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Title “Stretch Forth Thy Hand and Prophecy”: Hand Gestures in the Book of Mormon

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Abstract Often overlooked in scriptural text, hand and arm gestures are often used to convey meanings that complement the verbal lessons being taught. This article discusses the meaning and significance of four specific gestures referred to in the Book of Mormon: stretching forth one’s hand(s), stretching forth the hand to exert divine power, extending the arm(s) in mercy, and clapping the hands to express joys. Beyond the fascinating meanings of these gestures in the Book of Mormon are the correlations that can be seen in the biblical text and in other Near Eastern cultures. Also insightful, specifically in reference to Moses’s hand movements at the Red Sea, is the way in which the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other extracanonical writings build on each other to give a fuller interpretive picture.



Abinadi stretches forth his hands. "And His Face Shone with Exceeding Luster." © Jeremy Winborg.

For many scholars of religion, both inside and outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, discourse on the meaning of scripture tends to focus on words. Performing word studies, cross-referencing phrases, and tracing quotations to their sources are usually priorities in the analysis of a sacred text. Although manners and movements—whether explicitly recorded or repeatedly imagined anew—always accompany the revealed word, only rarely do these manners and movements take an overt role in our analyses.

Nevertheless, many aspects of our Latter-day Saint faith dispose us to reflect on the nonverbal dimension of communication in scripture. For example, we believe in a God with a physical body that can be seen. When the Father and Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the first vision, the Fa-

ther's words to the Prophet were accompanied with a gesture:

One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, **pointing to the other**—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear him!* (Joseph Smith—History 1:17, italics in the original)

Joseph Smith's report that the Father's first action was to point to his Beloved Son is not insignificant. The latter-day doctrine that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22) means that God's communicative body movements, as well as his words, have theological importance. Further, it means that not only his words but also his actions can be repeated by humans—he can be emulated as well as quoted.

FROM THE EDITOR:

David Calabro, doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, has applied his dissertation research findings on hand gestures in the Hebrew Bible to the Book of Mormon. It will be no surprise to the faithful that the Book of Mormon, as well as presenting its own unique meanings to certain hand gestures, exhibits many of the same understandings, often hidden to the casual reader, of these hand gestures in the Hebrew Bible.

“STRETCH FORTH THY HAND AND PROPHECY”:

HAND GESTURES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

DAVID CALABRO

In addition, gestures feature prominently in many of the ordinances we perform in the church. One may think, for example, of the uplifted hand gesture used to sustain leaders and to baptize people. Since Latter-day Saints believe that ordinances performed in the church today were also performed among the Lord’s people in ancient times,¹ we may look to the scriptures to illuminate these ordinances and their gestures. Latter-day Saints, then, have both reason and opportunity to reflect on nonverbal matters in holy writ.

In what follows, I will explore the use of hand gestures in a book of scripture that stands at the roots of our tradition, the Book of Mormon. I will make two main points. First, each gesture mentioned in the Book of Mormon is consistently associated with a particular meaning and context. These meanings and contexts often differ from both the Bible and other restoration scripture (the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price), but because there are connections between the traditions, studies of gestures in these books of scripture can be mutually instructive. Second, the gestures described in passages of scripture, rather than being just incidental ornaments, contribute to the meanings of those passages; understanding the meanings of ges-

tures therefore leads to a fuller understanding of the scriptural message.

Stretching Forth the Hand(s)

The most common use of the idiom *stretch forth one’s hand(s)* in the Book of Mormon occurs immediately preceding a description of speech:

And the Lord said unto me: **Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy, saying** . . . (Mosiah 12:2)

After Abinadi had spoken these words he **stretched forth his hands** and **said** . . . (Mosiah 16:1, printer’s manuscript)

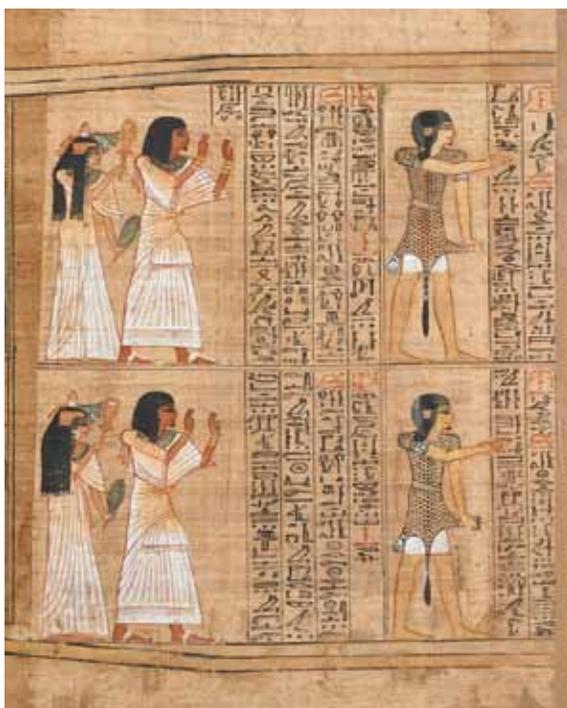
But Amulek **stretched forth his hand**, and **cried** the mightier unto them, **saying** . . . (Alma 10:25)

When Alma had said these words unto them, he **stretched forth his hand** unto them and **cried** with a mighty voice, **saying** . . . (Alma 13:21)

And when he saw them he **stretched forth his hand**, and **besought** them that they would heal him. (Alma 15:5)

And as he arose, he **stretched forth his hand** unto the woman, and **said** . . . (Alma 19:12)

Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he **stretched forth his hand**, and **cried** unto those which he beheld, which were truly penitent, and **saith** unto them . . . (Alma 32:7)



Scene from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. On the right, two priests stretch forth their hands while speaking the words indicated in the hieroglyphs to their right. On the left, the scribe Ani, with his wife behind him, stretches forth both hands as he praises the god Osiris. Detail of Papyrus of Ani, sheet 12. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and **stretched forth his hand** and **cried** with a loud voice, and **prophesied** unto the people whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart. (Helaman 13:4)

And it came to pass that he **stretched forth his hand** and **spake** unto the people, **saying** . . . (3 Nephi 11:9)

He **stretched forth his hand** unto the multitude, and **cried** unto them, **saying** . . . (3 Nephi 12:1)

In Mosiah 16:1, the current text has the singular *hand*. However, the earliest extant text (the printer's manuscript) has the plural.² Other passages describing the same or similar gestures in the Book of Mormon also vary between singular and plural *hand(s)*. For this reason, I retain the original plural reading in Mosiah 16:1.

In all these instances, the phrase *stretch forth one's hand(s)* precedes a verb describing speech (*prophesy, say, cry, beseech, speak*), usually followed by direct speech introduced by a form of the verb *say*.³ Where the singular *hand* is used, this may be similar to the ancient Egyptian speech gesture often

depicted in art in which an individual stretches forth the hand in vertical position toward the addressee.⁴

However, it is not sufficient to conclude that the purpose of this gesture is to accompany speech. Individuals in the Book of Mormon obviously sometimes speak without stretching forth their hand(s), just as Amulek had been speaking before he stretched forth his hand in Alma 10:25. So the question arises, what specifically does this gesture contribute to the utterance? In many of the examples cited above, the gesture seems to increase the force or urgency of the speech. This can be seen when we compare the verbs of speech used by the narrator before the gesture with those used immediately after (see table 1).

In five cases, a generic verb like *say* or *speak* before the gesture is followed after the gesture by a stronger verb such as *cry*, sometimes with an additional qualifier like *mighty* or *loud*. Thus the outstretched-hand gesture, at least in these cases, seems to signal a greater force or urgency with which the speaker desires to get his message across.

Significantly, this gesture often accompanies the initiation of speech (Alma 15:5; 19:12; Helaman 13:4; 3 Nephi 11:9) or a switch in addressees (Alma 32:7; 3 Nephi 12:1). When the gesture is employed in the midst of speaking, it may be interpreted as renewing the communication on a more forceful level.⁵

When we examine the content of speech immediately following the outstretched-hand gesture, we can see that it varies corresponding to the possible shifts in speaker and addressee. There are three types of scenarios: (1) A new speaker arrives on the scene; stretching forth his hand, he proclaims his identity. (2) A speaker turns to (re)address a (new) person or group; stretching forth his hand, the speaker refers to this new addressee by using second-person pronouns, usually in a blessing formula (except in the case of Alma 10:25, where the people of Ammonihah, the new addressees, are apparently not worthy of a blessing). (3) Both the speaker and the addressee remain the same; the speaker stretches forth his hand and makes a statement about the current moment or a prediction about the future.⁶ Examples of these three types are shown in table 2.

In the case of Mosiah 12:2, the change in participant format is not a change in the actual participants but a change in the speaker's role. Here Abinadi switches from referring to the Lord in the third person to speaking on behalf of the Lord.⁷ Since this

introduces God as the speaker, the speech following the outstretched-hand gesture both proclaims the identity of the new participant (“the Lord”) and includes a prediction about the future (“It shall come to pass that this generation . . . shall be brought into bondage”).

Beyond investigating the functional meaning of this speech gesture in terms of its use in context, one can investigate its symbolic meaning in terms of how one might interpret it and react to it. For example, the gesture may be interpreted as a symbol of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee—partially bridging the distance between them and thereby forming, for the moment at least, a closer physical and also social relationship.⁸ Such an interpretation is clearly at work in the narrative in Alma 15:5-6, where the previously hostile and now repentant Zeezrom stretches forth his hand (see above), asking Alma and Amulek to heal him. Alma’s response involves a contact gesture:

And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, **taking him by the hand**: Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation? (Alma 15:6)

One can sense the implied reconciliation and goodwill of Alma’s gesture when he takes hold of Zeezrom’s outstretched hand. This sequence of outstretched hand followed by contact seems to indicate that the gesture expresses not only a partial bridging of social distance but also a desire for acceptance through contact. One can posit that the desire for contact as a symbol of acceptance is a consistent aspect of this gesture in the Book of Mormon. In every instance of this gesture, the one performing it is presenting a message whose acceptance is critical to the welfare of either the addressee or himself. In cases in which the addressee rejects the message, there is no subsequent gesture on the part of the addressee. Rather than reciprocating with a hand gesture, King Noah commands Abinadi to be put to death (Mosiah 17:1); the people of Ammonihah cry out against Amulek (Alma 10:28) and eventually bind Alma and Amulek (Alma 14:3-4); and the people of Zarahemla cast stones and arrows at Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 16:2). These are not only reactions to the speakers’ words but also repudiations of the plea for acceptance indicated by the gesture. Further, in each

Table 1. Verbs used before and after stretching forth the hand(s).

Reference	Verb of speech before gesture	Verb of speech after gesture
Mosiah 12:1, 2	prophecy	prophecy
Mosiah 16:1	speak ^a	say
Alma 10:17, 25	say	cry the mightier
Alma 13:21	say ^b	cry with a mighty voice
Alma 15:4, 5	desire ^c	beseech
Alma 19:12	—	say
Alma 32:4, 7	teach, speak	cry, say
Helaman 13:2, 4	preach	cry with a loud voice, prophecy
3 Nephi 11:9	—	speak
3 Nephi 12:1	speak ^d	cry

- Compare Mosiah 15:1, 28, where the verb *say* is used in the narration at the beginning of Abinadi’s speech and in Abinadi’s own reference to his speaking.
- Compare Alma 12:36, where Alma uses the words *I say unto you* as he begins addressing the multitude (after having spoken to Antionah in Alma 12:22-35).
- Zeezrom “desired” Alma and Amulek to come to him, expressing his wish in the form of a written or orally mediated message: “he sent a message immediately unto them, desiring them to come unto him” (v. 4). The fact that Zeezrom addresses Alma and Amulek with a request directly upon seeing them (v. 5), without any greeting to mark the beginning of the interaction, makes it likely that Zeezrom wished his speech to be a continuation of his invitation to come to him.
- Compare *said* in 3 Nephi 11:22 at the beginning of Jesus’s words to the twelve disciples (the portion extending from 3 Nephi 11:22 to 12:1).

Table 2. Types of scenarios for stretching forth the hand(s).

Type	Reference	Change in speaker	Change in addressee	Speech immediately following gesture
Type 1	Mosiah 12:2	no/yes (change in role)	no	"Thus saith the Lord"
	Helaman 13:4	yes	no	"Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord"
	3 Nephi 11:9–10	yes	no	"Behold, I am Jesus Christ"
Type 2	Alma 10:25	no	yes	"O ye wicked and perverse generation"
	Alma 15:5	no	yes? ^a	(uncertain: direct speech not reported)
	Alma 19:12	no	yes	"Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou"
	Alma 32:7	no	yes	"I behold that ye are lowly in heart; and if so, blessed are ye"
	3 Nephi 12:1	no	yes	"Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed"
Type 3	Mosiah 12:2	no/yes (change in role)	no	"It shall come to pass that this generation, because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage"
	Mosiah 16:1	no	no	"The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord"
	Alma 13:21	no	no	"Now is the time to repent"

a. The addressees, Alma and Amulek, have newly arrived on the scene; however, the speaker has already been addressing them indirectly through a relayed message (v. 4).

of these cases of prophetic speech, it is not only the prophet's but also the Lord's plea for acceptance that is at stake.

The use of two hands in the earliest text of Mosiah 16:1 raises the possibility that other passages that mention stretching forth two hands, or that show variation in the number of hands used, should also be associated with this speech gesture. In Alma 31:14, we have a description of the Zoramites' manner of prayer. While standing upon a high podium, each person offering prayer was to raise his hands to heaven and utter a set formula. This recalls the prayer gesture of raising the hands found in the Bible and in many ancient cultures; in Hebrew the usual phrase is *pāraś kappayim* "spread the hands."⁹ However, when we look at the phraseology of the text, we notice a striking similarity to other instances of stretching forth the hand(s) to speak:

Therefore, whosoever desired to worship must go forth and stand upon the top thereof, and **stretch**

forth his hands towards heaven, and **cry** with a loud voice, **saying** . . ." (Alma 31:14)

Here we have the phrase *stretch forth one's hand(s)*, the verb *cry* modified by the prepositional phrase *with a loud voice*, and the quotation marker *saying*—exactly as in other instances of the speech gesture. The prescribed speech immediately following the Zoramites' prayer gesture refers to the addressee of the prayer: "Holy, holy God" (Alma 31:15). While it is quite typical to begin a prayer by calling upon God, this phrase can also be understood in terms of the functional meaning of stretching forth the hand(s) as described above, addressing God as a new participant in the encounter.

In two other Book of Mormon examples, the Lord tirelessly stretches forth his hand(s) to his people. Here the verb of speech is not explicit, yet ministering with the spoken word could be implied:

But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I **slackened mine hand**, that I have not nour-

ished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have **stretched forth mine hand** almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh. (Jacob 5:47)

And how merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he **stretches forth his hands** unto them all the day long. (Jacob 6:4)

In Jacob 5:47, the speaker is the Lord of the vineyard, who symbolizes God in Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree quoted here. Following closely Jacob’s quotation of the allegory and continuing the imagery of “roots and branches,” Jacob 6:4 quite likely refers to the earlier passage, despite the variation in number of hands. Thus these two passages seem to refer to the same action of the Lord. Since the meaning in both cases is allegorical, the fact that this gesture most often accompanies speech in the Book of Mormon could indicate that Zenos and Jacob are referring to the Lord’s tireless imparting of the word of God to his people. The Lord’s actions toward his people, who are represented allegorically as an olive tree, are described as nourishing, digging about, pruning, dunging, and remembering. The image of *nourishing* is, in particular, compatible with the notion of teaching the word of God (see Deuteronomy 8:3 and Moroni 6:4). The connection between the Lord stretching forth his hand(s) “all the day long” and nourishing through the word, in the context of the allegory, is clearly implied in Jacob 6:7:

For behold, after ye have been **nourished by the good word of God** all the day long, will ye bring forth evil fruit, that ye must be hewn down and cast into the fire? (Jacob 6:7)

In the three instances in which the outstretched-hand gesture accompanying speech employs two hands in the earliest extant reading—Mosiah 16:1, Alma 31:14, and Jacob 6:4—the use of two hands as opposed to one does not appear to impact the meaning of the gesture. Note that in Jacob 5:47 and 6:4 the same action of the Lord is described with the singular *hand* in the former passage and the plural *hands* in the latter. However, in the case of Alma 31:14, it could be that the use of two hands in the prayer gesture is a fixed form, similar to the uniform use of two hands in the biblical prayer gesture, since the forms of gestures used in ritual often become set through repetition and prescription.

Aside from these examples in which stretching forth the hand correlates with speech, there are two instances in Book of Mormon narrative where this phrase describes a gesture of supernatural destructive power:

And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: **Stretch forth thine hand** again unto thy brethren, and . . . I will shake¹⁰ them. . . . And it came to pass that **I stretched forth my hand** unto my brethren, and . . . the Lord did shake them. . . . 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. (1 Nephi 17:53–55)

Therefore let us **stretch forth our hands**, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not **stretch forth mine hand**.¹¹ (Alma 14:10–11)

The use of an outstretched hand to destroy or exert supernatural power is very common in the Hebrew Bible; the most frequently used idiom to describe this gesture in Hebrew is *nāṭā yād* “extend the hand.”¹² This idiom is also found in biblical passages quoted in the Book of Mormon, such as in Nephi’s long quotation from the book of Isaiah.¹³ These passages contain the repeating sentence “For all this his anger is not turned away, but **his hand stretched out**

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still” (the word *is* between *hand* and *stretched*, which is italicized in the King James Version,¹⁴ was originally omitted in the Book of Mormon passages). The gesture in each of these passages is clearly connected with judgments and destruction that God is said to inflict on Judah and Jerusalem. It will suffice to quote the first of these passages:

Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath **stretched forth his hand** against them and hath smitten them. And the hills did tremble and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but **his hand stretched out** still. (2 Nephi 15:25, printer’s manuscript)

Interestingly, the variation between *stretch forth* and *stretch out* in this passage (both phrases translating the Hebrew expression *nāṭā yād* in Isaiah 5:25) shows that the two English phrases are synonymous in the seventeenth-century idiom used in the King James Bible and in the Book of Mormon.¹⁵

The one performing the gesture in these Isaiah passages is the Lord, unlike in 1 Nephi 17:53–55 and Alma 14:10–11, where the agent of the gesture is a prophet. However, the idea of a prophet performing this gesture is quite in harmony with biblical narratives in which Moses and Joshua perform the gesture, always following a direct commandment from the Lord (Exodus 7–14; Joshua 8).

It is possible that the gesture of stretching forth the hand to exercise supernatural power was accompanied by a verbal curse or command. If so, one might identify this gesture with the speech gesture described above. However, it is unlikely that this is the case. Of the forty-three biblical instances in which the idiom *nāṭā yād* “extend the hand” refers to a gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (as in 1 Nephi 17 and Alma 14), not one mentions speech, while other gestures that accompany speech almost always mention the speech act explicitly.¹⁶ This argues that the omission of verbs of speech in these two Book of Mormon instances

is significant and that we are dealing with a different gesture here, one whose function was to exert supernatural power without the use of speech.

Moses’s Gesture at the Red Sea

One of the most interesting contributions of the Book of Mormon to biblical interpretation is found in the different accounts of what Moses did at the Red Sea. The description of this event in Exodus mentions a gesture of stretching out the hand:

And **Moses stretched out his hand** over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. . . . And **Moses stretched forth his hand** over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. (Exodus 14:21, 27)

In two passages in 1 Nephi, the prophet Nephi refers to this event in exhortations to his brothers. However, he does not mention the gesture but instead adds a different detail to the event:

Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for **he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea** and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea. (1 Nephi 4:2)



Moses parting the sea. Dura Europos panel (ca. AD 239). Princeton University Press / Art Resource, NY.

Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work; and ye know that by his **word** the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground. (1 Nephi 17:26)

According to Nephi's understanding of the event, Moses engaged in speaking, and his gesture is apparently interpreted as a gesture of speech. Nephi's understanding of what Moses did at the Red Sea thus accords with the Book of Mormon's prominent use of the phrase *stretch forth the hand* to accompany speech. Other restoration scriptures agree with this interpretation of the event at the Red Sea:

Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy **command** as if thou wert God. (Moses 1:25)

For I am the Lord thy God. . . . **I stretch my hand over the sea**, and it obeys my **voice**.¹⁷ (Abraham 2:7)

A similar idea may also be alluded to in the apocryphal Hebrew book of Ben Sira:

With his (Moses's) **word** he (the Lord) swiftly brought about [signs], he strengthened him before the king.¹⁸ (Ben Sira 45:3)

In light of these data, a different description of the same event by another prophet named Nephi (Nephi₂) later in the Book of Mormon is all the more striking:

Behold, my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses, to **smite upon the waters of the Red Sea**, and they departed hither and thither, insomuch that the Israelites, which were our fathers, came through upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up? (Helaman 8:11, printer's manuscript)

Here Nephi₂ mentions neither the outstretched hand nor the speech act, but a completely different detail, an act of smiting the water. This interpretation of the outstretched-hand gesture as a prelude to smiting accords well with biblical tradition. In a great number of instances in the Hebrew Bible, the extended-hand gesture of destruction is followed by an act of "smiting" (in most cases, this "smiting" may be understood as figurative, an exertion of divine power on a person, group, or natural element).¹⁹ Interestingly, Nephi₂'s description closely parallels the

biblical account of Elijah crossing the Jordan, especially as worded in the King James Bible:

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and **smote the waters**, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8)

The similarity in language here (compare also 1 Nephi 17:26, quoted above) is unmistakable and can hardly be ascribed to coincidence, especially in view of its wide divergence from the biblical account of Moses. Both 2 Kings and Nephi₂ give the same sequence: a person smiting the waters, the waters departing²⁰ or dividing hither and thither, and people walking through on dry ground.²¹ One other passage in restoration scripture also agrees with the idea that Moses smote the waters:

I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and **he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod**. (Genesis 50:24 JST)

Finally, it may be mentioned that at least two ancient, nonbiblical sources, namely Josephus and the Qur'an, also say that Moses smote the waters:²²

Having thus called upon God, he (Moses) **smote the sea with his staff**. At this stroke, it recoiled and, withdrawing into itself, left the earth bare to be a road and an escape to the Hebrews. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 2.338)

We gave inspiration to Moses: "Travel by night with my servants, then **smite** for them a dry path through the sea; do not fear being overtaken, and do not be afraid." (Qur'an 20:77)

Then we gave inspiration to Moses: "**Smite the sea with your rod**." Then it was divided, and each part was like a great mountain. (Qur'an 26:63)

From the perspective of gesture symbolism, the interesting thing about the diverging accounts of the two Nephis in 1 Nephi 4:2 and Helaman 8:11 is that they can both be understood as interpreting the outstretched-hand gesture of Moses mentioned in Exodus 14. Speaking is substituted for the gesture in one case, and smiting is substituted for it in another, showing that the gesture was interpreted in two different ways, both of which accord with usage elsewhere in scripture. The fact that both interpretations are also found in other restoration scripture and in nonbiblical ancient sources shows that

these interpretations are not unique to the Book of Mormon. This is one instance in which the study of gestures in the Book of Mormon, in other restoration scripture, and in literature from the biblical world can be mutually instructive. In this instance, the Book of Mormon proves to be a good laboratory, since it reflects the diversity of interpretations found in other sources.

The Extended Arm(s) of Mercy

Several passages in the Book of Mormon have reference to the Lord's extended arm(s) of mercy. This gesture is distinct from the stretched-forth hand accompanying speech. The *arm* and not the *hand* is always mentioned, and the gesture is often correlated with mercy but not with speech.²³

For notwithstanding I shall **lengthen out mine arm** unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for **mine arm is lengthened out** all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts. (2 Nephi 28:32)

And while **his arm of mercy is extended** towards you in the light of the day, harden not your hearts. (Jacob 6:5)

For I say unto you, that if he had not **extended his arm** in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred. (Mosiah 1:14)

Having gone according to their own carnal wills and desires; having never called upon the Lord while **the arms of mercy was extended** towards them; for **the arms of mercy was extended** towards them, and they would not. (Mosiah 16:12, printer's manuscript)

And thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, **extending the arm of mercy** towards them that put their trust in him. (Mosiah 29:20)

Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for **the arms of mercy is extended** towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. Yea, he saith, Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life. (Alma 5:33-34, printer's manuscript)

And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that **his arm is extended** to all people who will repent and believe on his name. (Alma 19:36)

And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard

my prayer; yea, then do I remember **his merciful arm which he extended** towards me. (Alma 29:10)

Behold, **mine arm of mercy is extended** towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. (3 Nephi 9:14)

Though this gesture is clearly distinct from the stretched-forth hand accompanying speech, it is similar to the latter in one respect—namely, that in some examples (Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33-34) where the arms (plural) are stretched out, the use of one or both limbs has no apparent impact on the meaning of the gesture.²⁴ Further, in Mosiah 16, it seems likely that there is an intended connection between Abinadi's stretched-forth hands (v. 1) and the Lord's extended arms (v. 12).²⁵ It is as if Abinadi, through his own intensifying and pleading gesture of stretching forth the hands, is providing an illustration of the Lord's extended arms of mercy. In Jacob 6:5, the imagery of the Lord's "arm of mercy . . . extended towards you in the light of the day" plays on the imagery in verse 4, "he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long."²⁶ The fact that the two gestures are distinct, therefore, does not prevent their similarities from being exploited for literary purposes.

Interestingly, this phrase focuses on the arm(s) and not the hand(s). In many cultures, including that of ancient Israel, the arm is symbolic of strength. In the Book of Mormon, some passages speak of the folly of "trusting in the arm of flesh" or "making flesh one's arm" or, in other words, trusting in one's own merely human strength instead of in God's power and precepts (2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31). This symbolism of the arm as strength may be present in some of the passages quoted above, particularly Mosiah 1:14, where the arm is associated with the "preservation" of people against their enemies, and Mosiah 29:20, where "extending the arm of mercy" is parallel to the Lord's "work[ing] with his power."

However, other symbolic associations are consistently present in the nine verses cited above dealing with extended arm(s). One of these is the notion of mercy, which is explicit in the phrases *arm(s) of mercy* (Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 29:20; Alma 5:33-34; 3 Nephi 9:14) and *merciful arm* (Alma 29:10). Another is the invitation to "come" and be "received," which is given explicitly in Alma 5:33-34 and 3 Nephi 9:14. The verbs *deny* and *come* are used in 2 Nephi 28:32 to describe contrasting reactions to the gesture of lengthening out the arm, suggesting that an invita-

tion to come is implied in the gesture. One can also compare Mormon 6:17: “how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!”²⁷ In these cases, the fact that it is specifically the arm(s) and not the hand(s) that are mentioned makes it very likely that the gesture expresses the desire to embrace the addressee, just as the speech gesture of stretching forth the hand(s) expresses the desire for a handclasp or other physical contact. The Lord’s protective and redemptive embrace is described in the Book of Mormon as being “encircled” or “clasped” in the Lord’s arms:

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)

And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and **encircles them in the arms** of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice. (Alma 34:16)

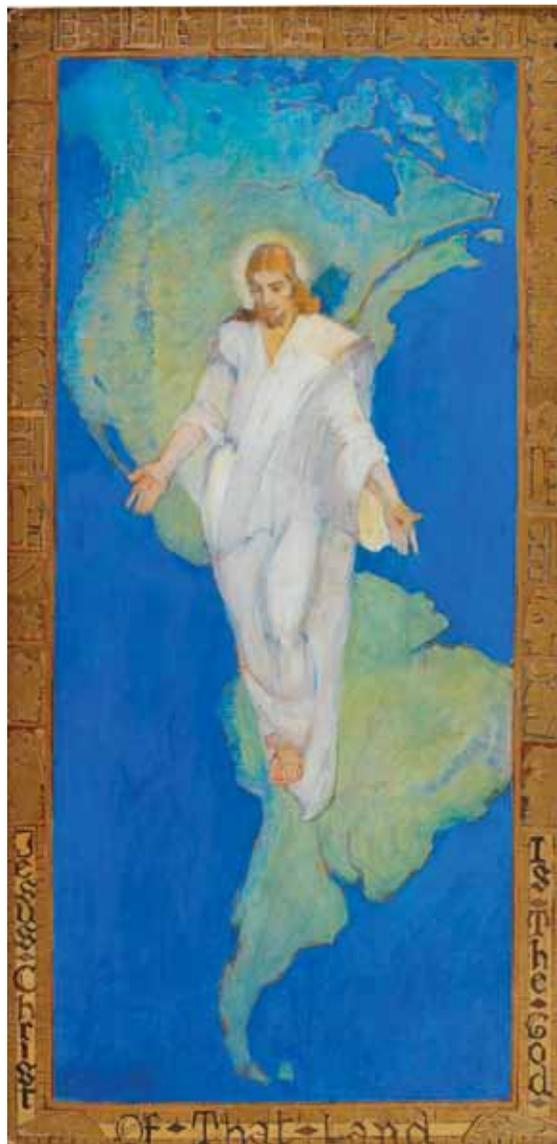
They will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been **clasped in the arms** of Jesus. (Mormon 5:11)

The embracing arms in these passages and the extended arm(s) of mercy both depend on the human addressee’s repentance (compare 2 Nephi 28:32; Alma 5:33-34; 19:36), which increases the likelihood that the two gestures are related.

Both the extended arm(s) and the embracing arms are often described in relationship to one of the Lord’s attributes: mercy, love, or safety. While these expressions could be attributing figurative arms to the personified attributes, it seems more likely, both from a semantic standpoint and in keeping with the overall style of the Book of Mormon, that this type of phrase is to be interpreted as a Hebraism.²⁸ In this interpretation, *arm of mercy* simply means “merciful arm.”²⁹ The more idiomatic phrase *merciful arm* actually occurs in Alma 29:10.³⁰ In the case of 2 Nephi 1:15, where a possessive determiner *his* occurs before *love*, the possessive determiner should be taken as modifying the whole phrase, as “his loving arms.”³¹

Another passage that may refer to an embrace is found in 2 Nephi 4:33. Here the verb *encircle* is used, but the person is encircled not in “arms” but in a “robe”:

O Lord, wilt thou **encircle me around** in the robe of thy righteousness! (2 Nephi 4:33)



Jesus Christ Is the God of That Land, by Minerva Teichert. 1940s, oil on canvas, 47⁷/₈" x 23³/₄". Courtesy of the Springville Museum of Art collection 1985.037.

Hugh Nibley, in a 1989 article, referred to this passage as describing an embrace.³² The embrace is not explicit here. However, the phrase *the robe of thy righteousness*, like the phrases with *arm* discussed above, can be interpreted as a Hebraism, in which case the meaning is something like “thy saving robe.”³³ If this is the case (that is, if the robe is worn by the one performing the gesture), then the gesture of encircling would imply a kind of embrace. In any case, the context in 2 Nephi 4:31-33, in which Nephi is pleading for deliverance from his enemies, makes clear the

association of encircling in the robe with providing safety (compare Alma 34:16, cited above).³⁴

“She Clapped Her Hands, Being Filled with Joy”

Another gesture in the Book of Mormon that can be consistently correlated with a meaning is that of clapping the hands. In the two passages where it occurs, this gesture indicates overflowing joy:³⁵

And now when the people had heard these words, they **clapped their hands** for joy and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts! (Mosiah 18:11)³⁶

And when she had said this, she **clapped her hands**, being filled with joy, speaking many words which were not understood. (Alma 19:30, printer’s manuscript)

In the second of these instances, the current text reads *clasped* instead of *clapped*. However, thanks to the work of Royal Skousen, it is now well known that the original text read *clapped*, spelled as *claped* by Oliver Cowdery in the printer’s manuscript (the earliest textual source for this passage). Skousen’s prose on this is worth quoting: “The 1830 typesetter accidentally misread *claped* as *clasped*, which ended up removing the more emotional, even pentecostal, *clap* of the original event in favor of the rather anemic *clasp*.”³⁷

In the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources, clapping the hands is a sign of intense emotion, but it is anger or derision at least as often as joy.³⁸ Too few examples of the gesture exist in the Book of Mormon to be sure whether the ges-

ture indicated joy exclusively or was a more general indicator of intense emotion. If used solely to denote joy, this would be a unique feature of Book of Mormon culture compared to ancient Israel and other Near Eastern cultures.

Conclusions

I have discussed four distinct gestures found in the Book of Mormon, some of which have echoes in the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in restoration scripture. These are tabulated in table 3.

Understanding how these gestures function helps to illuminate the scriptural passages in which they are mentioned. For example, knowing that the stretched-forth hand accompanying speech is a plea for contact and acceptance makes Abinadi’s use of the gesture while delivering a message that would lead to his martyrdom especially vivid. Similarly, knowing the symbolism of God’s extended arm(s) and this gesture’s relationship to a protective and loving embrace helps us to understand his repeated statements that his arms are extended toward his people.

In this paper, I have maintained a somewhat narrow focus on a few explicit gestures involving the hands and arms in the Book of Mormon.³⁹ A more thorough study of nonverbal communication in restoration scripture would be an enormous and very fruitful undertaking. Future studies could, for example, illuminate the functions and symbolism of postures, proxemics (the distance between participants in an interaction), and use of objects.⁴⁰ In addi-

Table 3. Book of Mormon hand and arm gestures.

Gesture	Function	Symbolism	References	Total
stretching forth the hand(s)	intensifying speech, initiating new instance of speech, or marking a shift in participants	partially bridging physical and social distance, inviting handclasp as symbol of acceptance	Jacob 5:47; 6:4; Mosiah 12:2; 16:1; Alma 10:25; 13:21; 15:5; 19:12; 31:14; 32:7; Helaman 13:4; 3 Nephi 11:9; 12:1	13
stretching forth/out the hand	exercising the power of God without speech	supernatural destructive power	1 Nephi 17:53–54; 2 Nephi 15:25 (twice); 19:12, 17, 21; 20:4; 24:26–27; Alma 14:10–11	12
lengthening out/extending the arm(s)	a “reaching out” of God to humans, as situated within prophetic imagery	protection, mercy, love, invitation to come and be embraced	2 Nephi 28:32 (twice); Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 1:14; 16:12 (twice); 29:20; Alma 5:33; 19:36; 29:10; 3 Nephi 9:14	11
clapping the hands	expression of intense emotion	joy (and other emotions?)	Mosiah 18:11; Alma 19:30	2

tion, an infinite number of studies could be devoted to revealing what our interpretations of scripture presuppose about unexpressed nonverbal aspects of the text. Studies such as these would help scholars to elaborate their interpretations and render them more consistent with the cultural worlds of the texts themselves. In short, I hope that the present modest beginning points out a long and fruitful path of investigation. ■



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NOTES

1. Compare Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 168: “Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. . . . Therefore He set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them.”
2. For discussion, see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004-9), part 2:1342-45. Skousen prefers to restore the earlier reading here, though he notes that “it could very well be an error for *hand*.” The change to the singular, as maintained in the current text, was made by John Gilbert in his typesetting for the 1830 edition.
3. One might also consider the special case of Alma 30:51-52, in which the chief judge and the mute Korihor use a similar gesture not to speak but to write to each other: “And Korihor **put forth his hand** and wrote, **saying**: I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak” (v. 52). Another special case is Alma 44:13-14, where a soldier speaks while stretching forth a sword instead of a hand: “And it came to pass that the soldier who stood by . . . took up the scalp from off the ground by the hair, and laid it upon the point of his sword, and **stretched it forth unto them, saying** unto them with a loud voice: Even as this scalp has fallen to the earth . . .”
4. Brigitte Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993), 77-78. A similar gesture, most likely derived from Greek rhetorical practice, also occurs once in the New Testament, rendered in the King James Version with phraseology similar to that in the Book of Mormon: “Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself” (Acts 26:1). Compare David G. Burke, “Gesture,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:453.
5. Compare Erving Goffman, “Foot-ing,” *Semiotica* 25/1-2 (1979): 1-29, republished in Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1981), 124-59.
6. On the categories of speaker and addressee, see Dell Hymes, “Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life,” in *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, ed. John Gumperz and Dell Hymes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 35-71; Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, 131-33, 226-27; Stephen C. Levinson, “Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing: Explorations in Goffman’s Concepts of Participation,” in *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order*, ed. Paul Drew and Anthony Wootton (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 161-227; and Judith Irvine, “Shadow Conversations: The Indeterminacy of Participant Roles,” in *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 131-59. On the relationship between verb tense and the current moment of speech, see Michael Silverstein, “Shifters, Linguistic Categories and Cultural Description,” reprinted in *Language, Culture, and Society: A Book of Readings*, ed. Ben G. Blount, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1995), 187-221.
7. To use Goffman’s terminology, Abinadi here switches from the role of author to the role of animator (Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, 226); compare the terms *author* and *relayer* in Levinson, “Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing,” 170-72.
8. Compare Raymond Firth, “Bodily Symbols of Greeting and Parting,” in Firth, *Symbols Public and Private* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 299-327.
9. Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Isaiah 1:15; 25:11; 65:2; Jeremiah 4:31; Psalms 44:21; 143:6; Job 11:13; Lamentations 1:17; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:12, 13, 29.
10. Erroneously *shock* in the current text. For discussion, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, part 1:378-79.
11. Note that Alma’s response indicates that *our hands* means “one hand of each of us” since he says “mine hand” (singular). This rules out the possibility that the reference is to a prayer gesture like that in Alma 31:14, as suggested by John A. Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 82.
12. Exodus 7:5, 19; 8:1, 2, 12, 13; 9:22, 23; 10:12, 13, 21, 22; 14:16, 21, 26, 27;

- Joshua 8:18 (twice), 19, 26; Isaiah 5:25 (twice); 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4; 14:26, 27; 23:11; 31:3; Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6; 21:5; 51:25; Ezekiel 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3; Zephaniah 1:4; 2:13; 1 Chronicles 21:16. Compare Paul Humbert, “Etendre la main,” *Vetus Testamentum* 12/4 (1962): 383–95.
13. 2 Nephi 15:25; 19:11–12, 17, 20–21; 20:4; 24:26–27; compare Isaiah 5:25; 9:11–12, 17, 20–21; 10:4; 14:26–27.
 14. Words in italics in the King James Bible are not represented in the Hebrew text but were inserted by the translators to make the sentences read properly in English.
 15. The same variation occurs in the King James translation of Exodus 14:21, 27 (quoted below).
 16. In one instance of the idiom *nāṭā yād* where the context is *not* that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, namely Proverbs 1:24, a speech act is mentioned: “For I called, but you refused; I extended my hand (*nāṭītī yādī*), but none gave heed.” The agent of the gesture here is the personified Lady Wisdom, whose role in this passage is portrayed as similar to that of a prophet, speaking in the streets and gates (vv. 20–21) and pronouncing judgments against those who will not hear (vv. 26–32). Compare Harold C. Washington, “Proverbs, Sirach,” in *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Hebrew Bible section, 906. Considering the close cultural link between ancient Egyptian wisdom and the book of Proverbs, it is not unlikely that this is an example of the Egyptian-like gesture of stretching out the hand to accompany speech. The Book of Mormon use of the phrase *stretch forth the hand* is exactly the reverse of the biblical use of *nāṭā yād*: in those passages of the Book of Mormon that are not quoted from the Bible, it is predominantly a speech gesture and only rarely a gesture of destruction.
 17. This speech of Jehovah is set in an earlier era than the exodus from Egypt. However, while it may not have specific reference to the (then future) crossing of the Red Sea, it clearly refers to the same kind of gesture. Note that the gesture of stretching out the hand at the Red Sea, while actually carried out by Moses, was considered to be the Lord’s gesture. See, for example, Exodus 15:11–12 KJV: “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? **Thou stretchedst out thy right hand**, the earth swallowed them.” Compare also Exodus 7:4–5; Isaiah 10:26.
 18. Part of “his word” is missing in the Hebrew text (manuscript B). However, *dbrw* “his word” is written in the margin, supporting the restoration. See Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 79. Some translations (like the New Revised Standard Version), based on the Greek version, restore the noun as plural, *dbryw* “his words.” The identification of Moses as the antecedent of “his” follows the New Jerusalem Bible. The translation from the Hebrew is my own.
 19. Humbert, “Etendre la main,” 391. Exodus 7:20 also describes a gesture of raising or extending the hand followed by “smiting” water, but here the gesture idiom is *hērīm yād*, “raise the hand.”
 20. The current text of Helaman 8:11 reads “parted,” but the earliest textual witness, the printer’s manuscript, reads “departed,” perhaps with the archaic meaning “parted, divided.” The word was changed to “parted” by John Gilbert in the typesetting of the 1830 edition. See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, part 5:3011–13.
 21. Nephi₂ begins his summary of Moses’s action by asking his audience, “Have ye not read . . .,” implying that he is referring to an already existing text. It is possible that he is simply giving a loose account of the narrative in Exodus, using language from 2 Kings 2. However, it is also possible that Nephi here refers to another ancient text, one in which similar language is used in the description of the events at the Red Sea and at the Jordan River. The latter possibility would compare well with 1 Nephi 5:10–13, which relates that the brass plates (the Nephites’ scriptures that they took with them from Jerusalem) contained both a historical record spanning “from the beginning” to the reign of King Zedekiah and a prophetic record covering the same time span, both of these records being distinct from the “five books of Moses.”
 22. It is noteworthy that the Jewish commentator Abraham ibn Ezra (ca. AD 1100–1160), in his commentary on Exodus 14, seemingly reacts against the tendency to interpret Moses’s gesture as one of smiting: “But as for you . . .” (Exodus 14:16): God said to Moses, ‘Lift up your staff and divide the sea before they take their journey,’ for he did not say to him that he should strike the sea, only that he should stretch out his hand against the sea with his staff, in the same manner as ‘And Moses stretched forth his staff toward heaven’ (Exodus 10:22), and we understand that the staff did not divide the sea, but at the very moment that Moses stretched out his hand against the sea, God made the sea move by a strong east wind, then the waters were divided, for thus it is written.” See Jacob ben Hayim ibn Adoniya, ed., *Biblia Rabbinica* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972), 1:158. The translations from Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic are my own.
 23. In Jacob 6:4, the Lord’s remembering the house of Israel and his stretching “forth his hands to them” are described as evidence of his mercy. Nevertheless, mercy is more often connected explicitly with the phrase *extend one’s arm(s)* than with the phrase *stretch forth one’s hand(s)*; Jacob 6:4 is the only example of the latter connection. In addition, the idiom *arm(s) of mercy* has no equivalent using the word *hand(s)*.
 24. In the printer’s manuscript (the earliest source for these passages), the verb that goes with *arms* is singular: *was* in Mosiah 16:12 (twice), *is* in Alma 5:33. These readings continued in the 1830 edition but were all changed to *are* in Joseph Smith’s editing for the 1837 edition. Based on this, it would be possible to posit that *arms* is an error for the singular *arm*. However, since there is variation in the original text for the number of hands or arms used in other gestures, it seems advisable to allow variation in this case, according to the reading of the earliest extant text. On the use of *was* with plural subjects in the original text, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, part 1:101–5.
 25. Note that restoring the original

- plural reading *hands* in verse 1 helps to make this connection clear.
26. This imagery begins even earlier in this chapter, in verse 2: “the day that he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people.” Jacob here quotes from Isaiah 11:11, also quoted by him in 2 Nephi 6:14 and by his brother Nephi in 2 Nephi 21:11; 25:17; and 29:1. In the case of 2 Nephi 29:1, the use of this image immediately follows the mention of God’s arm being “lengthened out all the day long” in 2 Nephi 28:32 (there was no chapter division between these verses in the original text). The linking together of different gestures under a unified theme is thus a recurring technique in the books of 2 Nephi and Jacob. Compare David Rolph Seely, “The Image of the Hand of God in the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 144, 147–48.
 27. Compare Seely, “Image of the Hand of God,” 148–49.
 28. Recent studies on Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon text include the following: Brian D. Stubbs, “Book of Mormon Language,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179–81; Royal Skousen, “The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 28–38; and Donald W. Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 155–89. Earlier foundational studies can be found referenced in the works just cited and in the note just below. Overall, the literature on this topic is quite large, though the phenomenon itself remains imperfectly understood.
 29. Waltke and O’Connor refer to this as the “attributive genitive.” See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 148–49. Others have also noticed this phenomenon in the Book of Mormon. See Sidney B. Sperry, “The Book of Mormon as Translation English,” *Improvement Era*, March 1935, 141, 187–88, reprinted in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 215–16; and John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey,” *BYU Studies* 11/1 (1970): 55.
 30. There are other cases where a Hebraism is not employed consistently throughout the Book of Mormon text. One example of this is the use of *and* to transition from a circumstantial or conditional clause to a main clause, which occurs sporadically, sometimes varying with more idiomatic English usage within the same passage. See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, part 5:3068–69.
 31. Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 150–51. Waltke and O’Connor cite four examples; especially convincing is Psalm 42:9, literally “to the God of my life,” but clearly meaning “to my living God.” For a biblical example involving the noun *arm*, compare “his holy arm” (literally “the arm of his holiness”) in Psalm 98:1. Also compare “my saving right hand” (literally “the right hand of my righteousness”) in Isaiah 41:10.
 32. Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 558–60. Compare Seely, “Image of the Hand of God,” 149.
 33. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 841–42, under *šedeq* definition 6 and *šadāqā* definition 6.
 34. For the general theme of the robe of righteousness, compare Job 29:14; Psalm 132:9; Isaiah 61:10; Baruch 5:2; 2 Nephi 9:14; Doctrine and Covenants 29:12; 109:76. In each of these passages, the robe is referred to as “a robe” or “the robe” rather than “God’s robe,” and one is clothed in the robe rather than encircled in it.
 35. As an anonymous reviewer of this article has noted, in Alma 31:36, the similar expression “clap the hands upon (another person)” is used twice. This appears to be a different gesture than that denoted by “clap the hands” in Mosiah 18:11 and Alma 19:30, where there is no prepositional phrase describing an addressee. The result of the gesture in Alma 31:36 is that the addressees are “filled with the Holy Ghost,” which suggests that this could be related to “laying the hands upon (a person)” to give him/her the Holy Ghost (Moroni 2:2).
 36. I have modified the punctuation slightly from how it reads in the current text. The period after “This is the desire of our hearts” in the current text dampens the fervor that is implied by the gesture and by the verb *exclaimed*.
 37. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, part 3:2017.
 38. Anger: Numbers 24:10; compare the Egyptian Tale of Two Brothers, Papyrus D’Orbiney 6:7–8. Derision: Job 27:23; Lamentations 2:15; Nahum 3:19. Clapping hands is associated with joy, either through poetic parallelism or by means of the context, in Psalms 47:1; 98:8; and Isaiah 55:12. The gesture in Ezekiel 25:6 could be interpreted from context as indicating either joy or derision. The gesture in 2 Kings 11:12 occurs within the context of a coronation ceremony, perhaps as an expression of joy (as in Mosiah 18:11) or perhaps as a formal ritual gesture.
 39. Other hand gestures include the laying on of hands (Alma 6:1; 31:36; 3 Nephi 18:36; Mormon 9:24; Moroni 2:1–2; 3:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:41, 58, 68, 70; 36:2; 42:43–44; Articles of Faith 1:4, 5), “putting forth the hand” (Alma 47:23), putting the hand over another’s eyes (Abraham 3:12), and putting the hand under another’s hand (Genesis 24:2, 9 JST).
 40. Postures: 1 Nephi 8:30; 15:33 (compare Deuteronomy 19:17); Mosiah 20:25; Alma 4:17 (contrast Psalm 82:1; Isaiah 3:13; Ezekiel 44:24); 9:34; 34:1; 60:21–22; 3 Nephi 11:8 (Jesus apparently maintains the standing posture throughout chapters 11–16; contrast Matthew 5:1–2; 13:2–3), 11:19–20; 17:12–15; etc. Proxemics: 1 Nephi 13:40; Jacob 6:5–10; Alma 44:1; 47:21–23; 60:35; 3 Nephi 11:14–15; etc. Use of objects: Mosiah 19:4; Alma 44:13–14; 46:12–13, 19; etc.