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## Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon - VI

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# Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon

BY THOMAS W. BROOKBANK, ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE "MILLENNIAL STAR."

## VI

### 15. *Omissions of Conclusions and Abrupt Transitions.*

In the interpretation of the Biblical Scriptures the abruptness of transition in historical narratives, and especially in prophecy, creates difficulty. Different and often distant events are joined in what seems to be the same paragraph. Frequently a difficulty arises from the fact that the conclusion of an argument is omitted, or a premise is suppressed, or an objection is answered, without our being told what the objection is. The epistle to the Romans furnishes examples of all these difficulties. Rom. 3:22, 24; 8:17, 18; 9:6, Chapters 3 and 4.—Dr. Angus. *Bible Hand Book*, paragraph 291.

There is no present necessity for quoting all these statements of the learned author; but they are serviceable as attesting the lack in the Hebrew, in some respects, and at times, of that orderly arrangement, proper connection and completeness which are features of good English composition.

It is a cause for great rejoicing, on the part of every believer in the Book of Mormon as the inspired word of God, that none of its peculiarities dim the general clearness of its statements, even though Hebraisms, or Hebrew practices in uniting, are observable on almost every page,—a clearness that is due, first of all, to causes heretofore mentioned, and further to the fact that it was originally engraved on metal, and in strange hieroglyphics that were known to but few, and then preserved in a manner which made additions to or alterations in the text, or its confusion in any way or manner, approach closely to the impossible.

Resuming after this digression the subject of omissions, the reader is requested to accept in lieu of quotations and illustrations the statement of Dr. Angus in relation to their occurrence in the Bible, and we shall proceed to show by examples from the Book of Mormon that it is chargeable with delinquencies which are identical with, or similar to, some of those spoken of by him. One noteworthy example now follows:

"For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls, except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent; for the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; but if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father," *he shall be saved as surely as infants are who die in their infancy.*

This quotation is made from Mos. 3:18, 19; but the conclusion in italics is lacking; yet it is evident that it or one of like substance is required. It is easily arrived at from the context—a labor left to the reader to perform, thus corresponding exactly with that which ancient Hebrew authors so often imposed on their readers. Again:

"And ye all are witnesses this day, that Zeniff, who was made king over this people, he being over zealous to inherit the land of his fathers, therefore being deceived by the cunning and craftiness of king Laman, who having entered into a treaty with king Zeniff, and having yielded up into his hands the possessions of a part of the land, or even the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom, and the land round about," *was successful by these means in accomplishing his design concerning us.*—Mos. 7:21.

The words italicised are supplied. If the quoted passage is not rounded out in some such manner the word "who" before "having entered," stands as the subject of a sentence having no predicate, but such an anomaly cannot exist; a predicate must be expressed or implied in every sentence, and the one here implied by the context has been suggested.

Another; "And it came to pass that when the Lamanites found that their daughters had been missing, they were angry with the people of Limhi; for they thought it was the people of Limhi," *who had abducted and perhaps murdered them.*

Yet another; "And it came to pass that after they had bound me, insomuch that I could not move, the compass which had been prepared of the Lord, did cease to work. Wherefore, they knew not whither they should steer the ship," *and the anger of the Lord was poured out upon us,* "insomuch that there arose a great storm, yea, a great and terrible tempest."—I Nep. 18:12, 13.

From verse 10 of this same chapter we learn that Nephi was anticipating just such a storm as that spoken of in verse 13. The italicised words, therefore supply, as suggested by the context,

an apparent omission, and the use of "insomuch" is made proper. As the text stands, however, there is a break in the narrative which is readily accounted for as occurring under the hand of a Jewish writer.

In the first of the foregoing examples, under this number, we observe an omission which is conspicuous as an illustration of an unexpressed conclusion, while the third, with the last, show abrupt transitions or breaks in historical narratives scarcely less noticeable in their place and character.

In the second there is also a break not quite so patent as reading often goes; but yet a good illustration of a failure to round out a period as Anglo-Saxons think should be done. The omissions of all kinds now reviewed are clearly Hebraic in character; and are not of less value to support the claim of a Jewish origin for the Book of Mormon than are the numerous Hebraisms found in it.

#### 16. *Concerning the Construct State of Nouns and non-use of Adjectives.*

In stating what is meant by the "construct state of nouns," the terms used by Prof. Greene shall be employed without following him in points which are not essential to our purpose, he says: "When one noun stands in a relation of dependence on another, the first, in Hebrew, is put in what is commonly called the construct state, that is, supported; and their relation to one another corresponds, for the most part, to the occidental genitive, or to that denoted in English by the preposition *of*." And further, "It will be observed that the Hebrew uses nouns to express many of the ideas for which adjectives are employed in other languages, \* \* \* This both arises from and explains the paucity of adjectives in Hebrew, though even where corresponding adjectives exist, the other construction is frequently preferred."—*Heb. Gram.*, par. 254, and 6, a.

Thus we find nouns used for adjectives in the construct relation as follows:

Children of iniquity, for wicked men.—II Sam. 3:34.  
 man of violence, for violent man.—Ps. 18:48.  
 vessels of wood, for wooden vessels.—Lev. 11:32.  
 sons of strength, for strong men.—II Chron. 25:10.  
 heat of anger, for great anger.—II Chron. 25:10.  
 vessels of desire, for goodly vessels.—II Chron. 36:10.  
 possession of perpetuity, for perpetual possessions.—Gen. 17:8.

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fire of anger, for burning anger.—II Nep. 26:6.  
 furnace of fire, for fiery furnace.—Mos. 12:10; Nep. 1:32.

- land of promise, for promised land.—I Nep. 17:33 and often.  
lands of promise, for promised lands.—II Nep. 9:2; 24:2.  
words of truth and righteousness, for true and righteous words.—  
Al. 38:9.  
words of plainness, for plain words.—Jac. 4:14.  
words of soberness, for serious words.—Jac. 6:5.  
work of darkness, for evil work.—II Nep. 30:17; Hela. 6:29.  
works of darkness, for evil works.—II Nep. 25:2; Hela. 6:30.  
work of wood, for wooden work.—Mos. 11:8.  
work of miracles, for miraculous works.—Morm. 1:13.  
workers of iniquity, for wicked men.—Alma. 5:32, 37.  
man of great stature, for large man.—Eth. 14:10.  
mark of red, for red mark.—Al. 3:13.  
doings of abominations, for abominable doings.—II Nep. 25:2.  
plans of wickedness, for wicked plans.—Hela. 6:30; Eth. 13:15.  
work of wickedness, for wicked work.—Hela. 11:2.

This list might easily be lengthened from other examples found in the Book of Mormon; but those now given are sufficient, and they alone make evident the fact that that book resorts to the use of nouns for adjectives with commendable Jewish frequency. Further, we have already found that, according to competent authority, there is a paucity of adjectives in the Hebrew, and, consequently, it contrasts in this respect greatly when compared with the English, which is richly supplied with qualifying terms of this character. It is not then a matter of little importance that we find the Book of Mormon uses adjectives with a sparing hand. Any one wishing to verify the last statement can readily have his desire gratified by reading a few random pages in that work. But as some who read these lines may not have the book at hand, it will be stated that in the first five chapters of I Nephi,—covering about eleven pages,—there are only some sixty or seventy different adjectives in all, not counting a few numerals, words sometimes used as pronouns, and the demonstratives “this” and “that” or “these” and “those.” In these same five chapters there are, however, over eight hundred nouns altogether, a fact which shows that though numerous opportunities offered for using adjectives, the writers of that book found little use for them comparatively, thus harmonizing with Jewish practices; and those that were employed are of the most simple kind,—in that respect contrasting almost to the extreme with the grandiose character and multiplicity of adjectives so often found in English composition, or spread-eagle oratory. These writers, further, as already shown, reduced the use of adjectives to the minimum by substituting nouns for them, evidently preferring this construction, even in cases where it is plain that the vocabulary of the writers was sufficiently copious to enable them to employ the other form, if they had so desired.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)