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“Arise from the Dust”: Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon

Part 2: Enthronement, Resurrection, and Other Ancient Motifs from the “Voice from the Dust”

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“ARISE FROM THE DUST”: INSIGHTS FROM DUST-RELATED THEMES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

PART 2: ENTHRONEMENT, RESURRECTION, AND OTHER ANCIENT MOTIFS FROM THE “VOICE FROM THE DUST”

Jeff Lindsay

Abstract: In light of Noel Reynolds’ hypothesis that some material in the Book of Moses may have been present on the brass plates that Nephi used, one may wonder if Nephi or other authors might also have drawn upon the use of chains in the Book of Moses. Further examination of this connection points to the significance of the theme of “dust” in Lehi’s words and the surrounding passages from Nephi and Jacob, where it can involve motifs of covenant keeping, resurrection, and enthronement. Recognizing the usage of dust-related themes in the Book of Mormon can enhance our understanding of the meaning and structure of several portions of the text. An appeal to the Book of Mormon’s use of dust may also help fill in some gaps in the complex chiasmic structure of Alma 36 (to be treated in Part 3) and add meaning to other portions of that “voice from the dust,” the Book of Mormon.

In Part 1 we pursued an insight from Noel Reynolds regarding the possible relationship between the Book of Moses and the brass plates. We not only found multiple additional concepts that may point to material on the brass plates in common with the Book of Moses (e.g., being *strong* like Moses, the usage of *misery*, Satan’s dominion over the

hearts of men, etc.) but also found an interesting potential wordplay in the Book of Mormon involving the concept of chains of darkness in the Enoch material of the Book of Moses. That wordplay within Lehi's final speech draws heavily upon the *rise from the dust* passage of Isaiah 52:1–2.¹ Lehi, in 1 Nephi 1:23, urges his sons to awake, to rise from the dust, and to “shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity,” where the darkness-related meaning of *obscurity* may link to the *chains of darkness* concept in the Book of Moses. Hebrew words related to dust, either ‘*aphar* (אֶפֶר²) or ‘*epher* (אֶפֶר³), could have been used by Lehi in this passage, and could have provided an interesting wordplay in light of Hebrew words related to obscurity: ‘*ôphel* (אֶפֶל⁴) or ‘*âphêl* (אֶפֶל⁵).

The Book of Mormon's use of dust as a theme strengthens its covenant-related message and highlights the role of the Redeemer. Here we will explore the symbolism of dust and find that its usage in the Book of Mormon offers much to contemplate, suggesting profound awareness of ancient symbols and patterns by the authors of the Book of Mormon, with hidden treasures to be uncovered from the intricate voice from the dust that was buried for centuries, awaiting our day. The Book of Mormon's use of dust reminds us that Christ the Redeemer created us from dust, that He came to earth in a tabernacle of dusty clay and humbly wiped the dust from the feet of others before breaking the chains of sin and death to give us power to come out of obscurity and rise from the dust, thereby sharing in the blessings of resurrection and eternal life.

1. Part 1 of this series includes a brief discussion of the objections that may be raised to the presence of Isaiah 52 and neighboring chapters in the Book of Mormon, since many scholars today claim that they were written by “Deutero-Isaiah” during or after the Exile, and thus could not have been present on the brass plates for Nephi and Lehi to incorporate. There are, in fact, good reasons to accept the minority position that the Isaiah material Nephi cites was available in his day.

2 HALOT, 861–862. See also Strong's H6083, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6083>.

3 HALOT, 80. See also Strong's H665, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H665&t=KJV>.

4 HALOT, 79. See also Strong's H652, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H652&t=KJV>.

5 HALOT, 79. See also Strong's H651, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H651&t=KJV>.

A Note on the Role of Hebrew in the Book of Mormon

In discussing Hebrew words that may be connected to the Book of Mormon, we will assume that the Hebrew language played an important role not only in the original writings of Isaiah and other sources on the brass plates but also in the spoken and written words of Lehi, Nephi, and other Book of Mormon writers. A difficulty with this assumption is that Nephi states that he made his 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). Exactly what this means is difficult to assess. Although arguably an absurd statement in Joseph Smith's day, it makes more sense with the availability of examples of ancient Jewish writings combining Hebrew and Egyptian elements, as discussed by Neal Rappleye.⁶ Rappleye proposes that Lehi and Nephi were drawing upon an established scribal tradition in which Jewish scribes wrote using Egyptian as the underlying language but with many Hebraic modifications.

Egyptian is a Afro-Asiatic language and is related both to Asiatic (or Semitic) languages such as Arabic, Ethiopic, and Hebrew and to North African (or Hamitic) languages such as Berber and Cushitic. It is distinct from Hebrew, so seeing additional meaning in the English Book of Mormon text based upon what we think the corresponding Hebrew may have been still leaves many questions. Nevertheless, the words quoted from Isaiah and the words spoken by, say, Nephi and Lehi to their families and followers would likely have been in Hebrew, and it is reasonable to assume that the written language used to preserve such things would also preserve important aspects of the underlying Hebrew, particularly key wordplays, word pairs, or other Hebraic elements that added to the richness of the meaning. Perhaps some key portions of the gold plates were not just in a modified Egyptian language but were written in Hebrew or in Hebrew using an Egyptian script to preserve literary elements or Hebraisms when the Egyptian would be inadequate. Given the richness of Hebraic elements, including Hebraic wordplays, word pairs, and word groups in the Book of Mormon, the writing system surely was capable of preserving such content. Exactly how the apparent Hebraic content was preserved in Nephi's writing system is still unclear. I'll leave this as an issue for future exploration and turn to the dust-related themes in the Book of Mormon, building upon the previous

6 Neal Rappleye, "Learning Nephi's Language: Creating a Context for 1 Nephi 1:2," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 151–159; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/learningnephislanguagecreatingacontextfor1nephi12>.

discussion from Part 1 of concepts related to Satan's tactics, chains of darkness, and encirclement.

Key Insights on Dust from Bokovoy and Brueggemann

After exploring the theme of darkness and chains apparently embedded in 2 Nephi 1:23, as discussed in Part 1, I searched for further commentary to see what others had found. This led to David Bokovoy's blog at Patheos.com,⁷ where his 2014 discussion of Lehi's poetic speech to his sons shows how Lehi draws upon the theme of rising from the dust in Isaiah 52:1–2. The excerpt below from Bokovoy follows Grant Hardy's formatting for the poetic portions of the Book of Mormon.⁸

At the end of his life, the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi called his children together and delivered a series of final sermons. Facing the prospect of his own mortality, Lehi encouraged his sons to wake up and avoid spiritual death. While facing physical death, Lehi used resurrection imagery in his final effort to inspire his sons:

*O that ye would awake;
awake from a deep sleep,
yea, even from the sleep of hell,
and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound,
which are the chains which bind the children of men,
that they are carried away captive down to the
eternal gulf of misery
and woe.
Awake! and arise from the dust,
and hear the words of a trembling parent,*

7 David Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 1)," *When Gods Were Men*, Patheos.com, April 29, 2014; <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/04/deutero-isaiah-in-the-book-of-mormon-a-literary-analysis-pt-1/>. See also David Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 2)," *When Gods Were Men*, Patheos.com, April 30, 2014; <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/04/deutero-isaiah-in-the-book-of-mormon-a-literary-analysis-pt-2/>.

8 Grant Hardy, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Chicago: Illinois Press, 2005), 62–63, as cited by Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 1)."

*whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and
silent grave,
from whence no traveler can return;
a few more days and I go the way of all the earth ...
Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness.
Shake off the chains with which ye are bound,
and come forth out of obscurity,
and arise from the dust (2 Nephi 1:13–14, 23).*

Lehi's poem clearly draws its inspiration from Isaiah 52, a poetic text that seeks to reverse the sufferings experienced by the exilic community through a promise of royal restoration:

*Awake, awake;
put on thy strength, O Zion;
Put on thy beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city:
for henceforth
there shall no more come into thee
the uncircumcised and the unclean.
Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down,
O Jerusalem:
loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
O captive daughter of Zion (Isaiah 52:1–2)*

Lehi's sermon features the dual imperative "awake, awake," the image of being loosed from bands, arising from the dust, and putting on armor of righteousness/beautiful garments. The Book of Mormon sermon, therefore, clearly echoes this poetic refrain from Isaiah 52.⁹

Many people are puzzled by a phrase in Isaiah 52:2: "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and *sit down*." If you are shaking yourself from the dust, why would you sit down in it after rising? But the meaning is not

⁹ Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 1)."

to sit back down in the dust but rather to arise and *sit on the throne* that God has prepared. This will become clearer below as we explore how the theme of dust in the ancient Near East and in the Book of Mormon relates to enthronement and other themes. But first, let's see how Lehi's speech ties to subsequent writings of Nephi and Jacob.

According to Bokovoy, Nephi shows that he accepts Lehi's charge to "awake" shortly after recording Lehi's speech when he records his own psalm:

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin.
Rejoice, O my heart,
and give place no more for the enemy of my soul (2 Nephi 4:28).

This strengthens the case for Nephi as Lehi's successor and the legitimate king over the Nephite people.

Nephi also fortifies his acceptance of Lehi's plea when he asks God in verse 31 to make him that he "may shake at the appearance of sin," following Lehi's command to "shake off the chains with which ye are bound" and complying with Isaiah 52:2, "Shake thyself from the dust." The removal of dust and chains by shaking (or other means) is connected to rising toward enthronement, life, resurrection, and glory. Nephi's acceptance of Lehi's commands and his worthiness as authorized leader of the Nephite people should come as no surprise, of course, since Lehi already endorsed Nephi in his speech and observed that, in contrast to the chains and obscurity hindering his wayward sons, Nephi's "views have been glorious." Vision and glory stand in contrast to the chains, dust, and darkness encircling the wicked.

Two chapters later, Jacob explains that he is about to read words from Isaiah that Nephi asked him to discuss (2 Nephi 6:4). He then begins reciting and discussing Isaiah, starting with Isaiah 49:22, then Isaiah 50, 51, and finally concluding with the same passage that Lehi drew upon, Isaiah 52:1–2 ("Awake, awake, ... shake thyself from the dust").

Bokovoy sees Jacob's use of this passage, following Nephi's assignment to him, as a significant statement further cementing the legitimacy of Nephi's reign and establishing the authority of Nephi and Jacob. He sees the issue of Nephite leadership and authority and the use of Isaiah 52:1–2 as especially meaningful in light of a scholar's work that establishes a connection between "rising from the dust" and kingship, enthronement, and authority. The source is Walter Brueggemann's 1972

publication, “From Dust to Kingship.”¹⁰ That work offers some gems of insight for the Book of Mormon, the record we often call “a voice from the dust.”

Brueggemann’s study of this topic began with an investigation of 1 Kings 16:2, where the Lord tells Baasha that “I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel.” But then the antithesis is given: “Behold I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house,” referring to Baasha losing his status as a ruler and becoming dust again. This is tied to the Creation story, where we read that God formed man out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), and that we are dust, and will return to dust (Genesis 3:19). After being formed from the dust, Adam and Eve are put in charge of caring for the garden — in other words, they are given authority and responsibility — one of the themes associated with rising from the dust.

In light of modern science, we can say we are not only formed from the dust of the earth, but from the dust of the stars and the cosmos, and that the whole earth has been formed from the dust of space. Dust is such a fitting word to describe the origins of our physical bodies and even the world around us. The creative work of God in bringing about His ultimate goals begins with forming us from the dust.

Brueggemann builds on the 1967 work of J. Wijngaards.¹¹ Wijngaards observed that “dying and rising” describe the voiding and renewing of covenant relationships, and that calls to “turn” or “repent” involve changing loyalties or entering into a new covenant. He also cites other scholars who found that New Testament themes of resurrection are built on Israel’s ancient enthronement rituals and that when Christ was “raised up” from the dead “on the third day,” the concept was dependent upon a variety of related Old Testament passages. “The important gain of these studies is the recognition that the motifs of covenant-renewal, enthronement, and resurrection cannot be kept in isolation from each other, but they run together and serve to illuminate each other.”¹²

Brueggemann’s exploration of the dust theme in the scriptures led him to conclude that rising from the dust is tied to divine covenants. To

10 Walter Brueggemann, “From Dust to Kingship,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 84/1 (1972): 1–18; available with only the first page visible at <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/zatw.1972.84.issue-1/zatw.1972.84.1.1/zatw.1972.84.1.1.xml>.

11 J. Wijngaards, “Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context (Hos. VI 2),” *Vetus Testamentum* 17, Fasc. 2 (April 1967): 226–239; available at Jstor.org: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1516837>, accessed Dec. 16, 2015.

12 Brueggemann, “From Dust to Kingship,” 1.

keep them is to rise from the dust but not only to rise but to be endowed (my term) with power and authority. Rising from the dust is a symbol of enthronement. To break covenants is to return to the dust and to lose one's position of authority. Dust is used to describe the status of the covenant maker:

Behind the creation formula lies a royal formula of enthronement. To be taken "from the dust" means to be elevated from obscurity to royal office and to return to dust means to be deprived of that office and returned to obscurity. Since the royal office depends upon covenant with the appropriate god, to be taken from the dust means to be accepted as a covenant-partner and treated graciously; to return to the dust means to lose that covenant relation. ... To die and be raised is to be out of covenant and then back in covenant. So also to be "from dust" is to enter into a covenant and to return "to dust" is to have the covenant voided. Dust is not to be taken literally but as a figure for being out of covenant, impotent, and unimportant, or as Wijngaards has suggested, "dead." The dramatic movement of dust to life to dust [Genesis 2:7, 3:9, 1 Kings 16:2–3] is in fact imagery describing the fortune and standing of the royal occupant.¹³

Since my explorations on this topic began with 2 Nephi 1:23, where dust and obscurity are linked but initially seemed to me like an awkward pairing in the midst of other easily recognized parallels, it was intriguing to read Brueggemann's statement quoted above that "To be taken 'from the dust' means to be *elevated from obscurity* to royal office and to return to dust means to be deprived of that office and *returned to obscurity*" (emphasis added). That fits Lehi's speech nicely. Brueggemann's finding that rising from the dust is also related to kingship, to enthronement, to covenant keeping, and to resurrection also corresponds well with Book of Mormon usage.

Brueggemann explains that being in the covenant means having royal power and authority, and being out of the covenant means losing such power and status. Being in the dust without power or authority is contrasted to "sitting with princes" in 1 Samuel 2:6–8. Thus "the phrase 'from the dust' appears here also as a formula relating to enthronement." Thus "sitting" in 1 Samuel 2:6–8 is akin to the *sit* in Isaiah 52:2, where arising from the dust and sitting are both references to enthronement.

13 Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," 2–3.

The 1 Samuel passage ends with a reference to the creation: "for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world."¹⁴ This reference points to the stability that comes from sound kingship.

While Lehi's speech is directed to his rebellious sons, their failure to rise and repent leaves Nephi (who was praised and endorsed in the speech [2 Nephi 1:24–29] and given Lehi's first blessing if Laman and Lemuel do not repent [2 Nephi 1:29]), as the rightful leader of the group. This follows Lehi's earlier promise to Nephi, conditional on his obedience, that he would be a teacher and a ruler over his brethren (1 Nephi 2:22). Laman and Lemuel fail to accept the blessings of enthronement, but Nephi through his faithfulness and his writings demonstrates that he has responded to Lehi's teachings in 2 Nephi 1, though directed to others, and fully qualifies as Lehi's successor both spiritually and politically. The relevant writings of Nephi include his psalm (2 Nephi 4:15–31), as discussed above, which supports his divine commission as a prophet and his acceptance of the charge to awake and arise, plus his description of righteously acting in Lehi's stead in 2 Nephi 5:1–20, where he escapes life-threatening persecution and leads the Nephite people on a second exodus through the wilderness (vv. 4–7), is accepted by his people as ruler (v. 18), holds the symbols of authority such as the brass plates, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona (vv. 12, 14), builds a temple (v. 16), and helps his people to keep the commandments and thereby to prosper in the land, according to Lehi's words (vv. 10–11, 13; cf. 2 Nephi 1:20).

The political aspects of the dust-related content in Lehi's speech and Nephi's writings, coupled with other signs of Nephi's having been commissioned as prophet and leader, gave legitimacy to the reign of Nephi and his descendants and would be important for many generations thereafter. Nephi's legitimacy as Lehi's successor, established in these opening chapters of 2 Nephi, may have intentional parallels to Lehi's divine commission and his role as leader at the beginning of 1 Nephi, as discussed below, and this parallelism arguably points to one of Nephi's reasons for dividing his writings into two books.

The political tensions between Nephites and Mulekites under Kings Mosiah₁, Benjamin, and Mosiah₂ may have culminated in the open rebellion of the Amlicites/Amalekites which resulted in many years of war, putting the Nephite nation in peril. This topic is treated with fresh insights and analysis by Val Larsen,¹⁵ who builds on the recognition of

14 Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," 3.

15 Val Larsen, "In His Footsteps: Ammon₁ and Ammon₂," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 3 (2013): 85–113; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com>.

J. Christopher Conkling, based on findings of Royal Skousen regarding the early Book of Mormon manuscripts that the Amalekites in the Book of Alma₂ are likely the same as the Amlicites introduced early in that book.¹⁶ Establishing Nephi's divine claim to spiritual as well as political authority was an important role of the Nephite records and critical for the stability of the nation, though Nephi's ultimate motives were obviously spiritual, not merely political.

Moving beyond the theme of kingship and political rights, Brueggemann considers resurrection to be an important theme related to rising from the dust. He explains that resurrection in the Old and New Testaments is clearly linked to rising from the dust and says that these related themes run into each other and reinforce one another.¹⁷

Let us turn briefly back to Wijngaards' work, the foundation for Brueggemann's analysis. Wijngaards looked at Hosea 6:2 and its reference to reviving and rising on the third day. He also examined the related ancient Near Eastern theme of gods dying and "rising on the third day."¹⁸ He also notes that revival from sickness was a symbol of resurrection from God¹⁹ and that "killing" was used metaphorically to describe dethroning a king and removing people from power²⁰ or with replacing one king/lord with another,²¹ an act that has covenantal implications. Thus raising someone to life can refer to entering into a covenant, and death and killing can refer to breaking the covenant. There are ancient Near Eastern contexts, according to Wijngaards, where these concepts have rich covenantal implications, and one of the key words associated with these concepts is *yada* (יָדָע), "to know," as in a covenant

com/in-his-footsteps-ammon-and-ammon/.

16 J. Christopher Conkling, "Alma's Enemies: The Case of the Lamanites, Amlicites, and Mysterious Amalekites," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 14/1 (2005): 108–17. Val Larsen, "In His Footsteps," observes that equating the Amalekites with the Amlicites seems to have first been suggested by John A. Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1990), 298–301. See also Royal Skousen, "Do We Need to Make Changes to the Book of Mormon Text?," FAIR Mormon Conference, Salt Lake City, Aug. 2012; <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2012-fair-conference/2012-do-we-need-to-make-changes-to-the-book-of-mormon-text>.

17 Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," 1.

18 Wijngaards, "Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context (Hos. VI 2)," 228.

19 *Ibid.*, 229.

20 *Ibid.*, 231.

21 *Ibid.*, 232.

relationship.²² Finally, in this study of Hosea 6:2, Wijngaards concludes that the verse means this:

*Jahweh is said to “revise” and “raise” his people when “on the third day” he will renew his covenant with them. This renewal is called a “raising from death to life” because it will restore the reign of blessing and fertility that are consequent on and inherent in good covenantal relations. [emphasis original]*²³

Repentance, accepting, and keeping covenants, enthronement, and resurrection are tied together, as are the themes of covenant breaking, dying, loss of power and status, and obscurity — these are part of the complex of interlocking dust-related themes that we should consider in Lehi’s speech and related passages of the Book of Mormon.

Recognizing the relationship between dust and enthronement adds further meaning to King Benjamin’s farewell speech, where he names Mosiah as the new king. In Mosiah 2:25–26, he invokes the theme of dust to humbly remind his people that he is no better than they are, and that he is about to return to the dust himself:

And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the *dust* of the earth; yet ye were created of the *dust* of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.

And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are; for I am also of the *dust*. And ye behold that I am old, and am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth. [emphasis added]

Following his remarkably successful speech, the willingness of his people to enter into a covenant with God and to receive grace via the Atonement is expressed in Mosiah 4:1–2 with a reference to dust, apparently both in the sense of humility and with a reference to God’s creative work. This occurs after they fall to the earth:

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

22 Ibid., 237.

23 Ibid.

And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the *dust* of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. [emphasis added]

They fall to the earth and view themselves spiritually as less than the dust, but through the covenant and the power of the Atonement they will arise and receive mercy and purification, this rising from the dust and finding joy. This is juxtaposed with Christ's creative work and His condescension to the earth.

Later in the Book of Mormon, Christ Himself comes down among the Nephite and Lamanite peoples. Among His recorded words, Christ also cites Isaiah 52:1–2 (3 Nephi 20:36–37), which we'll discuss below.

Christ's use of Isaiah 52:1–2 in 3 Nephi 20 strengthens the dust-related themes in the Book of Mormon. Christ cites Isaiah 52:1–3, with verse 3 extending the "arise from the dust" passage with a reference to redemption "without money" for those who have sold themselves "for naught," and then skips forward to vv. 6–7 of Isaiah 52, using covenant language from verse 6 ("my people shall know my name" and "shall know that I am he that doth speak," where *know* probably is related to the Hebrew word *yada'* (יָדָע) with covenant implications). Verse 7 (3 Nephi 20:40) reminds us of Abinadi's discourse on the message of salvation and the beauty of the feet upon the mountains of those who proclaim the Gospel, ending with the message of Messianic triumph: "Thy God reigneth!" This is done as Christ stands at the temple in Bountiful, the symbol of Mount Zion and the cosmic mountain, after He has had His divine feet touched and undoubtedly washed by the tears of His people as they witnessed the marks in His hands and feet. He has risen from the dust, bringing triumph over dust, death, and the chains of hell. How beautiful upon the mountains, too, were His feet at Bountiful.

Finally, Moroni quotes that passage to conclude the Book of Mormon, a fitting closure in light of Lehi's early words.²⁴ Here is Moroni 10:30–31:

²⁴ Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 2)."

And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

This is a call to enter into a covenant relationship with the Redeemer, to acquire every gift that He offers, reminding us of Lehi's plea to his children to "arise from the dust" and, in parallel to putting on the armor of righteousness that Lehi spoke of (contrasted with the chains Satan offers), Moroni asks us to put on our beautiful garments, garments that are a symbol of our covenants with the Father. These garments may well refer to the robes and garments of the Temple, where we lay hold of every good gift and learn to cast out Satan and reject his evil gifts. Satan's gifts, like his chains, are those of darkness, or rather, the "obscurity" that Lehi urged his wayward sons to flee. Moroni calls us to come forth out of obscurity and arise from the dust as we keep our covenants with God and receive the grace and good gifts God offers those who come unto Christ.

Moroni's closing plea to "awake and arise from the dust" is preceded by what appears to be a Hebraic word pair, the pairing of *dead* and *dust*. In Moroni 10:27, Moroni describes what will happen at the bar of God, when the Lord will refer to the witness of the Book of Mormon:

... and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the *dead*, yea, even as one speaking out of the *dust*? [emphasis added]

This word pair is explained by Kevin Barney:²⁵

Hebrew (*repha'im*/*'aphar*)

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.

Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust (*'aphar*): for thy dew is as the dew of herbs,

and the earth shall cast out the dead (*repha'im*). (Isaiah 26:19)

Comment

The Hebrew *repha'im*, though always translated “dead” or “deceased” in the King James Version, properly refers to the shades or ghosts (*manes*) living in Sheol who, though devoid of blood and therefore weak, continue to possess powers of mind (such as memory). The parallelism of Isaiah 26:19 suggests that the word dead in Moroni 10:27 may answer to the Hebrew *repha'im*; this is interesting in light of the representation of the “dead” of Moroni 10:27 as crying out and speaking from the dust, which is consistent with a proper understanding of *repha'im*.

Katherine Murphey Hayes also observes: “Earth and dust, then, indicate not only the surface on which the dead lie or are laid, but the domain of death itself.”²⁶ According to Edwin Yamauchi, “The abode of the dead was viewed by the Hebrews as being dusty (Job 17:16; 21:26). As D. R. Hillers notes, ‘Especially common is the idea that death is a return to the dirt, a conception that encompasses the whole fleeting life of man.’”²⁷

25 Kevin L. Barney, “Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 4/2 (1995): 15–81; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1389&index=2>, PDF available from the Maxwell Institute via the shortcut <http://tinyurl.com/dustrefl>.

26 Katherine Murphey Hayes, *The Earth Mourns: Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 44; <https://books.google.com/books?id=VfpAvwbaFhEC&pg=PA44>.

27 Edwin Yamauchi, “Life, Death, and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East,” in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 21–50, citation from 44; <https://books.google.com/books?id=AvCmK0WRmj4C&pg=PA44>. Yamauchi cites Delbert R. Hillers, “Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery,” in *Love*

Moroni's use of the dust/dead word pair from the Hebrew scriptures is consistent with the ancient Near Eastern complex of dust-related themes and sets the stage for his dust-related appeal in Moroni10:31 and his closing sentence in v. 34 that refers to the time when his spirit and body will reunite and be brought forth to meet us before God on at the time of judgment.

Abinadi's Response to a Strange Question

Abinadi's discourse on the beauty of feet upon the mountains from Isaiah 52 merits a brief discussion here. It begins in Mosiah 12 when the priests of wicked King Noah cross-examine him using the most unlikely of questions:

19 And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

20 And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying:

21 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;

22 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;

23 Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem;

24 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God?

Why this question? Of all the things they could use to trip up Abinadi, why ask him about the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10? It makes

and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope, ed. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 107.

sense if Isaiah 52 were an important part of Nephite preaching. Given the importance of Isaiah 52 in Lehi's speech, Nephi's words, Jacob's words, and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, it would have been a reasonable ploy for Noah's priests to use that frequently cited, positive passage to challenge Abinadi's message of condemnation.

Abinadi's answer beginning with Mosiah 12:25 and extending to Mosiah 15:31 and then into Mosiah 16 initially seems almost as puzzling as the selection of that question. Instead of explaining its meaning, he launches into a multichapter discourse that begins by condemning the priests for their ignorance and disobedience, followed by a discussion of the law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, then a declaration that salvation does not come by the law alone but only through the Atonement of Christ (Mosiah 13:28) and the redemption of God (Mosiah 13:32), and a declaration that Moses and all the prophets have taught of the coming of the Messiah, His condescension, suffering, and resurrection (Mosiah 13:33–35). He then quotes all of Isaiah 53, the great prophecy of the Servant who would bear our griefs and heal us with His stripes, and then explains in Mosiah 14 how God breaks the bands of death (v. 8), how Christ obtains the "bowels of mercy ... having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice" (v. 9). Then he explains that those who accept the Atonement of Christ are the ones who are redeemed, and they are Christ's "seed" (vv. 12–13), as are the prophets who have published peace. Finally comes the answer in Mosiah 15:15: "And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!" In verses 19–23, Abinadi then explains that is because of the redemption because Christ has broken the bands of death, and gained power over the dead and brought to pass the resurrection, that we are raised to dwell with God and have eternal life.

Abinadi's lengthy response is not a rambling discourse but a beautiful and carefully crafted answer that teaches the principles of the law, our need for redemption, and the coming and triumph of the Redeemer and the joyous message of redemption through the Messiah's Atonement — for those who will accept the Redeemer and keep the terms of the covenant. Their feet will be upon Mount Zion, beautiful, washed, redeemed, raised from the dust and brought into the presence of God, where they "shall lift up the voice" (another aspect of the "arise" theme, integrated with the concept of joyous singing), and "with the voice together shall they sing" (Isaiah 52:8, Mosiah 12:21), leading Isaiah to exclaim, "Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:9). There is good news indeed and cause for song and rejoicing, for those who are penitent.

Abinadi needed to lay a foundation of basic teachings before the ignorant priests could understand the answer, before they could understand that the good news comes at a great price, the price of the eternal Atonement of Jesus Christ, but only to those who will accept and follow Him. Thus, the priests must repent and turn to God before they can enjoy the good news of salvation.

Abinadi's discourse is tied to important Nephite themes rooted in Isaiah 52. Those whose feet will become beautiful upon the mountains begin their ascent to Mount Zion by heeding Isaiah 52:1–2 through shaking off the dust, arising, and putting on the beautiful garments of the Lord. Then shall those feet be firmly established on Mount Zion, with cause to rejoice and sing praises to the Redeemer.

A Dusty View of the Plan of Salvation

In light of Brueggeman's insights and the use of dust-related themes in the scriptures, we can slightly adjust the way we view the plan of salvation:

- As spirit children, we come to earth, clothed in a tabernacle of dust. We are made from the dust.
- Through the fall of Adam and through our own sins, we are fallen: fallen into the dust, fallen toward the earth, encircled with chains of sin and hell.
- Through the power of the Atonement offered by the Redeemer, we can arise from the dust, overcoming Satan and shaking off the chains that bind us. We depart from darkness and obscurity, from captivity and sin, free from misery and torment, and enter into light and joy.
- As we enter into a covenant relationship with God, we are cleansed in baptism and other ordinances from sin and the dust of mortality, and we are given divine power and responsibility.
- God calls us to continue rising toward Him on the straight and narrow path as we ascend to stand on the divine mountain, Mount Zion, to enter God's presence, clothed in robes of righteousness, encircled, and embraced by the arms of God, singing hymns of praise with heavenly hosts,

where we sit on a throne shared with Christ and are filled with fullness of joy.

This pattern is similar to the one Jeffrey Bradshaw outlined for the ascent of Moses in Moses 1:

- Prologue (vv. 1–2)
- Moses in the Spirit World (vv. 3–8)
- Moses falls to the earth (vv. 9–11)
- Moses defeats Satan (vv. 12–23)
- Moses calls upon God and is answered by a voice from behind the veil (vv. 24–26)
- At the veil, Moses sees the earth and all its inhabitants (vv. 27–30)
- Moses stands in the presence of the Lord (vv. 31–40)
- Epilogue (vv. 41–42)²⁸

The dusty view of the plan of salvation also brings us to one of the Old Testament’s most famous prophecies related to the Redeemer and the resurrection, Job 19:25–26:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

The word translated as “stand” in Job 19:25 has the Hebrew root *quwm* (קוּם²⁹) more often translated as “arise” or “rise.” Here the Redeemer stands not upon the *’erets* (אֶרֶץ³⁰) the normal Hebrew word for earth, but upon the *’aphar* (אֶפְרָיִם), the dust, and some Bible translations use *dust* instead of *earth*. Job 19:25 seems to be closely related to Isaiah 52:2, which also uses *quwm* (קוּם) and *’aphar* (אֶפְרָיִם). Perhaps the use of

28 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Vision of Moses as a Heavenly Ascent,” *Meridian Magazine*, January 6, 2010; <http://ldsmag.com/article-1-415/>.

29 HALOT, 1086–1088. See also Strong’s H6965, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6965&t=KJV>.

30 Strong’s H776, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H776&t=KJV>.

'*aphar* (עָפָר) here is meant as a symbol of the Redeemer's conquest of the dust, having risen from its grasp and subjected it to Himself, and having broken the bands of death for all mankind. Though Job faces death and will return to the dust, yet in the resurrected flesh he shall see the Lord, the One who triumphs over death and dust and will stand upon the dust in the latter day.

This passage from Job is paraphrased in 2 Nephi 9:4 ("our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God"), just four verses after Jacob's quoting of Isaiah reaches a dusty climax with the key verses behind Lehi's discourse, Isaiah 52:1–2. Second Nephi 9 is a great discourse from Jacob that ties together the themes from Lehi and Nephi, plus the blocks of Isaiah that Nephi previously quoted and the second block that Nephi asked Jacob to use while involving a variety of dust-related themes.

Perhaps Jacob's allusion to Job 19 reflects an understanding of its relationship to Lehi's words. Job 19 could be particularly meaningful if viewed as a source of inspiration for Lehi's teachings, not only because of his powerful testimony of the Redeemer and the resurrection but also because Job 19 is dominated by Job's bemoaning his rejection by family members (vv. 13–19). It is a song of grief of one who, like Lehi, has been reviled by members of his own family, and faces death and physical afflictions (vv. 20, 22) yet turns to hope through the Redeemer.

It may be that Lehi had Job 19 in mind when he began his speech in 2 Nephi 1 and "spake unto them [his rebellious sons] concerning their rebellions upon the waters" (v. 2). Lehi also warns his posterity that if "they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them" (2 Nephi 1:10). His emphasis on the surety of judgment may reflect Job 19:29, where Job warns of the "punishments of the sword" that others "may know there is a judgment." In fact, Lehi reiterates that concern as he warns that his posterity, if they are rebellious, will be "visited by sword, and by famine, and [be] hated, and [be] led according to the will and captivity of the devil" (v. 18). Job's testimony of the Redeemer (Job 19:25–26) reminds us of Lehi's words:

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. (2 Nephi 1:15)

Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise (2 Nephi 2:6–8).

As a further parallel between Lehi and Job, in Job 19:24, Job even wishes that his story could be written in a book and engraved with an iron pen in the rock forever (or “inscribed with an iron tool on lead or engraved in rock forever” in the NIV), not completely unlike Lehi’s engraving of his story on plates that would be preserved for future generations. But the most vital relationship is that both men, in spite of their trials and sorrows, bear witness of the triumph of the future Messiah, who will restore us to life from the dust.

The related concept of the gathering or scattering of Israel can also be considered. Abraham’s descendants are associated with the word *dust* in Genesis 13:16: “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth,” conveying its vast quantity, so dust may be an appropriate concept in considering the gathering or scattering of his posterity. They can be scattered like dust, cast off like dust, swept away like dust, or return to the dust when they break the covenant. On the other hand, they can be gathered like dust as they arise from the dust and keep the covenant, and then have their dust washed away.

Isaiah’s earlier prophecy of the resurrection in Isaiah 26:19 is also relevant, for it brings together multiple elements of the dust-related themes in the Gospel:

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Awaking; arising, *quwm* (קום); singing; resurrection; and dust, ‘*aphar* (עפר) are all brought together here. The image of the dew suggests

cleansing and washing. The root used for “cast out” here is *naphal* (נָפַל³¹), which is often translated as the verb “fall” in other contexts, and could be part of further dust-related wordplays in the Book of Mormon or Old Testament.

In another passage of interest, 1 Nephi 22:12 (a verse in the transition chapter before Lehi’s speech, where dust and obscurity meet), being “brought out of obscurity and out of darkness” is associated with deliverance from captivity and the gathering of Israel to the lands of their inheritance, and thus “they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.” Then in v. 14 of that chapter, the nations that war against Israel will “fall into the pit which they have digged to ensnare the people of the Lord,” and the “great and abominable church shall tumble to the dust,” which reminds us of Isaiah 14 (quoted in 2 Nephi 24) and the dethronement of Lucifer/the king of Babylon or Assyria, the one who once made the earth to tremble (*ragaz*, רָגַז³²) and the kingdoms to shake (*ra’ash*, רָעַשׁ³³), who, after presumptuously seeking to ascend the divine mountain and exalt his throne above the stars of heaven (the Heavenly Council), is cast down to the pit, to rise no more.

The dust-related themes in the Book of Mormon include, in my opinion, the creation of man from the dust; rising from the dust as a symbol of enthronement, resurrection, covenant keeping, and redemption; returning to the dust as a symbol of death and breaking the covenant or losing covenant blessings; removing dust and chains as a symbol of deliverance and liberation from the forces of death and hell; the beautiful (washed) feet that stand upon mount Zion; and possibly the gathering or scattering of Israel. The use of dust motifs in some cases seems to reflect noteworthy literary intent rather than just random use of common words and phrases, and recognizing this possible intent in the structure and application of such motifs can add depth and context to the message of Book of Mormon writers. This is particularly true with respect to Nephi’s writings and the way he presents Lehi’s speech and related material, which we consider from another perspective now to further prepare us to reconsider the content of Alma 36 in Part 3.

31 Strong’s H5307, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5307&t=KJV>.

32. Strong’s H7264, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7264&t=KJV>.

33 Strong’s H7493, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7493&t=KJV>.

A Dusty Inclusio Bracketing Lehi's Speech?

A Hebraic language pattern also found in the Book of Mormon is *inclusio*:

In biblical studies, *inclusio* is a literary device based on a concentric principle, also known as bracketing or an envelope structure, which consists of creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section, although whether this material should consist of a word or a phrase, or whether greater amounts of text also qualify, and of what length the frames section should be, are matters of some debate. *Inclusio* is found in various sources, both antique and new.

While this may not be evident to many of the Bible's modern lay readers, the Hebrew Bible is actually full of literary devices, some of which, having fallen out of favor over the years, are lost on most modern readers. *Inclusio*, of which many instances can be found in the Bible, is one of these, although many instances of its usage are not apparent to those reading translations of the Bible rather than the Hebrew source.

Particularly noteworthy are the many instances of *inclusio* in the Book of Jeremiah.³⁴

This form of bracketing or framing with similar material placed at the beginning and end of a passage is related to chiasmus, which sometimes can seem like "recursive *inclusio*." As with chiasmus, the presence of *inclusio* is easily missed by modern readers reading translations of an ancient Semitic text such as the Bible or the Book of Mormon,³⁵ so it is an area of ongoing investigation, with *inclusio*, like chiasmus, only relatively recently discovered in the Book of Mormon, well over a century after publication. A recently discovered example of *inclusio* in

34 "Inclusio," *Wikipedia.org*; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclusio>, accessed Dec. 17 2015.

35 Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon*, (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–114; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/book/finding-biblical-hebrew-and-other-ancient-literary-forms-in-the-book-of-mormon/>, where inclusion is discussed in chapter 3 at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1097&index=4>.

the Book of Mormon, coupled with apparent Hebraic wordplays, was just published by Matthew L. Bowen.³⁶

There appears to be a notable example of *inclusio* in the way Isaiah is quoted both before and after Lehi's speech in 2 Nephi 1–3, the related passages from Nephi and Jacob in 2 Nephi 4–6, and the chapter that ends 1 Nephi, 1 Nephi 22. Back in 1 Nephi 19, Nephi quotes material from the brass plates no longer extant in our Bible and then says that in order to "more fully persuade [his people] to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scripture unto us" (1 Nephi 19:23). Nephi then begins quoting Isaiah 48 in 1 Nephi 20 and Isaiah 49 in 1 Nephi 21. Interestingly, when he quotes Isaiah 49:13, he adds two phrases which may fit the poetical nature of this verse. The parallelism is more evident when viewed with the formatting provided by Royal Skousen in *The Book of Mormon: the Earliest Text*³⁷ with the additions shown in italics:

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

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

The added word *smitten* might be related to the Hebrew *nagaph* (נָגַף), typically translated as "smite" or "smitten" in the KJV. This word can also have connotations of striking with the foot or striking against the foot.³⁸ However, the root most commonly used for "smite" in the

36 Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–195; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/nephis-good-inclusio/>.

37. Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 67 (1 Nephi 21:13).

38 Strong's H5062, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5062&t=KJV>. The use of *nagaph* for "strike against (with the foot)" is found in Proverbs 3:23 ("stumble" in the KJV) and Psalms 91:12 ("dash" a foot in the KJV). Jeremiah 13:16 also translates it as "stumble" following "feet" in the KJV.

KJV is *nakah* (נָכַח³⁹), which lacks a connection to feet but can also have connections to rejoicing when it describes the striking of the hands together as in applause. In either case, *smitten* may have interesting ties to the preceding words in this verse.

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

Another fitting change relative to the KJV for Isaiah 49 involves v. 9, where “sit” in 1 Nephi 21:9 replaces “are” in the KJV, giving: “That thou mayest say to the prisoners: Go forth; to them that sit in darkness: Show yourselves.” A likely Hebrew root used here is *yashab* (יָשָׁב⁴⁰) which is used in Isaiah 52:2 with enthronement overtones. To sit in darkness, dust, obscurity, and ashes is the opposite of enthronement and exaltation. It is a symbol of loss, of sorrow, of captivity, and of broken covenants. For the dust-related themes in Nephi’s writings, *sit* seems to be a stronger word for this passage describing the hope being brought to spiritual captives, and their sitting contrasts nicely with the implicit standing in v. 13 for “those who are in the east” whose feet “shall be established.” How appropriate that they shall “break forth into singing” when they know that they have been gathered and “shall be smitten no more” as the Lord has mercy upon his afflicted people.

39 Strong’s H5221, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5221&t=KJV>.

40 Strong’s H3427, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3427&t=KJV>.

The Isaiah quotations before Lehi's speech terminate in 1 Nephi 21 with the closing verses of Isaiah 49, giving a powerful image related to dust and enthronement/dethronement:

22 Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

24 For shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives delivered?

25 But thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Kings and queens will bow down and lick up the dust of those who are gathered by the Lord — what an amazing reversal that again employs the relationship of dust to enthronement.

Another related image is that of the King of Heaven bowing down before his mortal disciples to wash the dust from their feet shortly before His crucifixion. Surely He who took on a tabernacle of dust descended below all things, even below the dust itself as He entered the grave for three days and three nights. That act must be considered in light of its profound links to the role of dust (or dust and feet) in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon.

The dust-related passage in 1 Nephi 21 is what I consider to be the first bracket of Nephi's "dusty" inclusio.

The second bracket occurs after Lehi's Redeemer-centric words in 2 Nephi 1–3, after Nephi's Psalm where he accepts Lehi's charge to "awake, awake" and "shake" at sin (in light of Bokovoy's analysis, showing his worthiness to serve as the legitimate heir of Lehi as ruler

over the Nephite people⁴¹), and after Jacob's introductory comments in 2 Nephi 6, where Jacob announces that he is now going to read the words of Isaiah that Nephi has asked him to teach. These are carefully chosen passages but with a surprise, for the next chunk of Isaiah that Jacob begins reading is unnecessarily redundant. Jacob begins his words by quoting Isaiah not from where Nephi left off back in 1 Nephi 19, but instead he repeats the very verses that Nephi just quoted. This new excerpt from Isaiah begins with Isaiah 49:22 and quotes the verses about licking of dust from the feet, and the reference to the Redeemer.

A redundant oration is understandable, but given the limited space on the small plates of Nephi and the difficulty of engraving (Jacob 4:1), a redundant quotation involves genuine labor and certainly intent. But why?

This redundant section may have seemed like sloppiness to casual readers and critics, but it is highly thematic and is a clever use of a Hebraic literary tool, *inclusio*, to bracket and highlight the dust-related themes of the chapters in between and to emphasize the importance of this dust- and Redeemer-related passage in Isaiah. Jacob then continues in Isaiah until he gets to Isaiah 52:1–2, the dust-related passage that underlies Lehi's words — and perhaps more of the Book of Mormon than we realized before.

One rough way of portraying the structure is:

A. First Isaiah passage

Beginning: 1 Nephi 20:1 (Isaiah 48:1): Arising from the waters of Judah (baptism) — as if washed from dust.

End: 1 Nephi 21:22–26 (Isaiah 49:22–26): Kings and queens to lick the dust off the feet of the covenant people of Israel; all shall know the Savior and Redeemer.

B. Words of Nephi, Lehi, and Jacob in 1 Nephi 22 and 2 Nephi 1–6, with Lehi's repeated references to Isaiah 52:1–2 and themes of dust, deliverance from captivity, and redemption.

41 Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (pt. 1)."

C. Second Isaiah passage

Beginning: 2 Nephi 6:6, quoting Isaiah 49:22–23 (kings licking dust from the feet) in 2 Nephi 6:6–7, and then continuing with Isaiah 49:24–26 in 2 Nephi 6:16–18, then Isaiah 50 in 2 Nephi 7 and Isaiah 51 in 2 Nephi 8.

End: 2 Nephi 8:24–25, quoting Isaiah 52:1–2 (“Awake, awake ... Shake thyself from the dust, arise, sit down, loose thyself from the bands of thy necks, O captive daughter of Zion.”)

This is more than “just” an inclusio. You could say this is a textual example of going “from dust to dust.” Nephi appears to be using the structure of his words, including the choice of Isaiah passages to cite, in order to frame and amplify a core theme for the Book of Mormon.

The final words of the Isaiah material in the first bracket of the inclusio is a beautiful reference to the Redeemer: “all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (1 Nephi 21:26, Isaiah 49:26). The closing bracket in 2 Nephi 6 begins with the dust-related verses of Isaiah 49 (vv. 22–23), then follows with a reference to the Redeemer in v. 11, in the context of Israel having been scattered and smitten:

Wherefore, after they are driven to and fro, for thus saith the angel, many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and shall not be suffered to perish, because of the prayers of the faithful; they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that when they shall come to the knowledge of their *Redeemer*, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance (2 Nephi 6:11)
[emphasis added]

This ties in with the added content of Isaiah 49:13 found in 1 Nephi 21:13 indicating that the scattered House of Israel “*shall be smitten no more*” for the Lord “will have mercy upon his afflicted.”

At the end of 2 Nephi 6, Jacob completes the quotation from the closing verses of Isaiah 49 that again turn our attention to our “Savior and [our] Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

It must be emphasized that at the heart of Lehi’s message, indeed, the heart of the Book of Mormon’s message, is a focus on redemption through the power and love of the Redeemer. In 2 Nephi 1:10, he warns

Israel not to reject “the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God.” Then at essentially the center of Lehi’s speech, in v. 15, he declares that “the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.” Redemption and the love and triumph of the Redeemer are the core of all the dust-related themes and ultimately the core of the Book of Mormon itself.

Within the bracketed contents, Nephi’s transition from Isaiah material to Lehi’s speech in 1 Nephi 22 is done with more dust-related material. After further discussing the role of the Gentiles in nursing and gathering scattered Israel, there are references to obscurity, darkness, dust, and dust-like stubble (the Hebrew *qash*, *qāṣ*, refers to dry straw or chaff, not necessarily burned remnants of crops⁴²) as well as deliverance from captivity:

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.

Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be *brought out of obscurity and out of darkness*; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel. ...

And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another, and they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion shall be destroyed, and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall *tumble to the dust* and great shall be the fall of it.

For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as *stubble*; and the day cometh that they must be burned (1 Nephi 22:11–12,14–15) [emphasis added].

42 Strong’s H7179, *Blue Letter Bible*; <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7179&t=KJV>.

Later in this chapter, these concepts are reiterated to describe how Satan's work will be overthrown, using the dust-related terms *tremble*, *quake*, *dust*, and *stubble*. Here I provide the text as formatted in Royal Skousen's *The Earliest Text*, with some minor differences in wording with later editions of the Book of Mormon (I prefer the language of the *Earliest Text* in this case):

22 And the righteous need not fear.

For it is they which shall not be confounded,

but it is the kingdom of the devil,

which shall be built up among the children of men,

which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh.

23. For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain,

and all they which are built up to get power over the flesh,

and they which are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world,

and they which seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world

and to do all manner of iniquity,

yea, in fine, all they which belong to the kingdom of the devil,

it is they which need fear and tremble and quake;

it is they which must be brought low in the dust;

it is they which must be consumed as stubble.

And this is according to the words of the prophet⁴³ [emphasis added].

Returning to the dust describes Satan's dethronement and humiliation, while scattered Israel will be brought out of obscurity and darkness, having the dust licked off their feet as they are enthroned. Satan's overthrow is presented with a tricolon (fear+quake, brought low, consumed as stubble), which is now recognized as a legitimate form of

43. Skousen, *The Earliest Text*, 71 (1 Nephi 22:22–23).

parallelism in ancient Hebrew, though bicola (couplets) are much more common.⁴⁴

The bracketed content in the inclusio not only has Lehi's multiple references to dust and earth in 2 Nephi 1 but also has two references to the Book of Mormon crying from the dust to the House of Israel (2 Nephi 3:19, 20).

What happens after the second part of the inclusio is also interesting. As explained by Frederick W. Axelgard,⁴⁵ 2 Nephi 6 marks an important transition in the Book of Mormon, especially in light of the organizational plans for the text that Nephi shares in 1 Nephi 19:5. In that verse, he explains that later he will describe his making of the plates, and then he will convey "the more sacred things" for the welfare of his people. It is in 2 Nephi 5 where Nephi describes how he made the plates. After that, we essentially have a pure focus on doctrine and prophecy, with no more references to the historical things Nephi experienced. The only hint of any time passing after 2 Nephi 5 is found in Nephi's farewell near the end of his final chapter, 2 Nephi 33, where, in v. 13, he bids farewell to the House of Israel and "all the ends of the earth" until the great judgment day and tells us that he speaks unto us "as the voice of one crying from the dust."

Nephi's second book begins with Lehi's call to rise from the dust, is followed by the second bracketing of an inclusio with redundant dust-related verses from Isaiah that also marks Nephi's transition in 2 Nephi 6 from the temporal record to the "more sacred things," and ends with Nephi telling us that his voice speaks from the dust to all the ends of the earth. It is not just Lehi's speech that is bracketed with dust-related themes, it is also Nephi's "more sacred" content that completes his record. Between the dust-theme in 2 Nephi 6 and his closing "voice of one crying from the dust" in 2 Nephi 33:13, his "more sacred" content includes further references to dust in:

- 2 Nephi 12:10 (quoting Isaiah 2);
- 2 Nephi 15:24 (stubble, chaff, and dust, quoting Isaiah 5);

44 John A. Tvedtnes, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997); <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1393&index=17>.

45 Frederick W. Axelgard, "1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole," *BYU Studies* 26/4 (1986): 53–65; <http://byustudies.byu.edu/content/1-and-2-nephi-inspiring-whole> or also <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/5634/5284>.

- three instances in 2 Nephi 26 (one in v. 15 and two in v. 16, plus chaff in v. 18) as Nephi describes how his people will be brought low to the dust and will speak from the dust, adapting Isaiah 29:4; and
- 2 Nephi 27:9, again building on Isaiah 29 as he describes the future Book of Mormon as containing the “words of those who have slumbered in the dust.”

Dust-related themes appear to be deliberately and repeatedly used by Nephi and Lehi, especially in the latter half of 1 Nephi and throughout 2 Nephi. This raises the question of whether dust-related themes are also present earlier in 1 Nephi. The word *dust* does not occur until 1 Nephi 18:18, where Lehi and Sariah were in grief and on their sickbeds while traversing the ocean, “about to be brought down to lie low in the dust” and “near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.” However, the related themes of resurrection and redemption occur in 1 Nephi 10, as does gathering and scattering. Being bound with cords (like chains) that are shaken off (my assumption) occurs in 1 Nephi 7:16–18 as Nephi’s brothers bind him on the ship, but the cords are miraculously burst and Nephi is delivered. But the most important relationship between the dust-themes of 2 Nephi 1 may be in the opening words of 1 Nephi, where modern scholarship regarding the ancient Hebrew scriptures helps us recognize significant and apparently deliberate parallels that we may not have previously appreciated.

Nephi’s Call and Lehi’s Divine Commission: Deliberate Parallels in the Opening Chapters of Nephi’s Books

The insights from modern scholarship (Walter Brueggemann and others) regarding dust-related imagery in the Bible helps us understand that much more is taking place in Lehi’s speech and Nephi’s response than we might have otherwise realized. Another contribution from modern scholarship also helps bring out some striking parallels between Nephi’s call and Lehi’s divine commission in 1 Nephi 1.

Blake Ostler has explored Lehi’s experience in 1 Nephi 1 in terms of other ancient examples of prophets receiving their divine commission.

[T]he first chapter of 1 Nephi conforms precisely to a literary pattern that form critical studies have demonstrated to be the very essence of the prophetic commission in ancient

Israel which “gives the individuals credentials as a prophet messenger and ambassador of the heavenly council.” The pattern that emerges in the pseudepigrapha is that of a righteous individual who, concerned for the wickedness of his people, prays, and weeps on their behalf until physically overcome by the spirit of revelation and who, carried away in a vision, sees God enthroned amidst the heavenly council. He also receives a heavenly book which explains the secrets of the universe and the impending disaster of his people. The vision is completed with a call or commission extended from the heavenly council to warn his people of their impending destruction if they will not repent; however, he is also forewarned that his people will reject him. Ultimately, such an apocalyptic pattern derives from the visionary experiences of the prophets Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19–22), Isaiah (Isaiah 6) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1–3:21) who had visions of God on his throne preceding their prophetic calls.⁴⁶

Ostler draws upon a number of recent scholars who have explored ancient patterns in divine calls of prophets, with several characteristic components that can be identified:

1. *Historical Introduction*: There is a brief introductory remark providing circumstantial details such as time, place, and historical setting.
2. *Divine Confrontation*: Either deity or an angel appears in glory to the individual.
3. *Reaction*: The individual reacts to the presence of the deity or his angel by way of an action expressive of fear unworthiness or having been overpowered.
4. *Throne-Theophany*: In the commissions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the individual sees the council of God and God seated upon his throne. This element distinguishes the throne-theophany commission from the primarily auditory commissions.

46 Blake T. Ostler, “The Throne Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form Critical Analysis,” *BYU Studies*, 26/4 (1986): 67–95, quotation at 67; ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/5635/5285divine, accessed Feb. 8, 2016.

5. *Commission*: The individual recipient is commanded to perform a given task and assume the role of prophet to the people.
6. *Protest*: The prophet responds to the commission by claiming that he is unable or unworthy to accomplish the task. This element is usually absent when the reaction element is present as in the call of Ezekiel.
7. *Reassurance*: The deity reassures the prophet that he will be protected and able to carry out the commission. The deity may also reassure the prophet by giving him a sign indicative of divine power and protection.
8. *Conclusion*: The commission form usually concludes in a formal way, most often with a statement that the prophet has begun to carry out his commission.⁴⁷

Ostler explores relationships between Lehi's call and additional ancient texts from the pseudepigrapha, including texts associated with the Book of Enoch as well as the Book of Moses. Elements in common with the pseudepigrapha but not found in the Bible include (1) an intercessory prayer (1 Nephi 1:5); (2) revelation received on the prophet's bed or couch (1 Nephi 1:7); (3) an ascension into heaven (1 Nephi 1:8); (4) a vision of one descending from the heavenly council followed by others (1 Nephi 1:11–13) and (5) a prophecy of the coming Messiah and redemption of the world (1 Nephi 1:19). Ostler then explores each of these elements in depth.⁴⁸ For example, in discussing the reaction of prophets to their theophany, they often react physically, as Lehi did, who was overcome and cast himself upon his bed. Likewise, Moses in the Book of Moses is physically overcome, and Enoch shakes. In the Ethiopian *First Enoch* text, Enoch has a similar response: "fear covered me, and trembling got hold upon me. And as I quaked and trembled, I fell upon my face."⁴⁹ It is then that he beholds another vision in which he beheld the throne of God and the heavenly hosts,⁵⁰ as did Lehi.

47. Ostler, "The Throne Theophany," 69–70.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *The Book of Enoch or First Enoch*, transl. by R.H. Charles (Escondido, CA: The Book Tree, 2000), chapter 14, vv. 13–14, p. 33; <https://books.google.com/books?id=wQpjqn26o60C&pg=PA33>.

50. *The Book of Enoch or First Enoch*, chapter 14, vv. 14–22, pp. 33–34; <https://books.google.com/books?id=wQpjqn26o60C&pg=PA34>.

Recognizing that 1 Nephi 1 presents a classic ancient pattern for the divine commission of the prophet Lehi, we can now recognize important parallels to the opening chapters of 2 Nephi, seeing that the enthronement aspects of the dust-related themes support Nephi's rightful succession as Lehi's heir and his commission both as prophet and king. Just as Lehi has been called by the Lord following an established ancient pattern, so can we also see the divine calling of Nephi in a similar pattern as Lehi's true successor. The many parallels between the beginnings of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi highlight this relationship, and further strengthen our understanding of Nephi's craftsmanship in organizing his material into two books.

Like Lehi, Nephi has a divine confrontation. Lehi reminds us of that in 2 Nephi 1:24 when he tells his brothers that Nephi's "views have been glorious." In Nephi's response in 2 Nephi 4, Nephi speaks in more detail of his encounters with God, and his visions, suggesting that he has had both the divine confrontation and a theophany involving the heavenly hosts:

20 My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

21 He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh.

22 He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me.

23 Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the nighttime.

24 And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels came down and ministered unto me.

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

Nephi's commission and his right to lead the people comes through his father's endorsement in 2 Nephi 1 (e.g., v. 29, where Lehi's first blessing is upon Nephi, unless Laman and Lemuel repent, which they clearly do not) and in Nephi's acceptance of the charge to arise and awake, as previously discussed and noted by David Bokovoy. Further, just as

Lehi is "filled with the Spirit of the Lord" in 1 Nephi 1:12, in response to his theophany and divine commission, so Lehi, in endorsing Nephi, tells us that Nephi's commanding his brothers to obey was not Nephi speaking but rather "was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it" (2 Nephi 1:27). Nephi has already stepped into Lehi's shoes as a divinely commissioned prophet who cannot help but speak what the Lord commands, though it puts his life at risk.

Nephi's physical reaction to his commission and divine encounter is described in his psalm in 2 Nephi 4. In v. 21, he tells us that his encounter with God's love has been "even unto the consuming of my flesh," similar to Lehi's being physically overwhelmed. Perhaps also serving as his reaction and as his protest, Nephi writes with great humility, expressing his unworthiness and the weakness of both flesh and spirit:

17 ... O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

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

19 And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins. ...

26 O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men ["me" in the *Earliest Text*⁵¹] in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?

27 And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?

28 Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.

29 Do not anger again because of mine enemies. Do not slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.

51 Skousen, *The Earliest Text*, 87 (2 Nephi 4:26) with discussion of sources at 753.

According to Skousen's *Earliest Text* for the Book of Mormon, v. 26 should read "visited me" instead of "visited men," as found in the Printer's Manuscript (the Original Manuscript is not extant for this section of the text).⁵² This correction converts the Lord's general ministry to men into reference to a personal visitation, further strengthening the textual references to Nephi's divine encounter and theophany.

In terms of physical reaction, not only does Nephi's flesh "waste away" and his strength is slackened, but he also echoes Lehi's quaking and trembling (1 Nephi 1:6) as well as Lehi's charge to shake off the dust when he prays that he may be made to "shake at the appearance of sin" (2 Nephi 4:31). Though frustrated by his weakness, he undertakes the charge to awake and shake off the chains of Satan the enemy of his soul (v. 28). He accepts the divine commission, pleading for divine help to complete it.

The warning of rejection from others that often accompanies the commission of a prophet is implicit in Nephi's concerns about dealing with the enemies he faces who have caused him so much grief and anger, and relatively explicit in Lehi's warnings in 2 Nephi 1 that his rebellious brothers are likely to continue causing trouble:

24 Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem; and who hath been an instrument in the hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise; for were it not for him, we must have perished with hunger in the wilderness; nevertheless, *ye sought to take away his life; yea, and he hath suffered much sorrow because of you.*

25 *And I exceedingly fear and tremble because of you, lest he shall suffer again;* for behold, ye have accused him that he sought power and authority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare. [emphasis added]

Interestingly, Nephi uses similar language to describe the response of the Jews to Lehi's preaching in 1 Nephi 1:20:

And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had

52 Ibid.

cast out, and stoned, and slain; and *they also sought his life, that they might take it away*. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance. [emphasis added]

A warning from the Lord to Lehi in 1 Nephi 2:1 also states that Lehi's enemies "seek to take away thy life," and we are reminded again in 1 Nephi 2:13 that they "sought to take away the life of my father." Just as the Lord warned Lehi to flee from his brethren, the Jews, to save his life by going into the wilderness, the Lord also warns Nephi to flee into the wilderness to escape from his brothers who sought his life (2 Nephi 5:4–5).

Lehi's call results in rejection, efforts to take his life, and a need to flee into the wilderness and eventually to a promised land. Nephi's call results in rejection, efforts to take his life, and a need to flee into the wilderness and to a new portion of the promised land.

The element of reassurance in the full pattern of the divine commission of prophets may also be seen in Nephi's case. The words from his father can be taken as a reassurance of the Lord's protection and blessing to him in fulfilling his commission. The closing words of 2 Nephi 1 in v. 32 tell Zoram that "the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of thy seed with the seed of my son" if they will keep the commandments. There is a blessing of security and prosperity in the land to Nephi and his people — if they will obey the Lord. When he speaks to Sam in 2 Nephi 4:11, he also refers to the blessings upon Nephi: "thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi ... and thou shalt be even like unto thy brother ... and thou shalt be blessed in all thy days." This is surely one form of assurance. But assurance is also seen in Nephi's words in 2 Nephi 4 as he moves past his guilt and frustration and finds peace and joy before the Lord:

34 O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever ... 35 Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God.

In his pleadings to God, the frustrated and distraught Nephi finds hope.

Ostler also explains that the *descensus* of God/Christ coming down to earth is a common theme in prophetic calls, especially in the pseudepigrapha. Lehi's vision of Christ descending to the earth, followed by the Apostles (1 Nephi 1:9–10), is presented as a parallel to the text known as the Ascension of Isaiah, with similar content.⁵³ Likewise, Nephi's reference to the condescension of Christ seems particularly fitting. The word *condescension* is used twice in 1 Nephi, both in 1 Nephi 11, the pivot point of the overarching seven-step chiasmus that appears to be part of Nephi's organizational scheme for his writings.⁵⁴ It is also used in 2 Nephi. The occurrences are:

1 Nephi 11

16 And he said unto me: Knowest thou the *condescension* of God? ... 26 And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the *condescension* of God! [emphasis added]

2 Nephi 4

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

2 Nephi 9

53 And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his *condescensions* unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, he has promised unto us that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel. [emphasis added]

Another aspect of the divine commission, as explained by Ostler, is the frequent use of a book containing revelations that is given to the prophet that he then uses to obtain a divine message to teach others. This happens to Lehi as he is given a book to read in vision in 1 Nephi 1,

⁵³ *Ascension of Isaiah*, 10:7, 11:22, as cited by Ostler, "The Throne Theophany."

⁵⁴ John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *New Era*, February 1972; <https://www.lds.org/new-era/1972/02/chiasmus-in-the-book-of-mormon>.

and this also occurs to Nephi who receives the brass plates from Lehi. He takes these with him when is warned of the Lord to flee from his murderous brethren (2 Nephi 5:5, 12). Further, Nephi makes other plates to continue writing revelations from the Lord, and what he writes after this point, beginning with 2 Nephi 6, is the “most precious” material he mentioned in 1 Nephi 19:5, the material he would share after he gave an account of the making of his plates, which he does in 2 Nephi 5. This “most precious” material is free of the temporal affairs of his people and his life, and is focused on revelations from the Lord. This is a significant detail that points to Nephi’s carefully crafted organization of his work.

Besides the parallels in the divine commissions of Lehi and Nephi, other significant parallels in the opening words of 1 and 2 Nephi suggest Nephi’s division of his work into two books involves broad structural considerations in providing common elements in the opening words of both. A number of parallels are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Parallels Between the Beginnings
of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi.**

1 Nephi 1, 2	2 Nephi 1–5
Lehi prays for the welfare of others (1:5)	Nephi seeks only the welfare of his brothers (1:25)
Lehi quakes and trembles (1:6)	Lehi is “a trembling parent” (1:14)
Lehi physically “overcome,” falls upon his bed (1:7,8)	Nephi’s encounter with God has been “unto the consuming” of his flesh (4:21)
Lehi sees God and angels (1:8,14)	Nephi has majestic visions (1:24, 4:25,26); Jacob also saw God (2:3,4)
Lehi sees and testifies of Christ descending to the earth (1:9,19)	The condescension of Christ (4:26)
Lehi receives a divine book (1:11,12)	Nephi takes the brass plates (5:12), records his history upon plates and creates more plates (5:29–33)
Lehi “filled with the Spirit of the Lord” (1:12)	Lehi speaks of the workings of the Spirit in him (1:6) and speaks of the “Spirit of the Lord which was in” Nephi (1:27).
Lehi in a vision learns that Jerusalem will be destroyed (1:13,18)	Lehi sees in a vision that Jerusalem has been destroyed (1:4)
Heart/soul word pair (1:15) (see discussion below)	Heart/soul word pair (1:21, 4:17)

1 Nephi 1, 2	2 Nephi 1-5
Enemies seek to take away Lehi's life (1:20; 2:1)	Nephi's brothers seek to take away his life (5:2-4)
Deliverance (1:20)	Nephi pleads to be delivered from his enemies (4:31); themes of deliverance are also included in Lehi's speech
Tender mercies of the Lord (1:20)	Mercies of God (1:2)
Lehi is warned by God to flee Jerusalem into the wilderness (2:2) — an exodus from Jerusalem	Nephi is warned by God to flee into the wilderness (5:5) — the Nephite's second exodus
Lehi takes his tents and family and departed into the wilderness, traveling for three days (2:4-6)	Nephi takes his family and tents and departs, journeying in the wilderness for many days (5:6-7)
Lehi obtains sacred relics, the Liahona and the brass plates (1 Nephi 5:10, 16:10)	Nephi retains the sacred relics, the Liahona and the brass plates (2 Nephi 5:12)
Lehi builds an altar and offers sacrifices (1 Nephi 2:7, 5:9; this may also be what Lehi is doing in 1 Nephi 1:5-6, as Adam Miller suggests)**	Nephi constructs a temple, which of course would include an altar and be a place of sacrifice (2 Nephi 5:16). Further, 2 Nephi 2:7 speaks of the Messiah offering himself as a sacrifice for sin
Lehi obtains the brass plates to provide the law of Moses that the people need to keep (1 Nephi 4:15-16)	Lehi speaks of the law of Moses but emphasizes grace (2 Nephi 2:5-7)
Nephi puts on the "garments" and "armor" of Laban to obtain the brass plates (1 Nephi 4:19-21)	Lehi urges his sons "put on the armor of righteousness" (2 Nephi 1:23). The adjacent command to "awake, awake" and arise from the dust may also recall the "beautiful garments" of Isaiah 52:1.
** Adam S. Miller, <i>Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology</i> (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 14-16. Miller suggests that when Lehi, concerned over the sins of Jerusalem, "went forth" to pray on behalf of the people (1 Nephi 1:5), he would surely be "going forth" to a place where he would offer sacrifice. He further suggests that the rock upon which fell a pillar of fire from God was most likely the rock of an altar. He shows parallels to the Old Testament when pillars of fire fall from heaven to consumer sacrifices upon an altar (Leviticus 9:23-24, 2 Chronicles 7:1-2, Judges 13:19-20, and 1 Kings 18:37-39).	

Referring again to Kevin Barney's foundational work on Hebrew word pairs in the Book of Mormon,⁵⁵ another word pair he discusses is that of "heart," *lebab* (לבב) and "soul," *nepshesh* (נפש), for which he cites

⁵⁵ Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon."

1 Nephi 1:15 as a Book of Mormon example: "his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him." Barney's Book of Mormon examples include 2 Nephi 4:17: "Yea, my *heart* sorroweth because of my flesh; my *soul* grieveth because of mine iniquities," as well as Jacob's words in 2 Nephi 9:49. To this should be added an example in 2 Nephi 1:21 in one of the "arise from the dust" passages:

And now that my *soul* might have joy in you, and that my *heart* might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity. [emphasis added]

The heart/soul word pair in 1 Nephi 1 is echoed in Lehi's speech in 2 Nephi 1, and in Nephi's response in 2 Nephi 4, strengthening the ties between the opening portions of Nephi's books.

A significant difference in the two chapters is that 2 Nephi 1 emphasizes the promised land and the promises of liberty to those in the land, while 1 Nephi 1 is focused more on Lehi's vision of the heavens. Nevertheless, there may be a unifying factor even in this, when we recognize that a common word pair is heaven and earth.⁵⁶ Thus, 1 Nephi 1 gives a vision of the heavens, while 2 Nephi 1 looks at the promised land on earth, though with a divine perspective. This may be accidental but could have been part of Nephi's intent in organizing parallels.

A Dusty Hymn from the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Hymns Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls includes a variety of hymns similar to the Psalms of the Bible. First published in 1954–5, the 25 hymns therein contain rich doctrinal detail. The author expresses his unworthiness as a "creature of clay" for the blessings he receives from God. In Hymn 10 (formerly Hymn 5), we have a humble speaker made of clay, shaped from dust, who praises God for raising him up to divine heights and making him part of the everlasting Council, while also being delivered from Satan and the pit. This hymn shows some affinity for Nephi's psalm. The following translation is from Geza Vermes⁵⁷:

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Geza Vermes, "The Thanksgiving Hymns," in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 337–360; <https://books.google.com/books?id=r3dh4GjzuPQC&pg=PT337>.

I thank Thee, O Lord,
 for Thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit,
 and from the Hell of Abaddon
 Thou hast *raised me up to everlasting height.*

I walk on limitless level ground,
 and I know there is hope for him
whom Thou hast shaped from dust
for the everlasting Council.

Thou hast cleansed a perverse spirit of great sin
 that it may stand with the host of the Holy Ones,
 and that it may enter into community
 with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven.

Thou hast allotted to man
 an everlasting destiny amidst the spirits of knowledge,
 that he may praise Thy Name
 in a common rejoicing
 and recount Thy marvels before all Thy works.

And yet I, a creature of clay, what am I?
 Kneaded with water, what is my worth and my might?

For I have stood in the realm of wickedness
 and my lot was with the damned;
 the soul of the poor one was carried away
 in the midst of great tribulation.

Miseries of torment dogged my steps
 while all the snares of the Pit were opened ...

It was a time of the wrath of all Belial
 and the bonds of death tightened without any escape.⁵⁸
 [emphasis added]

This hymn, resonating with Nephi's psalm and the chiasmus of Alma 36, speaks of the bonds of hell, the author's grief at his sins, misery, torment, cleansing, deliverance, and divine destiny amid the heavenly council, consistent with Book of Mormon themes and the analysis of Brueggeman on *rising from the dust*. The themes related to rising from the dust were still at play at Qumran and continued into New Testament times, and are beautifully present in the Book of Mormon.

Completing the circle of our investigation that began in Part 1 with considering themes from the Book of Moses in the Book of Mormon, the

58 Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 358–360; <https://books.google.com/books?id=r3dh4GjzuPQC&pg=PT358>. Also available at http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls_deadsea/deadseascrolls_english/08.htm.

passage above from the Dead Sea Scrolls touches upon an issue relevant to the Book of Moses. Hymn 10 above connects being "shaped from the dust" with "a creature of clay, kneaded with water," showing that wet clay can represent God's creative work just as dust can. This is relevant to the symbolism of John 9:6-7, where Christ anoints the eyes of a blind man with clay that He forms from spittle and the dust of the ground. After anointing, He instructs the man to wash the clay from his eyes, resulting in miraculous healing. The early Christian leader Irenaeus argued that the use of clay here was an allusion to God's creative work in forming man from the dust (Genesis 2:7),⁵⁹ but others have disputed that, arguing that clay is not the same as dust. Recently, however, Daniel Frayer-Griggs has shown that three documents from the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Near Eastern documents provide compelling support for Irenaeus' view that anointing with clay refers to the Creation and particularly the creation of man.⁶⁰

In light of the Frayer-Griggs work, a possible connection to the Book of Moses occurs in Moses 6:35, where the Lord instructs Enoch to anoint his eyes with clay and to wash them, after which Moses 6:36 tells us that Enoch could then see "the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people." By virtue of anointing the eyes with clay, Enoch becomes a seer who could see the invisible things of the Creation, including the spirits God had created. It would seem that it is not so much the clay itself that adds vision and new light to Enoch or the blind man but the washing off of the clay/dust from the eyes.

This symbol of cleansing, repentance, and receiving light from God would seem to fit the complex of dust-related themes explored above. The role of a seer, after all, is to see divine *light* to reveal what is not visible to the rest of us.

The seer Enoch was said to have been "raised up unto his people" by the Lord (Moses 6:36) in parallel to the words of recorded on the brass plates from Joseph of Egypt: "A seer shall the Lord God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins" (2 Nephi 3:6) and the Lord's promise to Joseph, "A choice seer will I raise up ..." (2 Nephi 3:7).

59 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, 15:2; <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html>.

60 Daniel Frayer-Griggs, "Spittle, Clay, and Creation in John 9:6 and Some Dead Sea Scrolls," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132/3 (2013): 659-670; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23487892>.

Consistent with the “rise from the dust” theme of the Book of Mormon, the choice seer is “raised up” by the Lord. Seers are raised up by the Lord as part of God’s creative and revelatory work to raise up all of us if we will let Him.

2 Nephi 3:5–7 tells us that this “choice seer” would help bring Israel “out of darkness unto light ... and out of captivity unto freedom” and Mosiah 8:17 reiterates that through seers, “hidden things shall come to light.” By washing off the clay/dust that brings darkness, access to light and knowledge is made possible, revealing the hidden things of the Creation and assisting in God’s ongoing creative work as He helps His children rise from the dust and enter into light and life.

What This Means So Far

At this point, we have explored how modern scholarship on dust-related motifs reveals richer layers of meaning in Lehi’s speech in 2 Nephi 1 and in the surrounding chapters. This began by considering the relationship between elements in the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, wherein the theme of escaping the captivity of Satan and his chains pointed not only to related content but also to a Hebraic wordplay in a highly poetic passage relating dust and obscurity or darkness. Recognizing the significance of dust-related themes in 2 Nephi 1 then resulted in further discoveries about the way these themes are used in a coherent way in the Book of Mormon.

For example, the enthronement and covenantal aspects of rising from the dust shed light on Nephi’s organizational structure. His use of Isaiah material before and after Lehi’s speech bridges the two books and forms an intriguing *inclusio* with dust-related themes around Lehi’s poignant appeal to rise from the dust, as he is about to return to the dust. Further, by understanding the relationship of 1 Nephi 1 to classical patterns of divine commissions for ancient prophets, we can see remarkable parallels between Lehi’s divine commission and the kingship-related themes in 2 Nephi 1 and 4 where Nephi’s call as prophet and his rightful rule as king is documented, especially when we consider the complex of motifs associated with rising from the dust. Other parallels between the opening verses of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi reveal further relationships pointing to Nephi’s careful crafting of his two books.

This investigation of dust-related themes began with a look at the use of the word *chains* in the Book of Mormon and soon raised a question about the last occurrence of that word in the text in Alma 36. With

the background we have now established, we can dust off a famous but occasionally obscure chiasmus in Alma 36, the topic of Part 3.

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