



Enallage in the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Thomas W. Brookbank long ago suggested that enallage, meaning the substitution of the singular for the plural or *vice versa* for rhetorical effect, is present in the Book of Mormon. Enallage does appear to exist as a prominent, meaningful rhetorical figure in the Bible, but its presence in the Book of Mormon is more difficult to demonstrate given the pronominal variation found in the Book of Mormon, a factor that Brookbank did not account for in his study. Nevertheless, a careful reading of contextual and verbal clues reveals that enallage does indeed appear to exist in some passages in the Book of Mormon. An awareness of this usage is important for a full understanding of such passages.

At the end of the first decade of this century, Thomas W. Brookbank, a one-time associate editor of the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, published a series of articles in the *Improvement Era* entitled "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon."¹ This was a groundbreaking work that laid the foundation for what has become an entire literature devoted to examining possible Hebraisms in the English text of the Book of Mormon.² The idea that the language of the small plates of Nephi

¹ Thomas W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 13 (1909–10): 117–21, 234–39, 336–42, 418–20, 538–43; 17 (1914): 189–92.

² See, for example, Sidney B. Sperry, "The Book of Mormon as Translation English," *Improvement Era* 38 (March 1935): 140–41, 187–88, and "Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 57 (October 1954):





involved a transliteration of the Hebrew language into an Egyptian script, a practice that eventually evolved into the reformed Egyptian of the plates of Mormon, is held by many Book of Mormon scholars,³ but remains controversial, a significant minority arguing strenuously that the original language of the small plates was simply Egyptian.⁴ Much more work needs to be done

703, 728–29; E. Craig Bramwell, “Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960; John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 11 (Autumn 1970): 50–60; Melvin Deloy Pack, “Possible Lexical Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973; and Angela Crowell, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” *Zarahemla Record* 17–18 (Summer and Fall 1982): 1–7, 16.

³ See John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985), 74 at n.□8.

⁴ Hugh Nibley, for instance, scoffs at “the darling illusion that anyone who has had elementary Hebrew knows the original language of the Book of Mormon” in *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 17. John Gee establishes that most Book of Mormon Hebraisms may also be described as Egyptianisms, something I have long suspected. See John Gee’s review of *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 179 n. 7. Presumably, at least part of Nibley’s concern with the Hebrew-transliterated-into-Egyptian theory is the dearth of significant precedent for such a procedure. Stephen D. Ricks, in “Language and Script in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights: An Ancient Window* (March 1992): 2, points to a possible precedent in Papyrus Amherst 63, which has been deciphered as a text having been written in the Aramaic language (a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew) but transliterated into demotic Egyptian. The original discovery of the Aramaic background of the text is described in Raymond A. Bowman, “An Aramaic Religious Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944): 219–31. More recent commentary has been supplied by Richard C. Steiner of Yeshiva University and Charles F. Nims of the University of Chicago; see Charles F. Nims and Richard C. Steiner, “A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2–6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (January–March 1983): 261–74; Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, “You Can’t Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43 (1984): 89–114; Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Revue Biblique* 92 (1985): 60–81; Richard C. Steiner, “The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy of a New Year’s Festival Imported from Bethel to Syene by Exiles from Rash,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111/2 (1991): 362–63; and Richard C. Steiner, “Northwest Semitic Incantations in an Egyptian Medical Papyrus of the





in this area, but whatever the ultimate scholarly consensus (if one is ever achieved), an important debt will be owed to Brookbank's pioneering study.

Brookbank's Argument

In the first two articles of the series, Brookbank sets out his argument that enallage exists in the Book of Mormon. Brookbank uses the term *enallage*, which is Greek for "interchange," as "a convenient term to express the substitution of one gender, person,

Fourteenth Century B.C.E.," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (July 1992): 191–200. For an exhaustive bibliography including other relevant studies, see John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 96–97 n. 147. Edward H. Ashment, "'A Record in the Language of My Father': Evidence of Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in the Book of Mormon," in Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 351–54, challenges the relevance of Papyrus Amherst 63 to the Book of Mormon on the grounds that (i) the text is pagan, and "does not show the efforts of pious, religious Jews carefully recording part of their scripture in Egyptian characters, as the Book of Mormon does" and (ii) the demotic text actually takes up more space on the papyrus than would have been the case if the scribe had simply used the Aramaic alphabet. I happened to read "You Can't Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too" when it was published in 1984, and I saw the same significance to the text that Ricks did, even though it was clearly a pagan text. When I read the Ricks piece, I did not think that he was trying to hide the pagan nature of the text; after all, his article is but a one-page report of his research, scarcely enough space to undertake a detailed description of the contents of the papyrus. Papyrus Amherst 63 is not and was not put forward by Ricks as an *exact* parallel to what took place in the ancient production of the Book of Mormon; rather, its significance lies simply in the fact that it is a striking example of an ancient transliteration from a Semitic language into demotic Egyptian. I do agree with Ashment, however, as to the relative compactness of the demotic of this particular papyrus compared with the space a simple Aramaic rendering would have taken. Although I believe that it is certainly possible that the Nephites used a transliteration system to achieve greater compactness for the purpose of writing on metal plates (particularly given the internal statements referred to by Ricks), and although Gee, "La Trahison de Clercs," 99, correctly points out certain methodological problems in Ashment's reliance on transliteration to make his point, the fact remains that this particular papyrus does not illustrate a meaningful increase in compactness in the transformation from Aramaic into Egyptian script.





number, case, mode, tense, etc., of the same word for another.”⁵
As Brookbank explains it,

plural forms are sometimes put by the Jews for the singular to imply that there are more than one person or thing held in view, though it may be to only one that the direct address or reference is made. In other words, when more than one was to share in a thought, or sentiment, the plural was sometimes used to show that the single individual chiefly in mind was not the only one to whom it was applicable, and, conversely, when more than one was to be included, the singular could be substituted for the plural to show, among other things, that those to whom the thought or command, etc., was directed, were not viewed collectively only, but as individuals also, who separately composed the mass.⁶

As an illustration of this type of enallage in the Bible, Brookbank then points to the substitution of the singular for the

⁵ Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies,” 13:118–19. That enallage is a broad term descriptive of a variety of possible grammatical interchanges is illustrated by a monograph written by Victor Bers entitled *Enallage and Greek Style* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), which is entirely devoted to but one type of enallage, defined by its author as “the transfer to the governing substantive of an adjective which by logic, or at least convention, belongs with an expressed dependent genitive” (ibid., 1). The term “enallage” can thus refer to merely formal substitutions, such as that found in this invocation of the goddess of sacred poetry from Vergil’s *Aeneid*, 9:525: “vos [plural], O Calliope [singular], precor” [“I entreat you, O Calliope”], identified as enallage in the grammatical appendix to Clyde Pharr, *Vergil’s Aeneid, Books I–VI* (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1964), 77. An English illustration of such a formal substitution would be the use of the plural for the singular in the editorial use of “we”; see *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1973), s.v. “enallage.” The enallage described by Brookbank involves a switch from an intentionally plural expression to an intentionally singular expression or *vice versa*, not the mere use of a plural form with a singular meaning or *vice versa*. This distinction will be important in examining the possible presence of enallage in the Book of Mormon, since as we shall see the formal use of plural pronouns with a singular meaning is common in the Book of Mormon, but is different from the phenomenon found in the Bible and described by Brookbank.

⁶ Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies,” 13:119, citing “Dr. Angus in the *Bible Hand Book*, paragraph 277.”





plural found in the ten commandments given to the Israelites in Exodus 20. Although the Lord used the singular in addressing Moses, in Exodus 19 he naturally uses the plural to refer to the children of Israel. For instance, in verses 4–6 he conveys through Moses a message to the children of Israel (throughout this article, pertinent indications of number are italicized):

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare *you* on eagles' wings, and brought *you* unto myself. Now therefore, if *ye* will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then *ye* shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And *ye* shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou [Moses] shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:4–6)

Yet the ten commandments themselves, which are intended for these same people (i.e., all the children of Israel), are framed with the singular *thou* (as in “*Thou* shalt have no other gods before me. *Thou* shalt not make unto *thee* any graven image .[]’ etc.). Later in Chapter 20 the Lord reverts to the plural, as in verses 22 and 23: “*Ye* have seen that I have talked with *you* from heaven. *Ye* shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall *ye* make unto *you* gods of gold.” The rhetorical effect of this switch in number is to show that, although the commandments applied to all, the Israelites were not viewed collectively only, but as individuals also, who separately composed the whole house of Israel. In other words, by shifting from the expected plural to the singular, the Lord was emphasizing each and every Israelite’s *individual* responsibility to obey the commandments, almost as if each person had been commanded by name to live them. Here the grammatical requirement of number agreement is properly subordinated to this aim. As an example of the substitution of the plural for the singular, Brookbank refers to Genesis 19:29, which states that God overthrew the “cities” in which Lot dwelt. Since by physical necessity Lot could only dwell in one city, the use of the plural for the singular points out that disaster had befallen not only the city where Lot lived, but others in the same area as well.





Turning to the Book of Mormon, Brookbank cites several apparent examples of similar number switching. For instance, he quotes 1 Nephi 2:19–20:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me saying, Blessed art *thou*, Nephi, because of *thy* faith, for *thou* hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as *ye* shall keep my commandments, *ye* shall prosper and shall be led to a land of promise, yea, a land which is choice above all lands.

Brookbank explains this passage by observing that the Lord begins by commending Nephi for his personal righteousness and so uses singular pronouns. The promise of prosperity under the stated conditions was not limited to Nephi, however, but applied to his companions as well, so the Lord switched to using plural pronouns in order to broaden the scope of his discourse appropriately. Thus, Brookbank concludes, the characteristic switches in pronominal usage in the Book of Mormon are not to be ridiculed as grammatical errors, but rather understood as reflecting a peculiar Hebrew idiom evidenced in the Bible.⁷

Enallage in the Bible

The first question raised by Brookbank's thesis is whether in fact enallage exists in the Bible. Number switching is unquestionably a widespread phenomenon in the Old Testament, and to a lesser extent in the New Testament. Set forth as Appendix A is a chart showing the distribution of 188 number switches that occur within the context of a single verse.⁸ What are we to make of this phenomenon? I can think of five possible explanations:

⁷ Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies," 13:235.

⁸ This chart is derived from Lyle L. Fletcher, "Pronouns of Address in the Book of Mormon," Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1988, 191–92. Due to the happy circumstance that the King James Version (KJV) literally and uniformly reflects number in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible, Fletcher's results may be re-created by executing the following search in a database containing the KJV: "ye/you/your/yours/yourselves & thou/thee/thy/thine/ thyself" and then manually deleting those passages where the plural and singular forms clearly do not refer to the same person or persons. Presumably, this is how Fletcher himself generated this list. Of course, this chart is underrepresentative





1. *Simple grammatical error.* It is possible that some of these passages may involve an unintentional switch in number with no more glamorous an explanation than that a simple grammatical error was made. A possible illustration might be the occasional plural pronominal suffixes in address directed to a single person in 1 Samuel, as in the following passages:

And Samuel answered *Saul*, and said, I am the seer: *go up* [singular] before me unto the high place; for *ye* shall eat [*we-^oa^kðaltem*] with me to day, and to morrow I will let *thee* go, and will tell *thee* all that is in *thine* heart. (1 Samuel 9:19)

When *thou* art departed from me to day, then *thou* shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto *thee*, The asses which *thou* wentest to seek are found: and, lo, *thy* father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for *you* [*lakðem*], saying, What shall I do for my *son*? (1 Samuel 10:2)

And *Saul's* uncle said, Tell me, I pray *thee*, what Samuel said unto *you* [*lakðem*]. (1 Samuel 10:15)

I personally would be hesitant to assume that such a repeating usage is necessarily a mistake; it seems more likely to me that our

of the phenomenon of number switching in the Bible, since many examples traverse more than one verse, as in Deuteronomy 6:1–2:

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord *your* God commanded to teach *you*, that *ye* might do them in the land whither *ye* go to possess it: That *thou* mightest fear the Lord *thy* God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command *thee*, *thou*, and *thy* son, and *thy* son's son, all the days of *thy* life; and that *thy* days may be prolonged.

Here verse one is completely plural and verse two is completely singular, so these verses do not show up on the chart; yet these verses are a clear example of a plural/singular number switch. Needless to say, the ten commandments themselves, the classic illustration of number switching in the Old Testament, do not appear on the chart either, since they involve a fairly distant switch in number.





own understanding of the significance of the plural pronominal suffix here is inadequate. Perhaps the plural is meant as a kind of inconsistently applied *pluralis majestatis*, or perhaps Hebrew grammar was simply less demanding in matters of number agreement than we imagine English grammar to be. In any event, the number of occurrences of number shifting in the Bible and the wide distribution of such number switching across biblical texts make it highly unlikely that grammatical error is the sole explanation for this phenomenon.

2. *Personenwechsel*. “Personenwechsel” is a German word meaning “person switching” that has been applied to describe the numerical variation “characteristic of the more emotional passages of the Old Testament (not the New Testament), especially the inspired utterances of the prophets, and [which] is most particularly characteristic of Isaiah.”⁹ That number may be inadvertently switched in the heat of emotional prophetic discourse seems reasonable enough, although this theory fails to account for the many instances of number switching that occur in unemotional, nonprophetic contexts.

3. *Enallage*. As previously explained, this involves an intentional shift in number to create the rhetorical effect of emphasizing each individual in a group (in the case of plural to singular switches) or the broader ramifications of an action or idea (in the case of singular to plural switches). There may, perhaps, be intentional shifts in number that are motivated by some other purpose, although I am at a loss as to what that other purpose might be.

4. *Unintentional Redactional/Scribal Influence*. There are probably passages where the change in number did not exist in the original text but was created inadvertently by the activity of redactors or scribes. A possible example would be 2 Samuel 15:27, which reads as follows:

The king said also unto *Zadok the priest*, Art not
thou [*’attah*] a seer? return into the city in peace, and

⁹ Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, vol. 7 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 151. Nibley borrows the expression “Personenwechsel” from J. Sperber, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 32 (1918): 23–33.





your two sons with *you* [*beneykðem* *itkðem*], Ahimaaz
thy son [*binðka*], and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

Since “your” and “you” appear to refer specifically to Zadok and there is no possibility of enallage here, one might be tempted to ascribe this usage to grammatical error. It is more likely, however, that what appears to be a grammatical error here is actually the result of the accidental scribal omission of the words “and Abiathar” at the beginning of the second sentence.¹⁰ The plural “your” and “you” would then refer to *both* Zadok and Abiathar and would not involve a number switch at all.

5. *Intentional Redactional/Scribal Influence.* If redactors or scribes may have in some cases unintentionally created number shifts, they may also have intentionally created them, either to create the same rhetorical effect present in enallage (see no. 3) or for some other purpose. This is the conclusion reached by Henri Cazelles in his study of number switching in the first four chapters of Deuteronomy.¹¹ The problem with this conclusion is that it

¹⁰ Rudolf Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), 481. The reading *ʾattah we-ʾAbðyaṯaʿr shubu* [thou and Abiathar return] not only explains the plural forms, but is consistent with verse 29, in which Zadok and Abiathar in fact return to Jerusalem. The Revised Standard Version (1962) and the New English Bible (1970) both follow this reading.

¹¹ Henri Cazelles, “Passages in the Singular within Discourse in the Plural of Dt. 1–4,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (1967): 207–19, following Minnette de Tillesse, “Sections ‘tu’ et sections ‘vous’ dans le Deuteronome,” *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 29–87. Cazelles’ conclusion is stated at 219 as follows:

Inspired authors did not drop the old texts when they had to provide new ones. After the composition of the former stratum where the Book of the Covenant and the Shechem maledictions were inserted, a new text was written where the Law was explained as based on the Covenant between God and Israel conceived as an entity (discourse in the singular on war, conquest, and faithfulness after the conquest). Then came the great historian who interpolated this first edition of Deuteronomy with new ideas on anti-holy war, wisdom, exile, and distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful in Israel itself. This meant a more personal approach and the discourse was no more addressed in the singular but in the plural, to each Israelite who had to live a personal religion.





seems to assume that number shifting by the original author(s) cannot similarly explain the phenomenon, and it fails to account for the wide distribution of such shiftings across biblical texts (i.e., if redactors imposed these number switches on the text, they did rather a thorough job of it).

Although there are a variety of possible explanations, enallage seems to me to be the most likely explanation for number switching in the greatest number of passages where number switching is present.¹² A review of the passages set forth in Appendix A reveals some patterns that may shed light on various applications of enallage in the Bible:

a. *Legislation.* Number switching is very prominent in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Whether we see this phenomenon as the work of the original authors or as the result of a recension written in the plural being interpolated into and superimposed upon a recension written in the singular, the use of enallage for conveying precepts of the Mosaic Code is rhetorically effective, since this device emphasizes both the communal and the

Cazelles seems to be saying ("less than lucidly," as John Welch rightly points out; see his *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990], 152) that the original layer of texts was written in the singular, not referring to individuals but to Israel corporately; redactors then came along and wrote in the plural, no longer referring to Israel corporately but to Israel's inhabitants; thus, by writing in the plural, these redactors brought a more personal approach to religion, referring to Israel's inhabitants rather than to Israel corporately. There is certainly more number switching in the book of Deuteronomy than in any other book of the Bible, so this explanation may be true in part; but the wide distribution of the number-switching phenomenon across biblical texts (of which Cazelles seems only vaguely aware) suggests to me that redaction alone cannot be the sole explanation. Number switching seems rather to be an accepted feature of original Hebrew composition.

¹² For general background on rhetorical figures in the Bible, see Andreas H. Snyman, "On Studying the Figures (*schemata*) in the New Testament," *Biblica* 69 (1988): 93–107, and Andreas H. Snyman and J. v. W. Cronje, "Toward a New Classification of the Figures (*schemata*) in the Greek New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 113–21. In Snyman and Cronje's classification, which is an attempt to classify the figures based on their function in the text rather than on the rather artificial distinctions drawn in Hellenistic textbooks, enallage would fall under the following category: III. FORMS INVOLVING A SHIFT IN EXPECTANCIES B. *Shifts in expectancies of the syntax.*





individual responsibility for keeping the commandments. A couple of illustrations follow:

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for *ye* were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:21) [The command itself is set in the singular, emphasizing the applicability of the command to each individual, while the explanatory comment refers to the experience of all the Israelites in Egypt.]

Ye shall keep my statutes. *Thou* shalt not let *thy* cattle gender with a diverse kind: *thou* shalt not sow *thy* field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon *thee*. (Leviticus 19:19) [The plural introductory statement regarding the applicability of the statutes makes it clear that they apply to all, but again, the specific statute under consideration is drafted in the singular so as to emphasize individual responsibility.]

In these examples, we can see the same emphasis of individual responsibility as is present in the (singular) ten commandments. In fact, the striking use of enallage in the Sermon on the Mount may reflect a conscious imitation of this Hebraic legislative style, since there Jesus comments on the law of Moses and promulgates higher standards of ethical conduct:

But I say unto *you*, That *ye* resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite *thee* on *thy* right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:39)

Therefore when *thou* doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before *thee*, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto *you*, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:2)

And when *thou* prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they





may be seen of men. Verily I say unto *you*, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:5)

That the Saviour was teaching a group is clear from the introduction to the sermon (Matthew 5:1–2) and his repeated use of the formula “I say unto *you*,” yet the commands of the sermon are framed in the singular, thus reaching into the heart of each and every disciple.

b. *Shift in Emphasis between an Individual and a Larger Group.* Consider Exodus 3:12:

And he said, Certainly I will be with *thee*; and this shall be a token unto *thee*, that I have sent *thee*: When *thou* hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, *ye* shall serve God upon this mountain.

Here the Lord is speaking to Moses and therefore uses the singular in the first part of the verse. At the end of the verse, the Lord wishes to make it clear that it is not just Moses, but “the people” that he shall bring out of Egypt that shall serve God upon the holy mountain. One way to accomplish this would be to shift into the third person, as in “When *thou* hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, *they* [meaning the people] shall serve God upon this mountain.” This of course could possibly be read as including the people but excluding Moses. A slightly more accurate construction would be “*thou and the people* shall serve God upon this mountain.” Rather than switching to the third person, however, the writer simply stays in the second person and switches to the plural; “*ye*” thus includes both Moses and the people, but is far more vivid than a third person construction would be, since the Lord addresses the people directly (even though the people themselves are not present).

The following are several additional examples of shift in emphasis between an individual and a larger group:

And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for *you*; for *thee*, and for *thy* servant, and for *thy* maid, and for *thy* hired servant, and for *thy* stranger that sojourneth with *thee*. (Leviticus 25:6) [Here the plural “*you*” refers not only to each Israelite, but also to each





Israelite's servant, maid, hired servant, and the stranger that stays with each Israelite.]

And he hath brought *thee* near to him, and all *thy* brethren the sons of Levi with *thee*: and seek *ye* the priesthood also? (Numbers 16:10) [The shift to “ye” marks a shift in emphasis from the Levite rebel Korah to his entire company.]

And the men answered *her*, Our life for *yours*, if *ye* utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with *thee*. (Joshua 2:14) [The shift to “thee” marks a shift in emphasis from Rahab's household (see verses 12–13) to Rahab herself.]

c. *Collective Nouns*. Enallage sometimes revolves around collective nouns (such as cities or tribes). A good illustration is Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37:¹³

¹³ Note the extreme rhetorical consciousness of this passage. The verse itself is an *apostrophe* (a sudden break into direct address); it begins with a pathos generating *anadiplosis* (simple repetition: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem”); then proceeds with *synonymous parallelism*:

thou that killest the prophets,
and stonest them which are sent unto thee

which also happens to form the conclusion of an instance of *chiasmus* that traverses verses 34 to 37:

- A. send
- B. prophets
- C. city to city
- D. [former generations]
- D. this generation
- C. Jerusalem, Jerusalem
- B. prophets
- A. sent

which is followed by a *rhetorical question* (“how often . . .”) and a *simile* (“even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”). From this very careful and





O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto *thee*, how often would I have gathered *thy* children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye* would not!

Here Jesus personifies Jerusalem as a corporate entity with the singular until the end of the verse, when he dramatically indicts not Jerusalem corporately, but her inhabitants. Consider the following additional examples:

For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the *children of Israel*, *Ye* are a stiffnecked *people*: I will come up into the midst of *thee* in a moment, and consume *thee*: therefore now put off *thy* ornaments from *thee*, that I may know what to do unto *thee*. (Exodus 33:5) [The Lord cannot come up into the midst of a single person; the plural refers to the children of Israel, and the singular refers to Israel corporately.]

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, *thou* backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon *you*: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. (Jeremiah 3:12) [Israel herself is first referred to with a singular, but the plural then moves the emphasis to her inhabitants.]

d. *Formulaic Expressions*. Enallage is sometimes formed when a formulaic expression (i.e., a repeating expression that conveys some essential idea) is incorporated into a passage. For instance, the formula "Lord your God" is sometimes incorporated into passages otherwise framed in the singular, while the formula "Lord thy God" is sometimes incorporated into passages otherwise framed in the plural; in fact, a number of verses alternate between these two formulae within the same verse. This inconsistent usage appears to be an attempt to remind people of

crafted use of language, it is clear that the shift in number at the end of the verse was intentional and meant for rhetorical effect.





the universal nature of God (“Lord your God”) or the nature of God as loving father (“Lord thy God”), as appropriate. This usage is especially common in the book of Deuteronomy:

And I commanded *Joshua* at that time, saying, *Thine* eyes have seen all that the *Lord your God* hath done unto these two kings: so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither *thou* passest. (Deuteronomy 3:21)

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and *thy* stranger that is within *thy* gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the *Lord your God*, and observe to do all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 31:12)

And *ye* shall be left few in number, whereas *ye* were as the *stars* of heaven for *multitude*; because *thou* wouldest not obey the voice of the *Lord thy God*. (Deuteronomy 28:62)

Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the *Lord thy God* hath destroyed them from among *you*. (Deuteronomy 4:3)

Take heed unto *yourselves*, lest *ye* forget the covenant of the *Lord your God*, which he made with *you*, and make *you* a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the *Lord thy God* hath forbidden *thee*. (Deuteronomy 4:23)

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the *Lord your God*, which brought *you* out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed *you* out of the house of bondage, to thrust *thee* out of the way which the *Lord thy God* commanded *thee* to walk in. So shalt





thou put the evil away from the midst of *thee*.
(Deuteronomy 13:5)

Other examples of formulaic expressions that involve enallage are “so shalt *thou* put evil away from among *you*” (Deuteronomy 19:19; 21:9, 21; 22:21, 24; and 24:7); “unto *thee* will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of *your* inheritance” (1 Chronicles 16:18 and Psalms 105:11); and “[*thine* abominations shall be in the midst of *thee*,] and *ye* shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 7:4, 9 and 35:9).

e. *Parallelism*. It is well established that numerical increase can be the basis for parallel lines, as in the following examples:

If Cain shall be avenged *sevenfold*,
truly Lamech *seventy and sevenfold*. (Genesis 4:24)

Saul hath slain his *thousands*,
and David his *ten thousands*. (1 Samuel 18:7)

He shall deliver thee in *six* troubles:
yea, in *seven* there shall no evil touch thee. (Job 5:19)

This particular type of number parallelism is referred to as *a fortiori*.¹⁴ By analogy, it is possible that parallel lines may be created by the change in number effected by enallage. Several possible examples follow:

thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of
the house;
neither shall *ye* break a bone thereof. (Exodus 12:46)

And *ye* shall not swear by my name falsely,
neither shalt *thou* profane the name of *thy* God:

¹⁴ See Donald W. Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon,” in *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo: F.A.R.M.S., 1992), xxiv–xxvii, and “Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* (October 1989): 60; Wolfgang M. W. Roth, “The Numerical Sequence $x/x+1$ in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 300.





(Leviticus 19:12)

Ye shall not round the corners of *your* heads,
neither shalt *thou* mar the corners of *thy* beard.
(Leviticus 19:27)

Then shalt *thou* cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound
on the tenth day of the seventh month,
in the day of atonement shall *ye* make the trumpet
sound throughout all *your* land. (Leviticus 25:9)

your clothes are not waxen old upon *you*,
and *thy* shoe is not waxen old upon *thy* foot.
(Deuteronomy 29:5)

every man to *your* tents, O Israel:
and now, David, see to *thine* own house.
(2 Chronicles 10:16)

Ye have plowed wickedness,
ye have reaped iniquity,
ye have eaten the fruit of lies:
because *thou* didst trust in *thy* way,
in the multitude of *thy* mighty men. (Hosea 10:13)

Trust *ye* not in a friend,
put *ye* not confidence in a guide:
keep the doors of *thy* mouth
from her that lieth in *thy* bosom. (Micah 7:5)

Pronominal Variation in the Book of Mormon

Brookbank's premise that enallage exists in the Bible seems to me to be correct and the best available explanation for the widespread phenomenon of number switching in biblical texts. In applying that insight to the Book of Mormon, Brookbank makes the very natural assumption that "ye" and "you" are always plural and that "thou" and "thee" are always singular in the Book





of Mormon.¹⁵ I say this is a natural assumption because it is the traditional use of those archaic pronouns, it is true for the KJV,¹⁶ it is consistent with our usage of archaic pronouns in oral prayer,¹⁷ and it is an assumption I myself made for many years. For instance, according to the dictionary that I keep near my desk, the word “ye” was “used orig[inally] only as a plural pronoun of the second person in the subjective case,” and now is “used esp[ecially] in ecclesiastical or literary language and in various English dialects.”¹⁸ My own experience with the KJV and with public prayers taught me that *thou* is the subjective singular, *thee* the objective singular, *ye* the subjective plural and *you* the objective plural. This usage is illustrated in the table below:¹⁹

¹⁵ Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies,” 13:119. Brookbank’s assumption about pronominal usage is especially clear in the following passage: “By the use of *thou* and *thy* instead of *ye* and *your*, however, every individual is searched out and made to feel his personal accountability before the law almost as sensibly as if he had been commanded by name to observe it.”

¹⁶ The current uniformity of usage in the KJV was not achieved without editing in the eighteenth century to change numerous instances of nominative “you” to nominative “ye.” See Fletcher, “Pronouns of Address,” 166–93; Royal Skousen, “Toward a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30/1 (Winter 1990): 48.

¹⁷ Elder Spencer W. Kimball made the following observation in an address to Seminary and Institute faculty on 18 June 1962: “I have noticed . . . the youth . . . who address the Father with the words ‘you’ and ‘yours.’ The Presidency of the Church are quite anxious that everybody address the Lord with the pronouns ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ and ‘thine’ and ‘thy.’ . . . Youth may feel that ‘you’ and ‘yours’ are a little more affectionate. But would you do what you can to change this pattern?” The quote is from *Come, Follow Me: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide 1983* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 132. Elder Kimball only mentions “thou” and its cases because in prayer we address our Father in Heaven (singular) in the name of Jesus Christ; therefore, virtually all pronominal usage in prayer is singular and there is simply no occasion to use the plural “ye” and its cases. For a recent reaffirmation of Elder Kimball’s counsel, see Dallin H. Oaks, “The Language of Prayer,” *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 15–18.

¹⁸ *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1987), s.v. “ye.”

¹⁹ Adapted from Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (New York: Longman, 1985), 344–45. See also the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), s.v. “thou.”





Table 1. Archaic System of Second Person Pronouns

	<i>Subjective</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Reflexive</i>	<i>Possessive</i>
Singular (<i>th</i> -forms)	thou	thee	thysself	thy/thine
Plural y-forms	ye	you	yourselves	your/yours

Because I shared Brookbank's assumptions about pronominal usage in the Book of Mormon, when I first read Brookbank many years ago his argument that enallage exists in the Book of Mormon made complete sense to me. In the back of my mind, I realized that his argument depended on pronominal usage in the Book of Mormon following the traditional pattern reflected in the KJV (particularly since we cannot check the Book of Mormon text in its original language as we can the Bible), but I had no reason to doubt the consistency of pronominal usage in the Book of Mormon, particularly in light of the archaic, KJV-like language used in the Book of Mormon.

Over the years, as I began to read the Book of Mormon text more closely, I came to the realization that I (and Brookbank) had been mistaken in assuming that pronominal usage is necessarily consistent in the Book of Mormon.²⁰ Although "ye" and "you" are in fact plural in the great majority of passages in which they appear, there are numerous passages where those pronouns are clearly intended to be taken as singular. For example, consider 1 Nephi 17:19:

And now it came to pass that *I, Nephi*, was exceedingly sorrowful because of the hardness of their hearts; and now when they saw that *I* began to be sorrowful they were glad in their hearts, insomuch that they did rejoice over *me*, saying: We knew that *ye* could not construct a ship, for we knew that *ye* were lacking in

²⁰ Nibley, in *Since Cumorah*, 150, referred to the "occasional change of person or number in the middle of a sentence or speech in the Book of Mormon" as "bad English grammar"; the allusion was unfortunately too oblique for me to know what he was referring to when I first read that passage.





judgment; wherefore, *thou* canst not accomplish so great a work.

Here, Nephi's brethren are addressing Nephi and no one else, as indicated by the context and by the words "I," "Nephi" and "me." But in the second sentence of verse 19, they refer to Nephi twice with the pronoun "ye" and then switch to the pronoun "thou." Instead of "ye," we would have anticipated that "thou" would have been used consistently in that sentence, as follows:

We knew that *thou couldst* not construct a ship, for we knew that *thou wert* lacking in judgment; wherefore, *thou* canst not accomplish so great a work.

Set forth below are several additional examples of the singular use of "ye" in the Book of Mormon. In these examples I have included the pronominal usage we would have anticipated in brackets.

And it came to pass that he came unto *me*, and on this wise did he speak unto *me*, saying: *Brother Jacob*, I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto *you [thee]*; for I have heard and also know that *thou* goest about much, preaching that which *ye* call [*thou callest*] the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ. (Jacob 7:6)

And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: *Helam*, I baptize *thee*, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that *ye* have [*thou hast*] entered into a covenant to serve him until *you* are [*thou art*] dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon *you [thee]*; and may he grant unto *you [thee]* eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. (Mosiah 18:13)





For do ye [*dost thou*] not remember the priests of *thy* father, whom this people sought to destroy? (Mosiah 20:18)

Who art *thou*? Suppose ye [*supposest thou*] that we shall believe the testimony of *one man*, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away? (Alma 9:2)

Now Amulek said: O *thou* child of hell, why tempt ye [*temptest thou*] me? Knowest *thou* that the righteous yieldeth to no such temptations? (Alma 11:23)

And the Lord said unto *him*: Because of *thy* faith *thou* hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as *thou* hast; for were it not so ye could [*thou couldst*] not have seen my finger. Sawest *thou* more than this? (Ether 3:9)

These passages reflect a pattern of pronominal variation, in which normally plural *y*-forms are used with a clearly singular meaning. When I first observed this pattern, I assumed that such usage simply reflected grammatical error.²¹ Before long, though,

²¹ I should hasten to add that I view the presence of grammatical errors as irrelevant to the question of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. See, for instance, the reference to “human misspellings and grammatical oddities” in John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:212. Anti-Mormons have sometimes argued that, since certain historical accounts represent Joseph as mechanically and unthinkingly receiving the English text of the Book of Mormon, Joseph was a mere conduit, and therefore God himself would be responsible for the plethora of errors in the original manuscript, the printer’s manuscript, and the early editions of the Book of Mormon. Since God is perfect and does not err, the argument goes, the Book of Mormon cannot be a God-inspired work. For two recent refutations of the inerrantist premises anti-Mormons often make concerning the production of the Book of Mormon, see Daniel C. Peterson’s review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* and L. Ara Norwood’s review of *Letters to a Mormon Elder* in





I began to notice passages from a variety of sources in English literature that demonstrated a similar pronominal variation, such as this illustration from the second stanza of an early sixteenth-century Christmas carol, entitled *Thys endere nyghth*, in which a precocious baby Jesus addresses his mother Mary:²²

Thys babe full bayne aunsweryd agayne,
And thus me thought he sayd:
“I am a kyng above all thyng,
Yn hay yff I be layd,
For ye shall see
That kynges thre
Shall cum on Twelfe Day;
For thys behest
Geffe me *thy* brest,
And sing, ‘By, baby, lullay.’ ”

Here a singular “ye” alternates with a singular possessive “thy,” which is reminiscent of the type of switching seen in the Book of Mormon. I began to learn that, although “ye” was originally used strictly as a plural, both its use as a singular and switching

Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 5 (1993): 49–50 and 5 (1993): 336–39, respectively.

²² The text comes from the liner notes to *The Carol Album: Seven Centuries of Christmas Music* by the Taverner Consort, Choir and Players, conducted by Andrew Parrott (EMI Records, 1989). A modern English rendering of this stanza by Gareth Curtis reads as follows:

This baby replied at once,
and thus I thought he said:
“I am a king above all things,
even though I lie in hay;
for you shall see
that three kings
will come on the twelfth day.
For this promise,
put me to your breast,
and sing: by, by, lullay.”

For additional illustrations of the singular use of “ye,” see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “ye,” definition 2.





between *y-* and *th-*forms are well attested in the English language. “In M[iddle] E[nglish], *thou* and its cases were gradually superseded by the plural *ye, you, your, yours*, in addressing a superior and (later) an equal, but were long retained in addressing an inferior.”²³ This usage originated in a manner analogous to the plural of majesty or royal “we,” where the first person plural was used instead of the first person singular as a prerogative of royalty.²⁴ This usage was soon expanded to a more general plural of politeness. An article by Royal Skousen²⁵ led me to the massive thesis of Lyle Fletcher,²⁶ who demonstrated at great length that the kind of pronominal variation found in the Book of Mormon does not necessarily involve grammatical error, or at least that if it does, many authors have indulged in a similar error.

Brookbank’s failure to appreciate the existence of pronominal variation in the Book of Mormon tends to compromise the value of his observation regarding the presence of enallage in that book. By relying on the assumption that *y-*forms are necessarily plural and *th-*forms are necessarily singular, Brookbank saw enallage in many passages that are nothing more than instances of the switching of English pronouns and that do not reflect a switch in number in the original text.

Some Possible Examples of Enallage in the Book of Mormon

It does not necessarily follow from Brookbank’s mistake (and my own), however, that enallage is unattested in the Book of Mormon. The illustrations of pronominal variation quoted above all involve simple pronoun switching, as demonstrated by various verbal and contextual clues in those passages. There are other passages, however, where verbal and contextual clues (other than the

²³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “thou.”

²⁴ The pronoun “ye” is derived from the Old English *ge*, which was simply a modified form of the first person plural *we*. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “ye.”

²⁵ Skousen, “Toward a Critical Edition,” which was the first forthright treatment of this issue that I came across and confirmed my own conclusions regarding the phenomenon of pronominal variation in the Book of Mormon.

²⁶ Fletcher, “Pronouns of Address.”





supposed plural nature of *y*-forms) demonstrate an intentional shift in number (as opposed to the mere formal substitution of pronouns).

For an illustration of how verbal clues other than the supposed plural nature of “*ye*” can suggest the presence of enallage, consider 2 Nephi 12:10 (cf. Isaiah 2:10; Book of Mormon additions are underlined, KJV deletions are struck-through, and clues as to number are italicized):

O *ye* wicked *ones*, enter into the rock,
and hide *thee* in the dust,
for the fear of the Lord and ~~for~~
the glory of his majesty shall smite *thee*.

Here we can be certain that “*ye*” is definitely a plural, because it refers to “wicked ones,” even though the “*thee*” of KJV Isaiah was not conformed to that plural and an additional “*thee*” was added at the end of the verse. Therefore, this is not a case of typical pronominal variation involving a singular “*ye*” alternating with a singular *th*-form, but rather a plural “*ye*” switching with a singular *th*-form,²⁷ a numerical switch that does not exist in the KJV Isaiah parallel. Thus, this would appear to be an example of intentional switching, or enallage (although an unintentional switch is certainly possible). If this is in fact enallage, then the point of the switch is that this condemnation applies

²⁷ I have assumed here that the “*thee*” of KJV Isaiah 2:10 retains its force as a singular pronoun and that the “*thee*” added at the end of the verse is also meant to be a singular. It is possible that *th*-forms are occasionally used as plurals in the Book of Mormon; see the paradigm of plural pronominal usage in Fletcher, “Pronouns of Address,” 274–75. If in fact such usage exists in the Book of Mormon, however, it is considerably rarer than the use of singular *y*-forms, a usage that is readily explainable either on the basis of the historical development of the plural of politeness described by Fletcher or on the assumption that Joseph was influenced by the modern pronoun “*you*,” which is invariable as to number and to some extent as to case as well. No similarly rational explanation exists for the plural use of *th*-forms. Fletcher relies on 1 Nephi 17:55 as a prime example of the plural use of *th*-forms (“Pronouns of Address,” 13, 274–75), but that passage seems to me to be better explained as an instance of enallage (see the discussion of that verse below). Nevertheless, in examining possible examples of enallage, we should be aware of the possibility of plural *th*-forms.





to *all* of the wicked (thus the plural “O ye wicked ones”), and *each* person should take this condemnation personally and individually to heart (thus the singular “hide thee” and “shall smite thee”). The sensitivity of this emendation to the text of Isaiah 2:10 can be illustrated by the fact that, despite the singular imperatives “enter” (*bo^o*) and “hide thee” (*hittamen*) in the Hebrew text, the New English Bible (1970) renders the verse by transforming the imperatives into plurals: “Get *you* into the rocks and hide *yourselves* in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendour of his majesty.” Note also that the parallelism in 2 Nephi 12:10 is now based in part on the switch in number from the plural to the singular. This is particularly interesting when we examine the following verse, Isaiah 2:11:

The lofty looks of *man* shall be humbled,
and the haughtiness of *men* shall be bowed down,
and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Here the synonymous parallelism is based on the parallel pair man//men (*°a⁻da⁻m//°a⁻na⁻shîm*). The first term, *°a⁻da⁻m*, is a singular (the collective term for mankind), while the parallel term, *°a⁻na⁻shîm*, is a plural (literally meaning men). This collocation of singular and plural terms in a parallel construction in verse 11 further supports the possibility that enallage is present in 2 Nephi 12:10.²⁸

In Helaman 13:32–33 we read the following:

And in the days of *your* poverty *ye* shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall *ye* cry, for *your* desolation is already come upon *you*, and *your* destruction is made sure; and then shall *ye* weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall *ye* lament, and say: O

²⁸ If this passage is in fact an example of enallage, then either it reflects an ancient form of the Hebrew text that was preserved on the brass plates but has since been lost, or it reflects the creation of enallage by Joseph’s plural gloss being superimposed on a singular text. John Tvedtnes in “The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon,” F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report 1984, 24, categorizes 2 Nephi 12:10 as a K in his system, meaning that there is no presently existing textual evidence for the variations in this passage. Either way, appreciating the intentional number shift is important to a full understanding of 2 Nephi 12:10.





that *I* had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them and cast them out. Yea, in that day *ye* shall say: O that *we* had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave *us our* riches, and then they would not have become slippery that *we* should lose them; for behold, *our* riches are gone from *us*.

In commenting on the last sentence of verse 32 (as it carries over into the first sentence of verse 33), S. Kent Brown made the following observation:²⁹

Even though Samuel's language is consistent with the fact that he is addressing a crowd in Zarahemla, because of the plural pronoun "ye," the "I" of this piece is abrupt and therefore should probably be understood as a reference to an individual. Moreover, all of the verbs in the passage are in the first person singular, agreeing with the pronoun "I." Hence, we are likely looking at an individual lament, possibly composed for solo recitation.

As we have demonstrated, one cannot assume that "ye" is a plural pronoun in the Book of Mormon, so that assumption here, though understandable, is misplaced; nevertheless, Brown correctly interprets the "ye" at the end of verse 32 as a plural, not because it is by nature a plural pronoun, but because of the context showing that Samuel the Lamanite was addressing a crowd in Zarahemla. There are numerous verbal clues throughout Helaman chapter 13 that establish conclusively that Samuel is addressing the people (plural) of Zarahemla. For instance, verse 21 begins "Behold *ye*, the *people* of this great city, and hearken unto my words. . . ," and verse 39 reads "O *ye people* of the land, that *ye* would hear my words!" Therefore, we can be confident that the *y*-forms in verse 32 are all plural. Brown insightfully notices the "abrupt" switch from the plural "ye" to the singular "I," but is at a loss to explain the reason for the switch. Whatever the reason, the singular "I" leads him to interpret the lament in verse 33 as an individual lament. An understanding of enallage supplies the

²⁹ S. Kent Brown, "The Prophetic Laments of Samuel the Lamanite," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1 (Fall 1992): 166.





missing rationale for the switch from the plural to the singular: the point is to individualize in the minds of the people their responsibility for rejecting the prophets. Brown quite rightly reads this text as an “individual lament,” not because it was meant for any specific individual, but because it was meant to prick the conscience of each and every individual present. After verse 33, the number shifts back to a consistent plural; in fact, the singular “O that *I* had repented” of verse 33 is repeated in verse 36 with the anticipated plural: “O that *we* had repented. . . .” Although Brown’s analysis reaches the correct conclusion, an understanding of the rhetorical application of enallage here helps explain *why* verse 33 should be understood in individual terms.

In 2 Nephi 9:46, Jacob addresses his “beloved brethren” (see verse 45) with these words:

Prepare *your souls* for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that *ye* may not shrink with awful fear; that *ye* may not remember *your* awful guilt in perfectness, and be constrained to exclaim: Holy, holy are thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty—but *I* know *my* guilt; *I* transgressed thy law, and *my* transgressions are *mine*; and the devil hath obtained *me*, that *I* am a prey to his awful misery.

From the context and numerous verbal clues, we know that Jacob was addressing a group in 2 Nephi 9; therefore, we can be confident that the *y*-forms in verse 46a are plural. In verse 46b, Jacob shifts into the first person singular to emphasize that *each* unrighteous person will need to make confession and be responsible for his or her actions. Verse 47 then returns to the normal plural in this chapter (“But behold, my *brethren*, is it expedient that I should awake *you* to an awful reality of these things?”).

2 Nephi 29:3 reads “And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the *Gentiles* shall say: A Bible! A Bible! *We* have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.” The Lord then responds to the Gentiles (plural) in verses 4 and 5, as numerous verbal clues attest. Finally, in verse 6, the Lord says:





Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, *we* have got a Bible, and *we* need no more Bible. Have *ye* obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

Here the singular “thou” appears to be an example of enallage, driving home the foolishness of the idea to anyone who would entertain it. That this is enallage is supported by the fact that in verse 3 it is the Gentiles (plural) who recite the little mantra about having a Bible, which contrasts with the singular in verse 6. Further, in verse 4 the Lord calls the Gentiles who thus reject further scripture “fools” (plural). Thus, from the context and these verbal clues we can establish that “thou fool” at the outset of verse 6 involves an intentional shift from the plural to the singular, which promptly reverts to the plural with a plural “ye” in verse 6 and the following verses.

In 1 Nephi 17:55, in the contention surrounding Nephi’s shipbuilding activities, we read:

And now, *they* said: *We* know of a surety that the Lord is with thee, for *we* know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken *us*. And *they* fell down before me, and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer *them*, saying: I am *thy* brother, yea, even *thy* younger brother; wherefore, worship the Lord *thy* God, and honor *thy* father and *thy* mother, that *thy* days may be long in the land which the Lord *thy* God shall give *thee*.

In the immediately preceding verses, it is abundantly clear that Nephi has been speaking to his “brethren” (plural—see verse 54). In verse 55a, Nephi’s brothers reply to him, but when Nephi refuses their worship in verse 55b, he does so with singular pronouns. That this is an intentional shift in number would seem to be supported by sheer numbers: verse 55a contains six plural indicators and verse 55b contains eight singular indicators. That Nephi is here using enallage tends to be supported by his integration of Exodus 20:12, which we have already identified as a biblical example of enallage, into his response.

A similar emphasis of enallage already present in biblical texts occurs in several other passages in the Book of Mormon. In





Mosiah 13:12, the Book of Mormon version of the ten commandments is introduced as follows: “And now, *ye* remember that I said unto *you*: *Thou* shalt not” It is clear from the context that these *y*-forms are plural. In the Book of Mormon, the juxtaposition of the plural and the singular is much more pronounced than in Exodus 19–20. The enallage is actually clearer in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible.

As we have seen, in the Sermon on the Mount the Savior uses enallage repeatedly to individualize his message in the hearts of each of his disciples. 3 Nephi 12:23 makes the enallage in Matthew 5:23 more vivid by immediately juxtaposing a plural “*ye*” (as determined from the context):

Therefore, if ~~*thou* bringest *thy* gift to the altar, and there *ye* shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and~~ rememberest that *thy* brother hath aught against *thee*—

The enallage already present in Matthew 5 is now far more striking by the immediacy of the number change from the plural to the singular.

In 2 Nephi 32, Nephi addresses his “beloved brethren” (see verses 1 and 8) consistently using proper *y*-forms. That chapter then concludes with verse 9, which reads as follows:

But behold, I say unto *you* that *ye* must pray always, and not faint; that *ye* must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place *ye* shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate *thy* performance unto *thee*, that *thy* performance may be for the welfare of *thy* soul.

That the *y*-forms in verse 9a are plural is abundantly clear from the context and the completely consistent usage in the entire chapter up to that point. Nephi then chooses to personalize his description of the benefits of prayer, which, after all, can be an intensely personal experience, by shifting into a consistent singular in verse 9b.

In each of these examples, various verbal clues suggest that the switch in number is intentional and that enallage is therefore present in these passages. There are other passages which lack such





verbal clues, but which we may be able to identify as enallage on the basis of a comparison with the ways in which enallage is used in the Bible. Thus, in 1 Nephi 2:19–20 (quoted above), which Brookbank cited as an example of enallage, there is no verbal indication demonstrating that the *y*-forms in that verse are necessarily plural (i.e., they could be singular and be meant to refer specifically to Nephi), but the *theme* of that verse (keeping the commandments) is a theme that is intimately associated with the use of enallage in the Bible, and an interpretation of 1 Nephi 2:19–20 based on the existence of enallage in that passage makes excellent sense. There are numerous other possible examples of enallage in the Book of Mormon that seem to involve shifts in emphasis between an individual and a larger group *and* center on the themes of keeping the commandments or the inheritance of the land, themes we have seen explicated with enallage in the Bible, as in the following examples:

And he said unto *me*: *Thou* rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, the twelve ministers of *thy* seed shall be judged of them; for *ye* are of the house of Israel. (1 Nephi 12:9) [It may be that the “*ye*” does not just refer to Nephi, but to both Nephi and his seed.]

Wherefore, if *ye* shall keep the commandments of the Lord, the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of *thy* seed with the seed of my son. (2 Nephi 1:32) [Lehi in this testament is specifically addressing Zoram, but the “*ye*” could refer to Zoram’s and Nephi’s seed.]

And may the Lord consecrate also unto *thee* this land, which is a most precious land, for thine inheritance and the inheritance of *thy* seed with *thy* brethren, for *thy* security forever, if it so be that *ye* shall keep the commandments of the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 3:2) [Similarly, Lehi’s promise extends not just to his son Joseph, but to Joseph’s seed and the seed of his





brethren, which could account for the use of “ye” here.]

And there will I bless *thee* and *thy* seed, and raise up unto me of *thy* seed, and of the seed of *thy* brother, and they who shall go with *thee*, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of *thy* seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto *thee* because this long time *ye* have cried unto me. (Ether 1:43) [The “ye” at the end of the verse may, rather than referring solely to the brother of Jared, refer to his friends and their families, which are mentioned prominently in verse 41.]

And the *brother* of Jared repented of the evil which *he* had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord for *his* brethren who were with *him*. And the Lord said unto *him*: I will forgive *thee* and *thy* brethren of *their* sins; but *thou* shalt not sin any more, for *ye* shall remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man; wherefore, if *ye* will sin until *ye* are fully ripe *ye* shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And these are my thoughts upon the land which I shall give *you* for *your* inheritance; for it shall be a land choice above all other lands. (Ether 2:15) [The y-forms in verse 15b appear to refer not solely to the brother of Jared, but to both Jared and his brethren.]

Although the lack of explicit verbal clues makes the identification of enallage in these passages somewhat speculative, we should at least remain open to the possibility that enallage is present in such passages.

A possible illustration of enallage in the Book of Mormon based on a collective noun is found in 2 Nephi 7:4 (cf. Isaiah 50:4):

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a word in season ~~to him~~
~~that is weary;~~ unto thee, O house of Israel.





When ye are weary he wakeneth waketh morning by morning,
he.

He wakeneth waketh mine ear to hear as the learned.

KJV Isaiah 50:4 contains no second person pronouns, but in 2 Nephi 7:4 the parallelism of the passage now is based in part on the number switch from the singular “thee,” which refers to the house of Israel as a collective, to the plural “ye,” which appears to refer to the inhabitants of the house of Israel.

Another possible illustration of the use of enallage in parallelism in the Book of Mormon is Alma 37:37:

Counsel with the Lord in all *thy* doings,
and he will direct *thee* for good;
yea, when *thou* liest down at night lie down unto the Lord,
that he may watch over *you* in *your* sleep;
and when *thou* risest in the morning
let *thy* heart be full of thanks unto God;
and if *ye* do these things,
ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

This passage illustrates the complexities involved in interpreting pronominal usage in the Book of Mormon. In this chapter Alma is continuing his address to his oldest son, Helaman. It seems apparent that the *y*-forms in the fourth half-line are meant to be taken as singulars referring specifically to Helaman, as do the surrounding *th*-forms. It may well be that the two occurrences of “ye” in the last full line are also to be read as singulars referring to Helaman alone, but it is just possible that here Alma is using enallage to express the universality of the promise (meaning that if *we* do these things, *we* too shall be lifted up at the last day). While the parallelism and the universality of the theme suggest enallage, the presence of pronominal variation earlier in the verse and the lack of specific verbal clues make this interpretation somewhat speculative.





Conclusion

Although pronominal variation unquestionably exists in the Book of Mormon, a careful reading of various verbal and contextual clues suggests that enallage also exists in the Book of Mormon. The presence of two different phenomena in the Book of Mormon that are both characterized to some extent by similar indications (i.e., switching between *y*- and *th*-forms) is a potential stumblingblock to correct interpretation. Although it is possible in reading to gloss over the inconsistencies in pronominal usage and comprehend the general sense of a passage, Book of Mormon exegetes have for some time now been undertaking increasingly close and careful readings of the Book of Mormon text on its own terms, as evidenced by the work of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (such as the publication of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* and this journal). Book of Mormon scholars need to be aware of the presence of *both* phenomena in the text so that they may make informed judgments concerning the likelihood that a shift in pronominal usage is one or the other. A fuller comprehension of the phenomenon of enallage in the Book of Mormon may also eventually add to our understanding of the Hebraic origins of that book.





Appendix A

Number Switches within the Context of a Single Verse in the KJV Bible

Genesis	45:19
Exodus	3:12, 4:15, 10:17, 12:46, 22:21, 23:9, 23:13, 23:25, 23:31, 26:33, 29:42, 30:16, 30:36, 30:37, 33:5
Leviticus	10:13, 10:14, 19:9, 19:10, 19:12, 19:15, 19:19, 19:27, 19:33, 19:34, 21:8, 23:22, 25:6, 25:9, 25:11, 25:14, 25:17, 25:44
Numbers	13:2, 16:10, 18:1, 18:4
Deuteronomy	1:31, 2:24, 3:21, 4:3, 4:21, 4:23, 4:25, 6:3, 6:15, 6:17, 7:4, 7:12, 7:14, 7:21, 7:25, 8:1, 8:19, 9:7, 10:15, 11:10, 11:14, 11:19, 12:1, 12:5, 12:7, 12:32, 13:1, 13:3, 13:5, 13:7, 13:14, 14:21, 15:4, 15:7, 16:11, 17:2, 17:7, 18:15, 19:19, 21:9, 21:21, 22:21, 22:24, 23:4, 23:16, 24:7, 24:8, 24:9, 25:17, 26:11, 27:2, 27:4, 28:62, 28:63, 28:68, 29:5, 29:11, 30:18, 30:19, 31:12, 31:26, 31:27, 32:6
Joshua	2:14, 6:3, 7:13, 8:2, 9:24, 24:12
Judges	7:7, 8:15, 14:15, 19:5, 19:9
1 Samuel	2:29, 9:19, 11:0:2, 10:15, 22:3, 26:16
2 Samuel	7:23, 15:27
1 Kings	12:28, 20:28
2 Kings	19:29
1 Chronicles	16:18
2 Chronicles	10:16
Ezra	7:17, 7:18
Psalms	32:9, 105:11





Isaiah	23:2, 26:19, 30:20, 30:21, 30:22, 37:30, 44:8, 48:6, 51:12, 65:15
Jeremiah	3:12, 3:13, 5:14, 5:15, 5:19, 11:13, 13:20, 15:14, 17:4, 22:26, 29:27, 34:14, 49:5
Ezekiel	5:17, 7:4, 7:9, 16:45, 23:40, 33:10, 35:9, 36:12, 44:30, 45:20
Daniel	2:47, 10:21
Hosea	10:13
Micah	1:11, 6:16, 7:5
Zechariah	4:9, 9:12, 14:5
Malachi	1:8, 2:14
Matthew	5:39, 6:2, 6:5, 11:24, 23:37, 26:64
Luke	13:34, 17:3
John	3:7, 3:11, 14:9, 14:10
Galatians	6:1
Philemon	1:6
Revelation	2:10

