to be instances of near-verbatim repetition, a literary technique discussed by Robert Alter in which small changes are introduced into an otherwise verbatim repetition.[20] Although near-verbatim repetition seems to be used far less in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible, there are instances of short phrases being repeated with alterations that seem to serve the same function. For example, when $Alma_2$ began preaching in Zarahemla he introduced himself in these words:

> I, Alma, having been consecrated by my father, Alma, to be a high priest over the church of God, he having power and authority from God to do these things, behold, I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the land which was in the borders of Nephi. (Alma 5:3)

When he preaches in Ammonihah, the people reject him in an interesting parody of these words saying:

> Behold, we know that thou art Alma; and we know that thou art high priest over the church which thou hast established in many parts of the land, according to your tradition; and we

Lake City: Eborn Publishing, 2014), as adapted for "Book of Mormon Essays 73: The Two Ways (Moses 5) The Five Celestial Laws (Moses, Chapters 5–8)," Interpreter Foundation, 18 September 2021, interpreterfoundation.org/book-of-moses-essays-073/.

19. Hudson, "Seed Motif," 25–27.
20. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 122.

> are not of thy church, and we do not believe in such foolish traditions. (Alma 8:11)

The presence of these similar phrases in both narratives, as well as the shared imagery and themes, suggests that these stories are meant to be read as a paired diptych. The seed motif is, of course, by its very nature, structured as a diptych that encourages the reader to identify and compare contrasting elements and themes. The presence of the seed motif in both narratives, when taken in addition to the broader scope of opposing images and themes, provides a set of nested diptychs. An examination of this concept at the level of individual verses, such as those just mentioned above, reveals reflective dyads at that level as well, thus creating a nested hierarchy of diptychs at the level of the story, the motif within the story, and individual verses.

The Origin of the Terms the *Bands of Death* and the *Chains of Hell*

The two discourses of $Alma_2$, examined above, both use the terms the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell*. $Alma_2$ appears to have adopted these terms from other prophets and combined them together for rhetorical emphasis. By focusing on the usage of metaphorical chains or bands in the seed motif, we can see the way in which the concept is adopted by one prophet from another, and then adapted for the specific usage of that prophet. The origin of the concept of the metaphorical chains of hell may have been from the brass plates. Jeff Lindsay and Noel Reynolds have identified many specific turns of phrase or metaphorical concepts used in the Book of Mormon that may have originated with the brass plates. One of these concepts is the *chains of the devil* or the *chains of hell*. They note that:

> In Moses 7:26, Enoch sees Satan with "a great chain": "And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced." A little later in Moses 7:57, we read of spirits in prison, held captive in "chains of darkness" until the judgment day. (This follows the heavens being "veiled" in verse 56.) Chains of darkness and Satan veiling the earth (perhaps with the chain of darkness) are striking images in Moses 7.[21]

21. Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case

The examples explored below of the ways of which the metaphorical chains of the devil are used in the seed motif illustrate how Book of Mormon authors appear to have adapted themes within a common framework in unique ways. This allows them to maintain the integrity of the motif while at the same time dealing with those themes in deeply personal ways.

Lehi's usage of the chains of hell

Lehi was the first prophet in the Book of Mormon to use a term similar to the *chains of hell* in the context of the seed motif. This occurs when he explains to his rebellious sons the consequences of the choice to follow Satan in seed of the serpent fashion, He uses Nephi's righteousness as the contrasting seed of the woman behavior.[22] As Lehi alternates between these contrasting behaviors, he urges Laman and Lemuel to mend their ways. He twice invokes the metaphor of diabolical chains in a poignant plea for his sons to free themselves from the influence of the devil. He begs them:

> O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. Awake! and arise from the dust and hear the words of a trembling parent. (2 Nephi 1:13–14)

In these verses, he uses the imagery of a trembling parent watching his children who are unaware of the disastrous consequences of the fact that while they are spiritually sleeping, they are being pulled down by chains into a gulf of misery and woe. Brandt Gardner says of these verses that:

> This is a reference to the dead, even though the sons are not

for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 15, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/strong-like-unto-moses-the-case-for-ancient-roots-in-the-book-of-moses-based-on-book-of-mormon-usage-of-related-content-apparently-from-the-brass-plates/.

22. Rather than discussing each instance of the seed motif in detail in this example, I assume that all of the basic elements are present and will focus attention on the specific attributes of the seed motif that are relevant to the bands of death and the chains of hell and related imagery.

> physically dead. Lehi uses the imagery of the sleep in Sheol to describe their spiritual state. If they are in the awful gulf, then they are essentially dead to God's influence. Hence, they must awake and arise from the dust of that state of spiritual death. This reference is made more poignant by Lehi's declaration that he believes that he is on his deathbed.[23]

The imagery that he uses in the next verse is an interesting contrast (diptych) to children who are sleeping while bound with chains. He tells them:

> But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. (2 Nephi 1:15)

The encircling arms of the love of God stand in direct contrast to the encircling chains of hell. Lehi's certainty of his own salvation serves to reinforce the message that the trembling parent is not trembling because of concern for himself, but because he is so concerned for the fate of his children. The farewell address of a trembling father with his pleas to his wayward children to shake off the chains that bind them is a powerful image in this instance of the seed motif.

Jacob's usage of the chains of hell

As Jacob expounds upon his themes in 2 Nephi 9, he provides doctrinal statements that clearly delineate the domains of physical and spiritual death. This is done in a way that appears to have later been adopted by $Alma_2$:

> O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell. (2 Nephi 9:10–12)

In Jacob's teaching, there are two types of death: the death of the physical body is called *death*, or *the grave*, while *hell* is the *death of the*

23. Brant A. Gardner, "2 Nephi 1," in *Book of Mormon Minute* (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2019).

spirit. This latter death is not a dissolution of the spirit, but rather captivity to the devil. One may avoid hell if one is willing to "turn away from your sins; shake off the chains of him that would bind you fast; come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation" (v. 45). The *chains of hell*, or the *chains of the devil*, therefore, as in $Alma_2$'s preaching, refer to the means used to drag a spirit into captivity in hell.

Jacob uses another image that appears to be taken up later by $Alma_2$. Jacob figuratively takes off his garments and shakes them as a metaphor for shaking off the iniquities from his soul, much as he is encouraging his audience to shake off the chains of hell (v. 44). By performing this symbolic act, he can stand with brightness before God, being rid of the blood of those to whom he is preaching.

Finally, another key concept from Nephi, which is taken up later by $Alma_2$, challenges the ignorance of those who reject the word of God. Jacob perhaps articulates this concept better than anyone when he says:

> O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. (2 Nephi 9:28)

The treatment of spiritual and temporal death, the metaphor of the chains of hell, the use of garments stained with blood as a symbol of sinfulness, and the vain and foolish people who disregard the teachings of the prophets because they think they know for themselves are all concepts that $Alma_2$ appears to have borrowed from Jacob. If $Alma_2$ did, indeed, receive these concepts by reading the record of Jacob, the discontinuity theory may have to be reconsidered.

Nephi's usage of the chains of hell metaphor

Nephi's usage of the chain metaphor in 2 Nephi 28 is very similar to how his father uses it in that he is warning his oblivious audience of the danger that they are in of being grasped by the devil. However, unlike the urging of a trembling parent, Nephi is somewhat fierier in his preaching as he attempts to wake the Gentiles to an awareness of their situation. He says:

> For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or

> the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish... and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none — and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment. (2 Nephi 28:19–23)

As in Lehi's urging, Nephi warns that the devil has been using his tranquilizing influence to lull them into ignoring the raging torrent that is sweeping them to destruction. Nephi also makes use of the imagery of *shaking*, though in this case it is not a trembling parent, and it is not Laman and Lemuel shaking off the chains with which they are bound. Rather, it is the entire kingdom of the devil that is shaking as some of its members are stirred up to repentance.

The bands of death in the teachings of Abinadi

Just as Lehi spoke of being encircled in the arms of God, in Mosiah 16:12, Abinadi uses the imagery of the arms of mercy extended toward the people: "having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not." Since the people have chosen to be the seed of the serpent they refuse the extended arms, preferring instead to be grasped in the bands of death. This is a metaphor that Abinadi uses in the same way as Lehi, Jacob, and Nephi use metaphorical chains. He says:

> And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men. (Mosiah 15:8)

In his usage of this metaphor, Abinadi focuses on Christ's ability to overcome both the grave and the effects of sin as he breaks the bands of death through the power of the Atonement. Abinadi explains how Christ overcame the grave by first subjecting his flesh to death, thus swallowing up the will of the Son in the will of the Father to "break

the bands of death" (Mosiah 15:8). This phrase is found four times in Mosiah 15 and once more in Mosiah 16. It is found thereafter in the preaching of Amulek, $Alma_2$, Aaron, and Mormon. As noted earlier, $Alma_2$ appears to synthesize the teachings of Jacob and those of Abinadi when he combines the concept of the *bands of death* with that of the *chains of hell*. In so doing he specifically references Abinadi (Alma 5:11), thereby suggesting that Abinadi was the source of the concept of the *bands of death.*

Conclusions from the seed motif and the chains of the devil by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Abinadi

There are clear similarities in imagery between $Alma_2$ and his predecessors, especially in the case of Jacob. It seems unlikely that $Alma_2$'s preaching would have turned out as it did if he had not been influenced by reading Jacob. $Alma_2$'s definitions of death and hell, his use of the imagery of dirty garments, and the grasping chains that bind the proud and unrepentant all bear a strong similarity to Jacob. Jacob's use of the word "death" as a *leitwort* in 2 Nephi 9 (used a total of fourteen times for "death" and three more for "dead") seems to strengthen the connection. Jacob's most memorable passage using this lead-word says:

> Yea, that monster, **death** and hell, which I call the **death** of the body, and also the **death** of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this **death**, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its **dead**; which **death** is the grave. And this **death** of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual **death**, shall deliver up its **dead**; which spiritual **death** is hell; wherefore, **death** and hell must deliver up their **dead**, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies. (2 Nephi 9:10–11)

The rhythm and tempo in Jacob's usage of this lead-word closely match two verses from $Alma_2$'s sermon in Ammonihah. $Alma_2$ uses *dead*, *die*, *dieth*, and *death* a total of forty-one times in chapters 11 and 12. The matching usage by $Alma_2$ and Jacob of *death* as a lead-word within the framework of the seed motif suggests the intentional creation of an intertextual connection. The following verses illustrate the similar usage of the lead-word by $Alma_2$:

> Now, there is a **death** which is called a temporal **death**;

> and the **death** of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal **death**, that all shall be raised from this temporal **death**. (Alma 11:42)
>
> And now behold, I say unto you then cometh a **death**, even a second **death**, which is a spiritual **death**; then is a time that whosoever **dieth** in his sins, as to a temporal **death**, shall also **die** a spiritual **death**; yea, he shall **die** as to things pertaining unto righteousness. (Alma 12:16)

The bits of evidence accumulated so far build a strong case for $Alma_2$'s familiarity with Jacob's discourse, which he seems to have referenced in the development of his own preaching. Likewise, when $Alma_2$ directly references Abinadi's *bands of death* phrase, it becomes clear that $Alma_2$'s aptitude with the scriptures runs the gamut from those of the distant past to those that are recent enough to have been preached in $Alma_2$'s own lifetime. The familiarity with the scriptures is, of course, not limited to $Alma_2$. Several other prophets show that they are familiar with the teachings of their predecessors, and that specific scriptures tend to resonate with later prophets who pick them up and repeat them, often with adaptations. So it is that this one particular phrase came to be used many times in the Book of Mormon, all the way up to Mormon's words of farewell when he says, "all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death" (Mormon 9:13).

The accumulation of evidence that supports the adoption and adaptation from prophet to prophet over time supports the conclusion made by Matthew Stenson in discussing the discontinuity theory. Stenson suggests that there is sufficient evidence from the writings of $Alma_2$ to challenge the notion of discontinuity. Much of Stenson's evidence comes from the teachings of $Alma_2$ in the narratives examined above.[24] The evidence from the evolution of the concept of the chains of hell and the close correlation of Jacob's teachings with those of $Alma_2$ support the notion that $Alma_2$ was intimately familiar with the writings of his earlier predecessors and used the concepts they taught in his own preaching. This conclusion favors the position of continuity over discontinuity.

24. Stenson, "According to the Spirit of Revelation and Prophecy," 165–67.

Summary and Conclusions

This article examines the seed motif in two instances that occur nearly back-to-back in the book of $Alma_2$. The preaching of $Alma_2$ in Zarahemla shares several elements with his preaching in Ammonihah (in addition to those recognized as the basis of the seed motif). This suggests that the accounts are meant to be viewed as a sort of literary diptych. Some of the elements that tie these two narratives together include:

- A discussion of the priesthood after the holy order of God.
- The use of the phrases the *bands of death* and the *chains of hell* as lead-words.
- The imagery of garments made white in the blood of Christ.
- The imagery of a countenance that reflects divine qualities or else reflects the countenance of the damned.

Reading these two accounts with the notion that the original author meant them to be compared to one another provides insights into the likely motivations and aspirations of $Alma_2$, In addition, they offer doctrinal justification for the utter destruction of the people of Ammonihah and the ongoing preservation of the people of Zarahemla.

Several narratives in the book of 2 Nephi were shown to have elements that may have later been adopted by $Alma_2$ for use in his preaching. These elements include garments stained by blood as a sign of sin and chains that grasp the proud who refuse to repent of their sins. The narrative of Jacob in 2 Nephi 9 showed a particular set of common literary elements found in the preaching of $Alma_2$ in Ammonihah, including the shared usage of *death* as a lead-word. The narrative of Abinadi was found to have contributed the concept of the *bands of death* to the preaching of $Alma_2$.

Taken together, the narratives examined suggest a complex picture of the seed motif that may be better explained by the adoption and adaptation of elements of the literary motif by authors across time, rather than as the effect of a single unifying editor or author who imposed the motif on previously existing accounts. This tentative conclusion is based in part on the large variation in the ways in which the books attributed to different authors employ the seed motif and its associated themes and imagery. Further research into the ways in which literary elements such as the imagery of the bands of death and the chains of hell is required to confirm whether or not this conclusion is correct. However, in this case at least, it seems likely that several

memorable metaphors used by $Alma_2$ are based on earlier imagery from his prophetic predecessors.

Appendix: *Leitmotif* and *Leitwort* as Rhetorical Devices Employed by Ancient Hebrew Authors

As presented in the work of several other scholars, an ancient Hebrew literary form that ties together multiple narratives through the usage of a repeated lead-word is termed a *leitwort*.[25] The plural of *leitwort* is *leitworter*. *Leitworter* are used in such a way that they stand out in a narrative and prompt the reader to pay close attention. Yairah Amit explains that lead-words are used to connect separate stories to one another in ways that prompt the reader to contrast the different accounts.[26] Lead-words can also be created using short phrases repeated in a way that seizes the reader's attention. Once the reader's attention is captured, the reader may be prompted to recall a related passage of scripture that uses the same phrase in a similar way. The intent seems to have been to create an intertextual linkage between the two passages of scripture in a way that would allow the reader to draw new conclusions. Lead-words are used prominently in the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, for example, as well as in many subsequent instances of the seed motif.[27]

When one or more lead-words, or *leitworter*, are employed to tie together a set of stories, and when those stories also make use of a common set of mental images and situations, the resultant literary technique created is a *leitmotif*. *Leitmotif* is a term that was originally coined to refer to musical works, particular those of Wagner, in which a unique musical score was associated with a particular character.[28] *Leitmotif* may be conceived as applying to a unified body of work by a single composer. However, it has been also employed broadly in the literary world and has become more generalized. In addition to expanding into the field of literature, it is no longer restricted to the

25. See, for example, Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 116.
26. Yairah Amit, "The Multi-Purpose 'Leading Word' and the Problems of Its Usage," *Prooftexts* 9, no. 2 (1989): 100.
27. Ronald Hendel, "Leitwort Style and Literary Structure in the J Primeval Narrative," in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R. E. Friedman on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Shawna Dolansky (Berkeley, CA: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 98.
28. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "leitmotif," merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leitmotif.

unified work of a single artist. The term *leitmotif* has come to be used to describe a theme or motif used by multiple authors over time. Thus, I employ the term here as applied to the related work of several different authors in a single literary work based on a common set of images and themes. The modern definition of a *leitmotif* is flexible enough to accommodate this broader usage.[29] The *leitmotif* literary tool appears to have been used throughout ancient Hebrew scriptures in a variety of ways to aid the reader in uncovering relationships between stories.

Diptych is a term that refers to an art style from the late Middle Ages in which paintings or carved reliefs are created on two opposing panels hinged in the middle, with the opposing images on the inner sides frequently including common elements that serve as a reflection of one another, as in figure 1.

Artists sometimes make diptychs consisting of a pair of works with inverted lighting or color schemes, resulting in inverted mirror images.[30] The inverted mirror images of the righteous Lamanite king and the wicked Korihor are an example of a diptych-style literary portrait. Such related literary diptychs are common throughout the Book of Mormon. Indeed, the majority of the narratives in the Book of Mormon, which have adopted the framework of the seed motif, are structured in just such a diptych literary style with the qualities of the righteous seed of the woman reflected in the negative by the unrighteous seed of the serpent.

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29. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "leitmotif." Of particular interest in the dictionary entry is the following:

> Leitmotif (also and formerly more commonly spelled *leitmotiv*) has its origins in opera and is especially associated with Wagnerian opera. The word is from the German words *leit* and *Motif*, which translate respectively as, "leading" and "motive." In opera, a leitmotif is a recurring melody that accompanies the reappearance of an idea, person, or situation. The term is now applied in other kinds of music, sometimes with a meaning very close to the original: "The Imperial March" that is heard in the *Star Wars* film franchise whenever Darth Vader appears on screen, for example, is a modern example of leitmotif.
>
> An older example is the classic work "Peter and the Wolf" by Sergei Prokofiev in 1936. Leitmotif also has extended use that treads the same territory as motif. Although it is not a common word, when it is applied it often refers to a dominant recurring theme, as when an image is consistently used in an artist's works.

30. Marshall K. Harris, "Negative Drawing Diptychs," drawings, marshallkharris.com/art/drawings/negative-drawing-dipytics/view/2291849/1/6200705.

Figure 1. A diptych from the Metropolitan Museum of Art[31]

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31. Diptych with the Coronation of the Virgin and the Last Judgment, circa 1260–70, 5 x 5 1/8 x 3/4 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, object no. 1970.324.7a,b. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57857852.

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