

FROM THE EGYPTIAN TEMPLE THROUGH THE HEBREW BIBLE TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

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My first day as a student at BYU I took a class from Stephen Ricks; it was his first day teaching at BYU. His was easily the most memorable course of that first semester. From him I eventually took Modern Hebrew, Ugaritic, Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and ancient temples. I regret not being able to take a class from him on the subject on which he literally wrote the book: Epigraphic South Arabic. Over the years Stephen Ricks has served me in various capacities: professor, mentor, classmate, boss, benefactor, house-guest, co-author, colleague, collaborator, and even student. He helped me through my first academic conference and my first international academic conference. Back when he was the committee in charge of the Nibley Fellowships, the fellowships had a greater success rate than they have ever had with any subsequent committee. Stephen has had a lengthened and quickened stride, a voracious appetite for learning languages, a bibliographic memory, and a contagious enthusiasm for his subjects. When I was a student many considered him the most likely successor to Hugh Nibley. It has proven something of a challenge to find a topic that covers both the breadth of both our association and shared interests, and so I have opted for something more modest in scope.

Einheitsübersetzung has “Ich eile voran auf dem Weg deiner Gebote./ den mein Herz machst du weit.” More flexible translations include the Luther Bible (“Wenn du mein Herz tröstest, so laufe ich den Weg deiner Gebote”), the Anchor Bible (“I shall run the way of your commandments, if you enlarge my understanding”)² and the World English Bible (“I run in the path of your commandments, for you have set my heart free”). The problem is that widening the heart seems to be an idiom of some sort, and the meaning behind it is somewhat opaque and thus needs to be investigated.

A HEBREW HAPAX

The immediate philological method to solve the problem is to look to other places in the Hebrew Bible where the idiom occurs. Using the hiphil form of the verb, one speaks of expanding borders (*gebûlîm*),³ or a place (e.g., Gad),⁴ or even a bed (*miškāb*).⁵ Sometimes the verb takes no object.⁶ The niphil form is also used of places, like pastures (*kar*).⁷ But these usages are with geography, not body parts. With parts of the body, typically the qâl form of the verb is used. Thus one can widen the mouth (*pê*), meaning “to exult over,”⁸ or one’s steps (*ša‘ad*),⁹ or one’s heart (*lēbāb*), meaning “to be proud,”¹⁰ or one’s soul (*nepeš*), meaning the same.¹¹ The idiom with the hiphil does not seem to mean the same thing as the idiom with the qâl, or the verse would mean “I will run in the way of thy commandments because

2. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III 101–50* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 162.

3. Exod. 34:24; Deut. 12:20; 19:8; Amos 1:13.

4. Deut. 33:20; Isa. 5:14; 30:33; 54:2.

5. Isa. 57:8.

6. Gen. 26:22; Ps. 4:2 (KJV 4:1); Prov. 18:16.

7. Isa. 30:23.

8. 1 Sam. 2:1; Ps. 35:21; 81:11 (KJV 81:10); Isa. 57:4.

9. 2 Sam. 22:37; Ps. 18:37 (KJV 18:36).

10. Ps. 101:5; Prov. 21:4; Isa. 60:5. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 1212, (hereafter cited as *HALOT*); Bartelmus, “Rāḥab,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterwick, Helmer Ringgren, and Hainz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 13:429.

11. Prov. 28:25; *HALOT*, 1212.

thou hast made me haughty.” So, it is hypothesized that it must mean to have “a liberating effect.”¹² Or enlarging the heart is thought to mean to “free it of distressing worries so that all energies are concentrated upon loyal obedience”¹³ or to give “it liberation, joy, confidence and insight.”¹⁴ None of this speculation has a foundation on evidence.

The closest one comes to the idiom being used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible is Psalm 25:17, but although the hiphil form is used, the object is not the heart but the troubles of the heart (*šārôt lebābî*), and thus the idiom is not the same. Expanding troubles are not the same as an expanding heart.

As a result, the expression is a hapax legomenon (an expression that occurs only once) in the Hebrew Bible. It is thus little wonder that the idiom has occasioned such difficulty in understanding.

SEMITIC SOURCES

In considering Hebrew hapax legomena, it is standard procedure to look for cognate expressions in other Semitic languages. Sometimes a common Semitic expression may be rare in one language but well attested and well understood in a cognate language. Comparative Semitics thus becomes a source for elucidating otherwise intractable expressions.

Looking to other Semitic languages for assistance, we find that Akkadian does not use the root **rḥb*—possibly because the expected form **rēbu* might be confused with *rebû*, meaning “fourth”¹⁵—but uses a verb from a different stem: *rapāšu* “to be wide.”¹⁶ For the meaning of “to widen, to expand” Akkadian can use either the D-stem or the rarer Š-stem: *rappušu* or **šurpušu*. But Akkadian uses *rappušu* to talk about enlarging buildings,¹⁷ territories,¹⁸ and descendants.¹⁹ The body part enlarged is the

12. Bartelmus, “Rāḥab,” 431.

13. A. Cohen, *The Psalms* (London: Soncino, 1945), 398.

14. *HALOT*, 1211.

15. CAD R 222–24, s.v. *rebû*.

16. CAD R 153–58, s.v. *rapāšu*.

17. CAD R 156–57.

18. CAD R 157.

19. CAD R 157–58.

ears (*uznu*) as a metaphor for intelligence.²⁰ So Akkadian is a dead end because it does not have this idiom.

Later Aramaic at least has the verb *raḥab*, but the idiom does not seem to have been used.²¹

The Arabic verb *raḥaba*, which means “to be wide, ample, spacious, or roomy,” is used for places, things, lands, or countries.²² It is the source of the Arabic greeting: *marḥaban!* Someone who is *raḥīb el-ṣadri* “wide of breast” is thought to be “without care, . . . liberal, munificent, or generous.”²³ This idiom is somewhat removed from the one used in Hebrew. Would one run in the road of the commandments because they have been made carefree?

Comparative Semitics thus also leads to a comparative dead end.

AN EGYPTIAN TEMPLE IDIOM

What makes the most sense in the context is the idiom being borrowed as a calque from Egyptian. In Egyptian the idiom *ʾwi ib* is literally “to enlarge the heart,” but it means “to have joy.”²⁴ The noun phrase derived from this expression, *ʾwt-ib* “expansion of the heart,” is the term for “joy.”²⁵ Both idioms are attested about as early as Egyptian is attested.²⁶

In the vignette for Book of the Dead chapter 106, the deceased is seen offering the expression *ʾwt-ib* “joy.” The title of the text already in the Eighth

20. CAD R 158.

21. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903), 1465.

22. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1867), 3:1051.

23. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 3:1051.

24. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, ed. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, 5 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1926–1931), I 4.

25. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, I 4.

26. Jochem Kahl, *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 1:1; Rainer Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch I: Altes Reich und Erste Zwischenzeit* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 4.

teenth Dynasty is “chapter of offering joy (*ʿwt-ib*) in Memphis.”²⁷ If the actual text seems to have nothing to do with joy per se,²⁸ it is because it is corrupt. The earlier Middle Kingdom version of the text, Coffin Text 179, is for “giving offerings (*ʿwt*) in Heliopolis,”²⁹ which makes much more sense in relation to the actual text, which does deal with the giving of offerings.³⁰

The expression *ʿwt-ib* has an affinity with the Egyptian temple. Most of its appearances come in temple texts. It appears in the temple of the Third Dynasty king Djoser.³¹ As early as the Eleventh Dynasty temple of Mentuhotep II, on the outer wall of the sanctuary the people are told, “Put all life, endurance, dominion, health, and joy (*ʿwt-ib*) at the feet of this god (the king).” It is also noteworthy that this inscription is found on the king’s throne just under his feet.³² In a ritual embrace, the goddess, whose

27. BD 106, in R. Lepsius, *Der Tottenbuch der Ägypter* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1842), XXXVIII.

28. “O great one, lord of offerings, O great one, foremost of the upper houses, you who give bread to Ptah, please give me bread, and please give me beer. My breakfast is a shank with a roasted loaf. O ferryman of the southern sky, please bring me those bread loaves of your district, like when your father, the great one left the boat of god.” BD 106 from Papyrus BM EA 10477, in Günther Lapp, *The Papyrus of Nu* (London: British Museum, 1997), plate 21; cf. Stephen Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight—prt m hrw: The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: Golden House Publications, 2013), 234.

29. CT 179, in Adriaan de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 3:66.

30. CT 179, in de Buck, *Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 3:65–72 (most manuscript S10C): “Bringing bread in Heliopolis, giving offerings in Heliopolis, not eating excrement in Heliopolis, appearing as a praised god, and a great spirit: O great offerings, foremost of the upper houses, to whom bread and invocation offerings come forth in Heliopolis, O you who give bread to Ptah in Heliopolis, please give me bread, so that he may feast on a shank and a roasted loin. O ferryman of the southern sky, please bring me those legs like the great father when I leave like the boat of god.” There has clearly been some editing of this text, and it is apparent already in the manuscript tradition of the Middle Kingdom.

31. Kahl, *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch*, 1:1.

32. Dieter Arnold, *Der Tempel des Königs Mentuhotep von Deir el-Bahari: Die Wandreliefs des Sanktuaries* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1974), Tafel 10.

identity is missing in the lacuna, tells the king, “I have given you all life and dominion, all health, and all joy (*ʿwt-ib*) forever.”³³

By the time of Demotic, both the verb *ʿw* and the noun *ib* have largely disappeared.³⁴ In the bilingual Rhind papyri, every hieratic instance of *ib*

33. Arnold, *Die Wandreliefs des Sanktuars*, Tafel 28.

34. But note its exceptional appearance in the second century, Old Coptic papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, British Museum EA 10808 line 10 as *eri* and later on the same line with a suffix pronoun as *γβϙ*. For the transcription see Jürgen Osing, *Der spätägyptische Papyrus BM 10808* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), 259, 248. Unfortunately, Osing’s translation of the passage is nonsense: “Du, der du heiß bist (Hitze verbreitest) durch Verursachen von Feuersglut im Leib und im Herzen von NN und eines jeglichen Menschen, der in diesem ganzen Land ist, insbesondere von dem, dessen Herz du mir zuwendest und dessen Herz du mir lost, und aller Menschen, aller *pʿw.t*, aller *rḥw.t*, aller *hn-mmw.t* und aller übrigen, die mich sehen und meinem Namen hören werden an diesem Tag in dieser Stunde! Nicht soll sich erneuen ein ‘Aufruhr’ wegen der Vertreibung”; Osing, *Der spätägyptische Papyrus BM 10808*, 49. The same must unfortunately be said of the translation in Val Hinckley Sederholm, *Papyrus British Museum 10808 and Its Cultural and Religious Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 59–62: “... around the heart(?) of So-and-so and that of every man who is in this land to the border thereof. With enchanting words, may you divert his attention for my sake. May you distract (or relax) his heart for my sake—and that of every man, every Noble, every Commoner, every member of the Solar Priesthood, and anyone else who might look at me or hear my name today, or this hour, or this same year (thereof or in which these things are concerned).” For a much more correct translation see Joachim Friedrich Quack, review of Sederholm, *Papyrus British Museum 10808*, in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 104 (2009): 32: “Mögest du Liebe bewirken im Leib und im Herzen des NN sowie jedes Mannes, der in diesem ganzen Land ist in Ewigkeit(?). Mögest du mir sein Herz zuwenden, mögest du sein Herz für mich lösen sowie das von jedem Mann, jedem Edlen, jedem Geringen, jedem „Sonnenvolk“ und jedem Sonstigen, die mich sehen werden und die meine Namen hören werden an diesem Tag, in dieser Stunde in diesem Jahr und dem ihm zugehörigen.” Quack’s translation is not above criticism—for example, the use of the form *teε* as an imperative for the verb *di* is unusual, although I am fully aware of hieroglyphic and Demotic exceptions, and Quack himself was not entirely satisfied with taking *ḿεμετε* as “in Ewigkeit(?)”—but it is the best understanding of the text that has been achieved thus far.

as a noun by itself has been replaced in Demotic by *h't*.³⁵ The idiom *wt-ib* has been replaced by Demotic *ršy*,³⁶ the ancestor to Coptic ραγε “to rejoice,” which is used to translate Greek *χαίρειν, επιχαίρειν, ιλαρύνειν*, and *εὐφραίνειν*, and as a noun “gladness, joy,” translating Greek *χαρά, χαρμονή, χαρμοσύνη, γέλωσ, εὐφροσύνη*, and *ιλαρότης*.³⁷ So the translation of “joy” for the Egyptian expression is certain.

There is, however, more to the idiom than just establishing its basic meaning. The context in which the expression occurs is important. Because the usage is so vast, I will limit myself to one site from each major time period that overlaps with the Hebrew Bible.

The Twelfth Dynasty white chapel of Sesostri I at Karnak is the only completely surviving Middle Kingdom shrine. In the white chapel at Karnak, joy is something given to men by the gods. One approaches the temple from the east, and the bottom lines of the façade list joy among the gifts to the king.³⁸ On the south façade of the temple, joy is given so that the god might give the king salvation (*di-‘nh*).³⁹ The connection with salvation is continued on the architraves.⁴⁰ It appears on some offering scenes⁴¹ but not others.⁴² It does not appear on the initiation scenes where the king is brought to the temple,⁴³ or brought toward the god,⁴⁴ but does appear in scenes where the king is brought into the presence of the god,

35. Georg Möller, *Die beiden Totenpapyrus Rhind des Museum zu Edinburg* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), 39*.

36. Möller, *Die beiden Totenpapyrus Rhind*, 37*.

37. Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), 308–9.

38. Pierre Lacau and Henri Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1969), pl. 2.

39. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 3. For the interpretation of the Egyptian expression *di-‘nh*, see John Gee, “A New Look at the *di-‘nh* Formula,” in *Acts of the Tenth International Congress of Demotic Studies*, ed. Mark Depauw and Yanne Broux (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 73–82.

40. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 6 B 2.

41. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 13, 21, 26, 31, 35–36, 38.

42. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 15, 20, 22–24, 27, 32–34, 41.

43. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 13.

44. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 25, 40.

especially in those cases where no one stands between the king and the god.⁴⁵ It is associated with the ritual embrace where the god grants life and salvation to the king.⁴⁶

Sesostris I shows a pattern that goes back before the date of Abraham, but the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu comes only just after the date of Moses.⁴⁷ In Medinet Habu, the initiation scenes do not mention joy,⁴⁸ with one exception.⁴⁹ When one enters the presence of the god, however, it changes. One of the large scenes flanking the doorway to the sanctuary illustrates this well. The gods lead the king to see the god whom they call his father.⁵⁰ One of the gods announces, “I will open every good path for you so that I might conduct you to see your father.”⁵¹ Then the

45. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 16, 28, 30.

46. Lacau and Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris Ier à Karnak*, pl. 12, 29. Pl. 37, 39 are the exception.

47. One of the anonymous reviewers objected to using the Medinet Habu temple because they described it as a funerary temple. There are a number of problems with this objection. If we compare the supposedly funerary temple with the supposedly nonfunerary temple of Karnak across the Nile we find that in both cases the scenes show the king worshipping the gods. In neither case is the king worshipped. Thus the decoration is not funerary in either case. The objection also shows an ignorance of the recent literature that shows a blurring of the lines between funerary and cultic religion. See Alexandra von Lieven, “Book of the Dead, Book of the Living: BD Spells as Temple Texts,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 98 (2012): 249–67; John Gee, “The Use of the Daily Temple Liturgy in the Book of the Dead,” in *Totenbuch-Forschungen: Gesammelte Beiträge des 2. Internationalen Totenbuch-Symposiums, Bonn, 25. bis 29. September 2005*, ed. Burkhard Backes, Irmtraut Munro, and Simone Stöhr (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 73–86; Geraldine Pinch, “Redefining Funerary Objects,” in *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*, ed. Zahi Hawass and Lyla Pinch Brock (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 2:443–47.

48. Medinet Habu V 251, 252, 290, 313.

49. Medinet Habu V 256, 257.

50. Medinet Habu V 290 7.

51. Medinet Habu V 291 15. The connection between joy and seeing god is also picked up in the Book of the Dead: “I have come to see my father, Osiris, O lord of red-cloth, who has power over joy (another says “who opposes the heart”).” BD 99, in Lepsius, *Totenbuch der Ägypter*, Tafel XXXV.

king is brought into the presence of the god and the god's family. On the small inscription surrounding the shrine joy is mentioned twice.⁵² It is in the ritual embrace where the king is granted joy and salvation.⁵³

Complete Egyptian temples from the time period of the Israelite monarchy are rare. In the Edifice of Taharqa, the granting of joy has moved all the way forward to the washing preliminary to the initiation.⁵⁴ It is not mentioned in the initiation.⁵⁵ But when the king is ushered into the presence of the god, he is given salvation and joy.⁵⁶ Significantly, the same god who leads Ramses III on the path also leads Taharqa on the path and gives him joy.⁵⁷

THE PATH

In Egypt, the path or way of god denoted “the right way, the way of life pleasing to god.”⁵⁸ This particular articulation of the way of god begins in the late New Kingdom. So at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty the high priest of Onuris, Anhurmoose, says, “I was one who went on the path of god, without transgressing the course that he set out.”⁵⁹

One of the clearest articulations of the path of god comes from the inscription of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty prince Khaliut (*H'rwiwti*) at Gebel Barkal. The prince, a rough contemporary of Isaiah, says, “I did not lie, which is an abomination of the gods. I did not rob men. I did not do evil. My heart did not transgress against some of the poor. I did not kill a man wrongfully while his crime did not occur. I did not take a bribe to do evil. I did not deliver a slave to the hand of his lord. I did not commit adultery

52. Medinet Habu V 291.

53. Medinet Habu V 338.

54. Richard A. Parker, Jean Leclant, and Jean-Claude Goyon, *The Edifice of Taharqa by the Sacred Lake of Karnak* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1979), pl. 7.

55. Parker, Leclant, and Goyon, *Edifice of Taharqa*, pl. 8.

56. Parker, Leclant, and Goyon, *Edifice of Taharqa*, pl. 10.

57. Parker, Leclant, and Goyon, *Edifice of Taharqa*, pl. 7.

58. Günther Vittmann, *Altägyptische Wegmetaphorik* (Wien: Institut für Ägyptologie, 1999), 54–64.

59. KRI VII 227; cf. Vittmann, *Altägyptische Wegmetaphorik*, 55.

with a man's wife. I did not judge falsely. I did not trap the birds of the gods. I did not slaughter the flocks of the gods. I did not take the things of the gods but I gave offerings to all the gods and goddesses. I gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked. I did these things on the earth because I was on the path of god, staying away from what they abhor so that I might achieve a good end for my children after me in this land forever and ever."⁶⁰ The prince outlines specifically that the path of god was intimately connected with keeping the commandments.

In contrast, a wicked Pharaoh is said to be one who "did not exist on the path of god."⁶¹ So in Egypt, joy—as the widening or expansion of the heart (*ʿwt-ib*) —is associated with going on the path that leads to the temple and into the presence of god, who is "the lord of joy."⁶² That path is keeping the commandments. Joy comes as a result of following the path that leads to the temple. This is the same context as is found in Psalm 119. As a calque on an Egyptian expression, Psalm 119:32 would mean, "I will run on the path of your commandments because you have brought me joy." The similar contexts and associations in expressions between the Psalm and the Egyptian conceptions of a similar time argue for understanding the Hebrew expression as a borrowing from Egyptian. The only explicit connection that is lost in Hebrew is the connection to the temple, which might be preserved in the location where the Psalms were recited.⁶³

60. Gebel Barkal stele 52, lines 4–9, in M. B. Reisner, "Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal," *ZÄS* 70 (1934): 40; cf. Vittmann, *Altägyptische Wegmetaphorik*, 56.

61. Demotic Chronicle 4/7, in Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914), Tafel III; cf. Janet H. Johnson, "The Demotic Chronicle as a Statement of the Theory of Kingship," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 13 (1983): 69; Sandra Lippert, *Einführung in die altägyptische Rechtsgeschichte* (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2012), 4.

62. Christian Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 3:559–61.

63. The Mishnah quotes from Ps. 119 only in mAbot 4:1, 6:9. In neither of those places is a connection made to the temple.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon also uses variations of this idiom. These include not just uses of the idiom but also expansions of the idiom and playing off it as well.

This preservation of the idiom is an indication that it was found upon the plates of brass that Nephi brought with him. Mosiah noted that “it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time” (Mosiah 1:4). The plates of brass contained “the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. And . . . a genealogy of his fathers” (1 Ne. 5:11–14). They apparently also contained at least some of the Psalms since allusions to Psalm 95 fill the Book of Mormon.⁶⁴

The Book of Mormon includes a number of straight uses of the idiom of widening or expanding the heart. Of the Nephites who are delivered in battle, the text says, “Their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears, because of the great goodness of God in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies” (3 Nephi 4:33). On one occasion the missionary Ammon sees a missionary opportunity: “Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy” (Alma 17:29). Later in the same account, the text says of his convert, Lamoni, “Now, when he had said these words, his heart was swollen within him, and he sunk again with joy” (Alma 19:13). The connection with the Egyptian idi-

64. 1 Ne. 14:2, 6; Jacob 1:7–8; 6:5; Mosiah 26:3; Alma 8:11; 10:6; 12:10–11, 13, 33–37; 13:5–6, 12–13, 29; 16:17; 57:36; 60:13; Hel. 7:18; 10:13–14; 3 Ne. 21:22; 27:19; Ether 11:13; Moro. 7:3.

om is still there, but in Nephite records it needs an explanation. They have to explain that the hearts swelled with joy.

Book of Mormon authors have to explain that the hearts swell with joy because they might swell for other reasons: Moroni, for example, was “a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people” (Alma 48:12). One’s heart might swell with sorrow too: “When Nephi saw it, his heart was swollen with sorrow within his breast; and he did exclaim in the agony of his soul” (Helaman 7:6). “There were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the things which they had done” (Alma 24:24).

Another play on the idiom is for the soul to expand rather than just the heart. Of those who were converted by Abinadi and his father, Alma says, “Their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love” (Alma 5:9).

One of the more complicated plays on the expression occurs in one of the better-known passages in the book of Alma. Alma explains faith by comparing the word to a seed: “Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28). The swelling in the breast is equated with enlarging the soul and being delicious. This connects the expression with the Egyptian notions of the expansion of the heart.

Alma combines this idiom with the idea of planting the seed in the heart. While the cultural roots of the Nephites come out of the Old World, as preserved on the plates of brass, the events mostly took place in the New World, and it also exerted an influence on the culture. We find both influences mixed in the Book of Mormon, and often the Old World patterns are modified by New World ones. Even if we do not know exactly where in Mesoamerica the Book of Mormon took place, traits found in multiple Mesoamerican cultures can indicate general cultural patterns that prob-

ably apply to the setting. Alma's description of the seed is reminiscent of Sahagún's discussion of the Tlatzcan tree, which has been equated with both *Cupressus benthamii* and *Cupressus thurifera*: "Seeds scatter; they are sown; they swell, they swell up, they produce shoots."⁶⁵ Sahagún also says of this tree, "The tlatzcan is high, slender; it has branches. It is not forked; it is like a stone column. Its leaves cast a shadow. They are straight, slender, light blue, herb green, the color of the lovely cotinga. It has a terminal bud, a terminal growth. It has a blossom, it has blossoms, it has seeds. It is of pleasant, fragrant odor. It is a long-lived one, which does not become dormant, which does not rot, which is not eaten by worms nor gnawed. It is fine-textured, smooth, soft, compact."⁶⁶ While similar, this description does not match that of Alma since his tree bore edible fruit whereas the Tlatzcan does not.

The practice of planting a seed in the heart might have a reflex in Mesoamerica. In the Aztec feast of Chicome coatl during the fourth Aztec month (*Uey tocoztli*), young women made hearts out of ears of maize left over from the previous year, which were stored in granaries and then planted at seedtime.⁶⁷

The idea of the heart as a seed also appears in a song sung over Aztec warriors who died in battle: "Like fine burnished turquoise thou givest thy heart. / It cometh to the sun. / Thou wilt yet germinate / Wilt once again blossom / On earth."⁶⁸

The tree springing forth from the heart are also Mesoamerican motifs. Thus in the Popul Vuh the dead body of One Hunahpu is incorporat-

65. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, "General History of the Things of New Spain," Books 11, 6, 2, in Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson, *Florentine Codex. Book 11—Earthly Things* (Santa Fe: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1963), 107.

66. de Sahagún, "General History of the Things of New Spain," Books 11, 6, 2, in Dibble and Anderson, *Florentine Codex. Book 11—Earthly Things*, 106.

67. de Sahagún, "General History of the Things of New Spain," Books 2, 4 and 23, in Anderson and Dibble, *Florentine Codex. Book 2—The Ceremonies* (Santa Fe: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1981), 7, 64.

68. de Sahagún, "General History of the Things of New Spain," Book 6, in Dibble and Anderson, *Florentine Codex. Book 6—Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy* (Santa Fe: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1969), 115.

ed into the calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete*).⁶⁹ On the famous sarcophagus lid of K'inich Hanaab Pakal, “the cross-shaped tree of the worlds grows out of him,”⁷⁰ more specifically, from the area of his torso. On a Mayan tripod vessel now in Berlin, the deceased become trees that grow out of their bodies.⁷¹ Piedras Negras stele 11 depicts a human sacrificial victim with his heart ripped out and a plant growing out of the hole in his abdomen.⁷²

Alma combines the Mesoamerican image of the heart as a seed with the swelling of the seed as it sprouts and the Egyptian idiom of the expansion of the heart providing joy and delight to craft a metaphor for faith. Connecting faith with the heart is a very Mesoamerican practice since according to an Aztec idiom, religion is something that gushes out of the heart.⁷³

So this idiom, originally from Egyptian and calqued into Hebrew, has also found its way into “a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2).

A FINAL ODDITY

The one unaccounted-for problem with Psalm 119 is why does the passage use the verb “run” (’*ārûṣ*) rather than the expected “walk” (*halāk*)? That can be solved by looking at the rection of the two verbs (a concept I first learned from Stephen). The rection of a verb refers to how it takes its objects, whether it takes a direct or indirect object or an object mediated through a preposition and which prepositions it takes. The normal Hebrew

69. See Allen J. Christenson, *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (New York: O Books, 2003), 125–27.

70. Markus Eberl, “Death and Conceptions of the Soul,” in *Maya: Divine Kings of the Rain Forest*, ed. Nikolai Grube (Potsdam: H. F. Ullmann, 2001), 314.

71. Eberl, “Death and Conceptions of the Soul,” 312.

72. Conveniently in Linda Shele and Mary Ellen Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* (New York: Goerge Braziller, 1986), 112.

73. Andrés de Olmos, “Metaphors XXV,” in Judith M. Maxwell and Craig A. Hanson, *Of the Manners of Speaking That the Old Ones Had: The Metaphors of Andrés de Olmos in the TULAL Manuscript* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 104–5, 178.

expression is to walk in the way (*halāk be-derek*), which is common in the Hebrew Bible⁷⁴ and also the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷⁵ That, however, is the problem with the expression. Using the expression would destroy the acrostic in the Psalm because one would need to place the preposition in front of the first word in the sentence. On the other hand, the verb “run” (*rûš*) can occur with a preposition such as *l-*,⁷⁶ *el*,⁷⁷ *ad*,⁷⁸ or a directional *-h* indicating the destination,⁷⁹ but it can also take a direct object.⁸⁰ The use of the verb *rûš* with a direct object can also metaphorically mean “to accept.”⁸¹ This expression probably lies behind the phrase in the parable of the Prodigal Son: “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20 KJV). Thus the expression not only expresses the acceptance of the commandments and the eagerness to follow them but also preserves the acrostic.

CONCLUSION

An idiomatic rendering of Psalm 119:32 into English would be: “I accept the path of your commandments because you have brought me joy.” This scripture could serve as a summary of Stephen Ricks’s career.

We have seen how this Egyptian idiom in Hebrew has mostly been misunderstood by translators, but it has not always been understood by Egyptologists either. Back in 1867 when the earliest Egyptian dictionary was published, the Egyptian expression was not understood, and the correct reading of the sign *ʾw* had not been determined yet.⁸² It would be almost another thirty years before the correct reading of the sign and

74. 1 Sam. 15:20; 1 Kings 2:3; 3:14; 2 Kings 21:22; Prov. 1:15; 2:13, 20.

75. E.g., 1QS III, 20–21; IV, 11; IX, 9.

76. Gen. 18:2; 24:17; 29:13; 33:14; 2 Chron. 35:13; Prov. 1:16; Jer. 51:31.

77. Gen. 24:20, 29; Num. 16:47; 1 Sam. 3:5; Job 15:26.

78. 2 Kings 4:22; Isa. 42:4.

79. Josh. 7:22.

80. Gen. 41:14; 1 Sam. 17:17, 22, 48; 20:6; 2 Sam. 22:30; Ps. 18:29; 19:5.

81. Jer. 14:10; Hosea 8:13.

82. Heinrich Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1867), 1:5–6. Brugsch read it as *ʾfw*.

the expression was established.⁸³ How clever of Joseph Smith to correctly interpret an expression in an obscure passage of the Psalms, which is still largely misunderstood by translators, out of the mistranslation of the King James Bible, figure out that the idiom behind it was Egyptian, which would not be correctly understood until sixty-six years after the publication of the Book of Mormon and more than half a century after his death, and correctly salt it throughout the Book of Mormon claiming that it had Egyptian influence! A simpler explanation is that Book of Mormon authors, because of their training in some form of Egyptian, recognized the Egyptian idiom in the Psalm and used and expanded it by combining it with elements from the Mesoamerican world in which they found themselves.

83. W. Max Müller, "On a Hieroglyphic Sign," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 18 (1896): 187–91.