



Type: Magazine Article

Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon - V

Author(s): Thomas W. Brookbank

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (July 1914), pp. 881–884

Published by: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association

Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon

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

V

12 *Omission after Numerals.*

"In enumerations of familiar objects, the noun is sometimes omitted when the meaning is sufficiently plain from the connection;" (Greene's *Hebrew Grammar*, par. 251: 2. c) as,

"Ten" (shekels) "of gold" (Gen. 24:22); "three hundred" (pieces) "of silver" (Gen. 45:22); "six" (mesaures) "of barley" (Ruth 3; 15); "Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty (soldiers) with his fifty" (men) (II. Kings 1:9); "Of the Jews received forty (stripes) save one" (II Cor. 11:24); "And there were more than forty (of his enemies) which had made this conspiracy" (Acts 23:13).

The Book of Mormon is conformable in this respect, as,

"Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, (servants or soldiers), yea, even he can slay fifty, (of his enemies) then why not us?" (I Nephi 3:31). "My little band of two thousand and sixty" (young soldiers) Alma, 57:19, 20, 25); "Give heed unto the words of these twelve (ministers or representatives) whom I have chosen" (III. Nep., 12:1; 13:25; 15:11; 19:6; Mormn. 3:18, 19; Moro. 2: 1); "By the word of three" (witnesses) "God hath said, I will establish my word" (II Nep., 11:3); "But the former three (brethren) he took with him" (Al. 31:6); "Save it were the three (disciples) who were to tarry" (IV. Nep., 1:14).

13. *Numerals with a Possessive.*

Numerals used in a possessive sense are doubtless more characteristically Hebraic than is the omission of nouns after them. In the examples which follow, it will be observed that both an omission and the idea of possession occur in the same expression: "And Elijah arrived and said to the captain of fifty. If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and 'thy' fifty." (II. Kings 1:10); "and also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with 'his fifty' " (verse 11); in verse 14 of this chapter the possessive "their" fifties is found.

BOOK OF MORMON EXAMPLES

In expressions identical with those just given which show an

omission after a numeral and the idea of possession at the same time, the Book of Mormon supplies examples as follows:

"For, behold, he (the Lord) is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and 'his' fifty, yea, even than 'his' tens of thousands" (1. Nephi 4:1). "My men were hewn down, yea, even 'my' ten thousand" (Mormon 6:10); "And Lamah had fallen with 'his' ten thousand, and Gilgal had fallen with 'his' ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with 'his' ten thousand; and Joneam had fallen with 'his' ten thousand; and Camenihah, and Moronihah, * * * had fallen with 'their' ten thousand each. * * * and there were ten more who did fall by the sword, with 'their' ten thousand each" (Mormon 6:14, 15); "I did return with 'my' two thousand" (Alma 56:49, 50, 54; see also chap. 57:19, 25).

To conclude, "their fifty" is a reading in Mos. 11:19. The significance of these Book of Mormon examples, showing the use of possessive numerals, does not so much appear on their face, though corresponding perfectly with Hebrew practice, as it does when viewed in the light of what Prof. Greene (*Hebrew Grammar*, par. 250:2, (2 a), says respecting them, to wit: "The following numerals occur with pronominal suffixes having a possessive sense." Omitting the Hebrew which he gives, they are, "thy fifty," "his fifty," "their fifties," "my thousand," "your thousands" and "his ten thousands"

The learned author does not state in so many words that no other numerals are ever so used in the Hebrew, nor that these particular ones are never used with a *noun* in the possessive; but his language, we think, sustains these inferences quite plainly. Now, we find that the Book of Mormon does use in a possessive sense the very numerals which Hebrew practice sanctions according to Prof. Greene; but it never transgresses these limits. It further conforms to the Hebraic use of pronominal possessives, in case, but never is at fault by the use of a *noun* in the possessive. It is remarkable how the latter forms were avoided in the narrative, which relates the destruction of those many thousands of soldiers. Unless there was some justifying reason, not apparent to us, but which would satisfy a Jew, how shall we account for the form of Hebraic expression so faithfully adhered to, when an English author would more naturally unite, for example, "and Joneam's ten thousand" and Gilgal's "whole army of ten thousand men were also killed and the generals with them"?

14. Omissions Not Connected With Numerals

The remarks under this number and the next one also relate to Hebraic practices which give rise to faults in composition—glaring ones, too, when compared with English standards of quality. Translators of the Hebrew into our language find it

necessary, in many instances, to supply some word or words not found in the text, in order to make, for various reasons, the rendering more acceptable to us than a literal translation could at all do.

The italicised words in our Bibles are supplied, not being a part of the Hebrew text; and if we omit them in our reading, the completeness of expression in English composition when contrasted with the Hebrew will become very manifest, as, "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and no magistrate in the land, that might put to shame in thing, and they far from the Zidonians, and had no business with man"—Judg. 18:7, see the text for the words to be supplied,—this passage is by no means an extreme one to illustrate the point in view.

"Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, * * fine lords of the Philistines."—Judg. 3:1-3. Supply "namely" before "fine lords."

"When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, Thou hast clothing."—Isa. 3:6. Supply "saying" after "father."

BOOK OF MORMON OMISSIONS

In the following illustrations the italicised words are supplied by the writer of these remarks:

"Wherefore a commandment I give unto you, * * *namely*, that ye revile no more against them."—Jac. 3:9.

"And behold this was the desire which I desired of him, *namely*; That if it should be so."—Enos. 1:13.

And again—"I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands for this cause, *namely*, That I might obtain the records according to his commandments."—I. Nep. 4:17. See also I. Nep. 4:36; II. Nep. 10:15; Alma 9:25; Mos. 4:8-9.

"For in the last night the angel spake unto me, *saying* that this [Christ] should be his name."—II. Nep. 10:3.

"The voice of the Lord came unto my father, *saying*, that we should arise and go down into the ship."—I. Nep. 18:5.

For other omissions of this same word see I. Nephi 10:2, 5, 12, and frequently.

"And we cast lots to *determine who of us*."—I. Nep. 3:11.

"And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us" *to obtain*.—I. Nep. 5:21.

"And it came to pass *that* after I had prayed."—I. Nep. 8:9.

"I beheld many cities, yea, even *so many* that I did not number them."—I. Nep. 12:3.

"And their garments were white, even like unto *the garments of the lamb of God*."—I. Nep. 12:11.

"We cannot write *an account* of them all."—I. Nep. 17:6.

"* * * my wife with her tears and prayers, and also my children *with theirs*, did not soften the hearts."—I. Nep. 18:19.

Omissions from the text of the Book of Mormon are frequently observable. Those pointed out are nearly all found in the first few chapters, and by no means include all that occur there. Several examples in which the word "namely" may be supplied are given in order to show that though opportunities were presented quite often for its use in a work which some allege was written by an English speaking impostor, it might just as well never have been coined, so far as its service in the Book of Mormon is concerned.

It appears also that it was a term not found in the vocabulary of the Hebrew writers of the Bible. Its use, or that of synonymous terms, would have occasioned a formality in their compositions, which, if they did not study to avoid, seems to result from some peculiarity of the ancient Jewish mind, which led them, as we have seen, to string out their proposition without using many of those appropriate particles of connection which so largely characterize the English. In a few places the Book of Mormon shows a touch of formality, as, for example, in Mos. 2: 23, 24, where the phrases "in the first place," and "secondly," are employed; but that work, taken altogether, is built on strict Jewish models as an informal composition.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)