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“AND THEY SHALL BE HAD AGAIN”: ONOMASTIC ALLUSIONS TO JOSEPH IN MOSES 1:41 IN VIEW OF THE SO-CALLED CANON FORMULA

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *Moses 1:41 echoes or plays on the etymological meaning of the name Joseph — “may he [Yahweh] add,” as the Lord foretells to Moses the raising up of a future figure through whom the Lord’s words, after having been “taken” (away) from the book that Moses would write, “shall be had again among the children of men.” Moses 1:41 anticipates and employs language reminiscent of the so-called biblical canon formulas, possible additions to biblical texts meant to ensure the texts’ stability by warning against “adding” or “diminishing” (i.e., “taking away”) from them (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:22 [MT 5:18]; 12:32 [MT 13:1]; cf. Revelation 22:18–19). This article presupposes that the vision of Moses presents restored text that was at some point recorded in Hebrew.*

Without question, Joseph Smith’s translation and reception of additional scripture violated contemporary notions of scriptural canon.¹ To this day, a common protest registered against Joseph is that he “added to the Bible.”² Not infrequently, some Christian fundamentalists

1. The English term “canon” (not to be confused with “cannon”), as describing a fixed body or collection of texts, derives from Greek *kanōn* (κανών), “a straight rod,” which came to connote “a means to determine the quality of somet[hing]”; i.e., a “rule, standard”; “set of directions or formulation for an activity” thus, “assignment, formulation” and later, “rule of faith.” See Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick William Danker (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 507-8.

2. See, e.g., Howard W. Hunter, “No Man Shall Add to or Take Away,” *Ensign* (May 1981): 64; Monte S. Nyman, “Other Ancient American Records Yet to Come

still assert that Joseph did so in violation of the closing verses of Revelation, the closing book of the present-day canonical Christian Bible:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, **If any man shall add** [*epithē*]³ **unto these things, God shall add unto him** [*epithēsei*] **the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away** [*aphelē*] **from the words of the book** of this prophecy, **God shall take away** [*aphelēi*] his part [*meros*, share] out of the tree of life [= *tou xylou tēs zōēs* versus *tou biblou tēs zōēs* = Textus Receptus: book of life], and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18–19)

Ironically, Erasmus's Textus Receptus (1516)⁴ and its later editions, from which the KJV version of these verses is translated, represents a re-*addition* of text that had been *taken away* from or had otherwise gone missing from Erasmus's *Vorlage* for the Book of Revelation. In other words, the textual history and textual variants in Revelation 22:16–21, including the canon formula in vv. 18–19, bear witness to the unavoidable instability of a text that the canon formula — perhaps itself a later editorial addition — was intended to stabilize.

As has long been recognized,⁵ this canon formula warning has the single small book or document (Greek *biblion*) in view, rather than all the “books” *biblia* of the Bible (< Greek *biblia*, “books”), a collection that would

Forth,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 52–61, 79–80.

3. Here I am matching the translated KJV text to the relevant Greek terms from the Greek Nestle-Aland 28th edition text, rather than Erasmus's Textus Receptus, a later edition from which the KJV translation derives. The Nestle-Aland text represents a better text and a superior set of readings in any case.

4. Michael W. Holmes (*The New Interpreters Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Textus Receptus” [Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2009]) writes: “The term ‘Textus Receptus’ (‘received text’) designates the Greek text found in virtually all printed editions of the Greek NT from its initial publication by Erasmus [1516] through the late 19th century. ... Erasmus had only a small number of medieval manuscripts with which to work — in some instances, only one, and in a few [e.g., the final verses of Revelation] none, in which case he back-translated from Latin to Greek, creating a Greek text found in no known manuscript. His text, generally representative of the Byzantine [or ‘Majority’] textual tradition, nonetheless differs from it in over 1,800 places.” See further Thomas A. Wayment, “The Endings of Mark and Revelation,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 75–94.

5. See, e.g., David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17–22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 52C:1230–32.

not exist as a single entity for centuries after the composition of the Book of Revelation (cf. Doctrine and Covenants 20:35).⁶ Rather, Revelation 22:18–19 constitutes an example of the literary-textual phenomenon sometimes described (and oversimplified) as a “canon formula.”⁷ Regarding the biblical use of such “canon formulas,” Bernard Levinson writes:

The formula actually has a long pre-history in the ancient Near East, where it originally sought to prevent royal inscriptions, including law collections and treaties (cf. 1 Macc. 8:30), from being altered. In other contexts, it affirmed the adequacy of wisdom instruction. Only subsequently was it taken over by Deuteronomy’s Israelite authors and applied to the Mosaic Torah. The formula makes it clear that its intent is to preclude both literary and doctrinal innovation by safeguarding the textual status quo.⁸

The “canon formula” of Revelation 22:18–19 exhibits textual dependency on and adapts earlier instances of the biblical canon formula, including those attested in Deuteronomy: “Ye shall not add [*lō’ tōsipû*] unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought [*wēlō’ tigrē’û*] from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2); “These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more [*lō’ yāsāp*]” (Deuteronomy 5:22 [MT 18]); “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add [*lō’-tōsēp*] thereto, nor diminish [*wēlō’ tigrā’*] from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32 [MT 13:1]); “Add thou not [*al-tōsēp*] unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6). The first three examples, all from Deuteronomy, suggest a concern — whether original or added later in the textual tradition — with the stability of the textual tradition of the Book of Deuteronomy: adding and taking away from its text. In

6. D&C 20:35: “And we know that these things are true and according to the revelations of John, **neither adding to, nor diminishing from the prophecy of his book**, the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels.”

7. In this case, the form of the “canon formula,” because of its position in the book, constitutes a colophon. The content has been interpreted as “canon.” See the warning in epilogue in the Laws of Hammurabi, LH xlix 18-44 and the attached curses that follow (Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 136-40).

8. Bernard M. Levinson, “You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel,” *Numen* 50 (2003): 6-7.

this short note, I will attempt to show how the Lord's words to Moses as preserved in Moses 1:41 play on the meaning of the name Joseph ("May [Yahweh] add"),⁹ using that "add"/"take away" language of the biblical canon formula in a way that also harmonizes with the double etiology given for the name Joseph in Genesis 30:23–24.

"He Hath Taken Away"/"May He [Yahweh] Add"

Significantly, the concepts of "adding" and "taking away" (or diminishing, gathering in) are at the heart of the meaning of the name Joseph in the biblical tradition attributed to Moses.¹⁰ The Genesis narrative offers a chiasmic, double etiology for the name Joseph (*yōsēp*), the first half in terms of the Hebrew verb *ʾāsap* ("gather up," "to take away"), and the second in terms of the verb and somewhat homonymous antonym *yāsap* ("add," "increase," "do again, more"¹¹):

A And she conceived, and bare a **son**;

B and said, God **hath taken away** [*ʾāsap*] my reproach:

C And she called his name **Joseph** [*yōsēp*];

B' and said, **The Lord shall add** [*yōsēp*] to me

A' another **son**. (Genesis 30:23–24)

The verb *ʾāsap* primarily denotes "gathering in" or "assembling."¹² The *ʾāsap*-etiology, however, emphasizes the association between Joseph and the verb's secondary meaning, "taking away."¹³ The *yāsap*-etiology much more nearly conforms to the actual or "scientific" etymology of the name Joseph, "May he [Yahweh] add." The causative stem of *yāsap* from which the name Joseph is formed also has the more developed sense "to do something again," "to do something more," or "continue

9. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928), 212; Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 230–33.

10. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 173. He states: "These homiletic interpretations express two separate emotions — the immense relief experienced by the hitherto barren Rachel when she bears her first child, and her hope of another child to come."

11. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 418. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

12. See also, e.g., Genesis 42:17–18; 49:33–50:1; Exodus 3:16; 4:29. HALOT, 74.

13. See, e.g., Isaiah 4:1. HALOT, 74.

to do something."¹⁴ In addition to the etiological wordplay in Genesis 30:24, the biographical wordplay on Joseph in Genesis 37 follows this pattern. As we shall see, the wordplay in Moses 1:41 is similar.

"And They Shall Be Had Again Among the Children of Men"

As recorded in the Vision of Moses preserved in Moses 1, the Lord described to Moses a future in which the Lord's "words" would be "taken" — i.e., "taken away" — from "the book which [Moses would] write," including Moses's encounter with Satan after seeing Christ (see v. 23), presumably during the course of textual transmission:

A And in a day when **the children of men shall esteem** my words as naught

B and **take many of them from the book** which thou shalt write,

C behold, I will raise up another like unto thee;

B' **and they shall be had again**

A' **among the children of men** — among as many as shall believe (Moses 1:41).

The Lord employs chiasmic language that undeniably resembles and anticipates the aforementioned examples of the "canon formula." In the A and A' elements, the chiasm is bracketed by the "children of men" (Hebrew *bēnê 'ādām*) who "esteem [the Lord's] words as naught," but whose believing descendants¹⁵ will have those same words.

The central C element is the "raise[d] up" figure like Moses. It should not pass without notice that in Moses's Deuteronomy 18:15–19 prophecy, the "rais[ing] up" of "a Prophet like unto me" comes in response to ancient Israel's demand at Sinai, "**Let me not hear again** [*lō' 'ōsīp*] the voice of the Lord my God" (v. 16) — a demand for indirect guidance through prophetic intermediation rather than direct revelation.

This "raised-up" figure is enveloped in elements B and B' by the unauthorized "tak[ing]" of the Lord's words "from" Moses's "book" — the idea in the verbs *gāra'* and *'āsap* and the Lord's promise that "they shall be had again," the idea conveyed in the verb *yāsap*. It is thus interesting to consider this text and its structure in light of the presence of several aforementioned "canon formulas" in Deuteronomy, a work that contains a great deal of material traditionally attributed to Moses. Two of those "canon formulas" employ the verb *gāra'* ("diminish," "restrain," "withdraw," "remove") — a synonym of *'āsap* in the sense of

14. See HALOT, 418.

15. Those believing descendants would include "them that believe" mentioned in Moses 1:42.

“take away,” “gather up” — and all three employ the verb *yāsap* (“add”).¹⁶ The enveloping verbs hint at the identity of the raised-up figure.

The phrase “and they shall ... again” seemingly reflects (or at least resembles) the idiomatic Hebrew verb *yāsap* in its causative stem (*yôsîp*), whence the name Joseph (*yôsēp*) derives. We can thus detect the distinct use of the “add”/“take away” language of the “canon formula” as a wordplay on Joseph, the name of the one of whom the Lord said, “I will raise up another like unto thee [Moses].” The prophecy of Joseph in Egypt as preserved in 2 Nephi 3 — a form of which is, like the vision of Moses, preserved in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis — confirms this identification: “**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). The raised-up, Moses-like seer would bear the name Joseph: “**And his name shall be called after me** [Joseph]; **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 Nephi 3:15; JST Genesis 50:33).

As noted above, the “canon formulas” present in the Deuteronomic text possibly suggest the instability of a textual tradition that originated with Moses. The restored text of the vision of Moses (Moses 1; JST Genesis 1) represents a *re*-“addition” of words previously “take[n] ... from” or “diminish[ed] from” that textual tradition. Moses 1:41 anticipates not only unauthorized and uninspired additions to and subtractions from Moses’s “book,” but also the “canon formula” commands intended to stabilize the textual tradition in the future, any one of which (if indeed not original) represents an addition to the text. Thus, in the context of a figure specifically “raised up” so that Moses’s words that had been “taken” away “shall be had again,” we detect a clever, idiomatic wordplay on the meaning of the name Joseph (“may he [Yahweh] add,” “may he do [something] again”) in Moses 1:41 that evokes the language of the “take away”/“add” double etiology of Genesis 30:23–24.

We do well then, in the light of the foregoing, to consider the proposed wordplay on Joseph in terms of divine words that have been “take[n] (away)” and “shall be had again” (i.e., added) and the language of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 as exegetically juxtaposed and mutually interpreted by Nephi in 2 Nephi 25:17–18, 21:

16. See HALOT, 203–204.

And the Lord will **set** his hand **again** [Hebrew *yôšîp*, add his hand] the second time [quoting Isaiah 11:11] to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, **he will proceed** [*yôšîp*, add] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men [quoting Isaiah 29:14]. **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 *lô' yôšîpû* ('ôd)] for a Messiah to come... (2 Nephi 25:17-18; see also 2 Nephi 29:1)

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** [*yôšēp*] [in Egypt], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand. (2 Nephi 25:21)¹⁷

The issue of the biblical canon formulas and the divine *addition* and *re-addition* of scripture has important bearing on much of Nephi's writings in 2 Nephi 26–30.

Conclusion

The Lord's words in Moses 1:41 echo or play on the etymological meaning of the name Joseph — "may he [Yahweh] add" as he foretells a figure through whom the Lord's words, even after having been "taken" (away) from Moses's "book," "shall be had again [or, added] among the children of men." Moses 1:41 thus anticipates and makes use of the language of the so-called canon formulas, possible additions to biblical texts meant to ensure their stability by warning against "adding" or "diminishing" (i.e., "taking away") from them.

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17. 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; 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.

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