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“Unto the Taking Away of Their Stumbling Blocks”: The Taking Away and Keeping Back of Plain and Precious Things and Their Restoration in 1 Nephi 13– 15

Author(s): Matthew L. Bowen

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**“UNTO THE TAKING AWAY OF THEIR
STUMBLING BLOCKS”:
THE TAKING AWAY AND KEEPING BACK
OF PLAIN AND PRECIOUS THINGS
AND THEIR RESTORATION IN 1 NEPHI 13–15**

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *In the latter part (1 Nephi 13–14) of his vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 11–14), Nephi is shown the unauthorized human diminution of scripture and the gospel by the Gentile “great and abominable church” — that plain and precious things/words, teachings, and covenants were “taken away” or otherwise “kept back” from the texts that became the Bible and how people lived out its teachings. He also saw how the Lord would act to restore those lost words, teachings, and covenants among the Gentiles “unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks” (1 Nephi 14:1). The iterative language of 1 Nephi 13 describing the “taking away” and “keeping back” of scripture bears a strong resemblance to the prohibitions of the Deuteronomic canon-formula texts (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:31 [MT 13:1]). It also echoes the etiological meanings attached to the name Joseph in Genesis 30:23–24 in terms of “taking away” and “adding.” Nephi’s prophecies of scripture and gospel restoration on account of which “[the Gentiles] **shall be no more** [cf. Hebrew *lō’ yôšîpû ... ‘ôd*] brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel **shall no more** [*wěłō’ yôšîpû ... ‘ôd*] be confounded” (1 Nephi 14:2) and “after that they were **restored, they should no more be confounded** [*(wě)lō’ yôšîpû ... ‘ôd*], **neither should they be scattered again** [*wěłō’ yôšîpû ... ‘ôd*])” (1 Nephi 15:20) depend on the language of Isaiah. Like other Isaiah-based prophecies of Nephi (e.g., 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1–2), they echo the name of the prophet through whom lost scripture and gospel covenants would be restored — i.e., through a “Joseph.”*

As has already been widely noted,¹ the Genesis narrative etiologizes the name Joseph in terms of two homonymous, yet somewhat antonymous, roots: *'āsap* (“gather,” “bring in,” “withdraw,” “take away”)² and *yāsap* (“add,” “continue to do, carry on doing,” “increase,” “do again, more”);³ “And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God **hath taken away** [*'āsap*] my reproach: and she called his name **Joseph** [*yôsēp*]; and said, The Lord **shall add** [*yôsēp*] to me another son” (Genesis 30:23–24; emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine). I have elsewhere suggested that the antonymous meanings attached to the name Joseph are important to Nephi’s prophetic view of the Lord “**set[ting] his hand again** [*yôsîp*]⁴ to gather Israel (Isaiah 11:11–12) and “proceeding” (*yôsîp/ yôsîp*) to bring forth the sealed book (Isaiah 29:14) that “the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph,” the son of Jacob (2 Nephi 25:17, 21; cf. 29:1–2),⁵ and the prophetic role of a future raised up seer eponymously named “Joseph.”⁶

The occurrence of this antonymous double-etiology for Joseph in terms of “taking away”/“gathering” and “adding” in a work attributable to the “authority”⁷ if not the direct “authorship”⁸ of Moses has implications for the Lord’s words to Moses:

And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and **take** [i.e., take away] many of them **from the book** which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; And **they shall** be had **again** [cf. Hebrew *yôsîpû*] among the children of men — among as many as shall believe. (Moses 1:41; 2 Nephi 3:7–11)⁹

This latter text should be understood in connection with the Deuteronomic “canon-formula” texts (in my use of this term, I somewhat follow Bernard Levinson who describes canon formulas as warnings against adding to or taking away from a particular work “to preclude both literary and doctrinal innovation by safeguarding the textual status quo”).¹⁰ The Deuteronomic canon formula texts — also a part of the body of texts traditionally ascribed to Moses — include Deuteronomy 4:2 (“**Ye shall not add** [*lō' tōsipû*] unto the word which I command you, **neither shall ye diminish ought** [*wēlō' tigrē'û*] from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you”) and Deuteronomy 12:32 [MT 13:1] (“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: **thou shalt not add** [*lō' tōsēp*] thereto, **nor diminish** [*wēlō' tigrā'*] from it”). The Hebrew verb *gāra'* constitutes a synonym of Hebrew *'āsap* and the direct antonym¹¹ of the Hebrew verb *yāsap*

(whence the name *yôsēp* derives) in the Deuteronomistic canon-formula texts.¹²

In this study, I wish to apply these observations to that part of Nephi’s vision of the tree of life in which an angel shows Nephi “the formation of that great and abominable church” among the Gentiles that corresponds to “the great and spacious building”¹³ in his father’s dream. The angel shows Nephi that this church “take[s] away” from the gospel and from scriptural records, including from what would eventually constitute the version¹⁴ of “the book” that would go forth from the Jews to the Gentiles (i.e., the Bible — Old and New Testaments), many “plain and precious things [words]”¹⁵ and even “covenants” (1 Nephi 13:26–29, 32–34).

Nephi understood that the prophetic work to which a latter-day seer bearing the name “Joseph” would be called, would constitute a divinely aided work to restore these losses (see 2 Nephi 3:6–15). Accordingly, Nephi’s final use of the canon-formula-influenced “take away” motif in 1 Nephi 14:1 (“in that day ... [the Lord] shall manifest himself unto [the Gentiles] in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto **the taking away** of their stumbling blocks”) describes the reversal of the “taking away” of scriptural words, gospel truths, and divine covenants. Additional explanatory wordplay in 1 Nephi 14:2 (“[the Gentiles] **shall be no more** [cf. Hebrew *lō’ yôsîpû ... ‘ôd*] brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel **shall no more** [*lō’ yôsîpû ... ‘ôd*] be confounded”) and 1 Nephi 15:20 (“and after that they were **restored, they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again**”) further suggests that Nephi had the meaning of the name Joseph (with its double-etymology) and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in mind.

“Taking Away” or “Keeping Back”: The Integrity of the Divine Word and Its Human Diminution

As a literary phenomenon, biblical texts employing the so-called “canon formula” have direct relevance for 1 Nephi 13–14 and the deliberate “taking away” or “keeping back” of “plain and precious” words, concepts, and truths from sacred texts and covenants — e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:22 [MT 5:18]; 12:31 [MT 13:1]; Proverbs 30:6; and Revelation 22:18–19.

The most famous of the biblical canon-formula texts, Revelation 22:18–19, declares that the acts of “adding” and “taking away” from the text of the *biblion* (single “book”) of John’s revelation will activate “adding” and “taking away” as curses: “If any man **shall add** [*epithē*] unto these things, **God shall add** [*epithēsei ho theos*] unto him the plagues that are written in this book [*gegrammenas en tō bibliō toutō*]:

and if any man **shall take away** [*aphelē*] from the words of the book of this prophecy, God **shall take away** [*aphelei*] his part out of the [tree] of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book [*gegrammenōn en tō bibliō toutō*].” It seems significant, then, that Nephi’s vision had the original, whole, untampered-with autograph of John’s Revelation in view:

[T]he things which he shall write are just and true. And behold, they are written in the book [i.e., the Bible] ... And at the time the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the things which were written were plain and pure and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men. (1 Nephi 14:23)

This description strongly suggests that John’s text, despite its canon formula and attendant warnings, would suffer from unauthorized additions and deletions in its dissemination and transmission. It may be that the Revelation 22:18–19 canon formula itself constitutes the Lord’s or John’s effort to safeguard the text of Revelation, but it is also possible that these verses constitute a later addition to the text of Revelation intended to stabilize a text tradition that had already suffered the diminution of its divinely inspired contents. In any case, 1 Nephi 13–14 appears to have in view such unauthorized additions to and, more particularly, subtractions from divine covenants and law and the holy texts in which divine covenants and law are inscribed, just as do the Deuteronomic canon formula texts.

Jeremiah, a contemporary of Lehi and Nephi,¹⁶ received instructions from the Lord in the language of the Deuteronomic canon formulas, not to “diminish” or “take away” even a word from the divine message the Lord intended him to give his fellow Judahites:

Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD’s house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; **diminish not** [*’al-tigra’*] a word [*dābār*]. (Jeremiah 26:2)

Taken together, the foregoing examples help us appreciate how seriously the Lord regards the integrity of his words and his works.¹⁷

“Many of the Covenants of the Lord Have They Taken Away”: The Great Apostasy and the Gentiles’ Doctrinal Diminution of the Savior’s Gospel

After seeing in vision the fall of his own people (1 Nephi 12:13–21; cf. 1 Nephi 15:4–5)¹⁸ and the dwindling of the Lamanites “in unbelief” (1 Nephi 12:22–23), Nephi describes seeing the latter-day nations of the Gentiles who would populate the land of promise and their origin (see 1 Nephi 13:1–19), including the Great Apostasy. John W. Welch observes that “the longest scriptural prophecy about the apostasy and the years between the first and nineteenth centuries is found in Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 13.”¹⁹

In 1 Nephi 13:20, Nephi states that he “beheld a book” among these gentiles and that “it was carried forth among them.” When Nephi’s angelic guide asks if Nephi understands “the meaning of the book,” Nephi responds that he does not know the meaning of what he was seeing (1 Nephi 13:21–22). The angel then explains that the book “proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew” and that it constituted “a record of the Jews, which contain the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel,” a record that “containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets,” and a “record like unto the engravings ... upon the plates of brass, save they are not so many” (1 Nephi 13:23). Regarding the contents of the brass plates, Robert J. Matthews offered the following:

The plates of brass contained a record beginning with the five books of Moses down to Jeremiah — only a portion of the time period of the Old Testament and none of the New — yet the reduced version of the whole Bible—the Bible with which we are acquainted, containing both the Old and New Testaments — is ‘not so many’ as the record on the plates of brass.²⁰

If this is the case, the angel’s statement “gives us a clue as to just how much has been ‘taken away’ and lost to our present Bible.”²¹ Thus, these writings with their prophecies and covenants were “of great worth unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:23). The angel’s statements readily identify the “book” as the writings that came to constitute the canonical Bible (the English term ultimately deriving from Greek *biblia*, “books”), both Old and New Testaments.

The angel then informs Nephi that these writings, in their original, pre-canonical form and meaning, had gone forth from their Jewish authors “in purity” long before these writings had come to comprise the

canonical “book” previously described. As Matthews suggests, “That this reduction was deliberate and not simply caused by carelessness or by the difficulties encountered by transcription and translation is further emphasized by the angel.”²² The angel continues thus:

Wherefore these things [words] go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God. And **after that they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles** of the Lamb from the Jews unto the Gentiles, beholds, after this **thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church**, which is most abominable of all other churches. For behold, **they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.** And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. (1 Nephi 13:25–27; cf. 1 Nephi 14:23)

Nevertheless, Nephi is shown that writings and teachings would not remain as they “came from the pen of the original writers”²³ — writings and teachings that would be subject to a transmission process resulting in their deliberate alteration, both in terms of actual textual loss and a loss of the texts’ original intended *meaning*. Welch writes, “This stage possibly could have occurred more by altering the meaning or understanding of the concepts taught by the Lord than by changing the words themselves.”²⁴ Moreover, we should understand the twofold expression “they have taken away”/“have they taken away” in terms of the language of the Deuteronomic canon-formula texts (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:31 [MT 13:1]), with which Nephi would plausibly have been familiar. In other words, “these things” would undergo what the canon formulae warn against: the “taking away” from or “diminishing” their essential content, not just the words themselves. The process of “taking away” covenants was likely similar. As Welch further indicates, covenants “could be taken without deleting any words from the Bible as such. The knowledge and benefit of the covenants of God could become lost simply by neglecting the performance of ordinances, or priesthood functions, or individual covenants as the Lord had taught them.”²⁵

Nephi’s angelic guide further ascribes a twofold motive to the “great and abominable” Gentile church’s “taking away” of “plain and most precious” parts and “covenants” from these ancient Jewish texts and the gospel. First, this church intended to “pervert” the Lord’s “right ways”²⁶

or “way[s] of truth.”²⁷ Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines the transitive verb *pervert* as denoting “to turn from truth, propriety, or from its proper purpose; to distort from its true use or end.”²⁸ Second, through these textual and doctrinal alterations, the adherents of this church intended to “blind the eyes and harden the hearts” of the entire human family. Matthews concludes, “If the foregoing words say anything, they say that the alteration of the text was *deliberate* and intentional and extensive and for unholy and wicked purposes. It is plain also that the corruption of the text was not simply a matter of interpretation, or an awkward rendering of a few passages. It was not simply ‘lost in the translation.’”²⁹ The diminution of the inspired gospel — texts and covenants — was wide-ranging and thoroughgoing.

“There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book”: The Gentiles’ Diminution of What Became the Bible

Nephi’s angelic guide then offers a further clarification and interpretation of what Nephi has seen: “Wherefore thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church that **there are many plain and precious things** [words] **taken away from the book**, which is the book of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 13:28). Lori Driggs suggests that the expression “through the hands” as used in this passage “seems to imply a passage of time, through the hands of many people and influences.”³⁰ In other words, the phrase “through the hands” seems to describe a diachronic textual transmission process of some length. However, this statement additionally may have some bearing on the later, post-scriptural canonization process.

The angel’s and Nephi’s description of the biblical writings as collectively “the book of the Lamb of God” (v. 28, 38) suggests God’s regard for these writings as divinely inspired witnesses of Jesus Christ, even in their later, diminished state. Nephi asserts that in a later revelation to him, the Lord chided the Gentiles for their lack of gratitude for these sacred writings as the “book [that] proceedeth forth from the mouth of a Jew”³¹ — a Jew whom we might identify as those who wrote, copied, preserved, and handed-down the biblical texts, but also a Jew whom we might also identify as the Lord himself. Nephi records:

[A]nd 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! But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible, and it shall proceed forth from the Jews,

mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails and the labors and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles? (2 Nephi 29:3–4)

As a collective description, “Jews” or *yěhûdîm* describe those who are to be “praised” or “thanked,”³² not least the Lord himself. We are fortunate to have the writings of the Bible in the condition that we have them, and we should thank the Jews of ages past for the writing and preservation of these texts. The Lord’s description of “the travails and the labors and the pains of the Jews and their diligence unto me in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles” in the preservation of the biblical texts stands in stark contrast to the efforts of Gentiles belonging to “the great and abominable church” to “take away,” “keep back,” and otherwise diminish from them described throughout 1 Nephi 13. Clearly, The Lord views the former much more favorably than the latter. Welch further notes that “[a]lthough these records in the hands of the Gentiles will not be perfect, they will still be of great worth and will be amenable to corroboration.”³³

“An Exceedingly Great Many Do Stumble”: The Spiritual Costs of the Diminution of Scripture

Notwithstanding the Jews’ painstaking, diligent labors to preserve the biblical texts, they have suffered significant losses over time. It is important to acknowledge the reality of these losses and their cost in terms of how they have affected the ability of the honest in heart to fully draw near unto God — or, to “come unto Christ and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32) — to fully make and keep covenants with God, and to receive all that God offers his children in mortality. The reality is that the deliberate, unauthorized human diminution of God’s laws, covenants, and scripture through “taking away” words and the obscuring of their meaning (intentionally or not) has negatively impacted the ability of God’s children to understand and live them and has caused many to stumble in their faith. Nephi’s angelic guide showed him the degree to which these losses had caused individuals to stumble and had put them within the power of the Adversary:

And after that these plain and precious things were taken away, it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles. And after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea,

even across the many waters — which thou hast seen — with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, and thou seest **because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book**, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God — and **because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb**, an exceeding great many **do stumble**, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (1 Nephi 13:29)

The angel helped Nephi see that the unauthorized human diminution of scripture by the Gentile “great and abominable church” would have a devastating impact on the faith and religious praxis of the Gentiles themselves. The “book,” even without “many of the plain and precious things ... taken out of the book” would enable widespread religiosity of a type later described by the Lord to Joseph Smith as “teach[ing] for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (Joseph Smith — History 1:19).³⁴

Nephi would later describe the prevalence of these religious conditions such that even “the humble followers of Christ” would be “led that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men” (2 Nephi 28:14). In other words, many would “stumble,” and we are reminded of Lehi’s description “they which had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:23). Driggs asks, “After seeing this happen to the Bible [i.e., the human diminution of scripture] and after being taught the significance of the restoration of plain and precious truth, is it any wonder that Nephi’s soul ‘delighteth in plainness’? (2 Nephi 31:3).”³⁵ Indeed, Nephi’s entire statement in 2 Nephi 31:3 appears to reflect on the stumbling that occurred on account of the deliberate taking away plain and precious words that were “plain unto the understanding of the children of men according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God”: “For my soul delighteth in plainness, for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding, for he speaketh unto men according to their language unto their understanding.”

The Hebrew term for “stumble” — and likely the one used by Nephi’s angelic guide — is the verb *kāšal*. The image of stumbling given here is akin to Isaiah’s description of those in ancient Israel and Judah for whom the Lord would become “a stone of stumbling” that would cause “many among them” to “stumble”: “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but

for a stone of stumbling [*'eben negep*] and for a **rock of offence** [*šûr mikšôl*, literally rock of stumbling] to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them **shall stumble** [*wĕkâšĕlû*], and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken” (Isaiah 8:14–15). This stumbling of the Gentiles also resembles another Isaianic description of Israelite-Judahite stumbling: “But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and **fall backward** [stumble, *wĕkâšĕlû*], and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isaiah 28:13).

Furthermore, the image of numerous Gentiles stumbling on account of plain and precious things that have been unauthoritatively “taken away” from or “taken out” of the biblical texts and the gospel also recalls the results of the Lord’s *authoritative* withdrawal of “his plainness” from the ancient Judahites: “Wherefore because of their [the ancient Judahites’] blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for **God hath taken away his plainness** from them and delivered unto them many things [words] which they cannot understand because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it **that they may stumble** [cf. Hebrew *wĕkâšĕlû*]” (Jacob 4:14). Notably, the language of the subsequent verses (“stone,” “reject the stone,” “stumbling,” “safe foundation,” “sure foundation,” “build,” “head of the[ir] corner” in vv. 15–18) connects Jacob 4:14 with Isaiah 8:14–15; 28:16; and Psalm 118:22, terms that help us see these texts as messianic. Although the causes of the stumbling of the Gentiles and the Jews/Judahites differ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23),³⁶ the results are painfully similar: a loss of Christ as the covenant foundation stone. In neither case does the collective stumbling of these groups represent the Lord’s ideal or desire, and the stumbling of both groups requires a common solution.

**“The Plain and Most Precious Parts of the Gospel
of the Lamb Which Have Been Kept Back”:
The Semantic Range of Hebrew *gāra* ‘**

Nephi’s angelic guide again intimates that the unauthorized human diminution of scripture is not limited to losses of physical text. The gospel itself, as generally understood among the human family, suffered such losses as to leave the Gentiles in “an awful state of wickedness”:³⁷

Nevertheless thou beholdest that the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations upon the face of the land which is

choice above all other lands, which is the land which the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance, wherefore thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed which is among thy brethren. Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren. Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of wickedness which thou beholdest they are in because of **the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church**, whose formation thou hast seen. Wherefore, saith the Lamb of God, I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment. And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel — and this remnant of which I speak is the seed of thy father — wherefore after that I have visited them in judgment and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and **after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly** because of the **most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back** by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb, wherefore I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, saith the Lamb, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power much of my gospel, which shall be **plain and precious**, saith the Lamb. For behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed that **they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious**. And after thy seed shall be destroyed and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb. And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation. (1 Nephi 13:30–36)

The Hebrew verb *gāra*⁶, the verb employed in the Deuteronomic canon formula texts (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:31 [MT 13:1]) and rendered “diminish” (KJV), “take,”³⁸ or “take away,” in the Niphal stem also denotes to be “taken away” or “kept back”³⁹ as illustrated in Numbers 9:7: “And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we **kept back** [*niggāra*’], that we may not offer an

offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?” The expressions “take away” and “keep back” — similar, if not synonymous, in English — likely have the same Hebrew term ultimately underlying them. The repetition of “take away”/“keep back” throughout 1 Nephi 13 underscores the deep conceptual connection between what the Deuteronomic canon-formulas warn against and the unauthorized diminution of scripture foreseen and described in Nephi’s vision.

“These Last Records”: The Functions of Additional Scriptural Witnesses in Offsetting Textual and Doctrinal Diminution

Nephi’s angelic guide reveals to Nephi that the Lord had a longstanding plan to remedy the human diminution of scripture. This plan involved the coming forth of additional scripture to redress conditions of apostasy among the Jews, the Gentiles, and the “remnant” of the seed of Lehi’s children (i.e., the “Lamanites”):

And after it had come forth unto them, I beheld other books which came forth by the power of the Lamb from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and **the remnant** of the seed of my brethren — and also the Jews, which were scattered upon all the face of the earth — that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true. And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles shall **establish** the truth of the first, which is of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, **and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them** and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved. And they must come according to **the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb**. And the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Wherefore **they both shall be established in one**, for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth. And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles. And after that he hath manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and

also unto the Jews. And the last shall be first and the first shall be last. (1 Nephi 13:39–42)

Regarding the identity of the three groups described in Nephi's account of his vision and elsewhere, including Moroni's title page to the Book of Mormon, Shon D. Hopkin writes,

What did the titles "Jew" and "Gentile" signify for the Book of Mormon authors? Although the Book of Mormon was written "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile," elsewhere on the title page and in the Book of Mormon the text broadens this dual designation to include three distinct groups: Jews, Gentiles, and descendants of Lehi (known in the latter days by the title 'Lamanites'; see title page; 1 Nephi 13:39). Together these three groups constitute "all men" (1 Nephi 6:4).⁴⁰

The common solution to apostasy among "all men" is Jesus Christ himself, his atonement, and his doctrine. The angel's statement that "all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved" constitutes what Noel B. Reynolds has described as a *meristic* invocation of the doctrine of Christ (*merismus* is a rhetorical device whereby a whole is invoked or referred to by two or more of its constituent parts).⁴¹ In other words, all six points of the doctrine of Christ are here invoked by the mention of two: enduring to the end in faith, hope, and charity and receiving salvation or eternal life. Accordingly, Reynolds has convincingly shown that the concept of "coming unto Christ"⁴² is identical to enduring to the end in faith, hope, and charity (as detailed in 2 Nephi 31:20) as the fifth principle⁴³ in the doctrine of Christ. Regarding the angel's teaching in 1 Nephi 13:40, Reynolds further observes,

Clarifying the same teaching to his questioning brothers, Nephi explains that men must gain a knowledge of "the very points" (the elements) of the Redeemer's doctrine, "that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (1 Nephi 15:14).⁴⁴

Clearly, in order for one to embrace Christ and his doctrine and to fully live the latter, one must be "convinced" that the ancient "records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true," especially their testimony that "Jesus is the Christ" (Book of Mormon title page; 2 Nephi 26:12; Mormon 5:14).⁴⁵ The testimony of multiple distinct scriptural witnesses in cooperation with the convincing power of the Holy Ghost would serve to accomplish this.

Indeed, in declaring that “these last records ... **shall establish** [*yāqîmû*] the truth of the first,” Nephi’s angelic guide invokes the Deuteronomic law of witnesses governing potential capital cases, as codified in Deuteronomy 17:6 (“At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death”) and 19:5 (“at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall **the matter** [*dābār*, literally, **word**] **be established** [*yāqûm*]”). The angel cites the Lord himself as a confirming scriptural witness, when he foretells regarding “**the words** [Hebrew *haddēbārîm*] **which shall be established** [*yāqûmû*, i.e., “rise up or stand up” as a witness “in a lawsuit”⁴⁶] **by** [or, in] **the mouth of the Lamb**. And the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed” (1 Nephi 13:41). This promise, conforming to the literal sense of Deuteronomy 19:15 with respect to words being established or “standing up,” has direct reference to the Savior’s post-resurrection ministry among the descendants of Lehi, as would be recorded and preserved in 3 Nephi, and the words which he would teach — words that frequently quoted ancient prophets, including Isaiah, Nephi, and his successors.

Bruce Van Orden has observed that the “law of witnesses” constitutes a dominant motif in Nephi’s second book.⁴⁷ I would go even further in proposing that Nephi’s vision regarding scriptural witnesses — witnesses that include the Lord himself — and the Deuteronomic law of witnesses, together constitute the source for the declaration with which Nephi concludes his small plates record:

And you that will not partake of the goodness of God and respect the words of the Jews and also my words and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day. (2 Nephi 33:14)

Nephi’s account of his vision uses a word translated “establish” (cf. Hebrew *qûm/yāqîm*) for a third time with the angel’s promise that the records of Nephi’s posterity and the records that originated with the twelve apostles “**both shall be established in one.**” A later revelation given to Nephi seems to equate these records being “established in one” with the Lord’s restorative effort to have all his word “gathered in one” and his people “gathered home”: “And it shall come to pass that **my people** which are of the house of Israel shall be **gathered home** unto the lands of their possessions. And **my word** also **shall be gathered in one**, and I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people which are of the house of Israel that I am God and that I covenanted

with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever" (2 Nephi 29:14). Thus, the restoration of plain and precious words, doctrinal truths, and covenants that had been "taken away" by the gentile "great and abominable church," as part of the "establishing in one" or "gather[ing] in one" of the Lord's "word" and his people, represents a significant part of the Lord's final fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

"Unto the Taking Away of Their Stumbling Blocks": The Spiritual Blessings of Scriptural and Doctrinal Restoration

Although the Gentiles themselves have "taken away" from, diminished, and otherwise "kept back" the divine word, Nephi holds forth prophetic hope that these same Gentiles can have their stumbling blocks "taken away":

And it shall come to pass that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God **in that day, that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks**, if it so be that they harden not their hearts against the Lamb. And if it so be that they harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel. And they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever. **They shall be no more brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.** (1 Nephi 14:1–2)

Just as the Gentiles' "taking away" from or "keeping back" the divine word, divine covenants, and the Savior's gospel has resulted in "an exceedingly great many ... stumbl[ing]" (1 Nephi 13:29), the Lord will "be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day" in "bring[ing] forth unto them ... much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious" (1 Nephi 13:34) and thus amply provide for the "taking away" of the Gentiles' stumbling blocks. The ultimate result is that the faithful Gentiles "**shall be no more brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.**" In Hebrew, the idea "he/they shall no more [do/be something]" is frequently expressed with the idiom *wēlō' yôšîp/yôšîpû*. The Gentiles and the house of Israel will thus receive interrelated and interdependent restorative blessings described in terms of this idiom. Nephi may derive these promises, at least in part, from an Isaianic oracle that foretells the final end of Jerusalem's (Zion's) captivity: "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O

Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there **shall no more** [*lō' yôšîp ... 'ôd*] come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isaiah 52:1; more on this below). Nephi here appears use to the words of Isaiah to create a wordplay on or onomastic reference to the name Joseph similar to the one that he creates at the end of his longest quotation of Isaiah’s writings: “[T]he Lord **will set** his hand **again** [*yôšîp*] the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore **he will proceed** [*yôšîp/yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men ... that the promise may be fulfilled unto **Joseph** [*yôšēp*] that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand” (see 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; see also 2 Nephi 29:1–2).

Many years later, Moroni draws directly on Nephi’s *Joseph*-wordplay here in 1 Nephi 14:1–2 (and later in 15:20), when he creates an even more transparent wordplay on Joseph in terms of the Hebrew idiom *wělo' yôšîpû*: “Wherefore the remnant of the house of **Joseph** [*yôšēp*] shall be built upon this land, and it shall be a land of their inheritance. And they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord like unto the Jerusalem of old. And **they shall no more** [*wělo' yôšîpû*] **be confounded**, until the end come, when the earth shall pass away” (Ether 13:8).⁴⁸ Like Nephi’s *Joseph*-wordplay, Moroni’s *Joseph*-wordplay is ultimately rooted in the language of Isaiah.

Nephi’s description of the Lord “manifesting himself” unto the Gentiles in word, power, and deed “unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks” nicely matches Zenos’s description of the Lord of the vineyard and his servants “prepar[ing] the way” or clearing the way for the growth of the covenant tree branches (Jacob 5:61, 64) by “clear[ing] away” the branches bringing forth “bitter” or “bad” fruit (Jacob 5:65–66). Both constitute apt metaphors for the spiritual and doctrinal restoration that enables integration or reintegration into the Lord’s covenant people.

“They Shall Be Numbered Again Among the House of Israel”: Reintegration into the Covenant Family

A connection between Nephi’s vision and Zenos’s allegory of the olive trees is already signaled at the end of 1 Nephi 13 with the prophetic promise:

And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles. And after that he hath manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the

Gentiles and also unto the Jews. And the last shall be first and the first shall be last. (1 Nephi 13:42)

This promise directly corresponds to the instructions given by the Lord of the Vineyard in Zenos’s allegory to his servants: “Graft in the branches — begin at the last, that they may be first and that the first may be last — and dig about the trees, both old and young — the first and the last, and the last and the first — **that all may be nourished once again** [cf. Hebrew *yôšîpû/yôšîpû*] for the last time” (Jacob 5:63). An even stronger connection emerges in Nephi’s explanation of his father’s dream-vision to his brothers: “Behold, I say unto you: Yea; **they shall be numbered again** [cf. Hebrew *yôšîpû/yôšîpû*] among the house of Israel; they shall be **grafted in**, being a natural branch of the olive tree, into the true olive tree” (1 Nephi 15:16).

Firstly, we should note here with Royal Skousen that “they shall be numbered again” constitutes the correct reading versus “they shall be remembered again” as currently printed in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁹ The idiom “numbered among” occurs in Numbers 1:47; 2:33; 26:62, rendering the Hebrew words *hotpāqēdû* (“be mustered, be counted”)⁵⁰ and *bētôk* (“among,” literally “in the midst of”). In the latter two instances, the biblical text specifically describes how the Levites were “not numbered among the children of Israel” or “enrolled” (NRSV) with the other tribes when censuses of the house of Israel were taken. The collocation “remembered among” occurs only in Ezekiel 25:10. In the Book of Mormon, the idiom “numbered among” frequently recurs,⁵¹ whereas “remembered among” occurs nowhere. Thus, the phrase “numbered again among” makes much better sense description of reintegration into the Lord’s covenant family than the odd and uncertain phrase “remembered again among.”

Secondly, Nephi’s term use of a passive verb rendered “grafted in” and the phrases “natural branch of the olive tree” and “into the true olive tree” gives his statement away as a direct allusion to the writings of Zenos on the small plates. Noel Reynolds observes that “Nephi joins two metaphors together when, on the one hand, he speaks of being grafted ‘into the true olive-tree’ (1 Nephi 15:16) and speaks of coming ‘unto the true fold’ (1 Nephi 15:15). It may be that Zenos referred to Israel also as sheep that were scattered and needed to be gathered into the true fold (1 Nephi 22:25; Helaman 15:13), as [other prophets described Israel] (see Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23, 31, and 50).”⁵²

Thirdly, Nephi’s use of the Hebraistic “they shall ... again” (Hebrew *yôšîpû*) in the phrase “they shall be numbered again” recalls Zenos’s

similar use of this idiom⁵³ in his allegory in describing the “grafting in” of the branches into their “mother tree” or the “natural tree”:

I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree and have preserved the roots of their mother tree, that perhaps the trees of my vineyard **may bring forth again** good fruit, and **that I may have joy again** in the fruit of my vineyard, and perhaps that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit. (Jacob 5:60)

And the branches of the natural tree **will I graft in again** into the natural tree, and the branches of the natural tree will I graft into the natural branches of the tree. And **thus will I bring them together again**, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one. (Jacob 5:67–68)

“They Should No More Be Confounded, Neither Should They Be Scattered Again”: The Restoration and Final Gathering of Israel in Fulfillment of Divine Covenant

Nephi’s first explicit mention of the prophet Isaiah occurs in his explanation of “the things which [his] father saw” in 1 Nephi 15. In explaining how the Lord would fulfill the Abrahamic covenant (1 Nephi 15:18), including “the restoration of the Jews in the latter days” (1 Nephi 15:19), Nephi states,

And I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah, which spake concerning the restoration of the Jews or of the house of Israel. And after that they were **restored, they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again** [cf. Hebrew *wělo’ yôšîpû*]. (1 Nephi 15:20–21)

Like 1 Nephi 14:1–2 and 1 Nephi 15:16, 1 Nephi 15:20–21 is textually dependent upon Isaiah. Although Nephi does not directly specify which of “the words of Isaiah” he rehearsed or quoted, his periphrasis suggests that he may have cited, in addition to Isaiah 11:11–12, Isaiah 52:1 and 54:4: “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth **there shall no more** [*lô’ yôšîp ... ‘ôd*] come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isaiah 52:1); “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: **neither be thou confounded**; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy

widowhood any more" (Isaiah 54:4). Significantly, Moroni concludes the entire Book of Mormon with a prophetic juxtaposition of these two same passages:

And awake and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem! Yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, **that thou mayest no more** [(wě)lō' tōsîp ... 'ôd] **be confounded**, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. (Moroni 10:31)⁵⁴

Moroni's replication and repetition of Nephi's wordplay in Ether 13:8 and here in Moroni 10:31 indicates that he knew what Nephi and Joseph in Egypt knew: aside from the Lord himself, the servant who would play the most crucial role in bringing to pass Israel's restoration through the adding of scripture and plain and precious words, concepts, law, and covenants that had been "taken away" and kept back, would be a "Joseph."

Summary and Conclusion

Near the end of his tree-of-life vision (1 Nephi 11–14), an angelic guide shows Nephi the unauthorized human diminution of scripture and the gospel by the Gentile "great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13). Nephi witnesses that plain and precious things/words, teachings, and covenants were "taken away" and "kept back" from originally Israelite/Jewish texts that eventually became the canonical Bible with which we are familiar. These textual and conceptual losses drastically affected the ability of the Gentiles to live out the teachings contained within the Bible. Moreover, Nephi saw the processes through which the Lord would act to restore those lost words, teachings, and covenants among the Gentiles through additional scriptural witnesses "unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks" (1 Nephi 14:1).

The language of 1 Nephi 13 describing the "taking away" and "keeping back" of scripture recalls the pointed prohibitions of the Deuteronomic canon-formula texts (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:31 [MT 13:1]) against diminishing from divinely given law. It further recalls the etiological meanings attached to the name Joseph in Genesis 30:23–24 in terms of "taking away" and "adding." Nephi's prophecies of scripture and gospel restoration on account of which "they [the Gentiles] **shall be no more** [cf. Hebrew *lō' yōsîpû ... 'ôd*] brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel **shall no more** [*wě'lō' yōsîpû ... 'ôd*] be confounded" (1 Nephi 14:2) and that "after that they were **restored, they should no**

more be confounded [(wě)lō' yôšîpû ... 'ôd], **neither should they be scattered again** [wělō' yôšîpû ... 'ôd]" (1 Nephi 15:20) depend on the language of Isaiah. Like other Isaiah-based prophecies of Nephi (e.g., 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1–2), they also echo the name of the prophet through whom lost scripture and gospel covenants would be restored — i.e., through a “Joseph.” Moroni’s *Joseph*-wordplay in Ether 13:8 helps us more clearly see what Nephi intended. It also helps us see how the Lord would ensure that the remnant of Lehi’s seed would be “numbered **again** [yôšîpû] among the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 15:16).

Viewed in relation to the add/diminish language of the canon formula, the angel’s revelation to Nephi regarding the attempted human diminution — or taking away — of the divine word and covenants, and the prophetic Isaianic promises regarding gathering of Israel, the reader can better appreciate the Semitic/Hebrew name *yôšēp* as an expression of Joseph Smith’s divinely appointed prophetic role. Nephi knew that a Joseph would be “raised up” as a “seer” expressly for the addition, re-addition, and full restoration of scripture and divine covenants and the gathering of his people (see again 2 Nephi 3:6–15; 25:17, 21; 29:1). The results will eventually be that the Gentiles will “no more be brought down into captivity” and that the house of Israel “shall no more be confounded” nor be “scattered again” (1 Nephi 14:1–2; 15:20). All who come into the covenant will be “numbered again” among the Lord’s people (1 Nephi 15:16) — that is, be fully integrated or reintegrated his divine family. The “taking away of their stumbling blocks” (1 Nephi 14:1) will ultimately “prepare the way” (Jacob 5:61, 64) not only for the growth and complete restoration (or return) of Israel, but for the fulfillment of every divine promise in the covenant of the Father, which is the full extension of the blessings of Jesus Christ’s atonement in time and eternity to all who are willing to receive them.

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Matthew L. Bowen *was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently an associate professor in religious education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He is also the author of Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays*

on Onomastic Wordplay and The Temple in Mormon Scripture (*Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018*). With Aaron P. Schade, he is the coauthor of *The Book of Moses: From the Ancient of Days to the Latter Days* (Provo, UT; Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2021). He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.

Endnotes

- 1 See, e.g., Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, ISR: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 172–74.
- 2 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 74. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 418.
- 4 Book of Mormon citations will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2009).
- 5 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Shall Add’: Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 30, no.2 (2010): 2–4; Matthew L. Bowen, “Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 255–73, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/onomastic-wordplay-on-joseph-and-benjamin-and-gezera-shawa-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.
- 6 See recently Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And the Meek Also Shall Increase’: The Verb *Yāsap* in Isaiah 29 and Nephi’s Prophetic Allusions to the Name Joseph in 2 Nephi 25–30,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 30 (2018): 5–42, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/and-the-meek-also-shall-increase-the-verb-yasap-in-isaiah-29-and-nephis-prophetic-allusions-to-the-name-joseph-in-2-nephi-25-30/>.
- 7 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “KnoWhy OTL03B — Did Moses Write the Book of Genesis?” *Interpreter Foundation*, January 11, 2018, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/knowhy-otl03b-did-moses-write-the-book-of-genesis/>.

- 8 See, e.g., 1 Nephi 5:11.
- 9 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And They Shall Be Had Again’: Onomastic Allusions to Joseph in Moses 1:41 in View of the So-called Canon Formula,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 297–304, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/and-they-shall-be-had-again-onomastic-allusions-to-joseph-in-moses-141-in-view-of-the-so-called-canon-formula/>.
- 10 Bernard M. Levinson, “You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel,” *Numen* 50 (2003): 6–7.
- 11 See *HALOT*, 203.
- 12 G. André, “יָסַפַּ, *yāsap*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:122. André notes that “the hiphil of *ysp* with ‘*al* [i.e., add] is used as the opposite of *gāra’ min* [i.e., diminish from]” in the canon formula texts.
- 13 Lehi and Nephi see what is described as a “great and spacious building” in 1 Nephi 8:26, 31; 11:36 and as a “large and spacious building” in 1 Nephi 11:35; 12:18. Nephi’s equation of the “great and spacious building” with the “great and abominable church” would have very naturally suggested itself.
- 14 Canonical versions of the Bible greatly differ even within Judaism and “orthodox” branches of Christianity. For example, James H. Charlesworth (“Introduction for the General Reader,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009], xxiv) writes, “Even in America today there are different canons among the Christian communions: for example, Protestants exclude from the canon the Apocrypha, the additional books in the Greek Old testament; the Roman Catholics, following the edicts of the Council of Trent in 1546, include them as deuterocanonical. The Mormons, moreover, argue that more books belong in the canon, and that it should remain open.” Ethiopian Christianity includes books within its canon excluded by the other branches. Charlesworth (p. xxiv) further notes that “the Falashas, Ethiopian Jews, probably dependent on Ethiopian Christianity ... have an expanded canon, including

various apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, especially the Prayer of Manasseh, Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 3 and 4 Ezra." Apart from mainline Judaism and Protestantism, the various groups who accept additional books as part of their canons would see the absence of these additional books from their canon as a loss, to one degree or another, of "plain and precious things."

- 15 On the polysemy of *dābār* as "word"/"thing" in Hebrew, see Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Straightening Things Out: The Use of Strait and Straight in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 71. Late Egyptian/Demotic *md.t/mt.t*, as "word"/"thing" reflects the same polysemy.
- 16 Cf., e.g., 1 Nephi 5:13; 7:14.
- 17 On the integrity of his work, see Ecclesiastes 3:14: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put [added] to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." God's works and his words can never be permanently diminished. See Moses 1:3–5, 38, 41.
- 18 After reporting his vision in 1 Nephi 11–14, Nephi describes how he felt witnessing the violent destruction of his people: "And it came to pass that I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destruction of my people, for I had beheld their fall" (1 Nephi 15:5).
- 19 John W. Welch, "Modern Revelation: A Guide to Research about the Apostasy," in *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 105.
- 20 Robert J. Matthews, "Establishing the Truth of the Bible," in *First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman, and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1988), 205.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Matthews, "Establishing the Truth of the Bible," 204.
- 23 Joseph Smith rightly recognized that the biblical writings as we have them represent the results of numerous and lengthy diachronic processes: "I believe the bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers; ignorant translators, careless

transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.” Joseph Smith, “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” p. 1755, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/127>.

- 24 Welch, “Modern Revelation,” 108.
- 25 Ibid., 109.
- 26 Cf. 2 Nephi 28:15: “O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, **and pervert the right way of the Lord**, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!” In Genesis 24:48 the Hebrew expression *derek ’emet* stands behind the KJV rendering of “right way”: “And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me **in the right way** [*bēderek ’emet*, “in the way of truth”] to take my master’s brother’s daughter unto his son.” In Psalm 107:7, a slightly different idiom stands behind “right way”: “And he led them forth by **the right way** [*derek yēšārâ*],” or “straight way”); cf. 1 Samuel 6:12; Ezra 8:21. See also Acts 13:10: “And [Saul] said [to Elymas], O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?”; 2 Peter 2:15: “[they are children] which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor [Beor], who loved the wages of unrighteousness;” Moroni uses the collocation “the right way” twice in Mormon 9:20 and Moroni 6:4.
- 27 See further Psalms 119:30; 2 Peter 2:2; Mosiah 4:15.
- 28 *Webster’s Dictionary 1828*, s.v., “pervert,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/pervert>.
- 29 Matthews, “Establishing the Truth of the Bible,” 205.
- 30 Lori Driggs, “Nephi’s Vision and the Loss and Restoration of Plain and Precious Truths,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision* (2011 Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 71.
- 31 1 Nephi 13:23–24.

- 32 Matthew L. Bowen, “‘What Thank They the Jews’? (2 Nephi 29:4): A Note on the Name ‘Judah’ and Antisemitism,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 111–25, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism/>.
- 33 Welch, “Modern Revelation,” 107.
- 34 The Lord juxtaposed a quotation from Isaiah 29:13 (“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men”) with one from 2 Timothy 3:5 (“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”).
- 35 Driggs, “Loss and Restoration,” 72.
- 36 As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”
- 37 Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1: 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 290–91.
- 38 *HALOT*, 203.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 204.
- 40 Shon D. Hopkin, “To the Convincing of the Jew and Gentile That JESUS Is the CHRIST,” in *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, ed. Dennis L. Largey et al. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2015), 238. He further notes that “This three-fold division can be clearly seen in the teachings of Nephi (see 1 Nephi 13:38–39; 2 Nephi 25–26, 30), Mormon (see Words of Mormon 1:8; 3 Nephi 29–30; Mormon 7:1–10), and Moroni (see Mormon 8–9)” (p. 238).
- 41 Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical Merismus in Book of Mormon Gospel References,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 106–34.
- 42 Noel B. Reynolds, “‘Come unto Me’ as a Technical Gospel Term,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31 (2019): 1–24, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/come-unto-me-as-a-technical-gospel-term/>.
- 43 Noel B. Reynolds, “The Fifth Principle of the Gospel,” *Religious Educator* 15, no. 3 (2014): 117–27.
- 44 Reynolds, “Come unto Me,” 6.

- 45 Cf. also John 20:31; 1 John 2:22; 5:1; Moroni 7:44.
- 46 HALOT, 187.
- 47 Bruce A. Van Orden, “The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1989), 307–21.
- 48 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Shall No More Be Confounded’: Moroni’s Wordplay on Joseph in Ether 13:1–13 and Moroni 10:31,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 30 (2018): 91–104, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/they-shall-no-more-be-confounded-moronis-wordplay-on-joseph-in-ether-131-13-and-moroni-1031/>.
- 49 See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 1:321–22.
- 50 HALOT, 958.
- 51 1 Nephi 14:2; 2 Nephi 10:18–19; Mosiah 25:12; 26:32, 36; 27:8; Alma 5:57; 27:27; 45:13–14; Helaman 15:13; 3 Nephi 2:14, 16; 3:14; 15:24; 16:3, 13; 18:31; 21:6, 22; Mormon 7:10; Ether 13:10; Moroni 6:4, 7; 7:39. Skousen (*Analysis of Textual Variants*, 1:321) writes, “Elsewhere in the current Book of Mormon text, people are virtually always numbered as members of certain groups (31 times).” Skousen argues for an additional instance in Alma 27:21 with the restoration of the missing word “numbered” in the phrase “they were **numbered** among the people of Nephi” (emphasis added).
- 52 Noel B. Reynolds, “Nephite Uses and Interpretations of Zenos,” in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, The Bible, and Jacob 5*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 27–28.
- 53 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘I Have Done According to My Will’: Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 51–52; see also Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Blake Spendlove, “‘Thou Art the Fruit of My Loins’: The Interrelated Symbolism and Meanings of the Names Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 294–96.
- 54 See Bowen, “‘They Shall No More Be Confounded,’” 91–104.