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“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

Author(s): Matthew L. Bowen

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**“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**

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *Beyond his autobiographic use of Joseph’s name and biography, Nephi also considered the name Joseph to have long-term prophetic value. As a Semitic/Hebrew name, Joseph derives from the verb yāsap (to “add,” “increase,” “proceed to do something” “do something again,” and to “do something more”), thus meaning “may he [God] add,” “may he increase,” or “may he do more/again.” Several of the prophecies of Isaiah, in which Nephi’s soul delighted and for which he offers extensive interpretation, prominently employ forms of yāsap in describing iterative and restorative divine action (e.g., Isaiah 11:11; 26:15; 29:14; cf. 52:1). The prophecy of the coming forth of the sealed book in Isaiah 29 employs the latter verb three times (Isaiah 29:1, 14, and 19). Nephi’s extensive midrash of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 25–30 (especially 2 Nephi 27) interpretively expands Isaiah’s use of the yāsap idiom(s). Time and again, Nephi returns to the language of Isaiah 29:14 (“I will proceed [yôšîp] to do a marvelous work”), along with a similar yāsap-idiom from Isaiah 11:11 (“the Lord shall set his hand again [yôšîp] ... to recover the remnant of his people”) to foretell the Latter-day forthcoming of the sealed book to fulfill the Lord’s ancient promises to the patriarch. Given Nephi’s earlier preservation of Joseph’s prophecies regarding a future seer named “Joseph,” we can reasonably see Nephi’s emphasis on iterative divine action in his appropriation of the Isaianic use of yāsap as a direct and thematic allusion to this latter-day “Joseph” and his role in bringing forth additional scripture. This additional scripture would enable the meek to “increase,” just as Isaiah and Nephi had prophesied.*

“May [God] Add”/“May He Increase”

The importance of the name *Joseph* to Lehi and Nephi and their successors as a prophetic name emerges in a dramatic way in a statement preserved by the patriarch Joseph on Nephi’s small plates. Nephi records that Lehi recounted Joseph’s prophecy to his son “Joseph” regarding a future seer named “Joseph”:

And thus prophesied **Joseph**, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, of¹ which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise; **And his name [Joseph] shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father.** And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall **bring my people unto salvation.**² (2 Nephi 3:14–15)

Nephi’s preservation of this text suggests that he considered the name Joseph, as borne by his family’s tribal ancestor³ and his youngest brother, a name of great significance. Abundant textual evidence in the body of Nephi’s writings corroborates this suggestion.

The Hebrew Bible offers an etiological explanation for the name Joseph (*yôšēp*) in terms of two homonymous and (in some senses) antonymous verbal roots, *’āsap* (“to gather,” “take away”)⁴ and *yāsap* (“to add,” “to continue to do, carry on doing”; “to do again, more”)⁵: “And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, **God hath taken away** [*’āsap*] my reproach: And she called his name **Joseph** [*yôšēp*]; and said, **The Lord shall add** [*yôšēp*, ‘is adding’] to me another son” (Genesis 30:23–24). As Moshe

1. Following Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 516–18; Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 82.

2. “Salvation”: perhaps an echo of the name Jesus (*yēšūa’* or *yēhōšūa’*), “He [Yahweh] saves” (or “He [the Lord] is salvation”). See the explanation for this name offered by the angel in Matthew 1:21.

3. See 1 Nephi 5:14–16; 2 Nephi 3:4; Alma 10:3.

4. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 74–75. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

5. See HALOT, 418; see also p. 403.

Garsiel has observed, the text of the Joseph Cycle (Genesis 37–50) plays extensively on both verbal roots.⁶

In strict etymological terms, however, the Semitic/Hebrew name Joseph constitutes a jussive causative form of the verb *yāsap* and, as a possibly hypocoristic,⁷ theophoric⁸ name, means “may he [the Lord] add,”⁹ “may he increase,” etc. Book of Mormon writers, and Nephi in particular, evidence not only an awareness of the etymology and meaning of the name Joseph, but allowed the name and its meaning to inform their messages. In the first half of his writings (roughly 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 5), Nephi casts himself as Joseph in his relationship with his jealous brothers, as one whom his brothers “hated ... **yet the more** [*wayyôsipû ‘ôd*]” (Genesis 37:5, 8) and against whom “their anger did **increase** [cf. Hebrew *yāsap*]” (2 Nephi 5:2).¹⁰

In this article, I propose that Nephi’s wordplay on Joseph extends well beyond this autobiographical use of the patriarch Joseph’s name and biography (Genesis 37–50). In the latter part of Nephi’s writings, a thematic and prophetic wordplay on the name stands at the center of an extended

6. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 172–74. In addition to Genesis 30:23–24, see Genesis 37:5, 8; 42:17–18; 44:23; and 49:33–50:21. See also Exodus 1:8–10 and Numbers 36:3–4.

7. A *hypocorism* is a nickname or shortened form of an originally longer name. Joseph is probably a shortened form of a longer name like Josiphiah (Ezra 8:10), “May Yahweh add” or Eliasaph (“El [God] has added”). In English, the name *Joseph* itself is often further hypocoristicized to “Joe” or “Joey.”

8. Theophoric, from Greek *theophoros* (“god-carrying” or “god-bearing”), describes a personal name in which a divine name or title constitutes a component. Although the name Joseph, as a hypocoristicon, is formally missing a theophoric component, the verbal grammatical form of the name implies such (i.e., the *yô* in *yôsēp* constitutes a third person singular causative grammatical marker meaning “may he” — the “he” here refers to a divinity).

9. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), 212; Ephraim Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 230, provides the full meaning for the name as “May Yahweh add another son for me” (Genesis 30:24).

10. Matthew L. Bowen, ““Their Anger Did Increase Against Me’: Nephi’s Autobiographical Permutation of a Biblical Wordplay on the Name Joseph,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 115–36, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/their-anger-did-increase-against-me-nephis-autobiographical-permutation-of-a-biblical-wordplay-on-the-name-joseph/>.

midrash¹¹ on Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 25–30 and especially in 2 Nephi 27. Nephi’s rich, prophetic wordplay revolves around the name *Joseph* and its meaning, “may [God] add,” “may he increase,” “may he give more,” etc.

Nephi uses and adapts the verb *yāsap*, which occurs three times in Isaiah 29 (vv. 1, 14, 19) — just enough (in my view) to merit the description “thematic verb” — to expand and interpret the Isaianic text in creative and important ways. Nephi recognized and exploited the etymological connection between the name Joseph and verb *yāsap* as found in Isaiah 29 and elsewhere in the Isaianic corpus (e.g., Isaiah 11:11).¹² Thus, in his midrashic expansion of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27, Nephi also appears to expand and permute the use of the verb *yāsap* (or its scribal Egyptian equivalent) as many as six times in 2 Nephi 27 and in several additional instances in the chapters that precede (2 Nephi 25) and follow (2 Nephi 28–30). Isaiah 29:14, like the whole of Isaiah 11 (including v. 11), emerges as one of the most important single texts used in Nephi’s writings. For Nephi the importance of Isaiah 29:14, like that of Isaiah 11:11, consisted in the Lord, as the agent or subject of the verb *yāsap*, undertaking iterative action to restore Israel and Judah from their scattered state and conditions of apostasy (“their lost and fallen state”).¹³ Moreover, the use of *yāsap* in Isaiah 29:14 (“I **will proceed** [*yôsīp*] to do a marvellous work”) should be understood in the context of the use of Isaiah 29:19 (“the meek **shall increase** [*wěyospû*] their joy in the Lord”). Nephi understood that the Lord would “proceed” to do a marvelous work through a latter-day “Joseph” that would enable the “meek” to “increase” and have joy in the Lord in ways not otherwise possible.

Thematic Use #1:

“Add Ye Year to Year” (Isaiah 29:1) — Apostasy

The first occurrence of the verb *yāsap* in Isaiah 29 occurs as part of a “woe” oracle in the very first verse: “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David

11. *Midrash* = Hebrew “inquiry,” “investigation,” or “study.” I take the position that the additions to the text of Isaiah 29 throughout 2 Nephi 27 constitute Nephi’s own interpretation of and commentary on Isaiah’s text (which he had on the brass plates) rather than a restoration of lost text.

12. 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.

13. Cf. Abinadi’s description of the atonement of Jesus Christ as God “redeem[ing] his people from their lost and fallen state” (Mosiah 16:4). Alma uses the language of the Fall to describe the apostate Ammonihahites as “lost and fallen people” (Alma 9:30, 32).

dwelt! **add ye** [šəpû;¹⁴ 1QIsa^a has šəpî, a singular feminine imperatival form] year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel” (Isaiah 29:1–2). *Ariel*, sometimes taken to mean “altar hearth” (see the mention of the *har’ēl* or *hā’āri’ēl* in Ezekiel 43:15, perhaps an allusion by assonance to *har-’ēl*, “the mountain of God”¹⁵), serves as cognomen or codename for Jerusalem (cf. the *’er’ellām*, “priests” or “inhabitants of Jerusalem,” Isaiah 33:7).¹⁶ Numerous commentators have posited a connection with the Akkadian term *arallû*, a term for the “netherworld”¹⁷ (i.e., spirit world) or the “underworld and mountain of the gods, the altar for burnt offerings as the world mountain.”¹⁸ All the foregoing would fit nicely with Isaiah’s piled descriptions of Israel/Judah/Jerusalem “speak[ing] out of the ground [i.e., the spirit world]”; “and thy speech shall be low out of the dust [i.e., the spirit world]”; “thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit [i.e., as one channeling an ancestral spirit from the spirit world]”; “thy speech shall whisper out of the dust” (Isaiah 29:4).

Here in Isaiah 29:1–2, Isaiah uses the verb *yāsap* in a distinctly negative description of Judah and Jerusalem’s apostasy. Whether written *šəpû* or *šəpî*, the prophet mordantly commands Jerusalem to “**add** year to year”¹⁹ and to let the cultic sacrifices “go around” (*yingōpû*).²⁰ In other

14. HALOT (p. 418) analyzes *šəpû* as a plural imperative form of *yāsap*. So too, Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 415, hereafter cited as BDB. Sometimes, however, *šəpû* is erroneously analyzed as a form of *spy/sph* (“to take away,” “carry away”; “dwindle away”; “be carried away”), which means nearly the opposite of *yāsap* (see HALOT 763–64).

15. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Commentary* (Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 401. He writes: “It is ... possible that the designation is deliberately cryptic and polyvalent, perhaps including an allusion by assonance to *har-’ēl*, ‘the mountain of God.’”

16. HALOT, 82.

17. See *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, ed. Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, SANTAG 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), s.v. “arallû.”

18. HALOT, 87. See, e.g., Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 401.

19. Cf. the use of the verb *yāsap* in Isaiah 30:1: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that **they may add** [šəpôt, literally “to add”] sin to sin.”

20. Hebrew **nqp* = “revolve, recur” Cf. Ugaritic *nqpt*, “cycle of the year.” See HALOT, 722. This verb as used in Isaiah 29:1 describes time as circular or cyclical (cf. the Lord’s “circuit” or “course” as described in Psalms 19:6; 1 Nephi 10:19; Alma 7:20; 37:12; D&C 3:2; 35:1). The ancient Israelite *tēqûpâ* “circuit” of the

words, Isaiah criticizes apostasy, hypocrisy,²¹ and sin in the observance of the Jerusalem temple's ritual, sacrificial system,²² and cultic calendar, as he does with equal vehemence in Isaiah 1:10–15.

Neither Nephi nor his successors quote the opaque text of Isaiah 29:1–2 in the Book of Mormon. Nephi renders the first instance of “Ariel” that occurs in Isaiah 29:7 as “Zion.” In other words, “the multitude of the nations that fight against Ariel” becomes “all the nations that fight against Zion” (2 Nephi 27:3; cf. 1 Nephi 22:14), while the reference to “fight against mount Zion” from Isaiah 29:8 remains unchanged. Whether the text of Isaiah 29:1–2 existed on the brass plates in something approximating the form attested in the Masoretic Text or the other ancient witnesses (LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, etc.) is unknowable, since Nephi eschews quoting it.²³ In any case, Nephi “likens” the attack and siege on Jerusalem/Zion described in the subsequent verse (Isaiah 29:3) to the eventual destruction of his own people (see, e.g., 2 Nephi 26:15). The destruction of the Nephites, the condition of “those who have dwindled in unbelief”²⁴ (the Lamanites), and the general conditions of apostasy (Israelite and Gentile) described in Isaiah 29:1–13 necessitate the eventual fulfillment of the promise of iterative divine action mentioned in Isaiah 29:14.

year (Exodus 34:22, 2 Chronicles 24:23; cf. 1 Samuel 1:20) began at the autumnal, equinoctial festival (the New Year and Feast of Ingathering).

21. Cf. especially Isaiah 29:13.

22. J. Cheryl Exum (“Of Broken Pots, Fluttering Birds, and Visions in the Night: Extended Simile and Poetic Technique in Isaiah,” in *Beyond Form Criticisms: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism*. Ed. Paul R. House [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 362) writes: “The command *ḥaggîm yinqōpû* [‘let the feasts go round’] appears ironic; presumably the ground for the woe cry and the impending attack has to do with cultic observance. . . . The moaning and lamentation which result when *Yhwh* distresses Ariel, v. 2, are the opposite of what one expects at a religious festival, but, at the same time, fit readily the mourning called for by *hōy* [‘ah’] in v. 1.”

23. No portion of Isaiah 29:1–2 appears in the Book of Mormon in any form. Neither Nephi nor his successors quote it or attempt to interpret it.

24. “Those who have dwindled in unbelief”: a collocation used by Nephi in 2 Nephi 26:15, 17, 19 to describe the seed of his brothers Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and the mixture of his own posterity (see 1 Nephi 13:10) and that of his of other brothers (see, e.g., 2 Nephi 3:3; 9:53) who survived the great war that put an end to the Nephite civilization.

Thematic Use #2:
“I Will Proceed to Do a Marvellous Work”
(Isaiah 29:14) — Restoration

The second instance of the verb *yāsap* occurs at the rhetorical turning-point of Isaiah 29 in v. 14: “Therefore, behold, **I will proceed** [*yôšîp*] **to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder**: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isaiah 29:14). The expressions “do a marvelous work” (or “work a marvelous work,” Hebrew *lēhaplî*’) and “marvelous work” (Hebrew *haplē*’ — the phrase “marvelous work and a wonder” is *haplē*’ *wāpele*’ polyptotonic)²⁵ are what usually draw our attention to this verse. The phrase “marvelous work” occurs at least 14 other times in scripture.²⁶

However, the active participle *yôšîp*, a form of the verb *yāsap*, may ultimately represent the more important term here. This participle implicitly modifies the Lord as doer of the action: *hiněni yôšîp*; literally, “I am proceeding [to do ...].” As has been noted previously, this participle greatly resembles the name “Joseph” (*yôsēp*) in form and sound. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, it is tempting to see Isaiah making a deliberate wordplay on the name “Joseph,” *per ipsum*. However, we can conclude with greater certainty that Nephi not only sees a reference to the name Joseph in this passage but repeatedly uses and adapts it *as such*. I will discuss this possibility further below.

Moreover, we should note that whereas Jerusalem/Judah is the subject of the imperative form of the verb *yāsap* in its very negative use in Isaiah 29:1 (“add [ye] year to year”), Yahweh here becomes the one undertaking the action described in the active participle *yôšîp*. In other words, Yahweh is “adding” or “proceed[ing]” to undertake miraculous action that will in some measure reverse the devastating consequences

25. Polyptoton: a wordplay on cognate words — i.e., on words from the same root. Richard A. Lanham (*A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd ed. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], s.v. “polyptoton”) defines *polyptoton* as a “repetition of words from the same root, but with different endings.” However, the example Lanham cites shows that polyptoton can reflect not only different endings but different prefixes and stem changes: (quoting Winston Churchill on Neville Chamberlain’s government): “So they go on in a strange paradox, **decided** only to be **undecided**, **resolved** to be **irresolute**, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-**powerful** to be **impotent**” (emphasis added).

26. See 1 Nephi 14:7; 22:8; 2 Nephi 25:17; 27:26; 29:1; Alma 26:15; 3 Nephi 21:9; 28:32; D&C 4:1; 6:1; 11:1; 12:1; 14:1; 18:44.

of the apostasy mentioned earlier (Isaiah 29:1–13) and described by the verb form *sěpû/sěpî*.²⁷ This miraculous action will necessarily involve the “becom[ing]” or coming forth of the “book that is sealed” (Isaiah 29:11–12, 18).

**Thematic Use #3:
“The Meek Shall Increase Their Joy in the Lord”
(Isaiah 29:19) — The Fruits of Restoration**

Isaiah answers his use of the participial form *yôsîp* modifying *Yahweh* in Isaiah 29:14 with a third and final use of the verb *yāsap* in Isaiah 29:19. Where *Yahweh* undertook the restorative action of “adding” to “do a marvelous work and a wonder” in Isaiah 29:14, here the “adding” is undertaken by those who benefited from that action — the “meek.” Isaiah prophesies, “And in that day shall the deaf **hear the words of the book**, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. **The meek also shall increase** [*wěyospû*] their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 29:18–19). The “meek” (*ănāwîm*)²⁸ now “add” or “increase” in ways that apostate inhabitants of Jerusalem (and more broadly Israel and Judah) did not and could not. They can “increase” without “add[ing] year to year” in apostate or hypocritical cultic observance (cf. again Isaiah 29:1).

Brown, Driver, and Briggs note that *yāsap* can here have the sense “have more.”²⁹ Koehler and Baumgartner further suggest that the phrase *yāsap śimhâ*, as an expression, denotes “[he] has joy after joy.”³⁰ In Isaiah

27. Hebrew *āsap* “collect, gather” = Akkadian *esēpu* “collect, gather.” See Hayim ben Yosef Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological, Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalence with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2009), 27.

28. Robert F. Smith (personal communication, June 2017, notes in possession of author) observes that “Jesus claimed to be ‘meek’ (Matthew 11:29), but the Greek term *praus* actually refers to being ‘gentle, humble,’ rather than ‘weak’ and ‘simpering.’ Jesus was clearly a very powerful figure, so the term must refer to a proper attitude toward others. The Greek term is also used to refer to a horse that has been ‘broken, trained,’ so that being able to obediently follow God’s will may be an integral part of being ‘meek’ in that Beatitude (Matthew 5:5), which is taken directly from Psalm 37:11 *ănāwîm* ‘meek’ (‘afflicted, undemanding, unassuming’).” This thus suggests a similar sense for *ănāwîm* as used by Isaiah in Isaiah 29:19.

29. BDB, 414.

30. HALOT, 418. Since these words are not attested together elsewhere, it is not clear that they constitute an idiom per se.

29:19, however, the noun *śimḥâ* (“joy”) is separated from the verb *yāsap* by two words (*ʾānāwîm* [the subject] and *byhwh* [the preposition *in* + the divine name *yhwh*]) in a slightly odd word order, which may explain why Nephi saw the line *wēyospû ʾānāwîm byhwh śimḥâ* as constituting two separate phrases (see further below). In either case, Isaiah 29 describes a future situation involving a forthcoming book — an event through which “the meek ... shall increase” — i.e., “the meek have more” (Isaiah 29:19 \cong 2 Nephi 27:30).

Isaiah describes additional fruits of restoration that will emerge in consequence of the forthcoming of the sealed book:

For the terrible one **is brought to nought** [*ʾāpēs*], and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Therefore **thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name**, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. (Isaiah 29:20–24 \cong 2 Nephi 27:31–35)

Isaiah’s use of the verb *ʾāpēs* creates something of a pun on *wēyospû* in the previous verse: while the “meek shall increase [*wēyospû*]” the “terrible one is brought to naught [*ʾāpēs*]” — an opposite outcome. Isaiah prophesies that those who “watch for iniquity” and thus “make a man offender³¹ for a word [*dābār*]” — not least those who make the one through whom the Lord “proceed[ed] to bring forth”³² the “words [*dibrê*] of [the] book” (Isaiah 29:11, 18) an offender — would be “cut off.” This idiom evokes the penalty of excommunication mentioned throughout the Pentateuch — i.e., “cut off from among” the “people.”³³ This language appears in Nephi’s periphrastic or variant quotation³⁴ of Deuteronomy 18:15–19: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto

31. Literally, “those making [him] a sinner” = Hebrew *maḥḥîʾê*.

32. 2 Nephi 27:14, see below.

33. See, e.g., Genesis 17:14; Exodus 30:33, 38; 31:14; Leviticus 7:20–21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9–10; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5–6, 17–18; Numbers 9:13; 15:30; cf. Ezekiel 14:8; 25:7.

34. See John A. Tvedtnes and E. Jan Wilson, “The Prophet Like Moses,” *Insights* 27, no. 5 (2007): 2–3.

you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet **shall be cut off from among the people**” (1 Nephi 22:20).

One of the most important fruits of the “sealed book” would be a restoration of the children of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph to “the Holy One of Jacob,” i.e., the “God of Israel.” The words of the sealed book would help redress the recurrent apostasy of Israel and Judah. All of this enables the eventual total fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. As Nephi described it, “And after our seed is scattered the Lord God **will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto ~~their~~ the being ~~nourished~~ nursed³⁵ by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders [see Isaiah 49:22]. And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the **Father** [*’ab*] of heaven unto **Abraham** [*’abrâhâm*, usually understood to mean “Father of a multitude”³⁶], saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (1 Nephi 22:8–9).

Midrashic Use #1:

Nephi’s First “Joseph” *Gezera Shawa* on Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 in 2 Nephi 25:17 (2 Ne 25:17; 29:1 \cong Isaiah 11:11; 29:14 [Isaiah 29:13–24 \cong 2 Ne 27:25–35])

Nephi’s first unmistakably clear midrashic use of *yâsap* from Isaiah 29:14 in his writings occurs in 1 Nephi 22:8: “And after our seed is scattered the Lord God **will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto ~~their~~ the being ~~nourished~~ nursed³⁷ by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.” Nephi here interprets Isaiah 29:14 in terms of the description in Isaiah 49:22 of the gathering of Israel by “the Gentiles” (*gôyim*). Nephi exegetically substitutes “the Gentiles” for “this people” in the text of Isaiah 29:14. He does something similar with Isaiah 29:14 and Isaiah 52:10 again a few verses later in 1 Nephi 22:11: “Wherefore, the Lord God **will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations [*haggôyim*,

35. See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 1:461–62.

36. Genesis 17:4–5; Abraham 1:2; cf. Romans 4:1–18.

37. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 1:461–62.

Gentiles], in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto ~~those who~~ they which³⁸ are of the house of Israel.”³⁹

In two instances, Nephi directly interprets Isaiah 29:14 in light of Isaiah 11:11. He appears to have done this on the basis of these passages’ shared use of the term *yāsap* (and their nearly homonymous forms, *yôšîp* in Isaiah 11:11 and *yôšîp* in Isaiah 29:14). As noted elsewhere,⁴⁰ this exegetical conjoining of two or more scriptural passages on the basis of shared terminology and interpretation came to be known in rabbinic times as *Gezera Shawa* (although the practice antedates rabbinic times).⁴¹ Nephi thus begins his sophisticated and rich midrash of Isaiah 29 with an exegetical juxtaposition of Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14:

The⁴² Lord **will set** his hand **again** [*yôšîp*] the second time [Isaiah 11:11] to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, **he will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work and a wonder [Isaiah 29:14] among the children of men. Wherefore, **he shall bring forth his words** unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that **they need not** look forward **any more** [cf. Hebrew *wĕlō’ yôšîpû ... ‘ôd*] for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by

38. Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 69–70.

39. See also Mormon 5:12–24.

40. Bowen, “He Shall Add,” 2–4; 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://www.mormoninterpreter.com/onomastic-wordplay-on-joseph-and-benjamin-and-gezera-shawa-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

41. Hillel the Elder is sometimes wrongly said to be the originator of *Gezera Shawa*. H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger (*Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 17) note that *Gezera Shawa* was “not invented by Hillel” but constituted one of “the main types of argument in use at that time.” The exegetical practice of interpreting two or more separate scriptural texts, each in light of the other, thus antedates Hillel.

42. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Two: 2 Nephi 11 – Mosiah 16* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 819–20; idem, *Earliest Text*, 131.

the prophets, and that Messiah is he ~~who~~ which⁴³ should be rejected of the Jews. (2 Nephi 25:17–18)

Nephi juxtaposes Isaiah 11:11 with Isaiah 29:14 not only on the basis of their shared use of the verb *yāsap* and the homophony of *yôsîp* with *yôsîp*⁴⁴ but perhaps also because Yahweh is the subject or agent of both verb forms. In other words, both passages prophesy of divine iterative action and divine restorative action, and all of this through a future “Joseph” (see 2 Nephi 3:11–16, especially v. 15).

And Nephi offers more. The divine iterative action that will restore Israel from its scattered and displaced condition (“their lost and fallen state”), speaking both in physical and in spiritual terms, will ultimately “convince them of the true Messiah” such that they will “not look forward any more for a Messiah to come.” The literal remnants of Latter-day Israel “**shall no more again** [*lō’-yôsîp ‘ôd*] stay upon him that smote them,” but shall believe in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah on account of the work, and thus “shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth” (Isaiah 10:20; 2 Nephi 20:20).

All of this will be done in fulfillment of promise. Nephi’s subsequent statement affirms the foregoing wordplay on the name Joseph: “Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, **that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph** [*yôsēp*], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand” (2 Nephi 25:21). The “promise” the Lord made “unto Joseph” alludes back to the prophecy of Joseph preserved in 2 Nephi 3:

And great was⁴⁵ the covenants of the Lord which he made unto **Joseph** [*yôsēp*]. Wherefore, **Joseph** [*yôsēp*] truly saw our day. **And he obtained promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch** unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, **nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days**, in the spirit of power, **unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light** — yea,

43. Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 132.

44. The phonological difference is one of vowel quantity. In reality the forms *yôsîp* and *yôsîp* represent different stems: the former a causative (Hiphil) jussive (like the name Joseph itself), the second an active (Qal) participle.

45. Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 81.

out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.
(2 Nephi 3:4–5; cf. 1 Kings 8:21)

Lehi's summary of Joseph's prophecy, offered just before he cites that prophecy, appears to have been colored by Isaiah 29 (e.g., "the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness," Isaiah 29:18 [=2 Nephi 27:29]; more examples of this will emerge below). The Lord's "promise ... unto Joseph" included the promise that he would raise up another "Joseph" who would help "make manifest" the Messiah — Jesus Christ — to the "seed" (posterity) of the patriarch, seed that would include that of Lehi and his son Joseph. Joseph then emphasized that the name Joseph constituted something of a sign. The latter-day "Joseph" would bear the name of his own father as well as that of the patriarch:

Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together [≅ 2 Nephi 29:12–13], unto the confounding of false doctrines [≅ 2 Nephi 28:9, 12, 15] and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers [≅ 2 Nephi 30:5] in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence [≅ 2 Nephi 30:8] among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. **And thus prophesied Joseph** [*yôšēp*], saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, of⁴⁶ which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, **I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise; and his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father.**⁴⁷ **And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation. Yea, thus prophesied Joseph** [*yôšēp*]: I am sure of this thing, even as I am sure of the promise of Moses; for

46. Following Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 1:516–18; idem, *Earliest Text*, 82.

47. Cf. Luke 1:59.

the Lord hath said unto me, I will preserve thy seed forever.
(2 Nephi 3:12–16)

As noted in brackets above, Nephi repeats Joseph’s prophecy extensively throughout 2 Nephi 25–30, Nephi’s quotation of 2 Nephi 3:14–16 in 2 Nephi 25:21 constituting another example of Seidel’s law (i.e., a repetition or quotation of material in inverse order).⁴⁸ It is specifically in view of the fulfillment of “the promise ... unto Joseph” (2 Nephi 25:21 \cong 2 Nephi 3:14) that “these things [the words preserved in the sealed book] shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and ... shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and [that] the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written” (2 Nephi 25:22), that Nephi made his now-famous declaration of why he and his contemporaries wrote: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God” (2 Nephi 25:23); “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). Nephi’s midrash of Isaiah 29 and the Lord’s “proceed[ing]” (*yôsîp*) to bring forth the sealed book as part of a “marvelous work” (Isaiah 29:14) must be considered and remembered in this light.

Midrashic Use #2:

“The Lord God Will Proceed to Bring Forth the Words of the Book” (2 Nephi 27 \cong Isaiah 29)

2 Nephi 11 constitutes the closing bracket of Jacob’s quotation of Isaiah and his sermon (2 Nephi 6–10); and the beginning bracket of Nephi’s long quotation of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 12–24, 27. 2 Nephi 27 does not merely represent Nephi’s quotation of Isaiah 29, but contains extensive interpretation or “midrash” on his part.

Within the confines of his more detailed midrash of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27, Nephi begins his use of *yôsîp* in 2 Nephi 27:14 thus: **“Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed [yôsîp] to bring forth the words of the book;** and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth

48. See David Bokovoy, “Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 20, no. 10 (2000): 2; Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes “Seidel’s Law,” in *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.

him good will he establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!” Nephi’s statement “the Lord God **will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to bring forth the words of the book” clearly uses Isaiah’s language from Isaiah 29:14, “**Wherefore I will proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvellous work” (≅ 2 Nephi 27:26, see below).

However, Nephi does not merely borrow the language of Isaiah 29:14, he creatively adapts it, when he substitutes the phrase “to bring forth the words of the book” for the phrase “to do a marvelous work.” Nephi had already established a precedent for this kind of midrashic use of the language of Isaiah 29:14. In his earlier explanation of his use of Isaiah 48–49, he declared: “Wherefore, **the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations**, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 22:11). Here Nephi combines the auxiliary verb *yôšîp* (“[I will] proceed”) from Isaiah 29:14 with the language of Isaiah 52:10: “The Lord **hath made bare** [*hâšap*] his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”⁴⁹ Nephi’s use and adaptation of *yôšîp* in these passage suggest that he identifies the Lord’s “bringing forth the words of the book” with the Lord’s “do[ing] a marvelous work” and his “making bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” as synonymous or nearly synonymous.

In addition to his incorporation and adaptation of *yôšîp*, Nephi takes the phrase “the words of the book” from Isaiah 29:11 (“the words of a book [*dibrê hassêper*] which is sealed”) and Isaiah 29:18–19. In the latter text, we also find another of Isaiah’s uses of the verb *yâsap*: “And in that day shall the deaf hear **the words of the book** [*dibrê sêper*], and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. **The meek also shall increase** [*wěyospû*, cf. Joseph] their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

We should further note here that the phrase “and . . . hear [*wěšāmē‘û*] the words of the book” further recalls the prophecy of Lehi to his youngest son Joseph at the end of his citation of the prophecy of the patriarch Joseph: “And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did my father of old prophesy. Wherefore, because of this covenant thou art blessed; for thy seed shall not be destroyed, for **they shall hearken unto the words of the book**” (2 Nephi 3:22–23). In his use of the phrase “they shall hearken unto the words of the book,” Lehi appears to quote Isaiah’s statement “in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book” (Isaiah 29:18; cf. 2 Nephi 27:29), thus linking the fulfillment of

49. See Bowen, “He Shall Add,” 2–4.

Isaiah’s prophecy regarding the “the book which is sealed” to the future restoration of the descendants of his son “Joseph.”

Nephi’s declaration “in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word” (2 Nephi 27:14) invokes the Deuteronomic “law of witnesses”: “**At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses**, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death” (Deuteronomy 17:6); “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: **at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter** [*dābār*, or “word”] **be established** [*yāqûm*” (Deuteronomy 19:15). Bruce A. Van Orden has observed that Nephi establishes a pattern of using the Deuteronomic “Law of Witnesses” throughout the book of 2 Nephi.⁵⁰

Nephi’s invocation of the “law of witnesses” in 2 Nephi 27:14 recalls his invocation of that law at the outset of his lengthiest Isaiah citation (2 Nephi 12–24). By 2 Nephi 11, Nephi had already brought together the “law of witnesses” motif together with the *yāsap*-motif:

And now, Jacob spake many **more** things [words] to my people at that time; nevertheless only these things [words] have I caused to be written, for the things [words] which I have written sufficeth me. And now I, Nephi, **write more of the words of Isaiah**, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken **his words** unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, **I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses**, and he proveth all his words. (2 Nephi 11:1–3)

Jacob spoke “words” or “things” that went beyond — or offered “more” — than what Nephi decided to record and preserve on his small plates. Then Nephi “proceeded”⁵¹ to write — or wrote “more” — of the words

50. 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, Brigham Young University, 1989), 307–21; Van Orden, “‘We Prophesy of Christ’: The Law of Witnesses in 2nd Nephi,” *Ensign* 20 (February 1990): 22–25.

51. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 10:1; 19:5; 2 Nephi 25:7; cf. Words of Mormon 1:9; Ether 1:1; 2:13; 6:1; 9:1; 13:1.

of Isaiah, namely the text of Isaiah 2–14 as a block (see 2 Nephi 12–24), as a “witness” or “testimony” of the words/things of which he and Jacob both testified. Again, this is significant because it frames the writing or bringing forth of additional scripture in terms of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses, especially Deuteronomy 19:15. Nephi reasons thus: In eschatological terms, “one [prophetic] witness” by itself is insufficient to condemn any man or woman “for any iniquity, or for any sin.” Thus, “in the mouth of two or three [prophetic] witnesses shall the matter [word] be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15). Nephi will later apply the same logic to scriptural witnesses and the eschatological final judgment (a “capital” case if ever such existed). Nephi further declares that God does not limit himself to “two or three witnesses,” but “sendeth more witnesses” (or, perhaps, “adds to send witnesses”) in order to “prove all his words.”

Structurally speaking, 2 Nephi 11 not only serves a closing bracket for Jacob’s quotation of Isaiah (2 Nephi 7–8) and the sermon in which he embeds it (2 Nephi 6, 9–10), it further serves as an opening bracket for Nephi’s longest block quotation of Isaiah (2 Nephi 12–24, 27). Even here, the bringing forth of “more” of the Lord’s word appears to revolve around the idea of *yāsap* (to “add” or “do something more”) and thus too the name Joseph.

Midrashic Use #3:

“The Lord God Will Deliver Again the Book” (2 Nephi 27:19 ≅ Isaiah 29:12)

The third passage in 2 Nephi 25–30 that plausibly reflects the Hebrew *yāsap*-idiom also describes iterative divine action. In this instance, Nephi prophecies that the Lord “will ... again” — i.e., “add” — to deliver the “book that is sealed” to the unlearned man who will become its translator: “Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God **will** deliver **again** the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned” (2 Nephi 27:19 ≅ Isaiah 29:12).

Here again, Nephi mixes the language of Isaiah 29:14 (“I [the Lord God] **will proceed** [to],” *yôšîp*) with the language of Isaiah 29:11–12 (“the words of a book that is sealed”; “And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.”) On one level, Nephi’s midrashic use of the “do again”/“proceed to do” idiom explicates what he believes the statement “I will proceed to do a marvelous work” signifies, namely that the Lord “will deliver again the book” by divine means and “the words thereof” also by divine means

to the book's unlearned translator. The Hebrew *yāsap* + verb idiom lies at the heart of this idea.

Nephi further prophesies: “Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee” (2 Nephi 27:20).⁵² One way of understanding this prophecy is that the “words of the book” would come into English translation as “the words which I shall give unto thee” — i.e., through divinely *given* translation (cf. the “gift and power of God,” Omni 1:20).⁵³

Midrashic Use #4:

“Then Shalt Thou Seal up the Book Again” (2 Nephi 27:22–23)

Nephi's midrash of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27 does something unusual for midrash in that it addresses the future translator of the “book that is sealed” directly in the second person. That translator, of course, was Joseph Smith. Interestingly, Nephi records that the Lord gave the translator a commandment that, if given or rendered in Hebrew, would have plausibly used the verbal idiom from which the translator's name is derived — *yāsap/yôsîp*:

Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and **obtained the witnesses** which I have promised unto thee, **then shalt thou seal up the book again** [cf. Hebrew *tôsîp*], and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men. For behold, I am God; and **I am a God of miracles**; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith. (2 Nephi 27:22–23)

Nephi may have originally recorded the instruction “thou shalt ... again” with the verb *tôsîp* (“thou shalt ... again”),⁵⁴ or with an Egyptian scribal equivalent. We recall that the name Joseph, *yôsēp*, constitutes a hypocoristic theophoric name with God (or a god) as the implied subject of the verb *yāsap*, “may he [God] add,” “may he do something again,” etc. Here, the text makes the translator (Joseph) a more concrete part of the ongoing and unfolding iterative divine action.

52. Cf. Deuteronomy 31:11; Jeremiah 36:6.

53. See also D&C 3:11; 5:31; 135:3.

54. Cf., e.g., Deuteronomy 28:68.

The Lord's self-description, "I am a God of miracles," also directly refers to and recalls the Lord's "proceeding to do, a marvelous work — yea, a marvelous work and a wonder."⁵⁵ One can render the phrase, "marvelous work and a wonder" as a "miraculous miracle," as Russell M. Nelson has recently rendered it.⁵⁶

Midrashic Use #5:

"And Again It Shall Come to Pass ... " (2 Nephi 27:24; 2 Nephi 27:25 \cong Isaiah 29:13)

Nephi's in-depth midrash of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27 employs another important idiomatic description of iterative divine action, again pointing to the name Joseph. Nephi declares, "**And again it** [cf. Hebrew *wayyōsep*] shall come to pass [cf. *lēhiyôt*] that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him" (2 Nephi 27:24). Nephi's phraseology here seems to approximate that of Genesis 4:2 ("**And she again** [*wattōsep*] bare his brother Abel" or "and again she bore his brother Abel); Genesis 8:10 ("**and again he** [*wayyōsep*] sent forth the dove out of the ark"); and 2 Samuel 24:1 ("**and again** [*wayyōsep*] the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel"). If so, we have another example of deliberate wordplay on the name Joseph.

Nephi thus prophesies that the Lord would quote Isaiah 29:13 to the future "Joseph," translator of the sealed book: "And **again** it shall come to pass that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him: Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts⁵⁷ of men" (2 Nephi 27:24–25, quoting Isaiah 29:13). Indeed, the Prophet Joseph Smith reported that the Lord concatenated a quotation of Isaiah 29:13 and 2 Timothy 3:5 as a part of his first vision: "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me,

55. Hebrew *haplē' wāpele'* "prodigies and wonders (NJB), shocking and amazing (NRSV)" (Isaiah 29:14); Hebrew *nīplē'ôt* "wonders, wonderful things" (Exodus 3:20).

56. Russell M. Nelson, "Teach Repentance and Baptize Converts" (Seminar for New Mission Presidents, Provo, Utah, June 23, 2016).

57. Nephi changes the phrase "taught by the precept of men" from Isaiah 29:13 into the plural "taught by the precepts of men." See also Nephi's use of this phrase in 2 Nephi 28:14 (cf. also vv. 26 and 31).

they teach for doctrines the commandments of men [Isaiah 29:13], having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof' [2 Timothy 3:5]" (Joseph Smith — History 1:19).⁵⁸

As it turns out, the confluence of the Lord's description of apostasy and hypocrisy in Isaiah 29:13 with the participial use of the verb form *yôsiṗ* in Isaiah 29:14 matches well the theophanic events that precipitate the restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of the sealed book (the Book of Mormon), and the gathering of Israel — all "the marvelous work, yea, a marvelous work and a wonder." According to Joseph Smith's 1832 account of his First Vision, the Lord first called Joseph by name: "Joseph <my son> thy sins are forgiven thee."⁵⁹ In his 1835 account of that vision, Joseph clarifies that God the Father appeared first⁶⁰ and that Jesus spoke the aforementioned words. Joseph Smith's 1838 canonized account of the First Vision further reveals that the first word that God the Father spoke also was "Joseph."

Thus, to sum up, God the Father introduced his Beloved Son, "Joseph, this is my Beloved Son, hear him!" Then Jesus said, "Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Jesus then quoted Isaiah 29:13 and 2 Timothy 3:5. The emphasis on Joseph's personal name, then, seems significant in the context of Isaiah 29:14 and Yahweh "proceed[ing] [*yôsiṗ*] to do a marvelous work."

Joseph Smith's account of Moroni's appearances to him on September 21–22, 1823 also stress that Moroni began his conversations with him speaking his first name — "Joseph" (Joseph Smith — History 1:33, 49). The emphasis on Joseph's name in the First Vision and during Moroni's visitations seems particularly appropriate given Isaiah's use of *yôsiṗ* in Isaiah 29:14 and Nephi's midrashic permutations of that idiom. From

58. In a manner not dissimilar to the opening verses of Isaiah 29 and Nephi's in-depth midrash in 2 Nephi 27, 2 Timothy 3:1–5 describes widespread latter-day apostasy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

59. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, ed. Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Richard L. Jensen (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press, 2012), 13.

60. *Ibid.*, 116. See also "Journal, 1835–1836," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed June 26, 2017, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/25>.

a Latter-day Saint perspective, we would further see, with Nephi, the Lord’s “proceed[ing] [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work” in the First Vision and his “proceed[ing] to bring forth the words of the Book” via Moroni’s ministrations as the moments when the prophecy of Isaiah 11:11 began to be fulfilled: “the Lord shall **set** his hand **again** [*yôšîp*] the second time to recover the remnant of his people” (see again 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1).

Midrashic Use #6:

**“I Will Proceed to Do a Marvelous Work”
(2 Nephi 27:26 ≅ Isaiah 29:14; 2 Nephi 9:43)**

After several interpretive adaptations of the *yâsap* idiom from Isaiah 29:14, Nephi finally quotes the passage in full in 2 Nephi 27:26. A side-by-side comparison of the two passages, however, reveals some important differences:

Isaiah 29:14	2 Nephi 27:26
Therefore, behold, I will proceed [<i>yôšîp</i>] to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.	Therefore, I will proceed [<i>yôšîp</i>] to do a marvelous work among this people, yea , a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.

The first distinct difference is the lack of the particle “behold” in 2 Nephi 27:26. However, the idiom underlying “behold, I will proceed” (*hiněni yôšîp*) can be rendered essentially the same way yet without representing the particle *hině* + *nî* in English with the particle “behold.” It is also interesting, if not significant, that the translated Book of Mormon text here does not replicate KJV’s use of “even,” an italicized term that the KJV translators supplied — i.e., it is not present in the underlying Hebrew text. Instead, the text uses the emphatic particle “yea.” It is possible that Nephi, recognizing the abruptness of the polyptotonic appositional phrase *haplē’ wāpele’* (“marvelous work and a wonder”), added a particle of his own, rendered “yea” in the Book of Mormon text. Or, like “even” in the KJV, it too may have been supplied according to the context.

A more significant textual variant occurs in the next phrase. Nephi's text expands the construction "the wisdom of their wise" to "the wisdom of their wise and learned." This expansion ensures that the reader understands that the type of wisdom that will perish will include that of "the learned" mentioned earlier in his midrash (2 Nephi 27:15–20). Moreover, in using this expanded construction, Nephi also recalls Jacob's earlier use of the expression "the wise and the learned" in the speech in which he interpreted Isaiah 48–49 (2 Nephi 6–10) as preserved by Nephi himself:

And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and **the wise, and the learned**, and they that are rich, who are **puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom**, and their riches — yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them. But **the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from them forever** — yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints. (2 Nephi 9:42–43)

Jacob's prediction that "the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from them forever" appears to quote or paraphrase Isaiah 29:14, "the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." This indicates that Jacob had a version of Isaiah 29:14 in mind in his previous use of the phrase "the wise and the learned," and perhaps suggests that "the wise and the learned" existed in the version of Isaiah 29 that Nephi and Jacob had on the brass plates.

Midrashic Use #7:

“And the Meek Also Shall Increase and Their Joy Shall Be in the Lord” (2 Nephi 27:30 ≅ Isaiah 29:19)

Just as Isaiah 29:19 represents a climactic moment in Isaiah's prophecy of the sealed book, Nephi's use and adaptation of this text in his midrash of Isaiah 29 also stands as a climactic moment. Nephi's text also renders Isaiah's text here somewhat differently:

Isaiah 29:19	2 Nephi 27:30
The meek also shall increase [wěyospû] their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.	And the meek also shall increase [wěyospû], and their joy shall be in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

Nephi's midrash makes the verb *yāsap* an intransitive verb — i.e., a verb with no object — rather than reading “joy” as the object. Thus while Nephi emphasizes that the “joy” of the meek will be in the Lord, he stresses particularly that the “meek shall increase” not simply in just that one sense. The “book” that Yahweh would *yōsīp* — “add,” “proceed” — to bring forth as a “miraculous miracle” through a latter-day Joseph would enable and empower the “meek” to *yāsap* — to “add” or “increase” in manifold senses.

Much could be written here on the class of persons called “the meek” or the *ʾānāwīm*, derived from the verb *ʾānā*, which can mean “to humble,” “afflict,” or even “rape” somebody. Numerous Hebrew Bible passages reflect a special concern for the *ʾānāwīm* and their plight.⁶¹ An earlier prophecy by Isaiah that Nephi particularly ties to Isaiah 29 declares that the Messianic figure would “reprove with equity for the meek of the earth [ʾanēwē ʾāreṣ]” (Isaiah 11:4), a passage that Nephi quotes two other times in 2 Nephi 21:4 and 2 Nephi 30:9. Jesus famously quotes the promise of Psalm 37:11 (“the meek shall inherit the earth”) in his Beatitude in Matthew 5:5 (3 Nephi 12:5; see also especially D&C 88:17). Jacob and Nephi make additional references to the *ʾānāwīm* in 2 Nephi 9:30 (“they

61. E.g., Isaiah 11:4; 29:19; 32:7; 61:1; Amos 2:7; 8:4; Zephaniah 2:3; Job 24:4; Psalm 9:18; 10:7; Psalm 22:16; 25:9; 34:2; 37:11; 69:32; 76:9; 147:6; cf. Psalm 9:8; Proverbs 3:34; 14:21; 16:19. Both the Essenes and the early Christians called themselves “The Poor” (*ʾebyōnīm* or *ʾebyōnīm*), a synonym of *ʾānāwīm*: “It is important to see the extent to which the terminology Ebionim (‘the Poor’) and its synonyms penetrated Qumran literature. Early commentators were aware of the significance of this usage, though later ones have been mostly insensitive to it. The use of this terminology, and its ideological parallels, ʾAni (‘Meek’) and Dal (‘Downtrodden’), as interchangeable terms of self-designation at Qumran, is of the utmost importance. There are even examples in crucial contexts of the published corpus of an allusion like ‘the Poor in Spirit’, known from Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount in both the War Scroll, xi. 10 and the Community Rule, iv.3.” (Robert H. Eisenman and Michael O. Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* [Shaftesbury, Dorset; Rockport, MA: Element, 1992/Penguin, 1993], 233).

despise the poor and they persecute the meek”) and 2 Nephi 28:13 (“they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart”), texts which both appear to have connections to Isaiah 29:14.

Midrashic Use #8:

“We Need No More of the Word of God”! (2 Nephi 28:29 — 2 Nephi 28:2–32 ≅ Isaiah 28:10, 13; 29:13, 15, 21)

Even after offering a thoroughgoing midrash of the text of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27, Nephi continues to explicate several aspects of that text in the chapters that follow. A statement in 2 Nephi 28:2 suggests that the sealed book of Isaiah 29 and 2 Nephi 27 remains Nephi’s overarching topic for 2 Nephi 28–30: “The things [words] which shall be written out of the book shall be of great worth unto the children of men, and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 28:2).

In 2 Nephi 28:3–30, Nephi revisits the conditions of apostasy described in Isaiah 29 and 2 Nephi 27, using language from his vision of “the great and abominable Church” (1 Nephi 12–14). He also incorporates additional images from Isaiah (e.g., “let us eat and drink; for to morrow [tomorrow] we shall die,” Isaiah 22:13).

At the end of this description of widespread apostasy, Nephi issues woe oracles against those who reject additional light and truth from God. “Yea, wo be unto him that saith: **We have received, and we need no more!**” (2 Nephi 28:27); “And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall. Wo be unto him that shall say: **We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!**” (2 Nephi 28:29).

Nephi thus draws an emphatic contrast between “the meek [who] **shall increase**” or who “**shall have more**” (*wēyospû*) and those who say, “We have received, and **we need no more!**” (2 Nephi 28:27); or worse, “We have received the word of God and **we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!**” (2 Nephi 28:29). These objections arise from the same “Gentiles” (2 Nephi 28:32) who are “the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts” (v. 15) and “turn aside the just for a thing of naught” (v. 16; quoting Isaiah 29:21) and “rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries ... [and] their fine clothing; and **they persecute the meek** [meek=Hebrew *ʿanāwîm*] and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up” (v. 13).

The declarations “we have received, and we need no more” and “we need no more of the word of God “ invert the language of Isaiah 29:14 (2 Nephi 27), “I will **proceed** [*yôšîp*, add] to do a marvelous work” and 2 Nephi 27:14, “I will **proceed** [*yôšîp*] to bring forth the words of the book,” as if somehow the human desire for “canon” and status quo could perchance thwart the divine intention to bring forth additional scripture.

Midrashic Use #9:

“Unto Him That Receiveth I Will Give More”

(2 Nephi 28:30 \cong Isaiah 28:10, 13)

Nephi further permutes and broadens his interpretation of Isaiah 29:14 and the idea of divine “adding” with his use of Isaiah 28:10 and 28:13. There, Isaiah describes the forthcoming of additional divine commandments or “precepts” in terms of [building]: “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”; “But the word of the Lord was unto them [or, came 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, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isaiah 28:10, 13).

Although Isaiah describes a process of divine revelation that leads to the eventual “fall” of Jerusalem and Judah (cf. Jacob 4), Nephi sees the Lord’s “line upon line” method of offering “additional” revelation and scripture as a process from which the righteous can benefit:

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for **unto him that receiveth I will give more** [i.e., “Unto him that receiveth, I will add” cf. Hebrew *’ôšîp*]; and **from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.**
(2 Nephi 28:30)

Again, the name Joseph denotes “may he [God] add” or, with more epistemic modality, “he will add.” Here the Lord promises to “give more” — i.e., to “add more” to those who “hearken” to his precepts or receive what he has already given. An idiomatic parallel from the Hebrew Bible comes from the prophet Nathan’s confronting David after the latter illicitly took Bathsheba for himself and had her husband killed. Nathan declared, “And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and

gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, **I would moreover have given** [*wě'ōsīpâ*] unto thee such and such things” (2 Samuel 12:8). The idiom rendered “I would moreover have given” here literally means, “I would have added.”⁶² Similarly, at the end of the book of Job, the narrator states that “the Lord **gave** [*wayyōsep*, **added to**] Job twice **as much** as he had before” (Job 42:10). In other words, the Lord “gave” Job “more.” That appears to be the idiom Nephi’s oracle uses.

Another intimation that Nephi is specifically thinking in terms of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies is that Nephi’s oracle also quotes and co-opts the language of Isaiah 28: “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”; “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” (Isaiah 28:10, 13). It also seems very likely that Nephi saw in Isaiah’s language a verbal picture of divine “adding.”

Against the backdrop of the Lord’s statement “unto him that receiveth will I give more, and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:30), it is interesting to consider Moroni’s words to the Lord in Ether 12:35: “Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and **give unto them who shall have more abundantly**.” Both prophetic statements have the latter-day Gentiles particularly in view (see 2 Nephi 29 and below); and both statements revolve around the issue of being willing to “have more” and the Lord’s willingness to give it. Thus in the broader context of 2 Nephi 25–30, Nephi’s allusion to divine “adding” in 2 Nephi 28:30 contributes to the symbolism of the name Joseph in terms of those who are willing to “receive” all that the Lord is willing to “add.”

Midrashic Use #10:

“At That Day When I Shall Proceed to Do a Marvelous Work Among Them” (2 Nephi 25:17; 29:1 ≅ Isaiah 29:14)

Nephi then pivots back to Isaiah 29:14 yet again. Here in 2 Nephi 29:1, Nephi’s second *Gezera Shawa* on Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 occurs, and he cites these passages as an oracle from the Lord himself. In this instance

62. Cf., e.g., NRSV 2 Samuel 12:8: “I gave you your master’s house, and your master’s wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, **I would have added as much more.**”

the order of the two passages is reversed (another example of Seidel’s Law⁶³): “But behold, there shall be many — at that day when **I shall proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may **set my hand again** [**wě`ôsîp yādî*; cf. *yôšîp ... yādî*] the second time to recover my people [Isaiah 11:11], which are of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 29:1). The oracle rewords the phraseology of Isaiah 11:11 from the third person into the first person (“that I may **set** my hand **again** the second time”). This has the practical effect of emphasizing the Lord’s intimate, personal involvement in initiating and carrying on the work of the gathering of Israel. We might cite the Lord’s personal visitation to Joseph Smith, which represents a concrete example of what Isaiah meant by his use of *yôšîp ... yādô* (Isaiah 11:11) and *hiněni yôšîp* (Isaiah 29:14).

Moreover, another practical effect of beginning this *Gezera Shawa* with the Isaiah 29:14 is that the Lord’s “proceeding” or “adding” to “do a marvelous work” makes the Lord’s initiation of the “marvelous work” — in hindsight, the First Vision, Moroni’s subsequent visitations, and the forthcoming of the “book that is sealed” (the Nephite records) — the departure point for the gathering of Israel. Nephi’s (and the Lord’s) repeated interpretation of Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 in light of each other signifies that no gathering of Israel would take place without the coming forth of the sealed book (eventually the Book of Mormon). Indeed, the express purpose of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is the gathering of Israel.⁶⁴

Midrashic Use #11:

“There Cannot Be Any More Bible”? (2 Nephi 29:2–3 ≅ Isaiah 5:26; 11:11–12 [cf. 2 Nephi 29:4, 6–7])

Nephi next records a significant permutation of the idea that the Lord “will add” or “will proceed do a marvelous work” by “adding” or “proceed[ing] to bring forth the words of the book.” In the immediate context of the aforementioned *Gezera Shawa* on Isaiah 29:14 (“I shall **proceed** [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work”) and Isaiah 11:11 (“that I may

63. See earlier discussion in this article.

64. Moroni, on the title-page of the Book of Mormon, describes the book’s *raison d’être* thus: “to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and **that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever** — And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

set my hand **again** [**wě'ōsīp yādī'*]), the Lord predicts that the Gentiles will respond to these “added” words from the “book that is sealed” with the declaration “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and **there cannot be any more Bible**” (2 Nephi 29:3).

In their present context, these words amount to an obtuse and ill-conceived refutation of the prophecies of Isaiah 29:14 and Isaiah 11:11, but they also represent a deceptive misinterpretation and misapplication of so-called “canon-formula” passages, like Deuteronomy 4:2 (cf. 5:22 [MT 22:18]); 12:32 [MT 13:1]; Proverbs 30:6; and Revelation 22:18–20. These passages constitute injunctions against “adding” to or “diminishing” from individual scriptural books or works and serve to delimit their content as future scribes copied them. In all of the aforementioned passages from the Hebrew Bible, the verb *yāsap* (“add”) is the key term. Much more could be said on this topic that I cannot enter into here (see further below). However, it suffices for the present to say that none of these passages remotely preclude the writing, collection, and preservation of divine oracles in the future or the production of additional, individual works of scripture.

Through Nephi, the Lord asks the Gentiles — especially Gentiles of the latter-day — several penetrating questions, anticipating the aforementioned protests against additional works of scripture. The first of these questions pertains to the anti-Jewish (i.e., antisemitic) attitudes and assumptions of those who insist that “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** [**yôdû 'et-hayyēhûdîm*] **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 29:4)

As noted elsewhere, the Lord’s question “And what thank they the Jews ... ?” constitutes a wordplay on the name Judah/Jews,⁶⁵ a name the Hebrew Bible associates with the verb *ydy/ydh*, “to praise,” “thank,” or “acknowledge,” or “to praise out of a feeling of gratitude.” The Lord expresses indignation towards Gentiles (perhaps especially Gentile “Christians”)

65. 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://www.mormoninterpreter.com/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism/>.

and the hypocrisy of declaring the all-sufficiency of scriptural texts whose authors' ethnic and religious origins many of these Gentiles revile.

In any case, the writing, collection, and preservation of scripture in times previous to Nephi's time, during Nephi's time, and in the future (i.e., additional scripture!) would occur through "the travails, and the labors, and the pains ... and [the] diligence" of the Jews. The Lord continues:

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and **we need no more Bible**. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that **there are more nations than one**? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I **bring forth my word** unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? (2 Nephi 29:6–7)

Here again we can clearly recognize thematic and lexical connections between Isaiah 29:14 and Nephi's midrash of Isaiah 29. Bearing in mind that the verb *yāsap* means to "add," "to do again," or "to do something more," the declamation "we need **no more Bible**" evokes the promise "I **will proceed** [*yôsīp*, add] to do a marvelous work"; and Nephi's earlier midrash of Isaiah 29:14, "the Lord God **shall proceed** [*yôsīp*, add] to bring forth the words of **the book**" (2 Nephi 27:24). The phrase "and I bring forth my word unto the children of men" (2 Nephi 29:7) recalls Nephi's earlier prophetic midrash on Isaiah, "Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed [*yôsīp*] to **bring forth the words of the book**" (2 Nephi 27:14), as well as Joseph the patriarch's prophecy regarding a future raised-up seer named "Joseph": "But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power **to bring forth my word** unto the seed of thy loins — **and not to the bringing forth my word only**, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them" (2 Nephi 3:11).

Midrashic Use #12:

"Wherefore Murmur Ye Because That Ye Shall Receive More of My Word?" (2 Nephi 29:8–9)

The penetrating questions subsequently continue as the Lord returns to the issue of Gentile complaints about the bringing forth of additional scripture. Nephi's oracle frames "receiving more" of God's word in terms of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).

One witness, according to that law, is insufficient to “establish” a “word” or “matter” (Hebrew *dābār*):

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that **the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, **I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.** And I do this **that I may prove unto many** that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that **I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure.** And because that **I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another;** for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. (2 Nephi 29:8–9)**

The expression “because that ye shall receive more of my word” plausibly represents an idiom like “because that ye shall add [*tôsîpû* or *tôsîpû*] to receive of my word [partitive].” Nephi’s return to the motif of the law of witnesses here, as in 2 Nephi 11 and 27, expands the idea of “more” scripture or “additional” scripture in terms of Deuteronomy’s legal requirement for “two or three witnesses” in capital cases (Deuteronomy 19:15; cf. 17:6). Indeed, legal language permeates 2 Nephi 29:8–9: “witness,” “testimony” (2 x), and “prove.” The Lord’s words, as preserved by Nephi, recall Nephi’s earlier appeal to Deuteronomy 19:15: “And now I, Nephi, **write more** of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. ... Wherefore, **by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word.** Nevertheless, **God sendeth more witnesses,** and he proveth all his words” (2 Nephi 11:2–3).

Here in 2 Nephi 29:8–9, as in 2 Nephi 11:2–3, Nephi transmutes the application of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15) into a form of “adding” or “writing more” scripture. Scriptural writers and even scriptural writings themselves become witnesses in the Lord’s “legal” cases with the human family, including final judgment (see especially 2 Nephi 33:14). Nephi’s interpretation of the coming forth of additional scripture as an application of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses represents another example of his sophisticated use of scripture.

**Midrashic Use #13:
 "Neither Need Ye Suppose That I Have Not Caused More
 to Be Written" (2 Nephi 29:10–14)**

The Lord's oracle to Nephi uses yet another midrashic permutation of the *yāsap* idiom in Isaiah 29:14 in which he further demolishes two common misassumptions: (a) that the "Bible" as embraced by the Gentiles (including latter-day Gentile Christians) would contain all divinely inspired writing and (b) that the Lord himself would never add or bring forth more divine writing beyond human notions of a closed "canon":⁶⁶

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible **ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.** For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that **they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world,** every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, **I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.** And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. 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**

66. See John W. Welch and David J. Whittaker, "Mormonism's Open Canon: Some Historical Perspectives on Its Religious Limits and Potentials," (Preliminary Report for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta, Georgia, November 1986), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/PreliminaryReports/Set%205/Prelim%20Rep/Welch%20and%20Whittaker,%20Mormonisms%20Open%20Canon,%201986.pdf>. This report was in response to W. Davies, "Reflections on the Mormon Canon," *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (January–July 1986): 44–66.

and against my people, who 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 29:10–14)

The presupposition that the Lord will not or does not “add” to existing scripture from any arbitrary point in time represents a gross misunderstanding of texts like Deuteronomy 4:2 (“**Ye shall not add** [*lō’ tōsipû*] unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it”); Deuteronomy 5:22 [MT 5:18] (“These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, ... **and he added no more** [*wēlō’ yāsap*]. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me”); 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 from it”); Revelation 22:18–19, etc. — the so-called “canon” — formula (this will be treated in much greater depth elsewhere).⁶⁷ Each of these Deuteronomic iterations of the “canon”-formula, if taken out of context and interpreted literally, might be construed as precluding any additional Deuteronomic text, to say nothing of additional books of scripture. It is sufficient to note here, however, that the verb *yāsap* stands at the heart of the Hebrew Bible texts that preclude human alteration of divine revelation, as well as those that describe the forthcoming of additional scripture in terms of iterative divine action.

It is divine prerogative, of course, rather than human, that governs the coming forth of additional revelation and scripture.⁶⁸ Note how the verb *yāsap* also functions in the book of Jeremiah’s account of Jehoiakim’s attempted suppression of divine revelation. After Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had ordered burned a prophecy by the prophet Jeremiah that he disliked (see Jeremiah 36:1–26), the Lord ordered the burned scroll to be reproduced with additional material (see Jeremiah 36:27–31). The pericope concludes with the following statement: “Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: **and there were added** [*nōsap*] besides unto them many like words” (Jeremiah 36:22). The result of the attempted suppression of divine, written revelation was “more” or “additional” revelation. Again, the name Joseph transparently means

67. Matthew L. Bowen, “There Cannot Be Any More Bible”? The Abuse of the So-called Canon Formula and Joseph Smith” (forthcoming).

68. See, e.g., 2 Peter 1:21: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” JST 1 Peter 1:20 adds, “no prophecy of the scriptures is given of any private will of man.”

“May he [God] add”; a greater irony, in view of what Isaiah 29:14 foretells in terms of the Lord “adding” (*yôšîp*) to bring forth written scripture and in view of what Joseph Smith’s critics charge him with, is scarcely imaginable. It is accurate to say that the bringing forth of “additional” divine revelation, especially scriptural revelation, constituted Joseph Smith’s life’s work — most appropriate for someone named “Joseph.”

We should also note here Nephi’s further development of the idea of additional scripture as fulfillment of the Deuteronomic law of witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15, cf. 17:6). The Jews, the Nephites, and the other tribes of Israel “shall write the words which I shall speak unto them.” Here Nephi further records that the Lord’s statement that out of these scriptural “books” the Lord would judge the world. In other words, each independent scriptural witness becomes a witness at the final judgment, fulfilling the requirement of two or three witnesses. Nephi makes this point even more explicit at the close of his writings (2 Nephi 33:14).

Last, Nephi’s revelation warns those who “fight against my word and against my people” that the Lord will remember his covenant with Abraham. Those who “fight against [the Lord’s] word and against [his] people” become the equivalent of those who “fight against Zion” (Isaiah 29:1–2, 7–8) and thus subject to the woes and consequences pronounced upon those who “fight against the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 14:13) and “fight against God and the people of his church” (2 Nephi 25:14; cf. 2 Nephi 26:12).

Midrashic Use #14:

“Written unto the Gentiles, and Sealed up Again”

(2 Nephi 30:3 \cong 2 Nephi 27:14, 22 \cong Isaiah 29:14

[2 Nephi 27:30 \cong Isaiah 29:19; cf. 2 Nephi 30:17–18])

The final example — or final examples — of the midrashic use of *yâsap* comes in 2 Nephi 30. Nephi closes out his midrash of Isaiah 29 with a prophecy that again evokes the language of Isaiah’s prophecy:

And now, **I would prophesy somewhat more** concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after **the book of which I have spoken shall come forth**, and be written unto the Gentiles, and **sealed up again** unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe **the words which are written**; and **they shall carry them forth** unto the remnant of our seed. (2 Nephi 30:3)

Nephi’s expression “I would prophesy somewhat more” represents a near inversion of a statement that occurs in the Book of Amos,

when Amaziah, the priest at Bethel demands that the prophet Amos “**prophecy not again any more** [lō’ tōsîp ‘ôd lēhinnābē’] at Beth-el” (Amos 7:13). Nephi’s plausible use of the *yāsap*-idiom thus dovetails nicely with what follows. His subsequent statement that the “book of which I have spoken,” — i.e., the words of the “book that is sealed” — would be “written unto the Gentiles and sealed up again” specifically recalls the commandment given unto the translator — i.e., Joseph Smith — “then shalt thou seal up the book again” in 2 Nephi 27:22, which itself appears to adapt or permute the *yāsap*-idiom used in Isaiah 29:14: The Lord “proceed[s] [yōsîp] to do a marvelous work” — that is, “proceed[s] [yōsîp] to bring forth the words of the book” (2 Nephi 27:14) and after the “book ... come[s] forth” the Lord commands the translator, the future “Joseph,” to “seal up the book **again** [Hebrew *tōsîp*, ‘shalt thou ... again’ or ‘thou shalt ... again’]” (2 Nephi 27:22). Again, Nephi prophetically alludes to the future translator’s name, Joseph, his instrumentality in the Lord’s “proceeding” (*yōsîp*), and the details of what that “marvelous work” or “marvelous work and a wonder” involved.

Moreover, the phrase “the words which are written” alludes to Nephi’s adaption of Isaiah 29:14 foretelling the Lord’s “proceed[ing] [yōsîp] to bring forth the words of the book.” It also echoes the description “the things which shall be written” (2 Nephi 28:2). Moreover, the phrase “there shall be many which shall believe the words that are written” refers to the “meek” who will “increase” (Isaiah 29:19; 2 Nephi 27:30). The “meek” will “increase,” in part, by service of those who “carry them [i.e., the words which are written] forth unto the remnant of our seed” (2 Nephi 30:3).

Nephi concludes his lengthy midrash and commentary on Isaiah 29 with the following prophecy:

There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; and **there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed**. Wherefore, **all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall at that day be revealed**; and Satan **shall** have power over the hearts of the children of men **no more**, for a long time. And now, my beloved brethren, I make an end of my sayings. (2 Nephi 30:17–18)

Nephi reminds us that all “sealed” documents on the earth and their contents will be revealed, including (of course) the sealed book that he discussed at length and eventually all of its contents. One practical effect

of having "all things which have been revealed ... [being] revealed" again will be that Satan "shall ... no more" (cf. Hebrew *lō' yôśîp*) have power over the human family. Nephi thus recalls his earlier citation of "the prophet" (Isaiah), who prophesied "that the time speedily cometh that Satan **shall** have **no more** power over the children of men" (1 Nephi 22:15; cf. Isaiah 52:1; 2 Nephi 8:24; 3 Nephi 20:36; see also Isaiah 51:22; 2 Nephi 8:24). The blessings promised in Isaiah 11:1–9 (and 2 Nephi 30:8–16) and Isaiah 29:17–24 will come to a full flowering.

Conclusion:

"He Shall Increase Their Seed" (Helaman 7:24; cf. Isaiah 37:31)

Near the end of his personal writings and following his adumbration of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 30–31), Nephi briefly returns to the "adding" motif. Nephi felt unable to "add" or "give more" doctrine beyond what he had heretofore taught:

Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and **there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.** And now I, Nephi, **cannot say more**; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be. (2 Nephi 32:6–7)

Again and again, Nephi expresses his deep concern over the future of his posterity⁶⁹ and that of his brothers⁷⁰ and that portion of his posterity who would survive among the Lamanites — all descendants of "Joseph." Nephi recognized that "unbelief, ... wickedness, and ... ignorance" (including hardness of heart), such as would exist among the latter-day Gentiles, inevitably precluded the reception of additional revelation.

Nephi and his successors, rather, hoped that their posterity, as descendants of Joseph, would believe and obey the "additional" scripture claim, the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, regardless of whether the Gentiles accepted such scripture. As

69. See especially 1 Nephi 15:4–5; 2 Nephi 33:3; see also 1 Nephi 6:6; 1 Nephi 12:15, 19–20; 2 Nephi 25:21; 26:15.

70. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 12:15, 19–20; 13:10–14; 38–39; 2 Nephi 26:15.

the Psalmist declared in one of Israel’s temple-hymns:⁷¹ “The Lord **shall increase you more and more** [*yōsēp ‘ălēkem*], you and your children” (Psalm 115:14). Similarly, Moses reiterated to Israel: “The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The Lord God of your fathers **make you** a thousand times so many **more** [*yōsēp ‘ălēkem*, “add upon you”] as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)” (Deuteronomy 1:11).

But Nephi and his successors knew that such covenant promises and blessings do not amount to covenant entitlements. Nephi the son of Helaman testified against the degenerate Nephites of his time, prophesying that the Lord would “increase” the “seed” of their Josephite brethren, the Lamanites, well beyond the destruction of the Nephites: “For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days **and increase their seed**, even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shalt repent” (Helaman 7:24). The Lord leaves a remnant that perchance the descendants of the destroyed will return and repent, as Isaiah so often testified: “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah **shall again** [*wěyāsēpâ*] take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (Isaiah 37:31).

The Lord will “give more” to those who willingly receive that which he offers and obey that which he commands. The Lord has “added” or “proceeded” (*yōsīp*) to bring forth additional scripture (Isaiah 29:14; 2 Nephi 27:14, 26), so that “the meek [can] increase [*wěyospû*] their joy in the Lord” (Isaiah 29:19); or so that “the meek also shall increase [*wěyospû*], and their joy shall be in the Lord” (2 Nephi 27:30). The blessings in store for those who persistently receive what the Lord “adds” and obey it until the end of their lives can be summed up no better than the Lord does in the premortal council in heaven as recorded in the book of Abraham: “They who keep their second estate **shall have glory added upon** their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26).

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71. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 45.

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 assistant 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). He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.*

