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Jeff Lindsay

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THE POSSIBILITY OF JANUS PARALLELISM IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Jeff Lindsay

Abstract: *Janus parallelism, a tool evident in ancient Hebrew poetry, is documented at some length by Scott B. Noegel in *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, which I recently reviewed. Since the authorship of *Job* predates the removal of the Lehighites from Jerusalem, this tool may have been available to writers in the *Book of Mormon*. While we do not have the original text to analyze wordplays in the original language, it may be possible to apply some of the cases considered by Noegel to find remnants of related “polysensuous” wordplays that might have been present in the original text or to consider other previously proposed wordplays that may include a Janus-like aspect.*

Recently I reviewed¹ Scott B. Noegel’s detailed work, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*,² a valuable scholarly examination of a unique element of Hebrew poetry. Noegel finds in the *Book of Job* over 50 examples of Janus parallelism in which a single word with two or more meanings can have one meaning that looks backward to a previous clause and another meaning looking forward to a following clause, adding richness and apparently intentional ambiguity in the Hebrew.

Janus parallelism might have been one of the tools of Semitic poetry known by and available to writers in the *Book of Mormon*. Therefore, it may be possible to apply some of the cases considered by Noegel to find remnants of related wordplays that may have been present in the original text, or to consider other previously proposed wordplays that may include

1. Jeff Lindsay, “Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job: A Review of Scott B. Noegel’s Work,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017): 213–220, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/janus-parallelism-in-the-book-of-job-a-review-of-scott-b-noegels-work/>.

2. Scott B. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009).

a Janus-like aspect. This tenuous exercise is fraught with difficulty and the obvious risk of false positives, but I present a few preliminary results in hopes of stimulating additional research.

Noegel's analysis may give future scholars a handful of tools to investigate further some of the many apparent Hebraic wordplays already noted in the Book of Mormon as well as tools for further tentative analysis of other passages in the Book of Mormon. In the tentative analysis that follows, I have used the fifty-plus examples of Janus parallelism in the Book of Job as a basis to search for related language patterns in the English of the Book of Mormon to see if there may be remnants of an initial Janus parallelism in the ancient text. This assumes that Nephite writers may have been aware of Janus parallelism from their training in the ways of Hebrew poetry or through their study of the brass plates. Interestingly, most of the examples that can be proposed as possibilities come from the writers who should be or appear to be most familiar with the brass plates, including Nephi, Jacob, and Alma.

The task is, of course, terribly obscured by our lack of the ancient text. Looking at a translation complicates the recognition of wordplays, and this is particularly the case for Janus parallelism, where we need to know what word with two meanings was used, and what words were used before and after it. Translation can obscure not only the original words but the order of adjacent phrases. In spite of the difficulties and, yes, the high risk of false positives via the "Texas Sharpshooter Fallacy,"³ some plausible Janus parallelisms perhaps can be rooted out by those familiar with ancient Near Eastern languages.

It is possible that Janus parallelism was a tool that wasn't appreciated or used to any significant degree by Nephite writers. On the other hand, it may have been used with great skill in a few cases that are obscured by the translation. A further complication is relying on the assumption that Hebrew is necessarily behind the literary work of Alma or others, several centuries removed from the Hebrew roots of Nephi and Lehi. Significant changes in the written language may obscure what we can infer from Hebrew wordplays. Nevertheless, regardless of the validity

3. *The Texas sharpshooter fallacy* is an informal fallacy committed when differences in data are ignored, but similarities are stressed. From this reasoning, a false conclusion is inferred. It is related to the *clustering illusion*, which refers to the tendency in human cognition to interpret patterns where none actually exist. The name comes from a joke about a Texan who shoots at the side of a barn, then paints a target centered on the tightest cluster of hits and claims to be a sharpshooter. See "Texas sharpshooter fallacy," *Wikipedia*, last edited 24 October 2017, 21:51, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas_sharpshooter_fallacy.

of any tentative findings proposed here, I'd like to encourage others to consider the possibilities of Janus parallelism in the Book of Mormon (and perhaps even the Book of Moses) in future research.

Several Possible Cases of Janus Parallelism in the Book of Mormon

Noegel examines over 50 Janus parallelisms. Many of them involve concepts or words that don't seem to be present in the Book of Mormon, but a handful involve words or concepts in the Book of Mormon that at least can be explored for hints of Janus parallelism. This initial effort aimed at low-hanging, speculative fruit has yielded a dozen tentative Book of Mormon examples of Janus parallelism.

In the discussion below, page numbers refer to pages in Noegel's *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*.

Possibility #1. On page 39, Noegel examines Job 3:23–24 and the dual meanings of חָסַח from the roots חָכַח (*cakak*, Strong's H5526⁴), meaning “hedged in, fenced in, enclosed, cover, covering,” and the root חָוַח (*cuwk*, Strong's H5480⁵), meaning “pour out, anoint.” In Job 3:23, this word plus the preceding text can be translated as “to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has fenced in.” But if given the alternate meaning of “poured out,” then “whom God has poured out” anticipates “my groans are poured out for me as water” in the last part of Job 3:24. It's a nice example of the two-sided technique of Janus parallelism.

Turning to the Book of Mormon, we find a use of “poured out” in Alma 8:9–10 that may play a similar dual role:

9 Now Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah; therefore they would not hearken unto the words of Alma.

10 Nevertheless Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer, that he would *pour out* his Spirit upon the people who were in the city; that he would also grant that he might baptize them unto repentance.

Satan is gaining hold upon the hearts of the people, and in response Alma seeks to gain a hold upon God as he wrestles in might prayer. If

4 "Lexicon: Strong's H5526 – *cakak*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H5526&t=KJV>.

5 "Lexicon: Strong's H5480 – *cuwk*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H5480&t=KJV>.

the word original word translated as *poured out* also means “enclosed, fenced in, or covered,” then the preceding concepts of “getting hold upon” and “wrestling” may be echoed, while the other meaning of *poured out/anoint* naturally fits the following text regarding the sought-after influence of the Spirit and Alma’s desire that the people be baptized. But this is highly speculative, and those skilled in Hebrew may see this as impossible or improbable.

Possibility #2: In *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, page 41, and later on page 132, Scott Noegel discusses a Janus parallelism in Job 3:25–26, in which a single Hebrew word can mean “stir up, quarrel with” or “dread, fear.” The Book of Mormon often uses *stir up* for those fomenting anger against the Nephites or the righteous, as well as for righteous people striving to persuade sinners to repent. Thus it is usually collocated with “anger” or themes related to “repentance.” But in a couple of cases, its use is linked to “fear” and thus in theory might be able to function as a Janus parallelism similar to the one discussed by Noegel. Enos 1:23 is one example:

23 And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things — *stirring them up* continually to keep them in the *fear of the Lord*.

As translated, *stirring them up* looks back to the statement on the need to preach with *exceeding harshness* and continually remind the people of the threats of death and damnation. The proposed alternate reading related to “fear” and “dread” would also look forward to the following statement about the “fear of the Lord.”

A related possibility comes from 2 Nephi 28:18–20:

18 But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof.

19 For the kingdom of the devil must *shake*, and they which belong to it must needs be *stirred up* unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be *stirred up to anger*, and perish;

20 For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

If we interpret the destruction and shaking of the kingdom of the devil with dread and fear, then in verse 19 the word translated as “stirred up” could be looking backward to the dread the devil faces and the terrifying need for those under his power to repent. But if they don’t repent, they are bound by his chains and, in a repeated instance of *stirred up*, are led to anger and death. If this is a case of a Janus parallelism, it is interesting that the pivotal word is repeated with two instances of *stirred up* around the reference to *everlasting chains*. Both can relate to fear associated with the description in the preceding passages (destruction of the devil’s kingdom and his grasping of victims with everlasting chains), while both can also relate to being stirred up (to repentance or anger). It could function as a Janus parallelism with its face split in two. But here the meanings linked to fear and dread are implicit in contrast to the explicit use of *fear* in Enos 1:23.

The double use of *stirred up* in verse 19 could be viewed as a combination of Janus parallelism and simple alternate parallelism, which is how Donald W. Parry formats it, where these verses are also part of a larger chiasmus.⁶

Possibility #3. On page 43, Noegel discusses a Janus parallelism in Job 4:2–3 in which one Hebrew root, יָצַר (*yacar*, Strong’s H3256⁷), in verse 3 plays a Janus role with its meanings of “bind” (primarily in Aramaic) and “chastise, admonish.” Noegel renders this passage as:

If one tried a word with you, would you not be offended? Yet who can refrain from speaking?

Behold, you have יָסַר many, and have strengthened weak hands.⁸

As *you have chastised* is related to the reference to words and speaking in verse 2. As *you have bound* relates to the following *you will strengthen/bind*, where *strengthen* comes from the root חָזַק (*chazaq*, Strong’s H2388⁹). The word pair *yacar-chazaq*, also found in Isaiah 8:11 and Hosea 7:15, strengthens the significance of the pairing in this case

6. Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2007), 120–21; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/book/poetic-parallelisms-in-the-book-of-mormon-the-complete-text-reformatted/>.

7 "Lexicon: Strong's H3256 – *yacar*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H3256&t=KJV>.

8 Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, 43.

9 "Lexicon: Strong's H2388 – *chazaq*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H2388&t=KJV>.

of apparent Janus parallelism. Again it is *yacar* that serves as the Janus pivot word, but the relationship to *chazaq* is part of a pairing that occurs elsewhere in the Bible and suggests that the relationship is intentional.

Mosiah 23 may offer something similar in a passage that begins and ends with a discussion of events in Helam, under the guidance of Alma₁ (the Elder). Here the key word is “chasten,” which is one of the ways the KJV translates *yacar* (e.g., Proverbs 19:18 has *yacar* behind the KJV “chasten thy son”):

18 Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness.

19 And it came to pass that they began to prosper exceedingly in the land; and they called the land Helam.

20 And it came to pass that they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam; and they built a city, which they called the city of Helam.

21 Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to *chasten* [*chasten/bind*] his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith.

22 Nevertheless — whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day. Yea, and thus it was with this people.

23 For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob.

24 And it came to pass that he did deliver them, and he did show forth his mighty power unto them, and great were their rejoicings.

25 For behold, it came to pass that while they were in the land of Helam, yea, in the city of Helam, while tilling the land round about, behold an army of the Lamanites was in the borders of the land.

Here the word *chasten* in vs. 21 with the meaning of “chastise or admonish” fits the following statement that *God trieth their patience and faith*. But if *chasten* in the Book of Mormon comes from Hebrew *yacar*, it could also have a meaning of “bind,” which, as Noegel points out, can be paired with the concept of strengthening. If so, the preceding text may link up with that sense of *yacar*, as it describes the nourishing given to the people and their prospering under the help of the Lord.

An interesting aspect of this passage is that according to the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, the name Helam may mean “to strengthen.”¹⁰ The name also occurs as a geographical name in 2 Samuel 10:16–17 (חילם, *cheylam*, Strong’s H2431¹¹). While the etymology may be uncertain, *cheylam* has a listed meaning of “stronghold.”¹² Helam obviously comes from a different root than *chazaq*, which is paired with *yacar* in Job 4:2–3 and in two other verses in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, *Helam* instead of *chazaq* with its meaning related to strength could also fit the “bind” or “bind up” sense of *yacar* and possibly form part of a Janus parallelism akin to that in Job 4:2–3.

The sense of “binding” for *yacar*, the tenuously proposed source for *chasten*, not only looks backward to Helam and related concepts in Mosiah 23, but may also foreshadow *bondage* in verse 23.

Possibility #4. On page 60, Noegel introduces a Janus parallelism from Job 18:4–5 based on *rock* and *enemy* being possible readings of a single Hebrew word, צוּר (*tsuwr*, Strong’s H6697¹³), with the concept of “enemy” deriving from the root צָרַר (*tsarar*, Strong’s H6887¹⁴), which can mean “to show hostility toward” or “to bind.”

You, who tear yourself to pieces in anger. Shall the earth be forsaken on your account? Or the צוּר be removed from its place?

In due course the light of the wicked is put out. The flame of his fire does not shine.

Noegel explains that the polysemy at work here involves a word normally translated as *rock* that could, in the purely consonantal text, be read as “adversary, enemy” as well, from a *qal* infinitive construct derived from a word meaning “show hostility toward.” Read as *rock*, the word in question parallels *the earth* in the previous stich, and as “enemy” it anticipates “the wicked” that follows.¹⁵

10. “Helam,” *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/HELAM>.

11. “Lexicon: Strong’s H2431 – *Cheylam*,” *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H2431&t=KJV>.

12. *Ibid.*

13. “Lexicon: Strong’s H6697 – *tsuwr*,” *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6697&t=KJV>.

14. “Lexicon: Strong’s H6887 – *tsarar*,” *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6887&t=KJV>.

15. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, 60.

If the Book of Mormon takes advantage of a single Hebrew word meaning both “rock” and “enemy,” perhaps we should examine Nephi’s psalm, 2 Nephi 4, which has the Book of Mormon’s highest concentration of the word *enemy/enemies* (seven times in one chapter, with six occurrences in verses 27–33) and also uses the word *rock* in the very center (vs. 30) of the final string of six instances of *enemy/enemies*, with two more occurrences of *rock* in the closing verse, vs. 35. A dual meaning is inappropriate in most of these occurrences, but a Janus function might be possible in verse 33:

33 O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! Wilt thou make my path straight before me! Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way — but that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.

If the second sentence of verse 33 used *tsuwr*, then *escape before mine enemies* might also have the sense of “escape before my rock,” suggesting deliverance before the eyes or under the oversight of the Savior. *Before my rock* would look back to the first sentence of verse 33 and the beginning of the second sentence of verse 33, both of which are addressed to the Lord, identified as the rock of Nephi’s salvation (vv. 30, 35). But read as *before my enemies* as we have in the English translation, the meaning naturally points to the latter half of verse 33, where Nephi seeks a clear path to escape and asks that his way not be hedged up, but the ways of his enemies.

The tentatively proposed alternate reading of *rock* in this case would not only look backward to *Lord* but forward to *the stumbling block in my way* — a contrasting, negative sense of a rock-like object that instead of providing escape can cut off escape. However, objections to this proposal can be made, including the purely visual nature of the Janus parallelism in Job 18:4–5, which may not fit with whatever punning Nephi may have used here. Further, since Nephi is crying to the rock of righteousness (vs. 35), attempts to use the meaning of *enemy* would seem inappropriate.

Possibility #5: Jacob 7:25 may offer another example of the Janus parallelism proposed in Example 4, building upon dual meanings of *rock* and *enemy* from a single Hebrew word.

25 Wherefore, the people of Nephi did fortify against them with their arms, and with all their might, trusting in the God and *rock* [*rock/enemy*] of their salvation; wherefore, they became as yet, conquerors of their enemies.

If the word translated as *rock* could also convey the meaning of “enemy,” then the *enemy of their salvation* would look forward to the end of this verse, which speaks of the Nephites becoming “conquerors of their enemies.” Meanwhile, *rock of their salvation* naturally looks backward to God in whom they trust.

Possibility #6. On page 74, Noegel discusses a Janus parallelism from Job 21:12-13, which turns on a Hebrew word that can mean both “waste away, consume” and “carry, bear along.” This may be at play in 2 Nephi 4:25-26:

25 And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.

26 O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh *waste away*, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?

The reading of *waste away* naturally relates to the slackening of his strength that follows, but the alternate reading (tentatively proposed, of course) of *carry, bear along* might relate to the preceding words about lingering in the valley of sorrow and especially to his body *being carried away* in verse 25. However, this may be too much of a stretch to be a meaningful or logical Janus parallelism.

Possibility #7: On pages 97–98, Noegel explores a Janus parallelism in Job 29:20–23 that includes use of a Hebrew word that can mean “pierce” or “renew.” The relevant root is חָלַף, *chalaph* (Strong’s H2498¹⁶). In the Book of Mormon, Jacob’s use of *pierce* in Jacob 2:9 may use a similar wordplay:

8 And it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

9 Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which

16 "Lexicon: Strong's H2498 – *chalaph*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H2498&t=KJV>. For the meaning of *pierce*, see the Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon entry at this Blue Letter Bible page.

I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of *consoling and healing* their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to *pierce* their souls and *wound* their delicate minds.

Pierce their souls is obviously parallel with the following phrase, *wound their delicate minds*, but an alternate reading of *renew* would be parallel to the preceding phrases about consoling, healing, and feasting upon the word. Similar parallelism may be at play in another case of *pierce* in this chapter, Jacob 2:35, coupled with the next verse, Jacob 3:1:

35 Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, *many hearts died, pierced* with deep wounds.

1 But behold, I, Jacob, would speak *unto you that are pure in heart*. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will *console* you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction.

The reading of *pierced* looks back to his words to the wicked whose sins brought the result that *many hearts died*. But an alternate reading of *renew* would look forward to his contrasting words to the pure in heart, to whom Jacob says God *will console you*. The structure of “wound — pierce/renew — console” is essentially the same but in reverse order of what we saw in Jacob 2:9 with the first instance of *pierce* in the Book of Mormon. To me, it looks as if Jacob is deliberately linking *console* to *pierced* in both these cases in Jacob 2 as if there were a Janus parallelism in his original text. Is this merely wishful thinking?

Possibility #8: On page 112, Noegel examines a Janus parallelism in Job 31:35 in which a single Hebrew word can mean both “mark” (as in a visible marking) and “desire.” Perhaps something similar occurs with the only occurrence of *mark* from the small plates of the Book of Mormon in Jacob 4:14:

14 But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and

sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their *blindness*, which *blindness* came by looking beyond the *mark* [*mark/desire*], they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they *desired* it. And because they *desired* it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

A reading of “desire” instead of “mark” might be viewed as “looking beyond the desires [of God],” which would relate to the two instances of *desired* in the last part of this verse. The meaning of *looking beyond the mark* naturally fits the preceding passage, which refers to the *words of plainness*, which can be viewed as the written *mark* from the prophets whom the Jews killed. By rejecting those words and the prophets, the result is blindness, which, like *desired*, is mentioned twice before the pivotal word and relates well the concept of a visible mark. In short, this verse has *blindness, blindness, mark/desire, desired, desired*.

One reviewer made the salient comment that this proposal might also work if *mark* referred not just to the desires of God but to the Savior as the Desired One.

Possibility #9: On page 117 of his book, Noegel discusses a Janus parallelism in Job 36:15–16 in which a single Hebrew word can mean “distress” or “confinement.” A similar effect may be proposed for 2 Nephi 4:17–18, if the word translated as *encompassed about* could be related to the word Noegel treats in Job 36.

17 Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my *soul grieveth* because of mine iniquities.

18 I am *encompassed about*, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily *beset me*.

A reading of *distress* would relate to the preceding statement about the grieving of his soul, and the reading of confinement or being encompassed about would relate to being *beset* by temptations and sins. Of course, this phrase also fits well with the concept of distress.

Possibility #10. Here we consider another possibility in 2 Nephi 4. On page 126, Noegel discusses a Janus parallelism in Job 39:10–11 that turns on a single Hebrew word which can be read as “deep valley” or “strong.” A related Janus parallelism can be proposed for another part of Nephi’s psalm, 2 Nephi 4:26:

26 O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men [*“me”* according to Skousen’s research¹⁷] in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the *valley* of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and *my strength slacken*, because of mine afflictions?

The *valley of sorrow* parallels the weeping of his heart in the preceding phrase, while if *valley* can also be read as *strong*, it nicely parallels *my flesh waste away and my strength slacken* that follows.

Interestingly, references to *valley* in 1 Nephi 2:10, 14 are also immediately followed with words that may be related to *strength* such as *firm and steadfast* and *power*, respectively.

A weakness in this proposal is that it seems to require that Nephi had an underlying single word for “valley of sorrow,” when it would be more reasonable that a phrase is behind this term. However, if an original meaning of *deep valley* has been translated as “valley of sorrow,” the proposal might have more merit.

Possibility #11. An even more tenuous example might be proposed for 1 Nephi 13:34, based on the observation that a Hebrew word, נָגַף (*nagaph*, Strong’s H5062¹⁸), can mean both “stumble” and “smite.” Consider how such a word could fit Nephi’s text:

34 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 whom I speak is the seed of thy father — wherefore, after 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 — I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, 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.

Stumble fits the immediately following description of the hindrance created by the removal of plain and precious parts of the gospel,

17. Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 87, 753.

18. "Lexicon: Strong's H5062 – *nagaph*," *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5062&t=KJV>.

while the alternate reading (tentatively proposed) of *smite* relates to the immediately preceding description of the remnant of Israel being smitten by the Gentiles.

The linkage of *stumble* and *plain and precious* in this passage also seems to have inspired Jacob in the above-mentioned passage of Jacob 4:14, which has its own proposed Janus parallelism.

This proposed example may be critiqued for relying on broad semiotic connections and not the precision of the Hebrew in Noegel's examples.

Possibility #12: Example #11 dealt with the possibility that 1 Nephi 13:34 used a Hebrew word, *nagaph*, which can mean both "stumble" and "smite." This same coupling may be at play in a passage from Isaiah 49:13 as quoted in 1 Nephi 21:13, but here Nephi's version has two added phrases, both of which are needed for the proposed Janus parallelism. In other words, the version of Isaiah that Nephi quotes (or edits) provides a possible example of Janus parallelism not found in our current version of Isaiah. Here is 1 Nephi 21:13, using formatting provided by Skousen,¹⁹ further modified to have the text unique to Nephi's record in italics, and the terms related to a proposed Janus parallelism in bold:

Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth,
for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established.
 And break forth into singing, O mountains,
for they shall be smitten no more [possibly from *nagaph*,
 smite/stumble].
 For the Lord hath *comforted* his people,
 and will have *mercy* upon his afflicted. (1 Nephi 21:13)

If *smitten* comes from *nagaph* and can also mean "stumble," the action of stumbling could look backward to contrast with the firm establishing of feet in the previous stich, while *smitten no more* looks forward to the comfort and mercy the Lord provides in the following text.

In discussing Nephi's apparent use of dust-related themes in the Book of Mormon in a 2016 article for *The Interpreter*,²⁰ I wrote the following about the changes to Isaiah found in this passage:

¹⁹ Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 67.

²⁰ Jeff Lindsay, "'Arise from the Dust': Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 2: Enthronement, Resurrection, and Other Ancient Motifs from the 'Voice from the Dust')," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 233–77, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/arise-from-the-dust-insights->

Now the first and third lines are parallel, as are the second and fourth, and the final two lines.

The added word *smitten* might be related to the Hebrew *nagaph* (נָגַף), typically translated as “smite” or “smitten” in the KJV. This word can also have connotations of striking with the foot or striking against the foot. However, the root most commonly used for “smite” in the KJV is *nakah* (נָכַח), which lacks a connection to feet but can also have connections to rejoicing when it describes the striking of the hands together as in applause. In either case, *smitten* may have interesting ties to the preceding words in this verse.

Regarding the first addition dealing with “feet . . . established,” one Hebrew root often translated as “establish” is *quwm* (קָוַם), the same root used in Isaiah 52:1 for “arise.” It occurs as “establish” twenty-seven times in the OT but far more frequently as “arise,” “rise,” or related terms. If this were the word Nephi used and presumably was found in the brass plates, it would fit some aspects of the “rise from the dust” theme. In view of the dust-related themes that follow and Abinadi’s later discourse on another verse in Isaiah 52 (v. 7, “how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet . . .”), I suggest this addition is meaningful and that the combination *feet + mountains + rejoicing/singing* paints a picture of the redeemed ascending the cosmic mountain, Mount Zion or the House of the Lord, where they have risen away from and have been washed from the mundane dust of the world. Freed from darkness and captivity, they have accepted the Lord’s covenant, have put on the Lord’s beautiful garments, and in joy have received the enthronement or endowment of power and grace that the Lord offers. Their washed feet are established on Mount Zion.²¹

At the time, I had failed to notice that the Hebrew word *quwm*²² I proposed for *established* in Nephi’s added text is used by Isaiah five

from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-2-enthronement-resurrection-and-other-ancient-motifs-from-the-voice-from-the-dust/.

21. Ibid., 256.

22. “Lexicon: Strong’s H6965 – *quwm*,” *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6965&t=KJV>.

verses earlier in Isaiah 49:8,²³ where the KJV translates it as *establish* in the passage *give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth*. This strengthens the case that the subsequent use of *establish* in Nephi’s vs. 13 may come originally from *quwm* and thus may be relevant to the “rise from the dust” theme.

In my view, Nephi’s additions, whether from his version of the brass plates or his interpretive editing of Isaiah, give Isaiah 29:13 enhanced poetical impact, not only because of the added parallelism that I previously discussed but also because of the possibility of an added Janus parallelism.

If Nephi’s added *smitten* in vs. 13 derives from the Hebrew root *nagaph* with possible readings of *smite* and *stumble*, then we find both proposed meanings relate to the following and preceding text as mentioned above. Further, if the root *quwm* was used for *established*, this adds related meanings of rising and ascent in beautiful contrast to stumbling.

Thus, Nephi’s use of Isaiah 49 is perhaps not only an intriguing use of the poetical technique of inclusio (as discussed in detail in Part 2 of the above-mentioned “Arise from the Dust” series) that adds enhanced parallelism related to his use of dust-related themes through the additional phrases from Nephi, but may be further enhanced with a Janus parallelism found in the unique verbiage in the Book of Mormon. I find this possibility to be especially interesting.

Weaker Examples

Another possibility involves the Janus parallelism in which a single word can mean “singing” or “looking,” found in Job 36:24–25 and discussed by Noegel on page 120. This may be at play in 1 Nephi 1:8 and again in Alma 36:22, but the effect does not seem particularly interesting. Could there be anything deliberate in those passages?

Another possibility that also seems weak involves the Janus parallelism involving meanings of *murmur*, *complain* and *lodge* in Job 31:31–32 and discussed by Noegel on page 110. A possibility for a similar Janus parallelism might be found in several places in 1 Nephi where the concept of murmuring is often motivated by the failure of Lehi’s family to remain in Jerusalem. Thus, the act of murmuring against Lehi, Nephi, or the Lord is linked to *not* lodging in the comfort of home, and may present possibilities for a related Janus parallelism or two. See 1 Nephi 1:11, 5:2, 16:5–6, 35–36, 17:22–24. In 1 Nephi 4:4–5, Nephi’s brothers continue to

23. “Isaiah 49:8 (KJV), Masoretic Text,” *Blue Letter Bible*, 2017, https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/49/1/t_conc_728008.

murmur and stay at night outside Jerusalem as Nephi goes in to confront Laban, but the sense of *lodge* is not clearly presented.

Mining Other Known Wordplays

In addition to further exploring the potential Book of Mormon presence of Janus parallelisms that Noegel and others have already found in the Bible, another route for future research might be to examine wordplays that have already been proposed within the Book of Mormon, but checking for the possibility of Janus parallelisms in their use. As a tentative example along these lines, consider the intriguing wordplays involving the Egyptian word that can mean “rod” or “word,” as described in detail by Matthew Bowen in “What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?”:²⁴

Further support for the antiquity of Nephi’s imagery is detectable in his own comparison of the word to a rod, a comparison that may involve wordplay with the Egyptian term for “word” and “rod.” Although we have the Book of Mormon text only in translation and do not know the original wording of the text, we can use our knowledge of the languages that the Nephite writers said they used — Hebrew and Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2; Mormon 9:32–33) — to propose reasonable reconstructions.

We note that the Egyptian word *mdw* means not only “a staff [or] rod” but also “to speak” a “word.” The derived word *md.t*, or *mt.t*, probably pronounced **mateh* in Lehi’s day, was common in the Egyptian dialect of that time and would have sounded very much like a common Hebrew word for rod or staff, *matteh*. It is also very interesting that the expression *mdw-ntr* was a technical term for a divine revelation, literally the “the word of God [or] divine decree.” The phrase *mdw-ntr* also denoted “sacred writings,” what we would call scriptures, as well as the “written characters [or] script” in which these sacred writings were written.

Now consider Nephi’s comparison of the word and the rod in the context of the Egyptian word *mdw*:

24. Matthew Bowen, “What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?,” *Insights* 25/2 (2005): 2–3, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1313&index=3>.

I beheld that the *rod* [*mdw/mt.t*, Hebrew *matteh*] of iron, which my father had seen, was the *word* [*mdw/mt.t*] of God. (1 Nephi 11:25)

And they said unto me: What meaneth the *rod* [*mdw/mt.t*, Hebrew *matteh*] of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree? And I said unto them that it was the *word* [*mdw/mt.t*] of God; and whoso would hearken unto the *word of God*, and would *hold fast unto it*, they would never perish. (1 Nephi 15:23–24)²⁵

Drawing upon the relationship between *rod* and *word* based on Bowen's research, the possibility of Janus parallelism may be considered in 1 Nephi 17 as Nephi refers to two miracles conducted by Moses through the power of his rod, though in Nephi's retelling, the *rod* has been changed to *word*, again showing Nephi's awareness of the wordplay, but perhaps showing something more. The stage is set in vs. 22 as Nephi's rebellious brothers complain that the people in Jerusalem were righteous and kept the law of Moses and statutes of God. In response in vs. 23, Nephi asks if the Hebrews would have escaped from the Egyptians "if they had not hearkened unto the *words* of the Lord?" He then recalls that it was the Lord who commanded Moses to lead Israel out of bondage, which was a good and essential thing (vv. 24–25). Then, in vs. 26, comes a potential Janus parallelism:

Now ye know that Moses was *commanded of the Lord* to do that great work; and ye know that by his *word* [*word/rod*] the waters of the Red Sea were *divided* hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground.

Here Nephi refers to the dividing and smiting power of the rod, the rod of Moses, from Exodus 14:16: "But lift thou up thy *rod* and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." But taking advantage of the wordplay between *rod* and *word*, the use of *by his word* can look back to the *words of the Lord* (v. 23) and the fact that "Moses was commanded of the Lord" (v. 26) to divide the sea.

While *his word* can look back to God's words and commands to Moses, if the same word also means "rod," then as a Janus pivot, it also looks forward to the dividing action of the rod against the sea (v. 26) as well as the defeat of the Egyptians (v. 27) and then the act of Moses

25. Ibid, 2.

smiting the rock with his rod mentioned in v. 29, but again changing *rod* to *word*: “Yea, and ye also know that Moses, *by his word* according to the power of God which was in him, *smote the rock*, and there came forth water, that the children of Israel might quench their thirst.”

Many similar situations in which apparent wordplays involve a word with two meanings might also serve as a Janus pivot, with one meaning looking forward and another looking backward. This is a topic for further investigation.

Summary

It may be impossible to find genuine Old World Janus parallelisms in a text translated into English from an original ancient record. Nevertheless, based on examples that have been found in the Hebrew Bible or based on potential wordplays that can be created in Hebrew, it may be possible to uncover some possibilities for further consideration. If these possibilities fit the context well and don't suffer from glaring defects, there may be something to consider tentatively. I am not sure if any of the possibilities proposed above rise to that level, but I hope others with suitable expertise might provide further feedback.

My search for possibilities in the Book of Mormon text relied primarily on taking examples from Noegel and electronically searching the Book of Mormon text for related possibilities. I was intrigued that the possible examples presented above tended to come from Nephi, with further contributions from Jacob and Alma, all men schooled in the brass plates and the techniques of Hebraic poetry. That may have been chance or may owe to my selective bias in expecting early Book of Mormon writers to be more likely to apply sophisticated parallelism than later writers. 2 Nephi 4, the psalm of Nephi, may be particularly fruitful, with three of the proposed examples listed so far.

My hope is that this preliminary and rough examination might stir someone with the required skills to take a more meaningful look at the possibilities. There is no reason why we must require Janus parallelism to exist in the Book of Mormon, but given the sophisticated application of Old World poetical tools in the text, most of which have only recently come to light, it would not be surprising for the real ancient Hebrew man named Nephi and his peers to have occasionally applied such a technique in their writings, if the Book of Mormon is a genuine ancient text. It would also not be surprising for some Janus parallelisms, tentatively reconstructed from English alone, to crop up by chance. While the examples shown above may prove to be of little value, past explorations of the role of various forms of parallelism in the Book of Mormon have

yielded insights in several ways, and my hope is that explorations of Janus parallelism or other forms of polysemy will provide further insights into the Book of Mormon.

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