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"IT CAME TO PASS"
IN
BIBLE AND BOOK OF MORMON
by
Robert F. Smith

This is a prospectus for statistical analysis by computer of a common phrase found in the Bible and Book of Mormon. Due to limitations in obtaining and processing critical data, the conclusions reached herein are merely adequate, not certain. Nevertheless, the general observations provided here are very likely to be confirmed in large measure by any future study possessing the requisite breadth and depth.¹

Although the Book of Mormon is less than 1/3 (31.6%) the length of the King James Version of the Bible (without Apocrypha), yet it contains over twice as many instances of the phrase "came/come to pass." Howso? Well, just over 9/10 of the biblical instances of that phrase are to be found in only about 2/3 of the Bible, and in 20 of the 66 books of the Bible--all but 3 of those 20 being from the Old Testament. The OT, constituting over 3/4 of the Bible, contains 86% of the instances of our phrase. However, 28 books of the Bible contain no instances of that phrase, and those books are characterized primarily by formal poetry, song, lament, wisdom literature, legislation, and epistles. The same applies to those books in which the phrase is quite rare (see Tables I & III). On the other hand, biblical instances of the phrase are found usually within prose narrative, though there are also instances of its use within poetic and prose prophecy and apocalyptic in the future tense (see the high frequency portions listed in Table IV).

How does the Book of Mormon usage stack up in comparison? Rather well, according to the attached statistical survey: Seven of eight (possibly nine) Book of Mormon epistles, for example, contain direct speech and no instances of the phrase, while the one epistle which does employ the phrase contains prose

¹ A recent, valuable critique of one computer approach to the phrase here under study is that of Prof. D. J. Croft (Univ. of Utah), "Book of Mormon 'Wordprints' Reexamined," Sunstone, 6:2 (Mar-Apr 1981), 18: ". . . the incidence of the six words in the phrase . . . is highly dependent on the literary form. An occurrence of any one of those six words in a passage . . . is correlated with an occurrence of the other five words and gives an immediate indication that the author is likely to be a historian. Thus the words in that phrase should not be labeled as 'non-contextual'" (cf. R. P. Howard, Restoration Scriptures, 1st ed., p. 38). See now, however, Brian C. Roberts, "Stylometry and Wordprints: A Book of Mormon Reevaluation," M. S. thesis (BYU Dept. of Statistics, Aug 1983), which employs junction grammar analysis and deletes all instances of the phrase in question.

narrative (Alma 56:2 - 58:14). Mormon's second epistle (Moroni 9:1-26) is indicative in that it contains no instances of the phrase, while his parallel prose narrative account of the same incidents does (Mormon 4:10-15).² Most of the Book of Mormon claims to be highly condensed prose narrative, and to a far greater and more uniform degree than can be claimed of most biblical books, even under hypercritical scrutiny by a documentary analyst. As Croft and others have pointed out, where oratory is found, fewer instances of our phrase naturally occur (see Tables II & V). Thus, a set of controlled and condensed annals, only incidentally or collaterally containing non-narrative matter, would not be likely to be as heterogeneous in nature as the anthology known as the "Bible."

While I have appended my 1979 technical summary on the Hebrew and Egyptian background and meaning of the phrase, further comments here are in order: A convenient summary of the consecutive and conjunctive (coordinate, subordinate, and correlative) uses of Hebrew וַ waw, "and," is provided by James W. Watts' A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament.³ The narrative waw-consecutive = past tense (chronological), and the prophetic waw-correlative = future tense (logical/eschatological, "and it shall be," etc.). The coordinate waw-consecutive indicates temporal sequence as well as logical cause, result, and contrast, in history, parable, legend, myth, and other literary narrative types. It is characterized by a constant return to waw-consecutive verbs.

The particular KJV (and Book of Mormon) phrase which is the center of our interest derives from Hebrew וַיְהִי wayehi, which is translated by the KJV not only as "and it came to pass," but also as "and it happened, came, had come, became, arose, was, now, etc. I have left these latter translations uncounted for this study. Other forms of the same verb "to be" (with and without waw) were rendered by the KJV translators as "shall come to pass, arise, appear, come, become, shall be; bring, brought to pass," etc.⁴ In Genesis 1, for example, wayehi occurs fully 19 times, yet is never translated there as "it came to pass," and other forms of the same verb appear in the same chapter 6 times, in such forms as "it was" and "let there be." Watts offers suggestions for improved translation of the consecutive-

² V. Garth Norman first brought the similarity of these passages to my attention.

³ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 103-117.

⁴ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 224-7; cf. Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, trans. & ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I:681-2.

narrative, depending on the context: "for, because, since, inasmuch, but, yet, however, still, nevertheless, so, therefore, thus, hence, likewise, also, then, afterwards," etc.⁵ We can only speculate at present as to how closely Joseph Smith either aped and possibly exaggerated the biblical style of his day, or reproduced the language of the Plates in altogether too literal and humdrum a manner. Whatever the case, the precedent is clearly available to argue for either, or both possibilities, and the phrase is not diagnostic of any substantive disjunction between Bible and Book of Mormon. Indeed, Joseph's use of a fallible, non-plenary "scriptural idiom" is reemphasized by our statistics.⁶

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⁵ Watts, loc. cit.

⁶ H. Nibley, "The Literary Style of the Book of Mormon," Saints' Herald, 108:968-969, 975.

TABLE Ia

OT Books (KJV)	Chapters	Verses	Words	"came, come to pass"
Genesis	50	1,533	38,267	61 + 7 = 68
Exodus	40	1,213	32,692	27 + 7 = 34
Leviticus	27	859	24,546	1 = 1
Numbers	36	1,288	32,092	11 + 5 = 16
Deuteronomy	34	959	28,461	5 + 13 = 18
Joshua	24	685	18,858	27 + 5 = 32
Judges	21	618	18,976	26 + 1 = 27
Ruth	4	85	2,578	3 = 3
I Samuel	31	810	25,061	33 + 7 = 40
II Samuel	24	695	20,612	28 + 1 = 29
I Kings	22	816	24,524	39 + 4 = 43
II Kings	25	719	23,532	37 = 37
I Chronicles	29	942	20,369	9 + 1 = 10
II Chronicles	36	822	26,074	20 = 20
Ezra	10	280	7,441	
Nehemiah	13	406	10,483	13 = 13
Esther	10	167	5,637	4 = 4
Job	42	1,070	10,102	
Psalms	150	1,775	35,166	
Proverbs	31	915	15,043	
Ecclesiastes	12	222	5,584	
Song of Songs	8	117	2,661	
Lamentations	5	154	3,415	1 = 1
Isaiah	66	1,292	37,044	6 + 27 = 33
Jeremiah	52	1,364	42,659	19 + 17 = 36
Ezekiel	48	1,273	39,407	15 + 11 = 26
Daniel	12	357	11,606	2 + 3 = 5
Hosea	14	197	5,175	3 = 3
Joel	3	73	2,034	3 = 3
Amos	9	146	4,217	1 + 2 = 3
Obadiah	1	21	670	
Jonah	4	48	1,321	1 = 1
Micah	7	105	3,153	2 = 2
Nahum	3	47	1,285	1 = 1
Habakkuk	3	56	1,476	
Zephaniah	3	53	1,617	3 = 3
Haggai	2	38	1,131	
Zechariah	14	211	6,444	1 + 13 = 14
Malachi	4	55	1,782	
39 books	929	22,486	593,195	526

Note: With the exception of Psalms, the figures here for chapters, verses, and words are taken from J. I. Packer, M. C. Tenney, and W. White, Jr., The Bible Almanac (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), pp. 559-582; since the computer analysis by John Hilton and Kenneth Jenkins gives a total of 609,861 words for the Old Testament, my estimates for the Book of Psalms may be low; the counts of "came" and "come to pass" are based on J. Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (1894).

TABLE Ib

NT Books (KJV)	Chapters	Verses	Words	"came, come to pass"
Matthew	28	1,071	23,684	6 + 1 = 7
Mark	16	678	15,171	4 + 2 = 6
Luke	24	1,151	25,944	40 + 9 = 49
John	21	878	19,099	4 = 4
Acts	28	1,007	24,250	13 + 4 = 17
Romans	16	433	9,447	1 = 1
I Corinthians	16	437	9,489	1 = 1
II Corinthians	13	257	6,092	
Galatians	6	149	3,098	
Ephesians	6	155	3,039	
Philippians	4	104	2,002	
Colossians	4	95	1,998	
I Thessalonians	5	89	1,857	1 = 1
II Thessalonians	3	47	1,042	
I Timothy	6	113	2,269	
II Timothy	4	83	1,703	
Titus	3	46	921	
Philemon	1	25	445	
Hebrews	13	303	6,913	
James	5	108	2,309	
I Peter	5	105	2,482	
II Peter	3	61	1,559	
I John	5	105	2,523	
II John	1	13	303	
III John	1	14	299	
Jude	1	25	613	
Revelation	22	404	12,000	1 = 1
27 books	260	7,956	180,551	87
Grand Totals:	Chapters	Verses	Words	"came, come to pass"
66 OT/NT Books	1,189	30,442	773,746	613

Note: The figures here for chapters, verses, and words are taken from Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., The Bible Almanac, pp. 584-601; Hilton & Jenkins provide totals of 180,383 words for the New Testament, and 790,244 words for the Old & New Testaments combined; the counts here of "came" and "come to pass" are based on Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, s.v., "pass" (including his Addenda on p. 1215)--no count has been attempted here of the 14 KJV Apocryphal books (174 chapters; 5,153 verses; estimated 135,956 words) wherein "came" or "come to pass" is rare in most books and nonexistent in others.

TABLE II

Book of Mormon Books	LDS Chapters	LDS Verses	Words	"came, come to pass"	
I Nephi	22	618	22,655	202 +	6 = 208
II Nephi	33	771	27,318	16 +	36 = 52
Jacob	7	203	8,384	47 +	1 = 48
Enos	1	27	989	6	= 6
Jarom	1	15	659	4	= 4
Omni	1	30	1,272	13	= 13
Words of Mormon	1	18	824	5 +	1 = 6
Mosiah	29	785	28,613	154 +	14 = 168
Alma	63	1,975	77,315	431 +	2 = 433
Helaman	16	497	18,652	124 +	11 = 135
III Nephi	30	785	26,706	133 +	21 = 154
IV Nephi	1	49	1,790	19 +	1 = 20
Mormon	9	227	8,666	62 +	1 = 63
Ether	15	433	14,837	165 +	1 = 166
Moroni	10	163	5,676		
15 books	239	6,596	244,355	1,381 +	95 = 1,476

Note: The chapters and verses here are figured, without counting superscriptions, according to the 1879 LDS edition--divisions which are used currently; RLDS editions maintain the chapters of the 1830 edition, and have a completely different versification; the words are my estimates and may be low, i.e., higher figures elsewhere may be more correct, e.g., 270,000 words in J. D. Hawkes, Book of Mormon Digest, 3rd ed. (SLC: Hawkes Publ., 1970), p. 238; Hilton & Jenkins found 268,625 words via computer analysis; the counts of "came" and "come(th) to pass" are based on the highest figures obtained from either G. Reynolds, Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon (1899), or R. G. Shapiro, An Exhaustive Concordance of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price (Hawkes Publ./Publishers Press, 1977), since the counts derived from each differ significantly--the nature of the differences make it unlikely that they are due to differences in the 1879 and 1920 editions; counts in the 1908 RLDS edition may differ from those above, but no RLDS concordance has included the phrase, and a critical, scholarly edition of the Book of Mormon does not yet exist.

Note: A computer check of these figures was run by John L. Hilton in August, 1981, utilizing the computer files of the 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon prepared by Larry K. Browning of the Language Research Center at Brigham Young University. This computer run corroborated most of the statistics in this Table II, but yielded the following few differences:

	"Came to pass" 1830 Edition/1879 Edition	"Come to pass"
1 Nephi	201/200	5
2 Nephi	17/17	36
Jacob		NC
Enos		NC
Jarom		NC
Omni		NC
Words of Mormon		NC
Mosiah	165/153	NC
Alma	445/422	NC
Helaman	121/120	10
3 Nephi	NC	19
4 Nephi	20/20	0
Mormon	60/60	NC
Ether	NC	0
Moroni		NC

TABLE III

Biblical Books	% of Bible	"came/come to pass"	% of Instances	rate each per
Genesis	5 %	68	11.1 %	563 words
Luke	3.4	49	8	530
I Kings	3.2	43	7	570
I Samuel	3.2	40	6.5	627
II Kings	3	37	6.1	636
Jeremiah	5.5	36	5.9	1,185
Exodus	4.2	34	5.6	962
Isaiah	4.8	33	5.4	1,123
Joshua	2.4	32	5.2	589
II Samuel	2.7	29	4.7	711
Judges	2.5	27	4.4	703
Ezekiel	5.1	26	4.3	1,516
II Chronicles	3.4	20	3.3	1,304
Deuteronomy	3.7	18	2.9	1,581
Acts	3.1	17	2.8	1,427
Numbers	4.2	16	2.6	2,006
Zechariah	.8	14	2.3	460
Nehemiah	1.4	13	2.1	806
I Chronicles	2.6	10	1.6	2,037
Matthew	3.1	7	1.1	3,383
20 books	67.3 %	569 instances	92.9 % of instances	

Note: This table is arranged by book according to the weight of instances of the phrase under study. It shows that, of the 38 biblical books which have some occurrence of the phrase, only 20 of those books (67.3 % of the Bible = 2/3) are required to account for 92.9 % (over 9/10) of the total number of occurrences of the phrase in the Bible. Moreover, only 15 books (55.2 %) are required to account for 83.2 % of those occurrences. The rate or frequency of those occurrences is figured according to the number of words (averaged) between each occurrence, the smaller number indicating the higher frequency. A closer look at rates is taken in Table IV. However, the 14 highest rates are listed below for quick reference:

Zechariah	460 words per phrase
Luke	530
Zephaniah	539
Genesis	563
I Kings	570
Joshua	589
I Samuel	627
II Kings	636
Joel	678
Judges	703
II Samuel	711
Nehemiah	806
Ruth	859
Exodus	962

TABLE IV
Selected High Frequency Portions of Bible
for "came, come to pass"

Biblical Section	style & genre	instances	total words	rate ea per words
Zph 1:8-12	poetic prophecy	3	222	74 wds VERY HIGH
Neh 4:1-16	prose narrative	5	445	89

Isa 7:1-23	poetic/prose narrative	5	572	114
Lk 24:4-51	prose narrative	6	699	116
Lk 21:7-36	prose apocalypt.	5	603	121
Ex 16:5-27	prose narrative	5	603	121 HIGH
Gn 37:23 - 41:13	prose narrative	20	2,604	130
Ex 12:25 - 13:17	prose narrative	8	1,080	135
Zch 13:2 - 14:16	prose prophecy	7	953	136

Gn 24:14-52	prose narrative	6	953	159
Zch 7:1 - 8:23	prose prophecy	6	984	164 MEDIUM
Jer 41:1 - 43:1	prose narr & prophecy	8	1,365	171

I Sm 17:48 - 18:30	prose narrative	6	1,111	185
Jsh 1:1 - 6:20	prose narrative	15	2,889	193
Lk 5:1 - 6:12	prose narrative	6	1,238	206
II Chr 24:4 - 25:16	prose narrative	6	1,365	228
Jer 36:1 - 37:11	prose narr & prophecy	5	1,334	267 LOW
Jsh 8:5 - 11:1	prose narrative	11	3,016	274
Lk 8:1 - 9:57	prose narr/proph/parable	9	2,635	293
Lk 1:8 - 2:46	poetry/prose narr/tales	8	2,350	294

II Sm 11:1 - 13:36	prose narr & proph.	9	2,858	318
I Kg 11:4 - 22:32	prose narrative	35	11,716	335
II Kg 18:1 - 20:4	prose narr/poet. proph.	7	2,350	336
II Kg 2:1 - 10:25	prose narr & tale	21	8,096	386
Jdg 13:12 - 19:12	prose narr & tale	11	4,318	393 VERY LOW
Ezk 32:1 - 33:33	prose proph & apocalyp.	5	2,000	400
II Sm 15:1 - 17:27	prose narrative	6	2,540	423
Gn 4:8 - 9:14	prose narrative-epic	7	3,048	435
Gn 27:1 - 35:22	prose narrative-epic	15	7,303	487
Gn 12:11 - 19:34	prose narrative-epic	8	4,508	564

Note: The number of words within each biblical section is estimated, and the rates in the Very High to Medium categories compare well with typical Book of Mormon rates (see Table V), though II Nephi is more in line with the low end of the Very Low category, and the book of Moroni contains no instances whatsoever (as for 28 biblical books). The five sections of Luke listed above contain nothing from Q, the non-narrative source posited by many New Testament scholars.

TABLE V

Book of Mormon	% of BofM	"came/come to pass" Reynolds/Shapiro	% of instances	rate ea/per
Alma	31.6 %	433/417	29.3 %	178.6 words
I Nephi	9.3	208/206	14.1	108.9
Mosiah	11.7	168/167	11.4	170.3
Ether	6.1	111/166	11.3	89.4
III Nephi	10.9	154/150	10.4	173.4
Helaman	7.6	135/130	9.2	138.2
Mormon	3.6	63/61	4.3	137.6
II Nephi	11.2	52/52	3.5	525.4
Jacob	3.4	48/48	3.3	174.7
IV Nephi	.7	20/20	1.4	89.5
Omni	.5	13/13	.9	97.8
Enos	.4	5/6	.4	164.8
Words of Mormon	.3	5/6	.4	137.3
Jarom	.3	4/4	.3	164.8
Moroni	2.3	0	0	

Note: Percentages listed may not total 100 % due to rounding; figures selected by counting the instances listed in the concordances of Reynolds and Shapiro differ, and the higher figure is used for each book, though both counts are listed here for reference and future study; according to S. Larson, 48 instances of "came to pass" in the 1830 edition were deleted from the 1837 edition (thesis, p. 267; n. 56, PMS marks only 42 of these for correction), though I am able to count only 46 of these instances absent from the 1920 edition. Whether the lower counts for some books in Shapiro's concordance are due to deletions subsequent to the 1879 edition used by Reynolds will be unknown until the necessary collations by computer are made of all editions and manuscripts. For convenience, the books are arranged by rate, below: (note especially Mormon's identical high rates in separate books!)

Book of Mormon	rate of occurrence per	classification
Ether	89.4 words	
IV Nephi	89.5	VERY HIGH
Omni	97.8	
I Nephi	108.9	

Words of Mormon	137.3	
Mormon	137.6	HIGH
Helaman	138.2	

Enos	164.8	
Jarom	164.8	
Mosiah	170.3	MEDIUM
III Nephi	173.4	
Jacob	174.7	
Alma	178.6	

II Nephi	525.4	VERY LOW

Moroni	0	none

Technical Addendum

"AND IT CAME TO PASS"

Wayehi וַיְהִי, the 3MS (masculine singular) consecutive-past aspect of the Hebrew verb "to be," has two basic meanings:

- 1) Static being, "and it was"
- 2) Dynamic becoming, "and it happened, became, occurred," etc., most commonly translated in the KJV as "and it came to pass,"¹ though in some contexts it was rendered as "and there was, and it was,"² "it came, then came,"³ "now it came to pass,"⁴ etc.

Modern grammarians see it often as an entrenched past narrative form, which frequently appears as a non-translatable "prop-word" when placed before adverbial phrases (predicates) in initial position.⁵ The rare appearance of such Hebrew verbs as ba' בא, "came," or asa אָשָׂא, "made, did," in similar usage may be ignored. The common Greek equivalent, kaì 'egéneto καὶ ἐγένετο (γίνωμαι, "be, be made, be done, become"), likewise need not concern us,⁶ and is, in any case, analogous to the Coptic and ancient Egyptian which we will discuss below.

Cumbersome as wayehi may appear in most English translations, as a short Hebrew word packed with nuances of introduction, continuity, aspect, etc., it is unsurpassed for its terse narrative use.⁷

In his analysis of the Tetragrammaton, YHWH יהוה (the rather famous four-letter word which the KJV translates "LORD" [always in capitals]--sometimes as "Jehovah"--and which the Jews traditionally read 'Adonai אֲדֹנָי, "My-Lord"), the late William F. Albright reasoned from the Hebrew & Aramaic root hwy הוּי, "to fall; become, come into existence," through to its late, 3MS qal-causative-indicative form, Yahwe, Yahweh (jussive Yahu), "He(-Who)-Causes-To-Come-Into-Existence; It-Is-He-Who-Creates," which, as used in Exodus 3:14, is essentially the same as Egyptian

¹Gn 6:1, 7:10, 8:6,13, Isa 7:1, Jer 28:1, etc.; the Hebrew verb "to be," haya הָיָה, is the second most common verb in the OT (in all its forms); 'amar אָמַר is the first.

²Gn 1:3,5,7, and passim.

³Jer 1:3,4, etc.

⁴Jer 26:8.

⁵Cf. the protasis of the real conditional clause in I Sam 3:2; the KJV rendered it as "it came to pass"; others have seen this as a "continuous aspect," but with little justification.

⁶Matthew 7:28, for example.

⁷See E. Cecil McGavin and Arch S. Reynolds, "And it Came to Pass," Deseret News: Church Department, 13 November 1937, pp. 2, 7.

