

Part 4: Events Early in Lehi's Escape

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When Lehi's family escaped from Jerusalem, they traveled south for an unknown period of time until they reached a point "by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:4-5). They probably used camels, the large pack animals of desert travel,¹ because the family carried tents and provisions (1 Nephi 2:4). After they reached "the borders near the shore" of the Red Sea, where they may have remained for an unknown period of time, they travelled for three days into "the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea," until they reached "a valley by the side of a river of water" (1 Nephi 2:5-6). At the valley near the Red Sea, they established a base camp, including an altar for sacrifice, and dwelt there in their tents for another unknown period of time (1 Nephi 2:7-10).

During their time at the base camp, if not before, the sons came to understand their main purpose at the camp was to finish preparing for travel to a land of promise. As part of that preparation, Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain a set of brass plates that were held by a relative named Laban. The brass plates contained Hebrew scripture and Lehi's family genealogy. The time required for this expedition to Jerusalem is not mentioned (1 Nephi 2:11-5:6; 7:13). After this first expedition back to Jerusalem, the family stayed at the camp for another unknown period (1 Nephi 5:7-22) and then Lehi's sons were sent back to the land of Jerusalem for Ishmael's family (1 Nephi 7). The time required for this second expedition is not mentioned. After Lehi's sons and Ishmael's family arrived at the base camp, the two families remained there for another unknown period while various group members gathered seeds, received revelation and married each other (1 Nephi 8:1-9:1; 10-15; 16:1-9).

How long did Lehi stay at his base camp? In 1993, I proposed that Lehi may have escaped from Jerusalem late in the reign of Zedekiah, when the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem was lifted for a period of about five months.² I made no claim that the base camp experience lasted five months. Instead, I stated that Lehi and his followers remained at the base camp "until 'the voice of the Lord spake unto [Lehi] ... by night, and commanded him that on the morrow he should take his journey into the wilderness' (1 Nephi 16:9)."³ While the families were together at the base camp by the Red Sea, it is possible that some of the time could have occurred after the Babylonians turned back the Egyptians and re-imposed the siege of Jerusalem. Upon the command of the Lord and in the direction set by the Lord, the extended family began their journey away from their base camp and toward a land of promise (1 Nephi 2:20; 5:5), without Nephi recording any bickering then about a return to the land of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 16:9-12). Whether there was any bickering or not, everyone in Lehi's group was willing to move farther away from Jerusalem at that time.

¹ According to Lynn M. Hilton, "it is certain that [Lehi's] family owned pack animals. The animals of choice then as now were camels since they were best suited for desert travel. The party members needed them because they took 'tents' whose weight was far too great for humans or smaller animals to carry (see 1 Nephi 2:4; 3:9; 16:12)." Lynn M. Hilton, "In Search of Lehi's Trail: Thirty Years Later," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 5. S. Kent Brown concluded the same thing, in "Refining the Spotlight on Lehi and Sariah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 116 n.5.

² Randall P. Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates," *FARMS Preliminary Report SPA-93* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies ["FARMS"], 1993), 10-12. See also Randall P. Spackman, "The Jewish/Nephite Lunar Calendar," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 57-59.

³ Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology," 14.

Nonetheless, to maintain their counter-argument to my proposal that Lehi escaped late in the reign of Zedekiah, S. Kent Brown and David Rolph Seely claimed that while it was “possible” for the escape and base camp experience to have occurred within a five-month period, such a scenario “asks readers to make too many assumptions.”⁴ They did not explain to their readers that in 1993 and 1998, I actually had not claimed that the escape and base camp experience occurred during a five-month period. Nor did they share with their readers the list of assumptions that had to be considered when dealing with a five-month stay at the base camp. Instead, they went on to discuss other issues and the supposed problems they raised with my late departure theory.

In 1997, Brown estimated that the extended base camp experience “would have required possibly seven or eight months, certainly no more than a year.”⁵ Unlike Jeffrey R. Chadwick,⁶ he provided no details about his method for estimating a period of “possibly seven or eight months.” In 2006, Brown reiterated his view with even less specificity: “[T]here are fewer problems if we assume that the family spent no more than a few months at the first camp, perhaps up to a year. All of the activities rehearsed by Nephi, particularly the two extended trips back to Jerusalem, could have taken place within a few months.”⁷ The phrase “few months” could be seven or eight months, or it could be the five months that Brown and Seely claimed I had proposed. According to Chadwick, who has walked some of the likely route followed by the desert travelers, Lehi’s family could have made the walking trip from Jerusalem to the camp or the return trip in thirteen days, but if camels were employed, in eleven or twelve days. Based on these factual estimates, Chadwick outlined a rough, but possible four-month stay for Lehi and Sariah at the base camp in a valley Lehi associated with his son Lemuel (1 Nephi 2:6, 10).

A four-month (nineteen-week) stay at the valley of Lemuel, from mid-November to mid-April, would include two weeks of initial camp setup; two weeks’ travel back to Jerusalem to visit Laban; one week to go to the land of inheritance to obtain gold and silver to buy the plates, then return to Jerusalem; one week to be robbed by Laban, chased into the wilderness, and return to Jerusalem to finally take the plates; two weeks for the return trip to the valley of Lemuel; two weeks for Lehi to study the plates of brass; two weeks to return to Jerusalem a second time to visit Ishmael; one week to convince and prepare his family for departure; two weeks to return again to the valley of Lemuel; one week in which Lehi experienced his vision and related it to his family; one week in which Nephi experienced the same vision and taught his brothers; one week to prepare and perform marriages of Lehi’s sons to Ishmael’s daughters; and one week to break camp and depart the valley.⁸

Chadwick’s suggested four-month stay at the base camp, the five-month escape and stay which Brown and Seely claimed that I proposed, even the “few months” and seven- or eight-month

⁴ S. Kent Brown and David Rolph Seely, “Jeremiah’s Imprisonment and the Date of Lehi’s Departure,” *The Religious Educator* 2/1 (2001): 26-27.

⁵ S. Kent Brown, “A Case for Lehi’s Bondage in Arabia,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 206.

⁶ Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “The Wrong Place for Lehi’s Trail and the Valley of Lemuel,” *The FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 202. The distance is about 250 miles. Brown, “A Case for Lehi’s Bondage in Arabia,” 206.

⁷ S. Kent Brown, “Refining the Spotlight on Lehi & Sariah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 48.

⁸ Chadwick, “The Wrong Place,” 211 n.6.

proposals by Brown, all might be consistent with Lehi's departure either early or late in Zedekiah's reign. The "five-month" length of Lehi's escape and stay at the base camp is not a genuine issue.

What were Sariah's anxieties? When Sariah's sons returned to Jerusalem for the brass plates, she eventually "mourned" because "she had supposed that [they] had perished in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 5:1-2). One might argue that if Lehi escaped late in Zedekiah's reign, after the imposition and removal of the Babylonian siege, "the close proximity of a foreign army, such as the Babylonians," would have been one of Sariah's "worries or complaints" and thus, one "would expect Nephi to record a different set of anxieties for his mother."⁹

However, one also might examine the four assumptions on which such an expectation rests: first, there was a foreign military presence to which Sariah might react; second, Sariah would not have included such a foreign military presence as one of the potential causes of her sons "perishing in the wilderness;" third, Nephi, a young teenager, knew all the sources of his mother's anxieties; and fourth, he was listing her anxieties for the record. I can find no text that even suggests such assumptions are accurate. Such an expectation runs afoul of the logical principles of simplicity (it uses four extraneous assumptions), uncertain cultural understanding (odd assumptions that Sariah would have excluded a foreign army from being a cause of her sons' deaths in the wilderness and that one of Nephi's narrative purposes was to catalogue his mother's anxieties) and rational reserve (the assumption that one's personal expectations somehow constitute a controlling factor to be considered in the interpretation).

In the three years immediately following Zedekiah's enthronement (as a minimum time period to be considered), the Babylonians had no need to maintain a military presence in Judah except, perhaps, for a few troops and spies to manage the collection of tribute from Zedekiah and to keep track of events near the Egyptian border.¹⁰ Late in Zedekiah's reign, the Babylonian army did return to punish Zedekiah for rebellion and they laid siege to Jerusalem; however, the Egyptian army assembled to help Zedekiah and the Babylonians were forced to withdraw from Jerusalem. The Egyptians had badly damaged the Babylonian army the last time they clashed (in late 601 or early 600 B.C.);¹¹ so, the Babylonians could not misjudge the threat approaching from Egypt. In

⁹ Brown and Seely, "Jeremiah's Imprisonment," 27.

¹⁰ For the eighth year of Nebuchadrezzar, no mention is made of any use of the Babylonian army. The emperor traveled to Carchemish, in Syria, around January 596 B.C. and returned to Babylonia a month later. His visit to Carchemish "was probably to receive homage and to collect tribute from those Syrian vassals [including Judah] who formerly would not have made these payments without the presence of the Babylonian army to enforce them." In his ninth regnal year, Nebuchadrezzar took his army along the Tigris River to meet an enemy "at a place the name of which is now lost in the broken text" of the Babylonian chronicle. Nebuchadrezzar stayed in Babylonia for most of his tenth year. Around December 595/January 594 B.C., a revolt broke out in Babylonia "which was only suppressed by the slaughter of many of his troops ... and by the capture of the rebel leader. Order must soon have been restored, for the king was able to go in person to Syria before the end of the year to receive the tribute brought by the vassal kings and other officials and to bring it back to the capital. This journey was apparently made, as two years earlier, without the presence of the army, for the latter is not specifically mentioned. It seems, therefore, that the west remained undisturbed." Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 35-36.

¹¹ Late in 601 B.C., "Nebuchadrezzar took over command of the army in person and marched to Egypt. On hearing of his approach the Egyptian king, Necho II, called out his army and both forces met in open battle. With characteristic frankness the chronicler states that both sides suffered heavy losses. Nebuchadrezzar and his army withdrew immediately afterwards and returned to Babylon.... It can be judged from the entry for the following year that the outcome of the battle was a severe set-back to the Babylonians. The fact that Nebuchadrezzar was forced to re-equip his army with chariots and horses may indicate that it

facing that grave threat, Nebuchadrezzar did not want Zedekiah's rebel army and their fortresses immediately at his back. He had to move his forces some distance away from Jerusalem.¹² Nebuchadrezzar may have gathered all of his available forces near the seashore (where they knew the terrain and had experienced success in besieging and destroying Ashkelon and temporarily taking control of Gaza in 604 B.C.).¹³ Hence, whether early or late in Zedekiah's reign, Sariah's sons would have been reasonably safe from foreign troops in the land of Judah. They were at greater risk from all the other dangers of desert travel during their long expeditions through the wilderness. No special assumptions are required to understand or interpret Sariah's fears for her sons' lives. Her "worries or complaints" are not a genuine issue in determining when Lehi escaped from Jerusalem.

Who was the last faithful record keeper of the brass plates? At the time of Lehi's escape or shortly thereafter, the custodian of the brass plates was Laban (1 Nephi 3:3). Lehi and Sariah knew of Laban and during the time their sons were obtaining the brass plates, Lehi and Sariah both worried that Laban might harm their sons (1 Nephi 5:5, 8). When Laman went to Laban's house to get the records, Laban grew angry and thrust Laman out, calling him a robber and telling him, "I will slay thee" (1 Nephi 3:11-14). When the brothers tried to trade Lehi's treasure for the brass plates, Laban "did lust after" the treasure. He thrust the young men out of his house and sent men to kill them, causing them to flee so quickly they had to abandon their father's treasure. The brothers hid in a cave to avoid being murdered (1 Nephi 3:22-27).

Laman and Lemuel later complained that Laban was "a mighty man," one who could "command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty" (1 Nephi 3:31), but Nephi believed "the Lord is able to deliver us ... and to destroy Laban" (1 Nephi 4:3). Nephi's brothers waited outside the city walls while he tried to obtain the brass plates. Inside the city that night, Nephi found Laban drunken on the ground near his house. In Laban's sheath, Nephi found a sword with a hilt of "pure gold" and a blade of "the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:4-9). Nephi knew that Laban "would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord;" so, he listened to the Spirit's prompting and killed the man. Then

was deficiency in these which had been a primary cause of the Babylonian defeat." Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 29-30. Alternatively, it may have been that Nebuchadrezzar's chariots and horses "had suffered the most in open battle. Since Josephus summarises the Babylonian early conquests in the west as 'as far as Pelusium' [near the eastern edge of the Nile River delta] it may be assumed that the contestants met in this region, possibly at Magdalu. [Following the destructive battle, the] Egyptians may ... have penetrated as far as Gaza." Donald J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1983), 29. See also John Bright, *The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), XLIX (the battle occurring "near the frontier"); J. Arthur Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, R.K. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 24 (the battle occurring "near the Egyptian border").

¹² It appears that the Egyptians then were "adhering to the age-old, bipartite strategy of Egyptian commanders faced with the prospect of offensive action in Asia: a land-thrust across the northern Sinai into southern Palestine, combined with a maritime crossing to the coast of Lebanon and a rapid march to the Orontes [River in Syria].... [Their] land force in all probability emerged from Gaza which, there is no reason to doubt, was still in Egyptian hands, and headed north up the coast road towards the Carmel range. Probably at the same time—i.e., late summer, 588 B.C.—[their] fleet will have appeared off Tyre. Where the erstwhile Babylonian besiegers of Jerusalem intercepted the Egyptian land force there is no way of telling" K.S. Freedy and Donald B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90/3 (1970): 482.

¹³ The fall of Ashkelon to Babylonian forces may have been one of the principal factors in Judah's original surrender to Nebuchadrezzar. Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 40-42, 47-48.

Nephi put on Laban's garments, armor and sword, and by subterfuge obtained the record from Laban's treasury (1 Nephi 4:10-27).

When Lehi received the brass plates from his sons, he found that the plates contained "the five books of Moses," together with "a record of the Jews" and the "prophecies of the holy prophets" that had been recorded "down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah." Also, there were "many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah," a living contemporary of Lehi (1 Nephi 5:11-13). Evidently, from the genealogy recorded on the plates, Lehi determined that "Laban ... and his fathers had kept the records" (1 Nephi 5:16).

The contents of the brass plates are consistent with Lehi's escape from Jerusalem in Zedekiah's first year, whether or not one chooses to speculate that Laban was a faithful record keeper attuned to Jeremiah's message. Of course, one might speculate that Laban was "a faithful keeper of the record. For, in this role, he would have either sought out those who had heard Jeremiah preach to write down the prophet's words, or he would have made the effort to find Baruch or Jeremiah himself to obtain a written copy of Jeremiah's prophecies. Either case points to an active, attentive record keeper."¹⁴

However, there are textual problems with such speculations. First, the text provides Nephi's note that "Laban ... and his fathers had kept the records" (1 Nephi 5:16), apparently based on the genealogy contained in the brass plates and Laban's holding of the plates; however, no text actually states that Laban recorded anything on the plates, either by himself or with a scribe. There is no textual evidence about how Nephi even could have known who engraved which symbols on the plates. Hence, it would appear to be unreliable speculation that Laban or his scribe recorded information in the brass plates. Second, the text does not state when or how Laban obtained custody of the brass plates except from "his fathers," apparently based on the recorded genealogy read by Lehi. Thus, it also would appear to be unreliable speculation that Laban gained custody prior to the reign of Zedekiah and that he faithfully recorded prophecies and history thereafter—up until the time Nephi obtained the record. All of this unnecessary speculation violates the principles of simplicity and rational reserve.

The contents of the brass plates also are consistent with Lehi's escape from Jerusalem in Zedekiah's first year if I make an alternative assumption that Laban acquired the brass plates from a faithful relative (perhaps his father, a brother or an uncle) before or shortly after Lehi left Jerusalem. One cannot ignore or overlook this alternative. There is no black-or-white choice required between Laban being either a "faithful" or a "slothful" record keeper. According to such an "either/or" distortion, if the record was not complete down to the time Lehi escaped from Jerusalem, there would have been a "lapse" in the record that only could have occurred because Laban was a slothful record keeper.¹⁵ It must be noted that such an incomplete rhetorical device violates the principles of thoroughness and simplicity.

In the text of the Book of Mormon cited above, Laban is described as an angry, lustful, lying, powerful, drunken and criminally violent military commander who would not listen to the Lord; so, it is quite unlikely that he was anything close to being a faithful writer of scripture who was attuned to Jeremiah's message. Based on the principle of consistency, the more plausible assumption is that Laban acquired the completed record from a faithful relative before or shortly after Lehi's escape—and this assumption is the same, whether Lehi escaped early or late in Zedekiah's reign.

¹⁴ Brown and Seely, "Jeremiah's Imprisonment," 24.

¹⁵ Brown and Seely, "Jeremiah's Imprisonment," 23-24.

If Lehi's family left Jerusalem late in Zedekiah's reign, why did Nephi not notice and mention a nine-year lapse in the record contained in the brass plates? Again, the principles of thoroughness and simplicity require that I not overlook or ignore the assumptions required by the question. For Nephi to have noticed a nine-year lapse in the record, there must have been some sort of writing and engraving during a king's reign rather than at its end, when it could be summarized. Such intra-regnal writing and engraving activities are not mentioned in the text. I would also have to assume that Lehi or Nephi knew of such record keeping activities by Laban's family, an awareness that is not set forth in the text. Third, I must assume that the record keeper in Laban's family had a cache of brass plates or that he was able to obtain new brass plates after the exile when Zedekiah came to power. Fourth, I must assume that the record keeper could employ or was himself a skilled engraver.

The text does not support the two former assumptions. The two latter assumptions are problematic because Judah's "craftsmen and smiths" were taken into exile to serve the needs of Babylonia when Zedekiah came to power (2 Kings 24:14, 16). These "craftsmen and smiths" were the skilled artists (wood workers, stone masons, quarry men and iron, gold and copper smiths) and other technicians evidently involved in building construction, fortification, blacksmithing and the production of weaponry and other metal goods (such as molten images, idols, and jewelry).¹⁶ These valuable artisans, who otherwise might have been able to produce plates and engravings after Zedekiah came to power, had been taken into exile in Babylonia. Indeed, if the faithful record keeper from whom Laban acquired the brass plates was exiled at the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, then the nine-year "lapse" (if it is speculated that one was perceived by Lehi and Nephi) would have been entirely understandable and not a matter of concern they would necessarily have mentioned.

Given the wickedness of Laban, the fear he instilled in Nephi's parents and their sons, and the actual contents of the brass plates described in the text, the brass plates most likely were acquired by Laban from a faithful relative before or shortly after Lehi left Jerusalem. No other assumption is required for consistency between the text and Lehi's early or late departure from Jerusalem. The contents of the brass plates are not a genuine issue for determining the time of Lehi's escape.

When was the Jerusalem gate open at night? When Nephi entered Jerusalem to get the brass plates, he "crept into the city" at night (1 Nephi 4:5). Nephi had to enter and leave the city through a gate.¹⁷ City gates seem to have been closed and guarded at night, after "the time of shutting of the gate," and not opened (at least to the general public) until morning (Joshua 2:5, 7; 2 Kings 7:17; Nehemiah 7:3; 13:19, 22). Thus, I must assume that a guard could admit a young man into the city and could permit a military man and his servant to leave the city through a gate at night. Perhaps, for a city the size of Jerusalem, one or more gates were designated and guarded for night-time use.

¹⁶ Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 58 n.83.

¹⁷ At the time, Jerusalem had many gates: the horse gate (2 Kings 11:16; 2 Chronicles 23:15; Jeremiah 31:40); the fish gate (2 Chronicles 33:14; Zephaniah 1:10); the middle gate (Jeremiah 39:3); the corner and valley gates (2 Chronicles 26:9); the gate of the guard (2 Kings 11:6, 19); etc. More than fifteen different gate names are referenced in Hebrew scripture, but some city gates may have had more than one name and some names may have referred to temple gates. James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*, Rev. ed., Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 476 ("Jerusalem (Gates of)").

When Nephi left the city, he did so in the garments and armor, and with the impressive sword of a military commander. A servant, Zoram, followed him, conversing with him and carrying something for him (the brass plates). Zoram was convinced that Nephi was Laban (1 Nephi 4:20-27); so, it seems unlikely that a sentry would have thought otherwise. He may have questioned their identity and been reasonably satisfied with the response.¹⁸ But how did Nephi get into the city in the first place? Nephi stated that he *crept* into the city. The word *crept* is the past tense of *creep*, an English verb which, as applied to humans, generally means crawling or moving “in a crouching posture.” However, the word may also mean “to move softly, *cautiously*, timorously, or slowly; to move quietly and *stealthily so as to elude observation*,” or “to proceed *humbly, abjectly*.”¹⁹

Because of Laban and his murderous men, Nephi and his brothers understandably would have been cautious. They approached the city wall and his brothers hid themselves. Nephi knew where they were hidden and only then did he enter the city (1 Nephi 4:4-5, 27-30). Since this all seems to have occurred at night, the gate would seem to have been closed. Nephi may have approached the gate humbly or abjectly. He was very young and had been at his father’s farm (1 Nephi 2:16; 3:22). He was on foot (1 Nephi 4:5). His father had sent him with vital information for his kinsman, Laban, a military commander (1 Nephi 3:4). The sentry likely would have let the humble youth pass into the city. Why risk Laban’s anger if the young man had valuable information for a commander?

Another possibility may have presented itself after the Babylonian siege was lifted, when travel through a city gate at night might have been even more common than during times of peace. When the siege was lifted, the Babylonians moved dozens of miles away to prepare for battle with the Egyptians. Some of Judah’s spies and troops probably would have been posted between the city and the Babylonians to acquire information and secure supply routes into the city. Messengers probably rushed back and forth between the forces outside the city and those within the walls. With part of Judah’s military force posted on high alert outside the city and with the intermittent arrival of military messengers and supply caravans bringing siege provisions into the city, one or more gates may have been used by many people entering and leaving throughout the night. Nephi might have eluded individual observation by joining with or helping a caravan carrying provisions into the city. However, this is just another possibility. Whether Lehi left Jerusalem early or late in Zedekiah’s reign, the only assumption required by the text is that ingress and egress were permitted through a city gate at night.

¹⁸ Brown and Seely took the alternative assumption, that there was “evident laxness at the city gate.” Perhaps, but they also wrote that “in the strong light of the moon” (an assumption not required by the text) “we are inclined to see Nephi’s nighttime entry and exit as occurring during a period of relative peace—that is, early in Zedekiah’s reign.” Brown and Seely, “Jeremiah’s Imprisonment,” 30. This type of rhetoric, fictionalizing the moonlight and insisting on the carelessness of the sentry, and then concluding with a vague descriptive term (“relative peace”), violates the logical principles of simplicity (at least one unnecessary assumption), natural uniformity (a fictional world based on the arbitrary assumption) and rational reserve (relying on one’s inclination, rather than rational principles and the fact of the text, as the basis for interpretation).

¹⁹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, two vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), I: 600 (“Creep”) (emphasis added).