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Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon

Hugh W. Pinnock

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Preface

Several years ago I became fascinated with a few chiasms that had been found in the Book of Mormon. Simply stated, a chiasm is an ancient Hebrew writing structure in which a series of words, concepts, or verses is presented in one order in the first half of a passage and then repeated in reverse order in the second half.¹ This form of composition is rarely found in English, German, Spanish, oriental languages, or most other writing systems found in the world's literature.

Much of my interest in chiasms came from reading an article published in the *New Era* written by John W. Welch.² After speaking and testifying about the Book of Mormon at a conference in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1990, I was approached by a member of the church named Dayton Conway. He showed me his marked copy of the Book of Mormon, which, he reported, contained about six hundred examples of chiasmus. I borrowed his book for the night and read it until early the next morning.

When I returned home to Utah, I contacted John Welch and Donald W. Parry, professors at Brigham Young University, who had been working on some projects involving chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. Little did I know that I was speaking to two of the world's experts in this field—that it was John Welch who first discovered chiasmus in the Book of Mormon in 1967 and that Donald Parry was at that time completing the requirements for a doctoral degree in biblical Hebrew. These two dedicated scholars taught me enough in those first conversations to convince me of the importance of research in this field, and I felt that others would be served well if they, too, understood a little about this amazing form of ancient writing. The beauty and surprising presence of this Hebrew writing form in the Book of Mormon appeared to be an almost untapped reservoir of testimony-strengthening material.

We must never forget, of course, that all scriptural truth is revealed through the Spirit, and there is never a substitute for the workings of the Holy Ghost. Moroni advised us well when he wrote:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when you shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:3–4)

Each of us can have a personal witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon by following Moroni's promise, and that testimony can grow by further study of the scriptures. Still, even those who have not yet received the witness from the Holy Spirit can come to respect and appreciate the Book of Mormon by studying it closely.

After studying chiasmus in the Book of Mormon and then expanding my study to encompass other literary qualities of the Book of Mormon, I introduced several examples of Hebrew writing forms found in that amazing book to a well-educated and intelligent Jewish woman, Mary Kay Lazarus. She called a rabbi friend she knew in Ohio and said, "Rabbi, I have found a book filled with chiasmus." "Then, my dear," he responded, "you have found one of God's books because chiasmus is the language of God."³ Since that time she has had great respect for the Book of Mormon.

With only a few exceptions, all languages spoken and written today have ancient origins. The language forms found in the Book of Mormon naturally have beginnings prior to their being used to write the great messages found in that book of scripture.

As the classical Greeks studied language, they defined various arrangements of words scientifically, naming more than two hundred structural patterns. Today literary critics still use many titles the Greeks gave to various writing forms.⁴ The Romans developed this discipline further, but after language changes in the Middle Ages, the use of these forms and their classical definitions was almost forgotten. Knowledge of these Hebrew writing forms and Jewish poetry has been partially resurrected today, but these elements of biblical style are still not broadly understood or even known by many of today's scripture experts. As far as I can determine, it was well after the publication of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith in 1830 that other books including or explaining these forms arrived in America.⁵ Hence Joseph Smith could not have been aware when he translated the Book of Mormon that it was full of chiasms and Hebraisms. He obediently did what the Savior wanted him to do—translate an ancient Israelite record for the benefit of our Heavenly Father's children today.

In this study, we will look at some of the major forms used in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon, noting several scriptural examples of each. This book is a personal statement; many other examples could have been selected, and their arrangement is a matter of personal discretion. Because more than two hundred Hebrew forms and subforms have been identified, only some of the most commonly used forms are discussed in this book. However, my own research indicates that the forms I discuss represent a significant percentage of the types of forms used in the Book of Mormon.

By design, this book simply glances at these inspiring and fascinating forms. My hope is that this book will deepen your testimony of the Book of Mormon to the extent that you will agree it is an ancient Hebrew book that was translated, but not written, by Joseph Smith in the nineteenth century. Angela Crowell enthusiastically writes, "We have in the Book of Mormon an ancient Semitic treasure—a masterpiece of literary style that has yet to reach its zenith in appreciation and acclaim."⁶

This book offers a basic working knowledge of some of the ancient writing forms that can be identified in the scriptures. As John Welch writes, "Of all the things which can be said about the Book of Mormon, it must be acknowledged that the book, especially in its most literary portions, is replete and precise with extensive chiasmic compositions. These passages are often meaningfully creative, original, and intricate, judged to be highly successful by any consistently applied criteria."⁷

As you study this book, I encourage you to mark in your own scriptures the forms given in the book and those you discover on your own in order to develop a better feel for the different literary forms found in the Bible and Book of Mormon. By persisting in marking your own scriptures as you continue to read these holy books, you will learn to recognize these beautiful writing forms more easily and will enjoy doing so.

Finally, I hope this book will inspire in you an even deeper faith in Jesus Christ. I believe that as you study the Book of Mormon as demonstrated in this book, the benefits I have mentioned, and many more, will flow from heaven and provide you with a firmer witness of this sacred record and its marvelously written message.

Acknowledgments

There are always many who deserve words of gratitude for the completion of a project such as this.

First I give my thanks to Anne, my eternal companion, who evolved into a fine researcher but mostly who offered her loving support, tirelessly typed the text while we lived in England, and helped with the project in many ways. Love and appreciation to our six children, who, with others, wondered if this project would ever be completed. Thanks to our son Nate for the artwork on the cover.

I especially wish to thank John W. Welch, a kinsman whom I am proud to claim, for his patient observations and academic integrity that sharpened a number of vital areas in the text.

Donald W. Parry has spent much time moving the manuscript along and providing invaluable information. He has been a mentor when one was needed and a source of endless input. I have drawn heavily from his *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns*⁸ as a springboard for my own research. Also, much gratitude is due to Daniel B. Hogan for his observations and fine-tuning and to Richard Dilworth Rust for his helpful review. I also appreciate H. Clay Gorton, a dedicated servant of the Master, who has shared so much with me as a friend and an inspired student and scholar.

After the manuscript arrived at FARMS, Mary Mahan spent tireless hours preparing the text for final review and printing. Thanks to Scott Knudsen for the design and layout that nicely complement the ideas and figures in this book. Appreciation is also due to Josi J. Brewer, Angela D. Clyde, Jessica Taylor, and Sandra A. Thorne for their proofreading skills and to Daniel B. McKinlay for his source checking.

Kenneth W. Olsen, a friend since our early high school days, had the courage to get angry and “force” me to think beyond a busy life in order to accomplish this simple work. My appreciation is extended to Mary Kay Lazarus, my Jewish friend whose eyes and words communicated the importance of this work and who allowed the Holy Spirit to touch her heart. Special thanks to friends such as John H. Tempest III, Franklin D. Johnson, R. Bruce Merrill, and Ian Cumming, who chided me but recognized and admired Hebrew writing forms and seemed to want more. Thanks to the many others who enthusiastically responded when they learned of this discipline. I would also like to acknowledge Steve Baxter, a man I met while flying from Manchester, England, to Atlanta, Georgia. His quick mind and desire to find spiritual truth taught me that being introduced to this fascinating discipline will bless the lives of many, whether they are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or not.

While returning from a conference in Boise, Idaho, a number of years ago, President Thomas S. Monson expressed interest in what I was writing and offered unexpected encouragement. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, when asked how one could be more effective in the work of the Master, replied that one should write, write, and write. Thank you, brethren, for input at critical times in my own ministry and in preparing this text.

Thanks to the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), which blesses the lives of both members and nonmembers of the church daily with their excellent publications, services, and untiring focus on Latter-day Saint scriptures and ancient religious studies. They compile much information pertaining to the kingdom of God that is read and appreciated by thousands. Their focus on the Book of Mormon is lifting our knowledge of that magnificent book to new heights and expanding its values beyond its unique original purposes.

This is not an official church publication, nor is it endorsed or sponsored by FARMS, although they have printed and will distribute it. Hence, though I was aided by many, I alone am responsible for the views found and communicated in this book. I have chosen to reformat a number of verses that other students of these writing

forms have arranged in other ways. There is much more to do in the formatting of the scriptures in Hebrew writing forms. E. W. Bullinger has concentrated on the Bible,⁹ whereas Donald Parry has contributed a significant service in arranging much of the Book of Mormon in his *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*.

May I also recognize so many of you who, through prayer, pondering, and preaching the principles found within the Book of Mormon, know the truthfulness of it yet still want to know more. I am grateful if these ideas provide additional knowledge of the Book of Mormon.

Author's Testimony

I would like to present my testimony of my sure knowledge that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by revelation from gold plates to which he was led by an ancient religious and military leader named Moroni. Joseph Smith forever altered the potential knowledge base of truth-seeking individuals with regard to the ancient people that for centuries dwelt in the Western Hemisphere. Those who inscribed the metal plates with their revelations, histories, and commentaries used the writing forms that they learned from their progenitors. This tradition was part of the Hebrew culture they brought from Jerusalem. It could have been no other way. David, Israel's king who foresaw many things pertaining to the workings of God throughout the ages, prophesied that "truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:11).

While serving as a newly called missionary in the Western States Mission in 1954, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, I was assigned to the small community of Rocky Ford, Colorado. There in our tiny apartment on Spruce Street, I read and prayed about the Book of Mormon with more fervor than ever before. The Holy Spirit forcefully responded. Before my mission, my first five quarters at the University of Utah included philosophy, anthropology, biology, social psychology, and sociology classes—hardly a scriptural or spiritual focus for a young elder preparing for his mission. No matter. Much of the negative worldly conditioning from the classroom slipped away during my mission as I focused on the teachings of the Book of Mormon and the tasks of a missionary.

In Rocky Ford, Colorado, I studied the teachings and lives of Lehi, Nephi, Mosiah, Alma, Alma the Younger, Mormon, and others. It was Moroni, however, who profoundly instructed me through his writings in the Book of Mormon. As I prayed and studied the promise found in Moroni 10:4, it was fulfilled completely in my own life. It still seems like only last week when that event transpired, even though it was over forty years ago. My life has never been the same.

I learned then that a spiritual testimony matters most. The Holy Ghost does not let us down. It is our responsibility to ask with faith, and the Lord will respond. Moroni wrote that we must first receive the truths found in the Book of Mormon and then pray for the confirmation that will surely come.

Studying ancient Hebrew writing forms and legal systems, determining agricultural practices, and deciphering the geography of the Book of Mormon are interesting pursuits that help us see the Book of Mormon in interesting ways, but such knowledge can never replace sincerely praying about that amazing book and studying continually its inspired examples, stories, and eternal doctrines. The Book of Mormon is a spiritual book. When we pray about its divine nature, it blossoms in our minds as the most helpful, powerful, and significant book in our lives.

Even though I have coordinated and authored most of this book, I stand first to declare that the evidences it contains pale in significance to the testimony that comes from humble prayer. That is my encouragement for you. If

you will study and pray, your testimony of the Book of Mormon will be from the Lord who gave us life.

Notes

1. See the section titled “Chiasmus” (pages 100–110).
2. See John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” *New Era*, February 1972, 6–11.
3. The rabbi’s statement, of course, should not be misunderstood or exaggerated. While God may on occasion use chiasmus, alternate forms, or anaphoras, this does not mean that he always does.
4. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968), v, ix.
5. This conclusion is based on several conversations I had with John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry beginning in 1991, as well as on my own personal studies.
6. Angela Crowell, “Hebrew Poetry in the Book of Mormon, Part 1,” *The Zarahemla Record* 32 (1986): 2.
7. John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; reprint, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 198.
8. See Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns*. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).
9. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*.

Hebrew Writing Forms

Few aspects of a culture are more fascinating than the development of language. In some societies, the written word was so important that even before the invention of the printing press, handwritten documents were collected in large, extensive libraries. For thousands of years, however, very few people could read or write. Naturally, the invention and development of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg with support from others in the mid–fifteenth century provided the critical breakthrough that permitted more than just a few places such as monasteries and temples to have libraries that included the holy scriptures and other books.¹

Prior to the printing press, learning was passed on largely through oral recitation and memorization. I believe that many of the Hebrew writing forms discussed in this book were designed by ancient religious leaders and early scholars to help students memorize oral or written texts. Another reason for the development of such structures was to carefully design sacred texts so that the revelations of deity could be clearly understood.²

Many ancient Hebrew writings employ either various types of repetitions that aid learning and allow authors to communicate what they feel is most vital to readers or parallelistic structures in which thoughts, ideas, or principles are arranged in word groups that refer back to each other and facilitate learning. Chapter 2 of this book, “Repetitions,” discusses sentences that begin the same, end the same, or repeat the same or similar words within a phrase, sentence, verse, or chapter (see the beginning of chapter 2 for an introduction to repetitions). Perhaps repetitive forms were considered a type of nonrhyming poetry and were composed for their beauty of expression as well as for aiding in memorization. Chapter 3 discusses parallelisms. Chiasmus, arguably the best-known form of parallelism, is discussed at some length. All the examples in chapter 3 have a certain parallelistic structure and are part of texts written by ancient prophets operating under the direction of the Spirit.

Two significant religious books written using Hebrew forms are the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. The book I have written may be an oversimplification of some very complex issues, but by reading the basic definitions given in the following chapters and in the glossary and by looking up the scriptural references, one can quite easily observe the writing forms that Hebrew prophets used in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Purposes of Hebrew Writing Forms

A vital part of understanding Hebrew writing structures is knowing why the ancient prophets and other authors expended so much time and energy to create the artistic, poetic devices that became standard Hebrew writing forms. Many interesting things can be said about these forms. In this section, I will suggest only a few general reasons, proposed by both LDS and non-LDS scholars, that these poetic forms are important. For purposes of illustration, I will focus primarily on chiasmus, but similar points could be made about the other Hebrew forms.

Form

Format is often revelatory. For example, chiasmus is a poetic device that God and his spokesmen apparently have chosen to communicate parts of their message to the people. Many instances of chiasmus can be found in writings from both the Old and the New Worlds.³ The Old Testament includes chiasms that date anywhere from the time of Moses almost to the meridian of time. The New Testament includes chiasms that date up to approximately AD

90. The Book of Mormon, written from 600 BC to AD 421, and the Doctrine and Covenants, written in the 1800s, contain examples of revelations recorded in various patterns of grammatical and topical parallelisms and repetitions, the two main devices used by ancient Hebrew authors.

Clarity

Hebrew poetic forms helped authors and prophets communicate what they wanted the reader to know and understand. The scriptures experienced an extensive review and editing for full clarity before they were inscribed on metal plates or written on papyri or parchment. In other words, the writings that have become our scriptures have obviously been carefully drafted and arranged to meet the high standards that the word of the Lord and his prophets deserve.

Translation Tools

Chiasmus and other literary forms are significant translation tools because they provide a partial yet explicit checklist for verifying the accuracy of the Book of Mormon's translation into other languages. Because these forms do not generally rely upon rhyme, length of line, or meter, they fit comfortably into almost every language. Hebrew writing forms rely instead on the use of repetitious words, series of words and thoughts, and predetermined parallelisms that can generally be duplicated fairly well in any language. The Lord preserved ancient writing forms in the translation of the gold plates into English by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and it appears equally vital to preserve them as the Book of Mormon is translated into other languages.⁴

Verification of Translated Texts

Knowledge of Hebrew writing forms may also provide a tool for verifying the accuracy of scriptures already published in other languages. By carefully examining passages that in English exemplified certain Hebrew writing forms, one can determine whether these forms have been preserved in the translation.

Substitute for Punctuation

The typical punctuation marks used today—periods, commas, colons, and semicolons, for example—were developed long after the ancient scriptural texts were written. Writing forms were sometimes used by ancient inspired writers as a form of punctuation. These literary forms shape the scriptural text by frequently delineating for the reader the beginning and end of a given passage.

Establish Priorities

To help determine the focal point of a chapter or verse, it seems that ancient authors may have employed the various forms in their writings in order to establish priorities and to emphasize and focus on the items or concepts they felt to be most vital.

Relieve Possible Monotony

The number and variety of these writing structures also relieve possible monotony in what is, by its very nature and by necessity, potentially redundant and repetitious writing. These forms add interest, rhythm, and flow to scripture texts.

Memorization Tools

I believe that these ancient communication forms were established to help students memorize scripture. Ancient people did not have their own personal scriptures, and of necessity they were trained to memorize great volumes of materials. In carefully determined, well-designed ways, chiasmus, alternates, and other Hebrew forms aided and encouraged the memorization of long passages.

Chiasmus has been discovered to be a characteristic writing form of the Quich? people, the most powerful and cultured people in Central America at the time of the Spanish invasion in 1524. The *Popul Vuh*, or *Book of the People*, is an oral tradition that was written down by a Quich? prince after he learned Spanish.⁵ That the book is highly chiasmatic seems to support the theory that chiasmus was used as a memorization aid. It seems to connect the Quich? culture to the Hebrew traditions of its progenitors.

Beauty

Chiasmus and other such writing forms give inner beauty to scripture. They allow for poetic expression and freedom and are a beautiful art form. Ancient writers often focused incredible energy, time, and other resources into providing a carefully designed, artistic format for much of their scriptural writings. For example, it appears to me that there are at least fourteen different Hebrew writing forms found in 3 Nephi 29:2–9; 30:1–2. As Professor John W. Welch writes, “As with much of ancient literature, the design and depth of the Book of Mormon often comes to light only when the book is studied with chiasmatic principles in mind.”⁶ Yes, these marvelous writing forms serve us today as helpfully as when they were initially written.

Provide Interest and Facilitate Learning

The various Hebrew writing forms found in the Bible and Book of Mormon communicate concepts in various ways, facilitating learning and maintaining the reader’s interest. Whereas redundancies and constant repetitions, if left standing alone, have the potential to become tiresome, the variety of forms in Hebraic literature increase readability and make the writings even more appealing. Shakespeare’s masterful use of the sonnet and other such poetic forms added power, interest, and beauty to his poetry for many of the same reasons.

Strengthen Testimony

The number and variety of explicit ancient Hebrew writing forms found in the Book of Mormon are evidence of its origin and truthfulness. Hebraic writing forms indicate that the Book of Mormon is exactly what Joseph Smith, the Prophet, claimed it to be—an ancient religious and historical record written by ancient Hebrew prophets and authors. It contains language forms that were used by prophets and scholars of the earliest Hebrew period but apparently not known to modern America until well after the death of Joseph Smith, the translator of the Book of Mormon. The extensive use of Hebrew writing forms throughout the Book of Mormon supports the testimony that the volume was written originally by various individuals who knew by tradition and training the art of writing in the manner of their Hebrew fathers. Several hundred explicit and beautifully designed chiasmatic structures remain intact in the Book of Mormon, undeniably supporting the truth that the book is indeed a translation of an ancient Hebrew text, as Moroni explained it to be.

“Enemies” to Understanding Hebrew Writing Forms

In the natural course of translating scripture into modern languages, several things happen that can cloud and obscure what the original authors wanted to communicate. Satan will always be alert to ways in which he can take advantage of such events in order to pervert truth and pollute purity. We are well instructed in the eighth Article of Faith, which declares that “we believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Chiasmus and other forms of Hebrew poetry can be disrupted if the translator is not aware of the carefully designed forms in which the text was written or if the form is so hidden or so subtle that it is not identified as a special and unique form of writing. Listed below are some of the explanations of how the original writing forms are obscured or lost. There is no reason to believe that individuals have consciously attempted to rid the Holy Bible of its beautiful literary forms, although that has taken place extensively.

Versification and Chapter Designations

The Bible and Book of Mormon were not always arranged by chapter and verse as they are now. To reduce long passages into smaller and more palatable bites for our more modern reading appetites and reference needs, the original structure of much of the standard works has been changed to serve other purposes. Often, the poetic structure was set aside when the text was divided. While there are many advantages to versification and chapter divisions, these arrangements also have some natural disadvantages. Divisions can dramatically disrupt chiasmus or other literary forms, and perhaps some of the original meaning can be reduced or lost.

One example of a chapter division that disrupts a literary form appears in the book of Ruth, which is organized in chiasmic form. The first two elements of a chiasm in chapter 2 are found at the end of chapter 1:

1:22 *A So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab:
B and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*

2:23 *B So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest;
A and dwelt with her mother in law.*

More examples of versification that disrupts the Hebrew writing forms can be found in Alma 5:4–49. A number of other verses in scripture end before a sentence or concept is completed.

Translation Challenges

Anyone learned enough to be a skilled translator must have a highly developed sense of what is correct English, Spanish, German, and so on. Each of these languages periodically uses parallelistic structures and repetition to add strength and interest. The use of such conventions, however, is minimal compared to biblical Hebrew, which is based on extensive parallels and several thousand repetitions. Joseph Smith successfully translated the English edition of the Book of Mormon from the golden plates. One of the many testimonies of this fact is that the ancient writing forms were preserved in his translation. It appears to me to be a responsibility of translators from English into other languages to follow the example of Joseph Smith in reflecting the Hebrew writing forms that are so well preserved in the Prophet’s translation.

While it is admirable to be sympathetic to the difficult task of translating ancient writings into a modern language, we should also realize that in dealing with scripture (God’s communication with man), if the text is not translated

literally, the original language meanings may become clouded or even lost. A translator assumes a heavy responsibility to the original author when he departs from a literal translation.⁷

Not Understanding the Book of Mormon as a Literally Translated Text

The Book of Mormon is a marvelous example of a literally translated text because it contains many repetitions and parallelistic structures common to writings from the Book of Mormon time period (beginning 600 BC). Jewish, Nephite, and Lamanite prophets who were educated in the language of their fathers, “which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2), wrote the Book of Mormon. Those who now translate the gospel messages of the Book of Mormon from English to other languages seem to me to have an ethical responsibility to retain intact as many of the Hebrew forms as possible in communicating these messages effectively. There should be no reason to change or obscure the forms that were preserved when these texts were translated into English.

Simply stated, when an ancient Hebrew text is translated directly and literally, the form and style of that unique writing system is retained—at least as much as the target language will allow. When it is translated loosely or nonliterally, the beautiful chiasms, parallelisms, alternates, and repetitions could be injured or, even worse, lost.

Controversy

The study of Hebrew writing forms and Jewish poetry is not without considerable discussion. Arguments, various perceptions, and differing viewpoints prevail. Robert Alter writes, “What are the formal elements that make up a poem in the Hebrew Bible? . . . Common sense might lead one to suppose that the rudiments of an answer would be self-evident, but in fact there is no aspect of biblical literature that has elicited more contradictory, convoluted, and at times quite fantastical views, from late antiquity to the latest scholarly publications.”⁸ Almost everyone who has extensively studied Hebrew writing forms and other ancient languages develops his or her own beliefs and determines what the ancient composers of these texts meant. I am thankful that our prophets, leaders, and teachers rely on the Spirit in looking for ways to understand the scriptures more clearly and advise us to do the same.

Overzealousness

Because the study of Hebrew writing forms in the Book of Mormon can strengthen testimony and be quite exciting, a number of researchers and laypersons have become overly enthusiastic, much to the detriment of the subject and integrity of their studies. Similarly, some Latter-day Saints, after learning that the Book of Mormon has marvelous examples of these parallelistic and repetitious writing forms, have become so enthusiastic that they have based their testimonies and life’s experiences solely upon their studies, again, much to their detriment and often to the detriment of their families. Our scriptures are spiritual in nature. They were written under the direction of the Spirit, who assists us in understanding what a wise Heavenly Father and our eldest brother, Jesus Christ, want us to know. Overzealousness can turn a friendly ally of knowledge into an enemy causing confusion.

Loss of Original Word Meanings

The science of comparative Hebrew word meanings (Semitic philology) and incredible archaeological discoveries have increased our knowledge of the original meanings of many words in scripture. There are sometimes still great differences between what authors’ words meant twenty-five hundred years ago and what those same words mean

today. I have come to know, however, that a kind God has preserved the original and vital meanings of these words by embedding them in literary forms that are part of our scriptural heritage in the Book of Mormon and, to a great extent, in the King James translation of the Holy Bible. The repetitions found in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon testify time and time again of what a kind Heavenly Father and loving Savior have revealed.

Original Lack of Punctuation

The ancient Jews did not have punctuation as we do today. Often the form itself provided the necessary breaks, hesitations, and phrases, but at times how the message should be structured was still confusing. As Robert Alter observes, “There are sometimes serious questions as to where the line breaks should come and, especially in some of the Prophets, ambiguities about the boundaries between prose and poetic passages,”⁹ and accordingly the punctuation that has been added sometimes disrupts or runs contrary to the original form. Again, thank goodness for the Book of Mormon, in which the sense of its phrases is usually unambiguous.

Declaring a Part of a Text to Be Incidental

It seems as if many who consider themselves to be sophisticated in scriptural matters attempt to slip around eternal truth by declaring certain sections of scripture to be merely figurative or by discounting parts of certain paragraphs as later additions. This potentially wipes away the very power of the writing forms that were originally used to add force and exactness to scriptural truth. It is also a dangerous procedure to pursue because it keeps the Spirit from fulfilling the vital responsibility to “teach [us] all things, and bring all things to [our] remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

Lack of Interest in Studying the Scriptures in Depth

Many individuals are satisfied to read the scriptures for relaxation, to fulfill personal goals, or for comfort—all good reasons—but they do not realize that a universe of additional meaning, enjoyment, and truth await them if they will penetrate the verses in depth. President Marion G. Romney explains, “One of the best ways to learn the gospel is to search the scriptures. The word *search* means to inquire into, study, and examine for the purpose of discovering the meaning.”¹⁰ An understanding of Hebrew writing forms can help us find deeper meaning in the scriptures as we search for eternal truth.

Not Relying on the Spirit

The study of Hebrew writing forms is an interesting discipline; however, it does not excuse the student from fasting, praying, and relying on the Holy Ghost. In fact, it is only through dependence on the Spirit that eternal truth can be found and applied in life. We are to pray for the spirit of revelation in all that we do, especially as we seek to learn the eternal truths that are found in the scriptures. Elder Bruce R. McConkie says, “It is not reading alone; it is reading, pondering, and praying so that the Spirit of the Almighty gets involved in the study and gives understanding.”¹¹ Concerning the Bible, E. W. Bullinger, an Anglican vicar from whom we often quote, writes, “The natural man may admire its structure, or be interested in its statements; he may study its geography, its history, yea, even its prophecy: but none of these things will reveal to him his relation to time and eternity. Nothing but the light that cometh from Heaven. . . . The Holy Spirit’s work in this world is to lead to Christ, to glorify Christ. The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit; and the same Spirit that inspired the words in the Book must inspire its truths in our hearts, for they can and must be ‘Spiritually discerned.’”¹² I am grateful that, on a number of occasions while I was writing this book, the Spirit whispered strongly whether I was on the right path. I hope that

others will seek and receive similar perceptions through the Spirit of God, confirming to their souls a clear understanding of the full intent of each passage of the holy scriptures.

Notes

1. It is interesting to note that in the eleventh century, the Chinese had developed movable type (see *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997 ed., s.v. "printing").
2. For further discussion, see the section "Purposes of Hebrew Writing Forms" (pages 2–7).
3. For examples of chiasmic writings in the New World, see Allen J. Christensen, "The Use of Chiasmus in the Ancient Literature of the Maya-Quich?," *The Journal of Latin American Indian Literature* 4/2 (1988): 125–50; "The Use of Chiasmus in Ancient Mesoamerica" (FARMS, 1988); and "Chiasmus in Mayan Texts," *Ensign*, October 1988, 28–31.
4. My point has been independently observed and validated by others, such as Sarah Hatch, "Book of Mormon Poetry in Translation: None Other People Knoweth Our Language" (honors thesis, Brigham Young University, 1997).
5. See Dennis Tedlock, trans., *Popul Vuh*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). A new translation by Allen J. Christensen is forthcoming from FARMS and BYU Studies.
6. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; reprint, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 209.
7. For a discussion of how translation actually enhances a poem written in parallel format, see Hatch, "Book of Mormon Poetry," 13–16.
8. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 3.
9. *Ibid.*, 5.
10. Marion G. Romney, "Records of Great Worth," *Ensign*, September 1980, 3.
11. Bruce R. McConkie, "Drink from the Fountain," *Ensign*, April 1975, 71.
12. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968), vii.

Forms of Repetition

There are two basic classifications of Hebrew writing forms: repetitions and parallelisms. In each area we find many different, distinct, and interesting forms. The repetitions we find in scripture are of letters, words, numbers, figures of speech, phrases, sentences, subjects, descriptions, conclusions, positions of words, meanings of words, arrangements of words, double meanings of words, and many more. They all seem to have several characteristics in common.

Repetition is almost always used for emphasis, clarity, or to make the phrase or verse more euphonious. However, we generally find redundancies and repetitions not encouraged and often even inappropriate in English, German, Spanish, and many other languages. Often they are described as boring and unneeded. Language teachers usually discourage their use. This is not the case in Hebrew. In fact, the opposite is true. We must remember that even though a word or phrase is repeated in close proximity, the two words or phrases do not necessarily mean exactly the same thing. The repetition might emphasize a completely different concept or principle, even if it is similar or identical to words or phrases used earlier. This is important to remember. Because repetitions are so common in Hebrew writing, we often ignore them. However, the scriptures become even more meaningful when we recognize the various types of repetition and realize that in almost every instance they were purposely designed for our benefit. Following Donald Parry's outline,¹ we can identify several types of repetitions and parallelisms.

Anaphora: The Same Beginning

Anaphora is the easiest type of Hebrew writing form to identify. It is the "repetition of the same word or phrase in several successive clauses."² E. W. Bullinger defines it as "the repetitions of the same word at the beginning of successive sentences."³

Anaphora is a Greek term meaning "to repeat" or "to bring again." It describes an "important and impressive figure of speech" that in English is simply designated as "like sentence beginnings."⁴ Anaphoric phrases are common and are easily found in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Perhaps the most famous example to Latter-day Saints is the phrase *and it came to pass*, found plentifully throughout the Book of Mormon. This phrase is also used frequently in the historical writings of the Old Testament (namely, parts of the Pentateuch, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles). In the book of Genesis, *and it came to pass* is found sixty-two times to begin sentences. The phrase is characteristic of prose narrative and is seldom found in poetry, song, wisdom literature, or epistles.⁵ It is more common in the Book of Mormon (found in one of every four verses) than in the book of Genesis (found in one of every twenty-four verses). These numbers are an average; the phrase is more concentrated in some parts of these books than others. It is natural that the phrase is so prevalent in the Book of Mormon, because as Robert F. Smith explains, "Most of the Book of Mormon claims to be a highly condensed prose narrative, and to a far greater and more uniform degree than can be claimed of most biblical books."⁶

Turning to the Book of Mormon, it is worth noting that Lehi, Nephi, and the successive prophets and custodians of the records had available to them the books of the Hebrew prophets in which anaphora is found most frequently.

The phrase *and it came to pass* is used approximately 1,430 times in the Book of Mormon. For instance, from 1 Nephi 7:16–9:2, we find that of forty-seven verses, twenty-three begin with *and it came to pass* and forty-three begin with *and*. But anaphora is not restricted to the phrase *and it came to pass*, as evidenced in 2 Nephi 9:31–38:

And wo unto the deaf that will not hear; for they shall perish.

Wo unto the blind that will not see; for they shall perish also.

Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day.

Wo unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell.

Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth, for he shall die.

Wo unto them who commit whoredoms, for they shall be thrust down to hell.

Yea, wo unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them.

And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.

One of the most beautiful anaphoras in all scripture is found in Genesis 1:3–11:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Of similar power and feeling is Psalm 150:1–5, in which *praise him* begins nearly every phrase:

Praise ye the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary:

praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts:

praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:

praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance:

praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals:

praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Anaphora is found throughout Hebraic writings and often in historical writings in the New Testament. A deeper appreciation of the Book of Mormon can be gained by identifying the Hebrew writing forms used in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon.

For further study, the following is a list of several significant examples of anaphora: Deuteronomy 28:16–19 (*cursed*); Psalms 13:1–3; 148:1–4 (*praise*); Proverbs 30:11–14 (*there is a generation*); Jeremiah 4:23–26 (*I beheld*); 50:35–37 (*a sword*); Zephaniah 1:15–16 (*day*); Matthew 5:3–11 (*blessed are*; see 3 Nephi 12:2–11); Romans 8:33–35 (*who*); 1 Corinthians 11:3 (*the head*); 12:8–10 (*to another*); Hebrews 11:1, 3–9, 11, 13, 17, 20–24, 27–31 (*faith*); 1 Nephi 7:9–12 (*how is it*); 7:16–8:2 (*and it came to pass*); 2 Nephi 15:20–22 (*wo unto*); 28:24–29 (*wo be unto*); Mosiah 4:9–10 (*believe*); Alma 5:3–60 (variations of *I say unto you*); 11:44 (*both*); Helaman 13:11–12, 14–16 and 3 Nephi 29:5–7 (variations of *wo be unto*, a phrase found almost exclusively in the Book of Mormon; however, see D&C 56:16–17); Mormon 9:26 (*who can, who will*).

Polysyndeton: Many Conjunctions

Polysyndeton is “a figure consisting in the use of several conjunctions in close succession; usually, the repetition of the same conjunction . . . to connect a number of coordinate words or clauses.”⁷ It is among the easiest of repetitious forms to identify because it repeats “the word *and* at the beginning of successive clauses.”⁸ As Parry explains, the literal translation of the Greek word *polysyndeton* is “‘many, bound together’—referring to the many phrases [or items] bound together by the repetition of a conjunction. Polysyndeton is a special type of anaphora”⁹ (like sentence beginnings) that usually limits itself to *and*. Other conjunctions might also be used in such a pattern.

Polysyndeton somewhat resembles anaphora in that the word *and* is often repeated in both forms. The difference lies in the position and function of the repeated word. With anaphora, the repeated *and* will often begin consecutive clauses or sentences, whereas with polysyndeton, the repeated *and* can be in various positions in the sentence or phrase and is used to connect a series of items such as weapons, people, or animals.

Old Testament writers used the conjunction *and* profusely, but in the translation from the Hebrew Masoretic text to the King James Version, many of them were ignored. After all, in English the frequent repetition of *and* seems awkward and unnecessary. An example of polysyndeton that survived is found in Joshua 7:24:

***And Joshua,
and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah,
and the silver,
and the garment,
and the wedge of gold,
and his sons,
and his daughters,
and his oxen,
and his asses,
and his sheep,
and his tent,***

and all that he had

Another example of polysyndeton that survived is found in the book of Genesis. *And* is the first word in 1,142 of the book's 1,533 verses (73 percent).

The Prophet Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon contains numerous redundant uses of the word *and*. The sheer numbers indicate that he, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, retained a greater percentage of instances of the word *and* than the King James translators did in their monumental translation efforts. That implies that this form could have been intentionally preserved for emphasis in the Book of Mormon translation under direct guidance from the Lord. A good example of polysyndeton in the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 1:29:

***an abundance of flocks
and herds,
and fatlings of every kind,
and also abundance of grain,
and of gold,
and of silver,
and of precious things,
and abundance of silk
and fine-twined linen,
and all manner of good homely cloth.***

Hebrew writing did not employ punctuation as we know it today, so *and* was often used in place of commas and semicolons. Because so much of Hebrew is written using repetitions, the connective *and* was used to link these elements and sometimes also to add continuity to a series of thoughts, principles, or historical happenings that the writer wanted to communicate. We would receive a low grade in an English class today if we were to use many *ands*, whereas this would have been natural for a Hebrew schoolboy. Helaman 3:14 contains an excellent example of how *and* had the effect of intensifying a listing of the "proceedings of this people" by focusing attention on each element individually and stressing the cumulative extent of the series:

***yea, the account of the Lamanites
and of the Nephites,
and their wars,
and contentions,
and dissensions,
and their preaching,
and their prophecies,
and their shipping
and their building of ships,
and their building of temples,
and of synagogues
and their sanctuaries,
and their righteousness,
and their wickedness,***

***and their murders,
and their robbings,
and their plundering,
and all manner of abominations
and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.***

After eighteen *ands*, one is almost glad that the Book of Mormon authors decided not to include the complete history of everything that the people did!

In the next examples we see further uses of *and*. The first shows how *and* gives power through step-by-step clarity to the connection between the requirements that the gentiles must follow and the necessity of remaining on the narrow path:

***except they shall be reconciled unto Christ,
and enter into the narrow gate,
and walk in the strait path which leads to life,
and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.***
(2 Nephi 33:9)

***And it came to pass that they did come up to battle;
and it was in the sixth month;
and behold, great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle;
and they were girded about after the manner of robbers;
and they had a lamb-skin about their loins,
and they were dyed in blood,
and their heads were shorn,
and they had headplates upon them;
and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies . . . because of their armor,
and because of their being dyed in blood.***
(3 Nephi 4:7)

One of the finest examples of polysyndeton is found in the King James translation of 1 Corinthians 13:1–3. Seven of these *ands* are present in the original Greek, and the others are grammatically implied.

***Though I speak with the tongues of men
and of angels,
and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
And though I have the gift of prophecy,
and understand all mysteries,
and all knowledge;
and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,
and have not charity, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and though I give my body to be burned,***

and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

The use of polysyndeton in these three verses adds a repetitive literary power that probably could not come in any other way.

Many *ands* are used often in 3 Nephi 10 to 12. Like other Hebrew writing forms, polysyndeton is used with varying frequency by various authors. Another fine example of how *and* strengthens a prophet's message is found in 3 Nephi 11:19–20:

***And Nephi arose
and went forth,
and bowed himself before the Lord
and did kiss his feet.
And the Lord commanded him that he should arise.
And he arose
and stood before him.***

The following example from verse 27 of the same chapter provides a powerful focus on deity:

***that the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Ghost are one;
and I am in the Father,
and the Father in me,
and the Father
and I are one.***

Easily recognizable, polysyndeton was a tool frequently used by Hebrew writers and is an obvious support for the Book of Mormon's Hebraic roots.

For additional examples of polysyndeton, see Genesis 8:22; 22:9–11, 13; Exodus 1:7; 1 Samuel 17:34–35; 2 Kings 5:26; Isaiah 2:12–19; Haggai 1:11; Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 7:11–18; 1 Nephi 2:4; 4:9; Enos 1:23; Alma 7:27; 8:21–23; 9:21; 4 Nephi 1:5–7; Mormon 8:37; Ether 9:17–19, 21–27. Sometimes for converse rhetorical effect, ancient authors deliberately left conjunctions out. This form is called asyndeton, meaning “without conjunctions.”¹⁰ Asyndeton is not commonly found in the Book of Mormon, although it may occasionally exist.

Paradiastole: The Disjunctive Form

Wherever many disjunctives, such as *either/or* and *neither/nor*, are located at the beginning of successive phrases, sentences, or series of words, the writing structure is called a paradiastole. In this form, “one word is repeated at the beginning of successive sentences.”¹¹ This form of repetition, a type of anaphora, “separates and distinguishes”

phrases¹² rather than connects their similarities. Thus it can also be defined as a “putting together of dissimilar things.”¹³ It often serves to establish a contrast or opposition.¹⁴

In particular, H. Clay Gorton finds that the conjunction *or* seems to have four applications, each of which is used extensively in the Book of Mormon.¹⁵ These four are as follows:

1. To identify opposites: “They are free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death” (2 Nephi 2:27).
2. To identify equivalents: “Favored above every other nation, kindred, tongue, or people” (Alma 9:20). This is the most frequent application in the Book of Mormon.
3. To restate: “I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision” (1 Nephi 8:2).
4. To aid in correcting a statement: “Thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace, or they buried the weapons of war, for peace” (Alma 24:19). In this form, the author makes a statement and then restates the idea using similar words because he is correcting or clarifying his original thoughts.

In the examples that follow in this section, with a little effort one can identify which of the uses of *or* applies in each case. A classic example of paradiastole is found in Deuteronomy 13:6:

*If thy brother, the son of thy mother,
or thy son,
or thy daughter,
or the wife of thy bosom,
or thy friend, which is as thine own soul,
entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods*

This writing form is quite popular in the writings of Paul. Perhaps one of the most quoted instances of paradiastole is found in Romans 8:35:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation,
or distress,
or persecution,
or famine,
or nakedness,
or peril,
or sword?*

Joseph Smith, as he translated literally the Book of Mormon, included these Hebrew writing forms because the plates were inscribed by ancient prophets who utilized this style of communicating in their writings. He knew nothing explicit of these forms, however. In 3 Nephi 29:6 we find a clear example:

*worketh by revelation,
or by prophecy,
or by gifts,
or by tongues,*

**or by healings,
or by the power of the Holy Ghost!**

Interestingly, the Old Testament contains relatively few examples of paradiastole. One is found in Exodus 22:10 (see also Deuteronomy 14:26):

**If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass,
or an ox,
or a sheep,
or any beast, to keep; and it die,
or be hurt,
or driven away, no man seeing it**

An example of paradiastole with *neither/nor* is found in Judges 1:31:

**Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho,
nor the inhabitants of Zidon,
nor of Ahlab,
nor of Achzib,
nor of Helbah,
nor of Aphik,
nor of Rehob**

As with other forms of Hebrew writing, we could supply many more examples of paradiastole. The few that are listed help to increase our understanding that the translation of the Book of Mormon is of divine origin and that it is a Hebrew book of ancient scripture.

Additional examples of paradiastole include Exodus 22:10; Leviticus 13:48–49, 52–53, 56–59; 21:14, 18–20; Deuteronomy 5:21; 12:17; 18:10–11; 1 Samuel 30:19; Ecclesiastes 9:10–11; Jeremiah 16:5–7; Matthew 10:9–10; Romans 8:38–39; 1 Corinthians 3:22; 5:10–11; 6:9; Colossians 2:16; 2 Nephi 2:11, 13; Mosiah 2:12–13; Alma 1:30; 7:20; 23:1–2; 3 Nephi 17:7; 4 Nephi 1:16–17; Moroni 6:9.

Epibole: Irregular Repetition

Epibole occurs when “the same sentence or phrase is cast upon or laid upon (like layers or courses of bricks) several successive paragraphs.”¹⁶ Expressed another way, an epibole is several words repeated close together in an irregular way.¹⁷ Furthermore, epibole may involve the appearance of words in a text as if they had been thrown into it or layered in. Note that this layering effect is also common in chiasmus (see pages 100–110).

A double example from the Old Testament is observed in Leviticus 21:6:

**They shall be holy
unto their God,**

and not profane the name of their God:

for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer:

therefore they shall be holy.

In an irregular manner, *they shall be holy* appears twice, and *their God* is written three times. If we were to look at the next two verses as well, we would find *the bread of their God* mentioned in both the sixth verse and the eighth verse.

Another highly interesting epibole is found in Leviticus 22:2–16: either *holy thing* or *holy things* occurs twelve times in this series of verses. This frequent repetition acts as a powerful reinforcement of the Lord's instructions to Moses that priests and their families are to honor their sacred calling by separating themselves from worldly and unholy things. Even modern readers cannot read this passage and mistake how the Lord feels about those who bear his priesthood. Though specific instructions have changed, the feeling created by this epibole lasts through generations in order to instruct us today.

Turning to the New Testament, we find epibole in the writings John penned while on the isle of Patmos. The phrases *I know thy works* and *he that hath an ear* irregularly occur multiple times in Revelation 2:2–26 and 3:1–2, 8, 15.

In the Book of Mormon, *house of Jacob* is repeated four times at irregular intervals in 3 Nephi 5:21 and 25, tying those sentences together most impressively. A somewhat more complicated and intricately designed example of a double epibole is found in 2 Nephi 29:8:

***Know ye not that the testimony of
two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember
one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto
one nation like unto another. And when the
two nations shall run together the testimony of the
two nations shall run together also.***

Note that *two nations* is repeated three times and *one nation like unto another* is repeated twice, as is *two nations shall run together*.

Perhaps the most interesting example in the Book of Mormon is found in 1 Nephi 13:23–24 and 14:23. Forty-one verses separate close variations of the highly distinctive phrase *proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew*, which appears three times in 1 Nephi 13:23–24 and three more times in 1 Nephi 14:23. Interestingly, it is also located once in 1 Nephi 13:38, probably to tie these verses together, like a cycloides (see the next section in this chapter). It could also be considered an *inclusio* (see pages 110–114).

The first book of Nephi in the Book of Mormon seems in my experience to use epibole more than other books in the Book of Mormon. For example, *into the ship* is used four times in 1 Nephi 18: once in verse 5, twice in verse 6, and once again in verse 8. Nephi wrote the epibole used most frequently in scripture when, from 1 Nephi 4:34 to 1 Nephi 7:6, he layered *in the wilderness* or *into the wilderness* eighteen times, tying those experiences together in a most effective way.

For other examples of epibole, see Numbers 9:18; Judges 5:27; 1 Nephi 18:5; Jacob 2:34; 3 Nephi 5:21, 25.

Cycloides: Regularly Circulating Repetition

Cycloides, a moderately common form of Hebrew writing, is beautifully and cleverly designed. Its name implies “resembling a circle.”¹⁸ Cycloides “is so called because the sentence or phrase is repeated at intervals, as though in regular circles.”¹⁹ It is quite easy to identify because the same words at a somewhat noticeable but not always predictable frequency circulate throughout a passage to delineate and connect a specific message. A block of text containing a cycloides almost always has an exact beginning and ending. The word or phrase creating the cycloides is not used in proximity before or after that block of text.

In Psalm 42:5–6 and 11 we find first the inquiry, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” followed by the statement, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me,” and then again the question, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” The answer finally comes after this cyclical approach and ends with “hope thou in God” in verse 11. Anyone who has sought solace from a loving Heavenly Father recognizes that this pattern is typical of such searching prayers. Another biblical example of cycloides appears in Psalm 80. In verses 3, 7, and 19 we find a close variation of the phrase *turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine* three times woven through this psalm.

The longest cycloides I have found in the Old Testament is in the writings of Ezekiel, in which the phrase *slain by the sword* circulates twelve times through twelve verses (see Ezekiel 32:20–32). A word alone can be a cycloides if it occurs at regular intervals, leading the reader through a specific message. In this same thirty-second chapter of Ezekiel, the word *uncircumcised* appears ten times, and *terror* appears seven times. In a more complete example of cycloides, *down to the pit* shows up five times and *land of the living*, six. A close variation of *slain by the sword* ties the last fifteen chapters of the book of Ezekiel together through its appearance eighteen times in chapters 21–35, with ten of those concentrated in chapter 32 alone.

Cycloides is also well attested in the Book of Mormon. Often, however, a cycloides is not the only Hebrew form in a passage and can be identified only because the words or phrases are the same, although often intermittent and sometimes seemingly incomplete until the other words or phrases are located to make a message whole. In 1 Nephi 19:6–7 we see a clear example of this form:

*And now, if I do err,
even did they err of old;
not that I would excuse myself because of other men,
but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.
For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others **set at naught**
and **trample under their feet**.
Yea, even the very God of Israel do men **trample under their feet**;
I say, **trample under their feet** but I would speak in other words—
they **set him at naught***

It is interesting to note that *would excuse myself* is used only these two times in all of scripture. *Trample under their feet* is used these three times in 1 Nephi, three times in Helaman (6:31, 39; 12:2), and only once in 3 Nephi (14:6).

The longest single-word cycloides I have found is in 3 Nephi 11:21–12:2, where the Lord discusses baptism at length. A variation of *baptize* is mentioned nineteen times, *father* sixteen times, and *doctrine* nine times. Incidentally, I have found that there are at least seven other Hebrew writing forms found in these verses: chiasmus, simple alternate, repeated alternate, extended alternate, inclusio (*and there shall be no disputations among you*), anabasis, and polysyndeton.

Another very interesting cycloides is located in 3 Nephi 29:4–8, a text that contains many forms of parallelism and repetition. Here a form of the word *spurn* is located in the five verses four times. Three of these instances are extended to include the phrase *doings of the Lord* in some form. *Spurn* and *spurneth* are not found anywhere else in scripture, and this supports the idea that the ancient authors purposely used this unique word in composing this cycloides.

In a very short cycloides near the ending of the Book of Mormon, Mormon writes in despair of the sinning everywhere about him:

O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—(And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people)

But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination—How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?"

(Moroni 9:11–14)

Other examples of cycloides include Deuteronomy 18:1–2 (*inheritance*); 2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27 (*how are the mighty fallen*); Mosiah 4:9–10 (*believe*); 5:10–12 (*name*); Alma 5:3–6 (*I say unto you*); 32:12–16 (*humble*). There are many others.

Epistrophe: Similar Sentence or Clause Endings

Donald Parry writes, “Epistrophe, or ‘like sentence endings,’ is the repetition of an identical word and/or expression at the end of successive sentences.”²⁰ E. W. Bullinger states, “It is a figure in which the same word or words are repeated at the end of successive sentences or clauses, instead of at the beginning.”²¹ Similarly, it is defined as “a figure of speech in which each sentence or clause ends with the same word.”²² Epistrophe is a characteristic of poetry rather than prose.

In Deuteronomy 27:16–26, each clause ends with the words *And all the people shall say, Amen*. In this passage, Moses, or those who helped him, say “amen” twelve times to end the various thoughts and add unquestioned emphasis.

Perhaps the most significant epistrophe in scripture is found in Psalm 136:1–26, in which the repetition of *for his mercy endureth for ever* is found at the end of each of the twenty-six verses. This impresses all who read it with the message of God’s eternal love while simultaneously depicting a perfect example of this Hebrew writing form.

Generally speaking, translators, not knowing Hebrew writing forms, unfortunately would versify the Bible text without understanding what was originally conveyed by the structure of Hebrew writing forms. This often

resulted in a case of cycloides but did away with the beautiful epistrophe that had originally been designed into the revelation. Psalm 118:10–12 is an excellent epistrophe:

*And all nations compassed me about: but **in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.***

*They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but **in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.***

*They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for **in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.***

We find in Psalm 115:9–11 another beautiful epistrophe:

*O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: **he is their help and their shield.***

*O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord: **he is their help and their shield.***

*Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: **he is their help and their shield.***

I believe that these identical phrase endings were skillfully included to make a strong point, add variety because of their rarity, and improve the concept flow of the passage.

In Ether 2:17 we find a well-constructed epistrophe that communicates clearly that the Jaredite boats were constructed “like unto a dish”:

*And they were built after a manner that they were exceedingly tight, even that they would hold water **like unto a dish;***

*and the bottom thereof was tight **like unto a dish;***

*and the sides thereof were tight **like unto a dish;***

*and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight **like unto a dish;***

*and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight **like unto a dish.***

In Mosiah we find two verses that make up an epistrophe. This epistrophe has been disrupted by modern versification, a common “enemy” that sometimes obscures these writing forms (see pages 8–9).

*And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the **law of Moses.***

*I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the **law of Moses** as yet;*

*but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the **law of Moses.***

*And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by **the law** alone;*

*and were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the **law of Moses.***

(Mosiah 13:27–28)

An interesting example of epistrophe is found in Ether 1:6–32, where the phrase *son of* is used twenty-six times in this fascinating genealogy of Ether, who was a descendent of Jared through these many generations.

Other examples of epistrophe include the following: Joel 2:26–27 (*my people shall never be ashamed*); Mosiah 1:6 (*are true*); Alma 62:18 (*Nephihah*).

Amoebaeon: Like Paragraph Endings

Amoebaeon contains “a recurring identical phrase or sentence found at intervals, always at the end . . . of successive paragraphs.”²³ “Cycloides may occur at the beginning, or middle, or any part of [a passage,] but amoebaeon only at the end.”²⁴ Hebrew prophets, wanting to reinforce their message to their students, often punctuated the very end of the message with identical or nearly identical phrases. Amoebaeon is often difficult to distinguish from epistrophe, because the Hebrews did not define sentences or paragraphs the way we do today. Amoebaeon is found in narrative writings, often indicated by the phrase *and it came to pass*, while epistrophe applies to poetry, which may be divided into lines, or strophes. It is difficult to determine how Hebrew strophes and narrative sections should be identified and arranged.

For an example of amoebaeon, let us turn to the Old Testament. These words describe a time that messengers came bearing tragic news signaling that Satan had begun to torment Job:

*And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; **and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.***

*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; **and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.***

*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; **and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.***

*While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; **and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.***

(Job 1:15–19)

In the book of Amos we learn of the Lord's great disappointment when the people, though blessed in many ways, did not return to their devotion to him. It is easy to observe how amoebaeon can be used as a tool to accentuate the message:

*And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.***

*And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.***

*I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.***

*I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.***

I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked

*out of the burning: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.***

(Amos 4:6–11)

On several occasions the authors of the Book of Mormon used amoebaeon, usually in short bursts of two or three similar paragraph endings. In Helaman 7:23–24 we see a typical example:

*For behold, thus saith the Lord: I will not show unto the wicked of my strength, to one more than the other, save it be unto those who repent of their sins, and hearken unto my words. Now therefore, I would that ye should behold, my brethren, that it shall be better for the Lamanites than for you **except ye shall repent.***

*For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed, even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed **except thou shalt repent.***

Time and circumstance alter the preference for certain writing forms just like other aspects of culture. Book of Mormon prophets seem to have used amoebaeons fairly frequently, but often together with another form. The book of Helaman employs this practice in the following example, in which *it shall be done* is mentioned twice, but in the final passage the closely similar expression *it shall come to pass* is substituted:

*And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, **it shall be done.***

*And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, **it shall be done.***

*And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, **it shall come to pass.***

(Helaman 10:8–10)

I believe that Alma is the unquestioned champion user of amoebaeons in all scripture. He mastered the form to the extent that he could comfortably substitute words, tense, circumstance, and time frames and still maintain the form in all its usefulness. He usually used short amoebaeons, however, which were not more than two or three similar endings. Following is a series of like paragraph endings that significantly add interest to the text:

*Who art thou? Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us **that the earth should pass away?***

*Now they understood not the words which they spake; for they knew not **that the earth should pass away.***

(Alma 9:2–3)

*And also because I said unto them that they were a lost and a fallen people they were angry with me, and sought to lay their hands upon me, that they might **cast me into prison.***

*But it came to pass that the Lord did not suffer them that they should take me at that time and **cast me into prison.***

(Alma 9:32–33)

*But it came to pass that they did not; but they took them and bound them with strong cords, and took them **before the chief judge of the land.***

And the people went forth and witnessed against them—testifying that they had reviled against the law, and their lawyers and judges of the land, and also of all the people that were in the land; and also testified that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should not save them; and

many such things did the people testify against Alma and Amulek. Now this was done **before the chief judge of the land.**

(Alma 14:4–5)

And when they had been cast into prison three days, there came many lawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor; and they came in unto the prison to see them, and they questioned them about many words; **but they answered them nothing.**

And it came to pass that the judge stood before them, and said: Why do ye not answer the words of this people? Know ye not that I have power to deliver you up unto the flames? And he commanded them to speak; **but they answered nothing.**

(Alma 14:18–19)

Now behold, we can look forth and see the fruits of our labors; and are they few? I say unto you, Nay, they are many; yea, and we can witness of their sincerity, **because of their love towards their brethren** and also towards us.

For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, **because of their love towards their brethren.**

(Alma 26:31–32)

Yea, and I also remember the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage, and by this did establish his church; yea, the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, **did deliver them out of bondage.**

Yea, I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians **did deliver them out of bondage.**

(Alma 29:11–12)

Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ **their Redeemer.**

And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many thousands of them, yea, and also many thousands of our stiffnecked brethren, the Nephites, who are now hardening their hearts in sin and iniquities, to the knowledge of **their Redeemer?**

(Alma 37:9–10)

And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, **their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage.** And it came to pass that they turned upon the Lamanites, and they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for **their liberty and their freedom from bondage.**

(Alma 43:48–49; see Alma 29:11–12)

A rather fascinating use of like paragraph endings is found in Alma 48:1–3. Mormon inscribes *against the Nephites* at the end of verse 1, then moves to the second verse, where *Nephites as well as the Lamanites* is written. He then goes to the third verse and writes the same phrase that is found in the first verse.

*And now it came to pass that, as soon as Amalickiah had obtained the kingdom he began to inspire the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi; yea, he did appoint men to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers, **against the Nephites.***

*And thus he did inspire their hearts against the Nephites, insomuch that in the latter end of the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges, he having accomplished his designs thus far, yea, having been made king over the Lamanites, he sought also to reign over all the land, yea, and all the people who were in the land, **the Nephites as well as the Lamanites.***

*Therefore he had accomplished his design, for he had hardened the hearts of the Lamanites and blinded their minds, and stirred them up to anger, insomuch that he had gathered together a numerous host to go to battle **against the Nephites.***

In Alma 39:16–40:2 we find a quadruple occurrence of the concept that Jesus Christ is coming. In this case, for final effect, the concluding paragraph ending is stated more definitively:

*And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather that salvation might come unto them, that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at **the time of his coming.***

*And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at **the time of his coming?***

*Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children? Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after **the time of his coming?***

*Now my son, here is somewhat more I would say unto thee; for I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead. Behold, I say unto you, that there is no resurrection—or, I would say, in other words, that this mortal does not put on immortality, this corruption does not put on incorruption—until after **the coming of Christ.***

Perhaps when an amoebaeon is focused on Jesus Christ, it becomes the most powerful. This amoebaeon, found in Alma 33:11–18, does just that:

*And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, **because of thy Son.***

*And now Alma said unto them: Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written by them of old? Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said; for, behold he said: Thou hast turned away thy judgments **because of thy Son.***

*Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have read the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on **the Son of God?***

For it is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things—For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou

hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.

And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words they stoned him to death. But behold, this is not all; these are not the only ones who have spoken concerning the Son of God.

Additional examples of amoebaeon are as follows: Psalm 118:10–12 (*in the name of the Lord I will destroy them*); Isaiah 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4 (*but his hand is stretched out still*); Joel 2:26–27 (*and my people shall never be ashamed*); 1 Nephi 10:12–13 (*scattered upon all the face of the earth*); Alma 14:8–14 (*forms of fire/burn*); 31:7–8 (*preached unto them*); 35:1–2 (*land of Jershon*); 40:18–20 (*resurrection of Christ*).

Notes

1. See Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), xxxv–xlvi. As expressed in the acknowledgments, I am deeply indebted to Donald Parry, whose expertise in the field of Hebrew literary forms has been immensely helpful.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “anaphora” (hereafter cited as *OED*).
3. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968), 199.
4. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xxxvi.
5. See Robert F. Smith, “‘It Came to Pass’ in the Bible and the Book of Mormon” (FARMS, 1984), 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 2.
7. *OED*, s.v. “polysyndeton.”
8. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 208.
9. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xxxviii.
10. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 137.
11. *Ibid.*, 238.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *OED*, s.v. “paradiastole.”
14. See *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1995 CD-ROM ed., s.v. “paradiastole.”
15. These ideas are from H. Clay Gorton, conversation with author, 20 May 1996. See also H. Clay Gorton, “If There Be Faults,” *Latter-day Digest* 2/2 (1993): 30–38.

16. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 346; parentheses in original.

17. See Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, 41.

18. OED, s.v. “cycloid.”

19. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 342.

20. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xlili.

21. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 241.

22. OED, s.v. “epistrophe.”

23. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, 44.

24. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 343.

Forms of Parallelism

To understand parallelism is to lay the foundation for understanding almost every other writing form in ancient scripture. Without a doubt, “the prevalent poetic form of . . . scripture is not the ode, the lamentation, nor the psalm, but parallelism.”¹ Not surprisingly, we find parallelism in ancient languages around the world, such as Mayan, Greek, and Akkadian. In the more modern languages, such as English, German, French, and Spanish, we find rhyming poetry that has a defined rhythm, is governed by a set line length, is nonredundant, and progresses from a definite beginning to a definite end. However, this is not true of ancient Hebrew poetry, which relied on repetitions, various other forms of redundancies, and parallelistic, symmetrical structures to achieve beauty, emphasis, and clarity of understanding.

An interesting dimension of parallelism is described in this way: “The purpose of parallelism, like the general purpose of imagery, is to transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception—that is, to make a unique semantic modification.”² In other words, the use of parallelism is not a mere matter of cosmetic style; it effects meaning and perception by introducing an idea from one angle and then semantically shifting the focus on that item to another angle.

While the essence of each literary form is fairly clear, the boundaries between the forms often overlap. Thus an example of one form can often be an example of another form as well.

At least 240 different defined Hebrew writing forms are identifiable in the Old Testament. Of those, more than 50 involve parallelism in one way or another.³ John Holmes, in his book *Rhetoric Made Easy*, lists 250 forms.⁴ Following are some of the most common. In each case, notice how the use of repetition strengthens and intensifies the point that the author is trying to make.

Repetitive Parallelism

A form that I have named repetitive parallelism is found whenever two or more clauses, verses, or sentences are found together or closely aligned in the text. Many parallelisms in the Book of Mormon and Bible are repetitive. One example of a simple repetitive parallelism is found in Genesis 4:23:

***A Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice;
A ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
B for I have slain a man to my wounding,
B and a young man to my hurt.***

Many more examples of this form are readily apparent.

Gender-Matched Parallelism

When masculine and feminine nouns occur in parallel combinations, we observe a form that Wilfred G. E. Watson identifies as “gender-matched parallelism.”⁵ In Hebrew, as in modern languages such as Spanish and French, nouns have gender; that is, they are either feminine or masculine. The ancient writers of the scriptures often arranged

nouns in parallel forms according to their gender. Watson gives the following example of a gender-matched parallelism:⁶

*I will make your heaven (m.) as iron (m.)
And your earth (f.) as brass (f.)
(Leviticus 26:19)*

In Hebrew, the words *heaven* and *iron* are masculine, while *earth* and *brass* are feminine. Thus this gender-matched parallelism is in the equivalent of A-A/B-B form.

Because gender-matched parallelism is present in the Hebrew Bible, it is quite likely that it also occurs in the Book of Mormon. However, because we do not have the ancient text of the Book of Mormon in Hebrew, we cannot find examples of this form in that book.

The Bible contains other gender-matched parallelisms such as the following:⁷ Genesis 1:2 (f. + m. //m. + f. //f. + m.); Deuteronomy 28:23 (m. + f. // f. + m.); Psalm 123:2 (m. + m. // f. + f.).

Word Pairs

A common element in Hebrew poetry is the use of word pairs. Kevin L. Barney explains, “Parallel lines are . . . created by the use of parallel words, that is, pairs of words bearing generally synonymous or antithetical meanings.”⁸ Thus Hebrew poetry is often based on common or standard word pairs. Even though these pairs figure prominently in poetry, they also appear in regular speech and narratives. The Book of Mormon is mainly prose, but it contains numerous examples of word pairs. Because the authors of the Book of Mormon would have understood and been familiar with such word pairs, it is not surprising to find them in the basic language of that book. Barney has compiled a list of word pairs, including the examples that follow.⁹

One word pair is *anger/fierce anger*, which appears in a chiasm in the Book of Mormon and a simple alternate in the Bible:

*A I will visit them
B in my anger,
B yea, in my fierce anger
A will I visit them
(Mosiah 12:1)*

*A before the fierce anger of the Lord
B come upon you,
A before the day of the Lord's anger
B come upon you,
(Zephaniah 2:2)*

The word pair *eyes/heart* also appears in both the Bible and Book of Mormon:

A *The statutes of the Lord are right,*
B rejoicing the **heart**:
A *the commandment of the Lord is pure,*
B *enlightening the eyes.*
(Psalm 19:8)

A *But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say:*
B *Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer;*
C *yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts;*
C *yea, walk after the pride of your eyes,*
B *and do whatsoever your heart desireth—*
A *and if a man shall come among you and say this*
(Helaman 13:27)

The antithetical word pair *good/evil* is also attested in the Book of Mormon and Bible:

A *for there is nothing which is good*
B *save it comes from the Lord:*
A *and that which is evil*
B *cometh from the devil.*
(Omni 1:25)

A *they are wise*
B *to do evil,*
B *but to do good*
A *they have no knowledge.*
(Jeremiah 4:22)

Mountain/valley is another common word pair that we find in a chiasm in the Book of Mormon:

A *and there shall be many mountains laid low,*
B *like unto a valley,*
B *and there shall be many places which are now called valleys*
A *which shall become mountains, whose height is great.*
(Helaman 14:23)

The word pair *place/land* is attested in these two simple alternates from the Bible:

A *Am I now come up without the Lord against this place*
B *to destroy it?*
A *The Lord said to me, Go up against this land,*
B *and destroy it.*
(2 Kings 18:25)

*A I will judge thee in the **place**
B where thou wast created,
A in the **land**
B of thy nativity.
(Ezekiel 21:30)*

Place/land is also found in the Book of Mormon:

*they had found those priests of king Noah, in a **place** which they called Amulon;
and they had begun to possess the **land** of Amulon
(Mosiah 23:31)*

*And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made,
which led from city to city,
and from **land** to **land**,
and from **place** to **place**.
(3 Nephi 6:8)*

The word pair *thousands/tens of thousands*, which is also an example of numerical parallelism (see page 132), is attested many times in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. This chiasmic example is from the Book of Mormon:

*A Yea, will ye sit in idleness
B while ye are surrounded with **thousands** of those,
B yea, and **tens of thousands**,
A who do also sit in idleness
(Alma 60:22)*

This beautiful chiasm from the Book of Mormon shows us the *visions/dreams* word pair:

*A And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account
B of the things which my father hath written,
C for he hath written many things
D which he saw in **visions**
D and in **dreams**;
C and he also hath written many things
B which he prophesied and spake unto his children,
A of which I shall not make a full account.
(1 Nephi 1:16)*

There are many more word pairs in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Some are part of other Hebrew writing forms such as chiasmus and simple alternate, but others are not. These word pairs that are so common in Hebrew writings are further evidence that the Book of Mormon derives from an ancient Hebraic text.

For additional word pairs see Deuteronomy 33:23 (*favor/blessing*); Psalms 56:11 (*God/man*); 101:8 (*city/land*); Isaiah 58:10 (*light/darkness*); 1 Nephi 11:25 (*tree/waters*); Alma 30:3 (*Lord/God*); 3 Nephi 9:19 (*blood/burnt offerings*); 10:18 (*favor/blessing*).

Synonymia and Synonymous Parallelism

Synonymia: Repeated Words with the Same Meaning

Synonymia features the repetition of words or phrases that mean the same thing or have similar meanings and are almost always found close to each other in a scriptural passage, as are other repetitions that reinforce a particular message. Synonymia is a most effective tool of communication because of its repetitive nature. It allows the author to expound on the principles he is teaching and gives him exceptional flexibility. It occurs when two or more words have “the same general sense, but possessing each of them meanings which are not shared by the other or others, or having different shades of meaning or implications appropriate to different contexts.”¹⁰ James Kugel writes that the second half of the simple synonymous parallelism is “not expected to be [or regarded as] a mere restatement” of the first half but was meant to “add to it, often particularizing, defining, or expanding the meaning, and yet also to harken back to . . . it.”¹¹ This expansion of meaning in successive lines of parallelism is often a poetic device of intensification, or it builds up to a climax. Examples of synonymia include pairs of words such as *serpent* and *snake*, *ship* and *vessel*, *compassion* and *sympathy*. Used appropriately, synonymia can convey new knowledge and additional insight because “the two members strengthen, heighten, [and] empower each other.”¹²

As a young missionary, I remember being taught over and over again by our leaders, “Repetition brings conviction.” Unquestionably, our investigators were blessed to understand the doctrine more clearly because the gospel messages were taught to them several times. Just as our investigators learned more by hearing our message repeated, we can learn more from the scriptures by noticing what elements are emphasized by repetition.

Synonymia occurs throughout our ancient scriptures. An Old Testament example is found in Deuteronomy 20:3, in which Moses uses four synonymous phrases:

***Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies:
let not your hearts faint,
fear not,
and do not tremble,
neither be ye terrified because of them***

Note how the prophet weaves four nearly synonymous words—*faint*, *fear*, *tremble*, and *terrified*—with the terms of negation *not* and *neither* in an almost overstated way that emphasizes to the children of Israel that they must not fear their enemies. Why does this concept receive such emphasis? The answer is found in the following verse, Deuteronomy 20:4, which explains, “For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Synonymia has two basic forms: simple and extended. Simple synonymia consists of just two lines, the second being a repetition of the first:

*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
and look well to thy herds.
(Proverbs 27:23)*

By definition, identical words are not used to create the synonymia. Part of the skill utilized in writing a synonymia is in finding similar but different words that can function eloquently in the structure.

Obviously, simple synonymia is very easy to identify, as is extended synonymia. In the extended variety, three or more lines, as opposed to just two, have a similar meaning. I have found that all synonymia constructions seem to have at least one of the following four purposes:

1. To strengthen an idea, concept, or principle through repetition
2. To impress the reader with the importance of a concept or experience by using different words or phrases to describe a specific communication
3. To add interest and variety
4. To provide an easy way of finishing one idea and then moving on to another one

Often an extended synonymia can accomplish one of these four tasks more effectively than simple synonymia simply because it has more lines. Indeed, synonymia is so helpful that its usage is often combined with at least one other Hebrew writing form.

Almost all the examples given are extended synonymia, as you will observe. In the Psalms, David's thoughtful musings are often written in synonymiaform:

*the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.
The Lord hath heard my supplication;
the Lord will receive my prayer.
(Psalm 6:8–9)*

All three phrases in the preceding example begin with the anaphoric (like sentence beginnings) expression *the Lord*. This expression is followed by synonymous verbs: *heard* appears twice, and *receive*, once. In turn, the verbs are followed by three synonymous words that are used to represent prayerful meditations: *weeping*, *supplication*, and *prayer*. The poet David thus poetically and powerfully teaches us that the Lord hears an individual's prayers.

The time of the second coming is well described in a biblical passage through the use of perhaps the most quoted synonymia of all:

*That day is
a day of wrath,
a day of trouble
and distress,
a day of wasteness
and desolation,
a day of darkness
and gloominess,*

*a day of clouds
and thick darkness
(Zephaniah 1:15)*

Here synonymia is used to descriptively identify the time of the second coming. *Wrath, trouble, and distress* are near-synonyms. *Wasteness and desolation* are synonyms, and *darkness, gloominess, clouds, and thick darkness* are also near-synonyms. These terms all describe a single era or event in a very similar way.

One Old Testament example comes from Psalm 3:7:

*Arise, O Lord;
save me, O my God:
for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;
thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*

We use something akin to synonymia when we teach purity to our teenagers today. We couch the topic in many ways and words (such as *purity, morality, chastity, virtue, uprightness, and spotlessness*), but they all mean basically the same thing. Also, those who give some of the most beautiful testimonies use synonymia for emphasis (this may include using such words as *testify, sure knowledge, witness, confirm, know of a surety, sustain, and manifest*), even though they might not be aware that they are using this form or know that it exists.

A hundred or more examples of synonymia can be quickly found in the books of the Bible; however, some of the most complete and beautiful synonymias are found in the Book of Mormon (further evidence for its Hebraic origins), such as this one from Moroni 8:8:

*Listen to the words of Christ,
your Redeemer,
your Lord
and your God.*

Each of the four titles in this passage identify a significant aspect of Jesus Christ's mission. In this manner, we are taught concerning God and his plan for us.

Because of its beauty and helpfulness, I have cited Alma 5:49–50. The synonymia in these two verses focuses on (1) various names by which Jehovah is known, (2) those to whom he will preach, and (3) how he will come:

*And now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called,
yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren,
yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land;
yea, to preach unto all,
both old and young,
both bond and free;
yea, I say unto you the aged,
and also the middle aged,
and the rising generation;*

yea, to cry unto **them**
that **they** must repent and be born again.
Yea, thus saith the Spirit: Repent, **all ye ends of the earth,**
for the **kingdom of heaven** is soon at hand;
yea, the Son of God cometh in his **glory,**
in his **might,**
majesty,
power,
and **dominion.**
Yea, my beloved **brethren,** I say unto you,
that the **Spirit** saith:
Behold the glory of the King of all the earth;
and also the **King of heaven** shall very soon
shine forth among all the **children of men.**

In one other example in the Book of Mormon, Alma and Amulek and others go forth to preach throughout the land:

*Now those priests who did go forth among the people
did preach against all **lyings,**
and **deceivings,**
and **envyings,**
and **strifes,**
and **malice,**
and **revilings,**
and **stealing,**
robbing,
plundering,
murdering,
committing **adultery,**
and all manner of **lasciviousness,**
crying that these things ought not so to be
(Alma 16:18)*

This example is a functionally significant synonymia.

Some synonymia may be couched in opposition to each other. They describe a certain concept or concern but use opposite aspects of a simple phenomenon. One of the best examples is found in Proverbs 3:33, where we see how the Lord deals with the wicked and the just:

*The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked:
but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*

From this verse we learn that the Lord curses the wicked and blesses the just, two opposing ideas that convey a similar message. Both halves of this parallelism deal with God's judgment, which is essentially consistent and

constant, even though it manifests itself in opposite effects. The result is similar to that of an antithetical parallelism.

In the more consistent and more common use of synonymia, both phrases mean exactly the same but use different words. Most synonymia are not antithetical. In Proverbs 4:24 we read:

*Put away from thee a froward mouth, and
perverse lips put far from thee.*

The two lines are a synonymia because they have a similar meaning and structure.

Synonymous Parallelism: Words in a General Classification

In my studies of ancient writing forms I have found that a prophet-author sometimes used a series of words to reinforce a condition, situation, or opening concept. Bullinger defines a form called *synathrōsmos* as a gathering together or assembly of terms. He notes that *synathrōsmos* differs from synonymia in that the terms “are not synonymous, but may be of many kinds and descriptions.”¹³ The words occur in the course of what is said rather than at the conclusion. According to Bullinger, “The use of the figure is to enrich a discourse, or part of it by enumerating particulars” that are part of a common grouping.¹⁴ For the purposes of this book, I have chosen to use the term *synonymous parallelism* rather than *synathrōsmos* to refer to this particular form. Watson writes that “the main function of key words is to express the principal theme of a poem,”¹⁵ or, in other words, the main theme of a verse or several verses.¹⁶

Let me illustrate by an example in Mormon 9:7:

*And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God
and say they are done away*

*that there are no revelations,
nor prophecies,
nor gifts,
nor healing,
nor speaking with tongues,
and the interpretation of tongues*

The previous example begins with a synonymia and concludes with a synonymous parallelism. Third Nephi 29:6 is similar in message and structure to Mormon 9:7, using *paradiastole* (the *nor/or* form) to separate the spiritual gifts. However, 3 Nephi 29:6 does not begin with a synonymia as does Mormon 9:7.

In Isaiah 1:16–17 we discover the following example of synonymous parallelism:

*Wash you,
make you clean;

put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;*

cease to do evil;
Learn to do well;
seek judgment,
relieve the oppressed,
judge the fatherless,
plead for the widow.

In the previous example, the synonymous parallelism strengthens the synonymia that began the two verses. The verse is a synonymous parallelism because the terms are in the same general classification.

A New Testament example of synonymous parallelism is recorded in Mark 12:30 (see also D&C 4:2), wherein followers of Christ are commanded to love God:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind,
and with all thy strength

In this passage, the phrase *with all thy* is repeated four times. This phrase is followed by the poetically synonymous terms *heart*, *soul*, *mind*, and *strength* to present a clear and unmistakable command from the Lord.

Moroni's father, Mormon, presents an interesting example of synonymous parallelism in Mormon 6:9:

And it came to pass that they did fall upon my people
with the sword,
and with the bow,
and with the arrow,
and with the ax,
and with all manner of weapons of war.

The four terms—*sword*, *bow*, *arrow*, and *ax*—belong in the same category—*weapons of war*—which appears in the final phrase.

In 3 Nephi 30:2 we observe another example that includes both synonymia and synonymous parallelism:

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and
repent of your evil doings,

of your lyings
and deceivings,
and of your whoredoms,
and of your secret abominations,
and of your idolatries,
and of your murders,

*and your **priestcrafts**,
and your **envyings**,
and your **strifes**,
and from all your **wickedness**
and **abominations***

The previous example includes synonymous parallelism because all the phrases list sins (general classification) but do not have identical meanings as occurs in synonymia. Note, however, that the first two lines are a synonymia.

There is a significant example of synonymous parallelism in Isaiah 3:18–23, which describes the falseness of the daughters of Zion and states what will happen to them:

*In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their **tinkling ornaments** about their feet,
and their **cauls**,
and their **round tires** like the moon,
The **chains**,
and the **bracelets**,
and the **mufflers**,
The **bonnets**,
and the **ornaments** of the legs,
and the **headbands**,
and the **tablets**,
and the **earrings**,
The **rings**,
and **nose jewels**,
The **changeable suits of apparel**,
and the **mantles**,
and the **wimples**,
and the **crisping pins**,
The **glasses**,
and the **fine linen**,
and the **hoods**,
and the **vails**.*

In the previous example all the synonymous terms are items the daughters of Zion are wearing.

The following is an example of synonymous parallelism because all the elements are things the Savior does:

*And he cometh into the world
that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice;
for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and
children, who belong to the family of Adam.
And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the
great and judgment day.*

And he commandeth all men that they must repent

(2 Nephi 9:21–23)

For further study, see these additional examples of synonymia and synonymous parallelism: Genesis 4:23–24; Exodus 1:7; 34:6–7; Psalm 7:13–16; Proverbs 4:14–15; Jeremiah 48:29; Daniel 9:5–6; Romans 2:4, 10; 9:33; Ephesians 1:20–21; 2 Timothy 3:14; 1 Nephi 20:9; 2 Nephi 19:6; Enos 1:20–23; Mosiah 3:5, 8; 4:12–16; 26:9; Alma 13:27–29; Helaman 7:7; 3 Nephi 22:5; 30:2; Mormon 1:8–9.

Synthetic Parallelism: Placing Two Things Together to Add Strength

Synthetic parallelism is a little more difficult to understand than the foregoing, more linear types of parallelism, but it is well worth the extra effort it takes to learn. “Here, in *Syntheton*, much more is meant than is expressed and embraced by the conjugation of the two words.”¹⁷ “It is called synthetic because a synthesis, or coordination, between the two elements takes place.”¹⁸ The synthesis signifies the placing of two things together. Ridderbos and Wolf define it as a form “in which the second line develops or completes the thought in a way that could not be determined by the first line.”¹⁹ Put another way, Donald Parry explains that “Simple synthetic, as a rule, is composed of two lines, neither of which are synonymous or antithetical. Rather, in this poetic verse, line two gives explanation or adds something new or instructive to the first line.”²⁰ We will look at two forms of synthetic parallelisms: simple and extended.

Simple Synthetic

Simple synthetic parallelism is generally composed of two lines, and line two either explains or adds to the first line in some way. The book of Proverbs is perhaps our best single source of simple synthetics:

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.
(Proverbs 3:5)*

*Let not thine heart decline to her ways,
go not astray in her paths.
(Proverbs 7:25)*

*Where there is no vision, the people perish:
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
(Proverbs 29:18)*

Another simple example is found in Isaiah 2:4:

*he shall judge among the nations,
and shall rebuke many people*

The Bible, however, does not have exclusive ownership on this form. In the Book of Mormon is found a frequently quoted couplet that is a marvelous simple synthetic:

*Adam fell that men might be;
and men are, that they might have joy.
(2 Nephi 2:25)*

We also find this simple synthetic parallelism in the Book of Mormon:

*for they could not bear that any human soul should perish;
yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and
tremble.
(Mosiah 28:3)*

Extended Synthetic

Extended synthetic parallelism involves two or more simple synthetic parallelisms that reinforce each other with common elements. A good example is found in Proverbs 2:2–11:

*So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;
Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.
Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.
When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;
Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee*

From this extralong extended synthetic parallelism we can see that

1. the verses were specifically designed by ancient prophets;
2. the passage builds toward a logical conclusion: “understanding shall keep thee”;
3. an extremely vital message is communicated in parallelistic form and also through numerous repetitions (*understand[ing]* six times, *knowledge* five times, *wisdom* twice, *judg[ment]* twice);
4. about a dozen separate messages, all testifying to the importance of gaining understanding, are much more powerful connected together than they would be if they were separate or fewer in number;
5. mentioning deity in one form or another eight different times makes even more firm the importance of the message, which is conveyed most effectively through the extended synthetic form.

The extended synthetic parallelism found in 2 Nephi 9:31–38 is one of the most enlightening we have because the second element in each pair so clearly explains the consequences of the sin mentioned in the first element:

And wo unto the deaf that will not hear; for they shall perish.

Wo unto the blind that will not see; for they shall perish also.

Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day.

Wo unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell.

Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth, for he shall die.

Wo unto them who commit whoredoms, for they shall be thrust down to hell.

Yea, wo unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them.

And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.

Whenever this pattern begins to form in your mind as you read the scriptures, study it—often you will find a synthetic parallelism. “Here, in *Syntheton*, much more is meant than is expressed and embraced by the conjunction of the two words.”²¹

Other examples of synthetic parallelism include Genesis 18:27; Psalms 19:7–9; 115:13; Isaiah 45:13–14; 1 Nephi 8:11, 15, 37; 17:4, 21, 23–24; 2 Nephi 4:34–35; Jacob 2:8; Mosiah 14:1–10; 26:4; 28:18; Alma 9:8–10, 12; 26:6–8, 15.

Alternate: Phrases Repeated in Order

The alternate form can be defined as at least two basic thoughts that repeat in alternating order. E. W. Bullinger notes that alternates occur when “the lines are parallel in thought, and in the use of synonymous words.”²² If we represent each thought or line with a letter of the alphabet, the simplest type of alternate can be represented as A-B/A-B. Let us look briefly at three types of alternate forms: (1) simple alternate, (2) repeated alternate, and (3) extended alternate.

Simple Alternate

Donald Parry writes, “Simple alternate consists of four lines, placed in an A-B/A-B pattern. In this formation, the ‘A’s have corresponding elements, as do the ‘B’s.”²³ He continues, “The cumulative effect is like multiplying witnesses.”²⁴ Simple alternates can be found in abundance in the Old Testament. Among the dozens found in Isaiah is this familiar one:

A I will make waste mountains and hills,

*B and **dry up** all their herbs;*

A and I will make the rivers islands,

*B and I will **dry up** the pools.*

(Isaiah 42:15)

For another example, let us look at Genesis 4:23. Bullinger calls this “the oldest example [of simple alternate], and the first in the Bible”:²⁵

A Adah and Zillah,

B Hear my voice;
A ye wives of Lamech,
B hearken unto my speech

A good example of a simple alternate is found in Amos 9:2:

A Though they dig into hell,
B thence shall mine hand take them;
A though they climb up to heaven,
B thence will I bring them down

Another A-B/A-B parallelism comes from Exodus 17:11:

A when Moses held up his hand,
B . . . Israel prevailed:
A and when he let down his hand,
B Amalek prevailed.

Some simple alternates are antithetical, meaning that the words show a contrast (see pages 94–99). One example is found in Proverbs 10:1:

A A wise son
B maketh a glad father:
A but a foolish son
B is the heaviness of his mother.

Simple alternates are also found in the New Testament. For example, let us look at Luke 1:46–47:

A My soul
B doth magnify the Lord,
A and my spirit
B hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

The apostle John provides a good example of a simple alternate:

A If any man love the world,
B the love of the Father is not in him.
A For all that is in the world . . .
B is not of the Father
(1 John 2:15–17)

Following are but a few of the numerous simple alternates that are found in the Book of Mormon:

A for their works
B were works of darkness,

A and their **doings**
B were doings of **abominations**.
(2 Nephi 25:2)

A Now it is not common that the voice of the **people**
B desireth anything contrary to that which is **right**;
A but it is common for the lesser part of the **people** to
B desire that which is not **right**
(Mosiah 29:26)

A We would not **shed the blood** of the Lamanites
B if they would stay in their own land.
A We would not **shed the blood** of our brethren
B if they would not rise up in rebellion and take the sword against us.
(Alma 61:10–11)

A And [Nephi] took it upon him to preach the word of God
B all the **remainder of his days**,
A and his brother Lehi also,
B all the **remainder of his days**
(Helaman 5:4)

A And there was a **great and terrible destruction**
B in the **land southward**.
A But behold, there was a more **great and terrible destruction**
B in the **land northward**
(3 Nephi 8:11–12)

There are many more examples of simple alternates in the Book of Mormon; for instance, consider the following:

A I do not desire that my **joy** over you should come by the cause
B of so much **afflictions and sorrow** which I have had for the brethren at Zarahemla,
A for behold, my **joy** cometh over them
B after wading through much **affliction and sorrow**.
(Alma 7:5)

A And now, behold, I say unto you,
B that ye ought to **search these things**.
A Yea, a commandment I give unto you
B that ye **search these things** diligently
(3 Nephi 23:1)

The following simple alternate is from 2 Nephi. A number of chapters in 2 Nephi are almost identical to chapters in the book of Isaiah, indicating that the Nephites brought with them many of Isaiah's writings.

*A And **righteousness** shall be*

*B the **girdle** of his loins,*

*A and **faithfulness***

*B the **girdle** of his reins.*

(2 Nephi 21:5; 30:11; Isaiah 11:5)

Repeated Alternate

Another alternate form begins exactly like the simple alternate form but gives the A-B pair three or more times.

Donald Parry offers this interesting illustration of a repeated alternate from the Book of Mormon:²⁶

*A Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the **Holy Ghost** unto these whom I have chosen;*

*B and it is because of their **belief** in me that I have chosen them out of the world.*

*A Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the **Holy Ghost***

*B unto all them that shall **believe** in their words.*

*A Father, thou hast given them the **Holy Ghost***

*B because they **believe** in me*

(3 Nephi 19:20–22)

Another repeated alternate appears in both the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:39–41) and the New Testament (Matthew 5:39–41):

A but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek,

B turn to him the other also;

A And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat,

B let him have thy cloak also;

A And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,

B go with him twain.

I have found it interesting that explicit Hebrew writing forms are often found in more than one book of scripture, implying that the writing forms are one of the ways in which God is willing to communicate revealed words and ideas. The parallelism gives more depth and clarity to the message. In the following example, the book of Helaman tells of the Nephites' rapid decline into apostasy. Note that the last couplet reverses the order of the year and the evil practices from the way they appear in the other couplets:

*A And in the **eighty and second** year*

B they began again to forget the Lord their God

*A And in the **eighty and third** year*

B they began to wax strong in iniquity

*A And in the **eighty and fourth** year*

B they did not mend their ways.

*A And it came to pass in the **eighty and fifth** year*

B they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness;

B And thus they were ripening again for destruction.

A And thus ended the eighty and fifth year.

(Helaman 11:36–38)

Extended Alternate

An extended alternate is longer and generally more complex than a simple alternate. An example of this form would be set up as something like A-B-C-D/A-B-C-D. The ancients apparently used this form both to aid in memorization and to reinforce some fairly complex concepts. Often geographic names were woven into an extended alternate. Perhaps that aided students in their learning about the world around them.

In the Old Testament we find this rather elementary extended alternate:

A Then the children of Ammon

B were gathered together,

C and encamped in Gilead.

A And the children of Israel

B assembled themselves together,

C and encamped in Mizpeh.

(Judges 10:17)

Psalms 132:1–18 contains this powerful extended alternate, summarized as follows:²⁷

A David swears to Jehovah (verses 1–2)

B David's words (3–5)

C search for the dwelling place and its discovery (6–7)

D prayer to enter into rest (8)

E prayer for priests (9)

F prayer for saints (9)

G prayer for the Messiah (10)

A Jehovah swears to David (11)

B Jehovah's words (11–12)

C designation of the dwelling place (13)

D answer to prayer for rest (14–15)

E answer to prayer for priests (16)

F answer to prayer for saints (16)

G answer to prayer for the Messiah (17–18)

Sometimes great lessons can be learned as we study verses of scripture, such as those above, when we see the Hebrew writing form as part of a master message. That is one of the great advantages of having some understanding of ancient Hebrew writing forms.

There are some extended alternates in the New Testament. An easily identifiable one is found in Matthew 6:19–20:

*A Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
B where moth and rust doth corrupt,
C and where thieves break through and steal:
A But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
B where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,
C and where thieves do not break through nor steal*

Because the Book of Mormon comes from a Hebrew background, it contains many clear extended alternates. There are scores of extended alternates in the Book of Mormon. One is found in 1 Nephi 20:16–17:

*A from the time that it was declared have I spoken;
B and the Lord God,
C and his Spirit,
D hath sent me.
A And thus saith the Lord,
B thy Redeemer,
C the Holy One of Israel;
D I have sent him*

Amulek formulates a quite lengthy extended alternate in Alma 10:22–23:

*A if it were not for the **prayers of the righteous**, . . .
B ye would even now be visited with utter destruction;
C yet it would not be by flood, as were the people in the days of Noah,
D but it would be by **famine**,
E and by **pestilence**,
F and the **sword**.
A But it is by the **prayers of the righteous** that ye are spared;
B now therefore, if ye will cast out the righteous from among you then will not the Lord stay his hand;
C but in his fierce anger he will come out against you;
D then ye shall be smitten by **famine**,
E and by **pestilence**,
F and by the **sword***

Another clever extended alternate is located in Helaman 6:35–36, again reminding us of how the Lord functions in his eternal role. In these verses we see the Lord withdrawing his Spirit from the Nephites because of their wickedness, while pouring his Spirit out on the Lamanites because of their humility:

*A And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord
B began to withdraw from the Nephites
C because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts.
A And thus we see that the Lord began
B to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites
C because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words.*

Another example comes from the book of Mosiah:

A *If my people shall sow filthiness*
B *they shall reap the chaff thereof in the whirlwind;*
C *and the effect thereof is poison. . . .*
A *If my people shall sow filthiness*
B *they shall reap the east wind,*
C *which bringeth immediate destruction.*
(Mosiah 7:30–31)

To conclude, let us look at an explicit, powerful extended alternate found in 3 Nephi 29:5–6:

A *wo unto him*
B *that shall deny*
C *the Christ*
D *and his works!*
A *Yea, wo unto him*
B *that shall deny the revelations of*
C *the Lord, and that shall say the Lord*
D *no longer worketh by revelation*

Other examples of alternates are Genesis 1:16; Exodus 16:35; Psalm 29:1; Proverbs 24:19–20; Isaiah 9:10; 31:3; 65:21–22; 1 Nephi 17:36; 2 Nephi 1:20, 28–29; 30:17; Mosiah 25:8–11; Alma 3:26; 5:40–41. You will find dozens more.

Climax: Repeated Elements at the End and Beginning

When ancient authors wanted to build their message to a high point of great emphasis, they often depended on the climactic form. “Climax occurs when, in successive clauses or sentences, the same word or words are found at the end of one expression and at the beginning of the next.”²⁸ This form helps the reader climb high enough to see the author’s main point with sufficient understanding.

Prophets in ancient Israel would often vocally address their listeners, building to a forceful conclusion or subpoint that they wanted the people to understand in its full importance. As students of the scriptures, we can never forget that widespread distribution and use of printed scriptures is a comparatively recent development in history. Before the time of Ezra, written copies of the sacred texts were not widely available to the general populace. Therefore, most who wanted to discuss the scriptures had to commit the text largely to memory. Furthermore, the prophets delivered most of their original messages orally, and they delivered their words with primarily a vocal emphasis. The climactic form aided the prophets in clearly communicating the word of God to eager listeners who had at best only limited access to the scriptural scrolls.

Following is an example of the climactic form taken from the Old Testament:

*Tell ye **your children** of it,
and let **your children** tell **their children**,
and **their children** another generation.
That which the palmerworm hath left hath the **locust** eaten;
and that which the **locust** hath left hath the **cankerworm** eaten;
and that which the **cankerworm** hath left hath the **caterpillar** eaten.
(Joel 1:3–4)*

Whether used alone or in connection with another writing form or two, the climactic form was a powerful tool for the writers of our ancient scriptures. Peter uses this form in a verse that is often quoted (2 Peter 1:5–7) and is also a solid example of anabasis (see pages 85–89):

*add to your faith **virtue**;
and to **virtue knowledge**;
and to **knowledge temperance**;
and to **temperance patience**;
and to **patience godliness**;
and to **godliness brotherly kindness**;
and to **brotherly kindness charity**.*

The climactic form is not restricted to the Bible alone. For example, in the Book of Mormon, Lehi uses this form:

*And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is **no sin**.
If ye shall say there is **no sin**, ye shall also say there is **no righteousness**.
And if there be **no righteousness** there be **no happiness**.
And if there be no righteousness **nor happiness** there be **no punishment nor misery**.
And if **these things** are not there is **no God**.
And if there is **no God we are not, neither the earth**;
for there could have been **no creation** of things
(2 Nephi 2:13)*

Additional examples of climax include Alma 17:2; 32:23; Mormon 7:9; Moroni 10:32.

Anabasis: Up the Staircase

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *anabasis* is derived from a Greek word that means “to go or walk up.”²⁹ Donald Parry defines it as “a poetical device where there is an apparent stepping up from one sense to another, until, at the pinnacle is a culmination of thought.”³⁰ “Biblical verse often moves up a scale of increasing intensity.”³¹ The scriptures give us some excellent examples of anabasis in both the Old Testament and Book of Mormon.

Two particularly fascinating examples are found in the Old Testament. The first is in Psalm 1:1–2. Incidentally, this is a prime example of the writing form being interrupted by versification. It is necessary to borrow from the second verse to complete the Hebrew writing form that begins in verse 1. (The following examples of anabasis are meant to be read from bottom to top.)

D *But his delight is in the law of the Lord*
C *nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*
B *nor standeth in the way of sinners,*
A *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,*

The first level is the blessed man who does not take counsel from unrighteous people. In the second level he does not commit sinful acts, and in the third he does not glorify wickedness where scorners have rejected that which is godlike. Note that each level names a more serious sin than its predecessor, but the blessed man rejects each sin, leading him to what is most important: finding delight in the joy of the Lord.

The second Old Testament example, Zechariah 8:12, tells us:

E *and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.*
D *and the heavens shall give their dew;*
C *and the ground shall give her increase,*
B *the vine shall give her fruit,*
A *For the seed shall be prosperous;*

In the previous example we see a rise from a seed, to a vine giving fruit, to the ground giving increase, to the heavens giving dew, to the Lord providing all blessings.

When Alma counseled with his son Helaman he used this form:

F *and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.*
E *and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God;*
D *that he may watch over you in your sleep;*
C *yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord,*
B *and he will direct thee for good;*
A *Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings,*
(Alma 37:37)

Note how effectively the following verse from the book of Helaman builds from merely stating that the people heard the Lord's voice, to describing the voice, to explaining how powerfully the voice affected the people:

E *and it did pierce even to the very soul*
D *as if it had been a whisper,*
C *but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness,*
B *neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise,*
A *and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, And it came to pass when they heard this voice,*
(Helaman 5:30)

Alma described Melchizedek using these words found in Alma 13:18–19:

G . . . but none were greater

F for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

E therefore he was called the prince of peace,

D And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days;

C did preach repentance unto his people.

B received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God,

A But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and

In the preceding verses, we see even more clearly that Melchizedek became greater with each succeeding event (thus the anabasis moves from lesser to greater). These verses somewhat remind us of the few words in Luke 2:52 when Luke wrote of the progress Jesus made as a boy: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Here we learn that Jesus increased in (1) wisdom, (2) stature, (3) favor with God, and (4) favor with man. This is not an anabasis, however, because it does not lead from a lesser state to a greater level. If it did, the order would more naturally begin with “stature” and end at “favor with God.”

Sometimes this “up the staircase” poetic form moves from the specific to the general, as in 2 Nephi 29:12:

D and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

C and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it;

B and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it;

A For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it;

The tribe of Judah is one specific branch of the house of Israel. The Nephites (including the Zoramites, Ishmaelites, and Mulekites) descended from Manasseh and Judah, and perhaps other tribes. The other tribes of Israel encompassed the rest of the house of Israel, and all nations included the whole world. In other words, the anabasis moves from the one tribe to the whole world, or from specific to general. Let us not miss identifying two cycloides of importance—*I shall speak* and *they shall write*—that tightly bind the verse together. The verse is a simple alternate and an example of epibole (see pages 30–35, 73–77).

As a reminder, a number of the verses in scripture have more than one writing form present in the words, phrases, and sentences. Also, one author may have formatted verses differently than another writer did. A further testimony that these forms were carefully designed into the scriptures is an exciting threesome of verses (Moroni 10:3–5) inscribed by Moroni in an “up the staircase” anabasis:

I And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

H he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

G and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ,

F I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true;

E ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things,

D receive these things, and

C that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of

Adam even down until the time that ye shall

B if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them,

A Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things,

In these three extraordinary verses we find sound spiritual advice pertaining to the Book of Mormon, truth, and the Holy Ghost. This is an anabasis because the verses describe a progression in the reader's commitment: (1) read the Book of Mormon, (2) remember how merciful God has been and ponder that truth, (3) pray to the Eternal Father in the name of Christ, (4) know the Book of Mormon is true by the power of the Holy Ghost, and (5) know truth of other things by the power of the Holy Ghost. We see from these choice verses that anabasis is a sound, effective way of teaching truth.

Some additional examples of anabasis are Job 4:19–20; Psalm 29:1; Proverbs 30:15–16, 21–23, 29–30; Isaiah 1:4; Ezekiel 2:6; Daniel 9:5; 1 Nephi 2:20; 4:32; 8:24; 12:18; 2 Nephi 24:13–14; 29:11; Jarom 1:8; Mosiah 15:15–17; Alma 1:30–31; 7:23–24; 8:31; 3 Nephi 10:12–17. There are dozens more.

Catabasis: Down the Staircase

Donald Parry explains, “Catabasis (Greek ‘going down’) is characterized by a lowering of the sense, from one level to another, with each succeeding line.”³² It is much as if the message were descending a staircase. Thus catabasis is defined as “descending or declining by degrees.”³³ A good example of catabasis can be found in Isaiah 40:31. In this verse, those who wait on the Lord renew their strength in every way. They fly as eagles, then run, and, lastly, walk at the end of the course:

A they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;

B they shall mount up with wings as eagles;

C they shall run, and not be weary; and

D they shall walk, and not faint.

The previous example is a catabasis because those who wait on the Lord first fly, then run, and, lastly, walk. Examples of catabasis often move from positive to negative.

We find this catabasis, also in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel 22:18:

Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross:

A all they are brass,

B and tin,

C and iron,

D and lead, . . .

E even the dross of silver.

The house of Israel descends from being a place of great value in the eyes of the Lord, to the level of brass, to tin, then iron, then lead, and at last to the dross of silver, which is slag left over from the refining procedure. Thus the catabasis format serves to accentuate the message of descent both by word and form. The metals decrease in

value. A similar catabasis is found in Daniel 2:31–43, in which deteriorating world powers are also described as substances that descend in value: fine gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay.

The Book of Mormon probably describes conflict as accurately and helpfully as any book ever written. Various climactic forms help to communicate the ups and downs in Nephite and Lamanite societies as they experienced righteousness and evil, power and weakness. For instance, we read in Helaman 11:36–38:

A And in the eighty and second year they began again to forget the Lord their God.

B And in the eighty and third year they began to wax strong in iniquity.

C And in the eighty and fourth year they did not mend their ways.

D And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness;

E and thus they were ripening again for destruction. And thus ended the eighty and fifth year.

In each succeeding year, the people persisted in becoming more and more ungodly. First they forgot the Lord, then began to wax strong in iniquity, then did not repent, and finally became so prideful and wicked that they were ripe for destruction.

Catabasis is an excellent literary form to use for describing a disintegrating society, such as is found frequently in the Book of Mormon. A short example is found in Helaman 3:2–3:

A And there was no contention among the people in the forty and fourth year;

B neither was there much contention in the forty and fifth year.

C And it came to pass in the forty and sixth, yea, there was much contention and many dissensions

From my assessment of the Old Testament and Book of Mormon, it seems that prophets used anabasis, the “up the staircase” form, a little more often than catabasis, because the scriptures are generally written in a positive manner, even when dealing with negative topics such as sin or evil. But, as said before, there are many examples of both forms.

Additional examples of catabasis follow: Lamentations 4:1–2; Amos 9:2–3; 1 Nephi 13:5, 7–8; 17:18, 20, 30; Alma 9:11, 21–22; 17:7; 53:7.

Antimetabole: Inverse Repetition in Contrast

Antimetabole is the name of a quite common writing form the ancient Hebrews used to emphasize an idea by stating the idea once, then restating an antithetical idea in reverse order. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that antimetabole is “a figure in which the same words or ideas are repeated in inverse order.”³⁴ Further, it is “a sentence inverst [sic], or turned back, or it is a form of speech which inverts a sentence by the contrary.”³⁵ Bullinger notes that “this figure repeats the word or words in a reverse order, for the purpose of opposing one thing to another, or of contrasting two or more things.”³⁶ In other words, antimetabole is antithetical chiasmus.

Notice how the following examples of antimetabole are expressed in chiasmic phrases:

A *And the Lord had **respect***
B *unto Abel and to his **offering**:*
B *But unto Cain and to his **offering***
A *he had not **respect**.*
(Genesis 4:4–5)

A *Woe unto them that call **evil***
B *good,*
B *and **good***
A ***evil**;*

A *that put **darkness***
B *for **light**,*
B *and **light***
A *for **darkness**;*

A *that put **bitter***
B *for **sweet**,*
B *and **sweet***
A *for **bitter**!*
(Isaiah 5:20)

In 2 Chronicles 32:7–8 we read the comforting words Hezekiah spoke when King Sennacherib, the Assyrian, invaded Judah:

A *There be more **with us***
B *than **with him**:*
B ***With him** is an arm of flesh;*
A *but **with us** is the Lord our God*

Another antimetabole is Isaiah 55:8–9:

A *For **my thoughts***
B *are not **your thoughts**,*
C *neither are **your ways***
D ***my ways**, saith the Lord.*
D *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways***
C *higher than **your ways**,*
A *and **my thoughts***
B *than **your thoughts**.*

Because the Book of Mormon is a Hebrew-influenced text like the Bible, it naturally contains this form in abundance. However, there is a fascinating difference between antimetabole in the Bible and the style of the Book of Mormon. In the Bible, antimetaboles appear often, generally expressed in A-B/B-A form; whereas in the Book of

Mormon, most statements are positive and thus follow the A-B/A-B, or simple alternate, form. The examples that follow illustrate the more rare A-B/B-A form.

One example in the Book of Mormon that establishes the effectiveness of antimetabole as a powerful way to communicate is found in 2 Nephi 11:7:

A For if there be no Christ
B there be no God; and if there be no God
C we are not,
C for there could have been no creation.
B But there is a God,
A and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.

Again, the point is made clear by using an opposing statement or phrase in close proximity to the original idea. Another verse that uses chiastic contrast follows:

A I give not
B because I have not,
B but if I had
A I would give.
(Mosiah 4:24)

Other examples of antimetabole from the scriptural canon, including the New Testament, follow for your further study: Deuteronomy 16:5–6; 2 Samuel 3:1; Psalm 6:2–4; Proverbs 3:35; 4:26–27; 8:7; Isaiah 5:20; John 8:47; 14:17; 2 Peter 2:19; Alma 7:8.

Antithetical Parallelism: One Phrase Opposing Another

Another basic poetic form that we will look at in this book is the antithetical form (Latin, *opposite* and *contraposita*; Greek, *antitheta*). The antithetical form is used to emphasize a point by contrasting opposing views of an idea or phrase. It is used in a number of ancient writing forms to establish a contrast. The ancient philosopher Aristotle wrote, “This kind of style is pleasing, because contraries are easily understood and even more so when placed side by side, and also because antithesis resembles a syllogism; for refutation is a bringing together of contraries.”³⁷ The antithetical form “is a figure by which two thoughts, ideas, or phrases are set over one against the other in order to make the contrast more striking and thus to emphasize it.”³⁸ Jose Krasovec writes, “Antithesis is not in terms of contradiction, thesis, and antithesis, but in opposite aspects of the same idea.”³⁹ Antithesis is different from antimetabole in that antimetabole is chiastic, whereas antithesis can take any form of parallelism. Antithesis can state an idea and its contrast (A-B) or can repeat that idea and its contrast (A-B/A-B/A-B).

That is the principle. Now let’s look at an example to see how easily the form can be identified. Paul, in his masterful discourse on the resurrection, wrote to the Greeks this now oft-quoted scripture:

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized

for the dead?

(1 Corinthians 15:29)

Paul asked a question that contrasts the notion of the dead continuing to live after death and their not rising once they have died. The need for baptism of the dead would be eliminated if the dead were not to be resurrected. At the time this scripture was written, members of the church were baptizing for the dead because the truth of the resurrection was accepted doctrine. The Gospel of John teaches that we must be baptized to enter the kingdom of heaven (see John 3:5).

The antithetical form effectively guides the reader to comparisons and sometimes to choices. It can also borrow from a seemingly unrelated or opposite idea to make a topic easier to understand. From the previous example we learn that baptisms for the dead are useless without the resurrection, just as the resurrection and a loving Father in Heaven necessitate that those who die must receive the saving ordinance of baptism.⁴⁰

Paul drafted one of the most clear examples of antithesis when he penned:

A We are fools for Christ's sake,

B but ye are wise in Christ;

A we are weak,

B but ye are strong;

B ye are honourable,

A but we are despised.

(1 Corinthians 4:10)

Antithetical parallelism often includes the words *but*, *except*, and *without*. Remembering these words may help you more easily identify the form. Following is one Old Testament example that includes the word *but*:

A we wait for light,

B but behold obscurity;

A for brightness,

B but we walk in darkness.

(Isaiah 59:9)

This antithetical parallelism is from the book of Lamentations:

A How doth the city sit solitary,

B that was full of people!

A how is she become as a widow!

B she that was great among the nations

(Lamentations 1:1)

Those who wrote the Book of Mormon used this form generously. Antithetical parallelisms in the Book of Mormon, as in the Bible, contain interesting and varied antonyms. One example is found in 1 Nephi 17:45:

Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God.

In this example the contrast is apparent. The word swift is an antonym to the word slow, and the phrase to do iniquity is the opposite of to remember the Lord.

One of the more interesting examples of antithetical parallelism in the repeated alternate form is found in Alma 3:26:

*A whether they were **good** or
B whether they were **bad**,
A to reap eternal **happiness**
B or eternal **misery**, according to the spirit which they listed to obey,
A whether it be a **good** spirit
B or a **bad** one.*

Another example is also found in Alma 36:4:

*And I would not that ye think that I know of myself—
A not of the **temporal**
B but of the **spiritual**,
A not of the **carnal** mind
B but of **God**.*

The following example of antithetical parallelism is from the book of Mosiah:

*A And whosoever repented of their sins and did **confess** them,
B them he did **number** among the people of the church;
A And those that would **not confess** their sins and repent of their iniquity,
B the same were **not numbered** among the people of the church
(Mosiah 26:35–36)*

In Alma we read this harsh warning that is part of the Jewish tradition of obedience mentioned often in Deuteronomy and in King Benjamin's teachings:

*A inasmuch as they shall **keep my commandments**
B they shall **prosper** in the land.
A But remember, inasmuch as they will **not keep my commandments**
B they shall be **cut off** from the presence of the Lord.
(Alma 50:20)*

In the book of Helaman we find much the same message. Mormon explains:

*A They that have done **good**
B shall have **everlasting life**;
A and they that have done **evil**
B shall have **everlasting damnation**.*

(Helaman 12:26)

Jacob, the ancient Book of Mormon prophet, uses antithetical parallelism in an interesting manner:

*Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn **with joy and not with sorrow**, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents.*

(Jacob 4:3; see verses 1–2, 4)

Another verse that uses contrast follows:

*And again, I say unto the poor, **ye who have not and yet have sufficient**, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give.*

(Mosiah 4:24)

Amulek uses antithetical parallelism to show the Lamanites that they have misinterpreted their law:

*For behold, have I testified against your law? Ye do not understand; ye say that **I have spoken against your law**; but I have not, but **I have spoken in favor of your law**,*

(Alma 10:26)

Scores upon scores of other examples can be found, but these will suffice for now. Finding this form in the Book of Mormon in such abundance is another testimony of the fact that its authors wrote in the Hebrew idiom and that the Book of Mormon was written and translated as Joseph Smith reported.

For further examples of antithetical parallelism, see the following: Proverbs 2:13, 21–22; 3:33, 34; 4:18–19; 8:35–36; Isaiah 65:13–14; Romans 5:18, 19; 8:13; 2 Corinthians 6:8–10; Philippians 3:7; 1 Nephi 4:3; 6:5; 17:37; 2 Nephi 2:27; Jacob 6:3; Mosiah 29:12; Alma 1:28; 5:40, 41; 6:2–3; 32:32; Helaman 14:18; 3 Nephi 18:25; Mormon 8:37; 9:23; Moroni 7:11; 10:6.

Chiasmus: Inverse Repetition

Perhaps the most exciting and interesting of all Hebrew writing forms is chiasmus. Chiasmus is what many look at as the classic form of parallelism, and as Wilfred G. E. Watson writes, “Parallelism is universally recognized as the characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry.”⁴¹ Named after the letter x (*chi*), the twenty-second letter in the Greek alphabet, chiasmus is found extensively in certain ancient writings.⁴²

Chiasmus consists of patterns of words, thoughts, or concepts that lead to a central point of emphasis and then repeat in reverse order. Perhaps the most-quoted definition of chiasmus is given by Nils Wilhelm Lund: “Chiasmus is a term based on the Greek letter *chi* [*x*] which refers to an inverted parallelism or sequence of words or ideas in a phrase, sentence, or any larger literary unit.”⁴³

BYU professor John Welch, who first discovered chiasmus in the Book of Mormon while serving a mission in Germany and who later became the first to publish on that topic, writes, “Basically chiasmus is inverted parallelism.”⁴⁴ He further explains, “The word ‘chiasmus’ itself stems from the Greek word *chiazein*, meaning to mark with or in the shape of a cross.”⁴⁵ David Noel Freedman concurs, “The basic figure of chiasm simply involves the reverse of the order of words in balancing clauses or phrases.”⁴⁶

Despite these definitions, it is sometimes easier to demonstrate a chiastic structure than to describe one. The following example shows how the As, Bs, etc., are repeated:

A *And the Lord said unto Moses,*
B *The man shall be surely put to death:*
C *all the congregation shall stone him with stones*
D *without the camp.*
D *And all the congregation brought him without the camp,*
C *and stoned him with stones,*
B *and he died;*
A *as the Lord commanded Moses.*
(Numbers 15:35–36)

There are many different levels of chiastic complexity and many different types of chiasms in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon. Although we will look at only the most basic, each was carefully designed by its author or authors in ancient times. It is quite unlikely that chiasms were written accidentally, except on extremely rare occasions. In Isaiah 3:4–14 (see 2 Nephi 13:4–14) we locate a beautiful chiasm, given in outline form as follows. The presence of this text in the Book of Mormon shows that the ancient Nephites appreciated the writings of Isaiah and felt them to be important. Some of Isaiah’s most significant chiastic writings were inscribed on the gold plates.

A *And I will give children to be their princes*
B *And the people shall be oppressed*
C *the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient*
D *let this ruin be under thy hand*
E *make me not a ruler*
F *of the people*
G *for they have rewarded evil unto themselves*
H *it shall be well with him*
X *for they shall eat the fruit of their doings*
H *It shall be ill with him*
G *for the reward of his hands shall be given him*
F *As for my people*
E *and women rule over them*
D *and destroy the way of thy paths*
C *The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients*
B *of his people*

A and the princes thereof

This book is focused mainly on the writing similarities of the Book of Mormon and Old Testament. Although the chiasms are found sparingly in the ancient Greek of the New Testament, they do appear occasionally. Consider this significant chiasm in John 5:8–11:

*A Jesus saith unto him, Rise, **take up thy bed, and walk.***
*B And immediately the man was **made whole,***
*C and **took up his bed,** and walked:*
*D and on the same day was the **sabbath.***
X The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured,
*D It is the **sabbath** day:*
*C it is not lawful for thee to **carry thy bed.***
*B He answered them, He that **made me whole,***
*A the same said unto me, **Take up thy bed, and walk.***

That chiastic writings are found extensively in the Old Testament (Hebrew) and to a much lesser extent in the New Testament (Greek) seems to indicate that those ancient authors of these books used the writing systems that were traditional

in their cultures and taught extensively in their schools. Naturally, the Old Testament is filled with almost endless examples of those writing forms used so many centuries ago. What I find equally exciting, or even more so, is that the Book of Mormon is replete with chiasms, showing that it, too, has Hebrew origins. One individual reported that he has identified over 600 examples of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, while others hold that at least 300 to 450 well-defined chiastic structures are found there.⁴⁷ Not all these chiasms are equally well crafted, of course.⁴⁸

Because chiasms, like the letter x, contain a well-defined crossing structure, the reversal of words, concepts, or phrases found in the second half of a chiasm renders the form quickly identifiable. Let us observe another chiasm by turning to Alma 10:9 in the Book of Mormon:

*A And the **angel** said unto me*
*B he is a **holy man;***
X wherefore I know
*B he is a **holy man***
*A because it was said by an **angel** of God.*

Another example of the abundant number of chiasms in the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 29:14–16. Note that this particular chiasm, like others, does not have a single crossing element at its center:

*A but my **joy** is more full*
*B because of the **success** of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi.*
*C Behold, they have **labored** exceedingly,*
*C and have **brought forth** much fruit; and how great shall be their reward!*

B Now, when I think of the **success** of these my brethren my soul is carried away,
A even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my **joy**.

Many Hebrew writing forms overlap each other. Some examples of one writing form are also examples of another form. In Alma 4:19 we find a chiasm that is also antithetical:

A this he did . . . that he might preach the **word of God** . . .
B to stir them **up** . . .
B that he might pull **down**,
A by the **word of God**

In 3 Nephi 23:13 we find this almost perfect chiasm:

A And it came to pass that Jesus **commanded**
B that it should be **written**;
B therefore it was **written**
A according as he **commanded**.

As Moroni's earthly ministry was about to come to an end, he wrote these two touching parallelisms in the A-B/B-A form:

A and because of their hatred they put to **death**
B every Nephite that **will not deny the Christ**.
B And I, Moroni, **will not deny the Christ**;
A wherefore, I wander withersoever I can for the safety of mine own **life**.
A Wherefore, **I write a few more things**,
B contrary to that which **I had supposed**;
B for **I had supposed** not to have written any more;
A but **I write a few more things**
(Moroni 1:2–4)

Another chiasm is 2 Nephi 9:28:

A O the **vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men!**
B When they are learned they think they are wise,
C and they hearken not
X unto the counsel of God,
C for they set it aside,
B supposing they know of themselves,
A wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not.

The previous chiasm compares and contrasts the foolishness of men with God's wisdom. The poet-prophet Jacob first presents the concepts of foolishness, wisdom, and obedience and then reverses their order to speak concerning obedience, wisdom (or knowledge), and foolishness. The climactic point of the structure centers on the

counsel of God. Through poetic means, Jacob places God's wisdom in the pivotal center and the foolishness of humanity on the periphery. In all Hebrew writings, whether parallelisms or repetitions, synonyms are often used that do not change but usually strengthen the message or structure.

King Benjamin uses several chiasms when he teaches at the temple:

A **whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ**
B **must be called by some other name;**
C **therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God.**
D **And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name**
E **that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out,**
F **except it be through transgression;**
X **therefore, take heed**
F **that ye do not transgress,**
E **that the name be not blotted out of your hearts.**
D **I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name**
C **written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God,**
B **but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called,**
A **and also, the name by which he shall call you.**
(Mosiah 5:10–12)

This chiasm contains important doctrinal instruction, placing significant emphasis on several concepts. The name of Christ is twice repeated. Other ideas that are emphasized include being "called," finding oneself on the "left hand of God," remembering Christ, having one's name "blotted out," and a warning against transgression. The elements at the center of the chiasm receive the most emphasis. Those listening to King Benjamin are admonished to "therefore, take heed." Joseph Smith knew nothing of ancient Hebrew writing forms but simply translated the plates that Moroni entrusted him with. This chiasm was the first found in modern times by John Welch.⁴⁹

Another chiasm in the book of Mosiah teaches about the resurrection:

A **But behold, the bands of death**
B **shall be broken,**
C **and the Son reigneth,**
D **and hath power over the dead;**
E **therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead.**
F **And there cometh a resurrection,**
G **even a first resurrection;**
H **yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be,**
X **even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called.**
H **And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God,**
G **shall come forth in the first resurrection;**
F **therefore, they are the first resurrection.**
E **They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them;**

D thus they have **eternal life**

C through **Christ**,

B who has **broken**

A the **bands of death**.

(Mosiah 15:20–23)

In 3 Nephi 5:20–22, we find a chiasm that overlaps with another chiasm that extends into verse 23:

A I am Mormon, and a pure **descendant of Lehi**.

B I have reason to **bless** my God

C and my **Savior** Jesus Christ,

D that he brought **our fathers**

E out of the **land** of Jerusalem,

X (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought

E out of that **land**)

D and that he hath given me and **my people** so much knowledge

C unto the **salvation** of our souls.

B Surely he hath **blessed** the house of Jacob, and hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph.

A And insomuch as the **children of Lehi** have kept his commandments

The chiasm that overlaps with the previous example is summarized as follows:

*A I have reason to bless my God and my Savior **Jesus Christ***

*B that he **brought** our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem*

*C **given** me and my people so much knowledge*

*D **blessed** the **house of Jacob***

*D **been** merciful to the **seed of Joseph***

*C **prospered** them according to his word*

*B **bring** a remnant of the seed of Joseph*

*A knowledge of the **Lord** their God*

(3 Nephi 5:20–23)

Following is a short chiasm:

A for ye ought to **tremble**;

B for the Lord redeemeth none such

C that **rebel** against him

D and **die in their sins**;

X yea, even all those

D that have **perished in their sins** ever since the world began,

C that have wilfully **rebelled** against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them;

B these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

A Therefore ought ye not to **tremble**?

(Mosiah 15:26–27)

There are many more chiasms in the Book of Mormon. One of the deepest wells from which to draw chiasms is 3 Nephi 5:20–26, discussed partially above. I have found several structures that overlay each other, outlined as follows:

A a pure **descendant of Lehi**
B reason to **bless** my God
C my **Savior** Jesus Christ
D our **fathers** out
E the **land** of Jerusalem
E those whom he brought out of that **land**
D given me and my **people** so much knowledge
C **salvation** of our souls
B **blessed** the house of Jacob
A **children of Lehi**
A my Savior **Jesus Christ**
B **brought** our fathers out
C he hath **blessed**
D **house of Jacob**
X hath been merciful
D **seed of Joseph**
C **blessed** them and prospered them
B again **bring** a remnant
A **Lord** their God
A Savior **Jesus Christ**
B **land** of Jerusalem
C no one **knew**
D **knowledge** unto the salvation of our souls
E **again bring** a remnant of the seed of Joseph
F And as he hath **covenanted**
X house of Jacob
F the covenant wherewith he hath **covenanted**
E **restoring** all the house of Jacob
D **knowledge** of the covenant
C then shall they **know** their Redeemer
B unto their own **lands**
A as the **Lord** liveth
A as surely **as the Lord** liveth
B **gather in from the four quarters of the earth**
C covenanted with all the **house of Jacob**
D even so shall the **covenant**

E covenanted with the *house of Jacob*
X be fulfilled in his own due time
E restoring all the *house of Jacob*
D the knowledge of the *covenant*
C then shall *they* [*house of Jacob*] know their Redeemer
B gathered in from the *four quarters of the earth*
A as the Lord liveth so shall it be

Other examples of chiasmus include the following: Leviticus 14:51–52; Psalm 58:1–11; Matthew 3:10–12; 2 Nephi 2:7; 28:32; Mosiah 3:18–19; 5:10–12; Alma 18:34–39; 32:9–10; 36:1–30; 61:12–13; 3 Nephi 13:22. Remember, there are scores more found in ancient Hebrew scripture.

Inclusio: Words Repeated at the Beginning and End

Inclusio, or epanadiplosis as the Greeks titled this form, “means a *doubling upon again*, and the Figure is so called because the same word is repeated at both the beginning and at the end of a sentence.”⁵⁰ This interesting form separates the internal message of the inclusio from the writings that come before and after it. Within the inclusio is always one message or several messages. Often an individual can locate a sentence that contains two or three parallelistic ideas and later in the chapter find other similar messages, yet the center of the expected chiastic structure does not follow the typical form of a chiasm. It is simply an inclusio, which follows a chiastic structure but is not a complete chiasm. The center of the message is not chiastic, but the beginning and end are. Wilfred G. E. Watson writes, “Inclusio or envelope figure is the repetition of the same words at the beginning and end of a section of poetry.”⁵¹ It is a form of distinct parallelism. This excellent inclusio is from the book of Joel:

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see
visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids
in those days will I pour out my spirit.
(Joel 2:28–29)

In Exodus 32:16 we read:

And the tables were the work of God,
and the writing was the writing of God,
graven upon the tables.

In the Pentateuch we find inclusio a number of times. In Numbers 8:12 the word *Levites* delineates the message:

And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks:
and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord,
to make an atonement for the Levites.

The book of Psalms gives us many excellent examples of inclusio. Psalm 27:14 is one example:

Wait on the Lord:

be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:

wait, I say, on the Lord.

Another example is found in Psalm 122:7–8:

Peace be within thy walls,

and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes,

I will now say,

Peace be within thee.

In Ecclesiastes 1:2 we find the powerful lament that vanity is so pervasive in a verse that begins and ends with the word *vanity*. This message conveys the concept that all is self-focusing:

Vanity of vanities,

saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities,

all is vanity.

This verse is also a significant example of cycloides (see pages 33–35).

A powerful inclusio is found in 2 Kings 23:25. The verse might be illustrated this way:

A And like unto him

B was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses;

B neither after him

A arose there any like him.

In the Book of Mormon we find a more complex inclusio in 1 Nephi 1:16:

And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account

of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children,

of which I shall not make a full account.

Nephi tells us that he does not fully report his father's writings at both the beginning and ending of the message. In other words, perhaps Nephi wants the reader to know that Lehi, his father, wrote many things about his visions and dreams, but Nephi will not give a full account of those communications.

In Helaman 7:7–8 we observe another example of inclusio in which Nephi, the son of Helaman, reviews some of the Nephite history and wishes that he could have lived in the days of Nephi, the son of Lehi. Perhaps a little idealistically, he perceives those times as somehow better and communicates that his own day, a mere sixty years before Jesus would visit the Nephites, is a time of apostasy. He beautifully describes the people of Nephi's time:

Oh, that I could have had my days in the days when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem,

*that I could have joyed with him in the promised land;
then were his people easy to be entreated, firm to keep the commandments of God, and slow to be led to do
iniquity; and they were quick to hearken unto the words of the Lord—
Yea, if my days could have been in those days, then would my soul have had joy in the righteousness of my
brethren.*

Inclusio is a marvelous tool our ancient prophets used to delineate the words on which we need to concentrate. In 2 Nephi 28:32 the message is included between the phrase *saith the Lord God of Hosts*. There are many examples in 2 Nephi. Helaman, Alma, Mosiah, and other Book of Mormon authors also used inclusio. In fact, the Book of Mormon perhaps presents even more examples of inclusio than does the Old Testament.

In 2 Nephi 25:20 we find an inclusio:

*And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err.
And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he
should head the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes
upon the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock
and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God
liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ,
of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.*

Once understood, this form is quite easy to locate. There are many more examples in Psalms, and each book in the Book of Mormon has at least one inclusio.

Other examples of inclusio are Deuteronomy 31:3 (*Lord*); 1 Samuel 26:23 (*Lord*); 2 Kings 23:25 (*like him*); Psalm 122:7–8 (*peace be within*); Mosiah 2:21 (*ye should serve him*); 4:27 (*done in order*); Alma 33:4–9 (*thou art merciful*); Helaman 16:2–5 (*words of Samuel*).

Even though the study of these Hebrew writing forms is fascinating, the great message of eternal salvation and the prophetic instruction for living more Christlike lives is what really matters. Rather than becoming overly concerned with cultural or external conditions that seem to substantiate the reality and truthfulness of the scriptures, we should never lose sight of the divinely inspired messages of the scriptures. In this way our understanding of the scriptures will deepen in a manner that matters eternally and in a way that will lead us back to our Father in Heaven.

Notes

1. Donald W. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), i. This is a commonly held view among scholars of such texts. For example, “Parallelism is universally recognized as the characteristic feature . . . of Hebrew poetry” (Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984], 114); “[The] one fundamental feature of Hebrew versification which can be preserved in translation

and therefore concerns the English reader . . . is that known as parallelism” (W. H. Hudson, “The Bible as Literature,” in *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Arthur S. Peake [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1919], 23).

2. Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as a Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), as cited in Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 10.

3. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House 1968), table of contents, xix–xlvi.

4. According to John Holmes, as cited in *ibid.*, ix.

5. See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 53, 367.

6. See *ibid.*, 53.

7. See *ibid.*, 53, 367.

8. Kevin L. Barney, “Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 15.

9. See *ibid.*, 15–81.

10. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “synonym”; hereafter cited as *OED*.

11. James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 8.

12. J. G. Herder, *Vom Geist der erbraischer Poesie* (Dessau: n.p., 1782), 23, as cited in Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 11.

13. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 436.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 288.

16. Bullinger notes that in *synathrōsmos*, the elements enumerated are not mentioned under one head. This characteristic is what distinguishes *synathrōsmos* from *merismos*, in which one element is first mentioned and its parts are then enumerated. (See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 435–36.) For the purposes of this book I have combined these two forms into one and called it synonymous parallelism.

17. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 442.

18. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xv.

19. N. H. Ridderbos and H. M. Wolf, “Hebrew Poetry,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. A. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 3:893.

20. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xiv–xv.

21. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 442.
22. *Ibid.*, 349.
23. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, ix.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 350.
26. See Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, 415.
27. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 369.
28. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xviii.
29. *OED*, s.v. “anabasis.”
30. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xxi.
31. Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 63.
32. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, xxiii.
33. *OED*, s.v. “catabatic.”
34. *Ibid.*, s.v. “antimetabole.”
35. *Ibid.* A citation of J. Smith’s 1657 *Mystery in Rhetoric*.
36. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 301.
37. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John H. Freese, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 3.9.7–10.
38. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 715.
39. Jose Krasovec, *Antithetic Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 137.
40. According to Donald Parry, conversations with the author, summer 1993.
41. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 114.
42. See John W. Welch, introduction to *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; reprint, Provo, Utah: FARMS 1999), 7.
43. Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hedrickson, 1992), vii.

44. Welch, introduction to *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 9.
45. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Ancient Greek and Latin Literatures," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 250.
46. David Noel Freedman, preface to *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 7.
47. According to Dayton Conway, conversations with the author, 1990 to August 1997.
48. See John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 1–14. Parry, *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*, has some four hundred strong, well-defined examples of chiasmus.
49. See John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 205.
50. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 245.
51. Wilfred G. E. Watson, "Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 136.

Miscellaneous Forms

Anthropopatheia: God and Man with Similar Attributes

The figure of speech called anthropopatheia is a fascinating Hebrew form found extensively throughout the scriptures. Upon understanding the true nature of God—his goals, mission, and physical attributes—the ancient prophets included in their writings a number of characteristics of deity that describe both God’s and man’s passions and physical attributes. For instance, God has body parts that are mentioned frequently in scripture. He is also a God who knows how to forgive, love, give comfort, and demonstrate anger. Yes, man is truly created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26–27).

Many of the passions and physical features attributed to God are also ascribed to humanity, hence the descriptive term *anthropopatheia*, which is a compound of Greek words meaning “the ascribing of human attributes to God.” Regarding this figure of speech, Bullinger pens that it “is used of the ascription of human passions, actions, or attributes to God.” He notes further that the Hebrews called this figure *Derech Benai Adam*, “the way of the sons of men.”¹ This included “having human feelings” or at least the “ascription of human feelings and passions” to deity.² Thus God spoke “after the manner of men.”³ One of the most important messages of the restoration is the fact that man is created in the image and likeness of God (see Joseph Smith—History 1:16–20). How grateful I am for the first vision, which forevermore has communicated this great truth to all who will hear!

The Old Testament, as we all know, begins with the writings of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Interestingly, Moses took care to record both his own personal experiences with God (some were face to face) and also the sacred experiences of other prophets who knew God. Through the employment of this figure of speech, Moses demonstrated a familiarity with deity and identified the attributes of God and man as being similar.

An Old Testament passage helps us to grasp this form quite simply: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:26–27). This key passage demonstrates that God created man and woman after his image and likeness. *Likeness* has been defined as “1: copy, portrait; 2: appearance, semblance; 3: the quality or state of being like: resemblance.”⁴ In a world filled with miracles, why should men doubt their divine characteristics?

Two forms of anthropopatheia seem evident: (1) the characteristics of man are literally like those belonging to God: “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exodus 33:11); and (2) God’s characteristics are used in a nonliteral, or figurative, sense: “Both riches and honour come of thee [literally “from before thy face”]” (1 Chronicles 29:12).

Anthropopatheia is the first form on which we will concentrate in this chapter. Its extensive use in the Bible is consistent with the close comfort level the Hebrews felt in their relationship with God. He was part of their lives so completely that they wrote many of their messages using this form.

Both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon contain a number of examples of anthropopatheia. The following body parts and characteristics are included:

Feet

*How beautiful . . . are the **feet** of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.*

(Isaiah 52:7)

*And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his **feet** and worship him.*

(1 Nephi 11:24)

*For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the **feet** of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people.*

(Mosiah 15:18)

Body

It is interesting to note that Jesus was particularly interested in communicating the fact that with his body he would be made known to man.

*And God said, **Let us make man in our image**, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.*

(Genesis 1:26)

*His **body** also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. . . . Then there came again and touched me **one like the appearance of a man**, and he strengthened me.*

(Daniel 10:6, 18)

*And many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in **body** unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed.*

(1 Nephi 15:13)

*Yea, I know that ye know that in the **body** he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him.*

(2 Nephi 9:5)

*Showing his **body** unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter.*

(3 Nephi 10:19)

*And this shall ye do in remembrance of my **body**, which I have shown unto you.*

(3 Nephi 18:7)

Arm

*And I will redeem you with a stretched out **arm**, and with great judgments.*

(Exodus 6:6)

*And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out **arm**: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

(Deuteronomy 5:15)

*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.*

(1 Nephi 22:11)

*Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine **arm**, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph.*

(Jacob 2:25)

*And while his **arm** of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day, harden not your hearts.*

(Jacob 6:5)

Mouth

*And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the **mouth** of the Lord.*

(Joshua 9:14)

*And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with his **mouth** unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it.*

(1 Kings 8:15)

*O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his **mouth**, and his law must be fulfilled.*

(2 Nephi 9:17)

Face

*And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God **face to face**, and my life is preserved.*

(Genesis 32:30)

*Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy **face** to shine; and we shall be saved.*

(Psalm 80:19)

*And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his **face**, and remain in their sins.*

(2 Nephi 9:38)

*And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me **face to face**, and that he told*

me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things.

(Ether 12:39)

*Behold, my heart cries: Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy **face!***

(Moroni 9:15)

Eye

*Behold, the **eye** of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*

(Psalm 33:18)

*And mine **eye** shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth.*

(Ezekiel 7:9)

*I pray the God of my salvation that he view me with his all-searching **eye**.*

(2 Nephi 9:44)

*But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing **eye** of the Almighty God.*

(Jacob 2:10)

Hand

*O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty **hand**: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?*

(Deuteronomy 3:24)

*And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his **hands** fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David.*

(2 Chronicles 6:4)

*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.*

(Isaiah 49:22)

*Yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the **hand** of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.*

(1 Nephi 5:14)

*Nevertheless, after they shall be nursed by the Gentiles, and the Lord has lifted up his **hand** upon the Gentiles and set them up for a standard.*

(1 Nephi 22:6)

Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the **hand** of the Lord.

(2 Nephi 1:6)

Bowels or Liver

Mine eyes to fail with tears, my **bowels** are troubled, my **liver** is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

(Lamentations 2:11)

Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his **bowels** of mercy are over all the earth.

(Alma 26:37)

Voice

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my **voice**.

(Genesis 22:18)

But behold, the **voice** of the Lord came unto him, that he should return again, and prophesy unto the people whatsoever things should come into his heart.

(Helaman 13:3)

Finger

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the **finger** of God.

(Exodus 31:18)

And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the **finger** of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear.

(Ether 3:19)

God the Father and Jesus Christ also possess the same affections and feelings as man, as shown in the following examples:

Love

*I **love** them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*

(Proverbs 8:17)

And he **loveth** those who will have him to be their God. Behold, he **loved** our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

(1 Nephi 17:40)

Comfort

*In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy **comforts** delight my soul.*

(Psalm 94:19)

*O Lord, wilt thou **comfort** my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me. . . .*

*Yea, wilt thou **comfort** their souls in Christ.*

(Alma 31:32)

Mercy

*For the Lord your God is gracious and **merciful**, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.*

(2 Chronicles 30:9)

*And now, behold, I say unto you, and I would that ye should remember, that God is **merciful** unto all who believe on his name.*

(Alma 31:32)

*Thou hast been **merciful** unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people.*

(Ether 3:3)

Favor

*For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with **favour** wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

(Psalm 5:12)

*I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly **favored** of the Lord in all my days.*

(1 Nephi 1:1)

*Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be **favored** of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured.*

(1 Nephi 3:6)

Long-Suffering

*The Lord is **longsuffering**.*

(Numbers 14:18)

*Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and **long-suffering** towards them?*

(Alma 5:6)

Goodness

*He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the **goodness** of the Lord.*

(Psalm 33:5)

*Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and **goodness**, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!*

(1 Nephi 1:14)

Kindness

*Blessed be the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvellous **kindness** in a strong city.*

(Psalm 31:21)

*Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving **kindness** and his long-suffering towards the children of men.*

(1 Nephi 19:9)

Anger

*And the **anger** of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.*

(Numbers 12:9)

*And I, Nephi, began to fear exceedingly lest the Lord should be **angry** with us, and smite us because of our iniquity, that we should be swallowed up in the depths of the sea.*

(1 Nephi 18:10)

*Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to **anger**, but that all men would believe in Christ.*

(Jacob 1:8)

Gives Counsel

*The **counsel** of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

(Psalm 33:11)

*Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take **counsel** from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he **counsel**eth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.*

(Jacob 4:10)

I find it fascinating that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only Christian church that teaches the great eternal truth that God and Jesus Christ each have bodies of flesh and bones.⁵ I testify that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is life eternal to know the Father and the Son (see John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

Now that you are aware of this Hebrew form, you are equipped to seek out examples of it on your own. There are many.

Old Testament examples of anthropopatheia include the following: Psalms 16:11 (in thy presence [literally in front of thy face] is fulness of joy); 17:2 (let my sentence come forth from thy presence [literally in front of thy face]); 32:8 (I will guide thee with mine eye); 34:16 (the face of the Lord is against them that do evil).

Numerical Parallelism

When specific numbers are designed into a text in a sequential, repetitious manner or are used poetically or to show the improbability or impossibility of a certain event by means of exaggeration, the author-prophet has applied a fairly rare Hebrew form known as parallelism of numbers.⁶ On the other hand, if he uses numbers to signify an exact amount, with no other attending or parallel number, then the author is almost certainly not using the numerical form. He is simply helping his writings become more interesting and exact.

Numerical parallelisms often communicate the significance or insignificance of an event, problem, or situation. One example is Genesis 4:24:

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

In this verse, no question is left that Lamech will be avenged much more than Cain. A Book of Mormon example is found in 1 Nephi 3:31:

How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?

Numerical parallelism is a variant of synonyms and pairs. It is found in many other books of scripture.

In the Old Testament we find the form used often. Moses inscribes these words to explain the power of God:

***How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight
(Deuteronomy 32:30; see D&C 133:58)***

This is a clear embellishment making a significant point. Another simple example:

***For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not
(Job 33:14)***

In the following example, the numbers two, three, and four form a numerical parallelism:

***The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, Yea, four things say not, It is enough.
(Proverbs 30:15)***

“In Hebrew and other Semitic languages, numbers have no synonyms, with the exception of *twenty/score*.

Equivalents in English like *twelve/dozen* and fractions like *half a hundred/fifty* do not exist,” writes Donald Parry.⁷ In 1 Nephi 4:1, Nephi compares the strength of the Lord (“mightier than all the earth”) to the might of Laban, which is

represented with a numerical parallelism (“Laban and his *fifty*, yea, or even than his *tens of thousands*”). Even if Laban did not command tens of thousands, the number impresses upon us his importance among men. This power, however, is little in comparison with one who is “mightier than all the earth.”

In the Book of Mormon, we find numerical parallelism used four times with *thousands* and *tens of thousands*, impressing upon the reader the extensiveness of the events concerned:

*And in one year were **thousands and tens of thousands** of souls sent to the eternal world.*

(Alma 3:26)

*Yea, will ye sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with **thousands** of those, yea, and **tens of thousands**, who do also sit in idleness, while there are **thousands** round about in the borders of the land.*

(Alma 60:22)

Other places in which this number is used are 3 Nephi 3:22 and 4:21.

In Alma 28:11–12 we read one of the most explicit examples of all, written in a complete simple alternate form:

*A the bodies of **many thousands***

B are laid low in the earth,

*A while the bodies of **many thousands***

B are moldering in heaps upon the face of the earth;

*A yea, and **many thousands***

B are mourning for the loss of their kindred. . . .

*A While **many thousands** of others*

B truly mourn for the loss of their kindred

Luke uses numerical parallelism for emphasis in the New Testament:

*For from henceforth there shall be **five** in one house divided, **three** against **two**, and **two** against **three**.*

(Luke 12:52)

Another chiasmic numerical parallelism that describes a vital moment in Jewish history is found in 1 Samuel 18:7–8 (see 1 Samuel 29:5):

The women answered one another as they played, and said,

*A Saul hath slain his **thousands**,*

*B and David his **ten thousands**.*

X And Saul was very wrath, and the saying displeased him; and he said,

*B They have ascribed unto David **ten thousands**,*

*A and to me [Saul] they have ascribed but **thousands***

A rather interesting numerical parallelism, or literary use of numbers, also comes from the physician Luke. Wanting to make the point of God’s concern for each of us, he writes:

*Are not **five** sparrows sold for **two** farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are **all** numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than **many** sparrows.*

(Luke 12:6–7)

Incidentally, Luke also writes in the first verse of the twelfth chapter of his Gospel:

*There were gathered together an **innumerable** multitude of people.*

In this verse he uses a number hyperbole to impress us with the size of the crowd. Large congregations have often been counted in holy writ, so it was well within the organizational ability of the Twelve and others to estimate the size of a large crowd, but the use of such hyperbole stands sharply and effectively in contrast to their typical, number-using writing style. It is much like the Lord's description of the descendants of Abraham as being as numerous as the sands of the sea (see Abraham 3:14; D&C 132:30; Moses 7:30).

One of the Savior's most significant miracles is reported by using an alternating numerical parallelism in its structure, summarized as follows:

*A Philip answered him, **Two hundred** pennyworth of bread is not sufficient*

*B There is a lad here, which hath **five** barley loaves*

*A and **two** small fishes: but what are they among so many?*

*B So the men sat down, in number about **five thousand***

*A and filled **twelve** baskets*

*B with the fragments of the **five** barley loaves*

(John 6:7–13)

In outline form we see this passage as follows:

A two hundred pennyworth

B five barley loaves

A two small fishes

B five thousand men

A twelve baskets

B five barley loaves

In this fascinating example, we see the interaction of two numbers, especially because twelve (*dodeka*) can be considered a variation of two (*duo*): two, five, two, five, twelve, five.

Incidentally, one of the largest numbers in all scripture is found in Genesis 24:60, in which Rebekah is blessed to become the mother of "thousands of millions." Another is in Revelation 9:16: "two hundred thousand thousand." The book of Revelation is saturated with the use of numbers. Many of them may be elements in numerical parallelisms. It appears, however, that the largest number intimated in the holy scriptures is found in chiastic form in Moses 7:30:⁸

*A And were it possible that man could **number** the particles*

B of the earth,

**B yea, millions of earths like this,
A it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations**

The Hebrews also designed some of their poetry and writings according to the N/N+1 pattern. The N/N+1 pattern is essentially the equivalent of *and so on* or *or more*. Study the following examples:

- 1/2 Judges 5:30; Psalm 62:11; Job 33:14; 40:5
- 2/3 Deuteronomy 19:15; Hosea 6:2; Proverbs 30:15
- 3/4 Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Proverbs 30:18, 21; Daniel 11:2; 2 Nephi 26:9
- 4/5 Isaiah 17:6; Helaman 3:2 (44/45)
- 5/6 1 Kings 6:6
- 6/7 Job 5:19; Proverbs 6:16
- 7/8 Micah 5:5; Ecclesiastes 11:2
- 9/10 Nehemiah 1:1

The Nephites used the N/N+1 pattern almost exclusively as they moved from year to year in their historical recollections. They seem to me to have developed this idea quite separately from their Old World counterparts, because they used the same N/N+1 formula but with years or numbers of people or events rather than as the equivalent of *or more*. The results, however, are nearly identical.

“An application of the process known as ‘break-up of a stereotype phrase’⁹ is the logical purpose for the N/N+1 pattern. To break up a stereotype phrase is to “break up the components of set phrases,”¹⁰ a tactic poets used to create parallel word pairs. This allowed them to create new poetry while still eliciting the associations present in the original construction.¹¹ It is interesting to note that sometimes ancient writers multiplied certain numbers by ten or eleven (see, for example, Genesis 4:24).

It is also interesting to note that neither the word *hundreds* nor *hundredfold* is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, yet *hundred* is inscribed seventy times. When more than a single hundred is needed, *hundred* remains singular with a number or the word *many* preceding it, a figure that Jacob uses twice and Mormon, once.

Other examples of numerical parallelism include Leviticus 26:8; Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Samuel 21:11; Psalms 68:17; 90:4; Micah 6:7; 1 Nephi 4:1; Mosiah 11:19; Helaman 3:26; Ether 15:2.

Exergasia: Working Through for Heightened Understanding

In ancient Greek literature, *exergasia* literally meant “working out,”¹² or in other words “to work through for understanding.” Exergasia involves saying the same thing another way so that the point is clarified and more fully developed. “The Latins called it *expolito*, a *polishing up*, because by such repetition the meaning is embellished as well as strengthened and not merely explained or interpreted as in other repetitions.”¹³ It was used to make a concept, principle, or condition more clearly understood in its importance.

Bullinger defines exergasia this way: "In this figure the same thought, idea, or subject is repeated in other words, and thus worked out and developed."¹⁴ He further writes, "Words of the same signification are repeated to make plainer the previous statement: or to illustrate the sense of what has been mentioned before."¹⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that it means "to work out, perfect."¹⁶

Because of its extensive use, exergasia often overlaps with other similar forms; indeed, it is not unusual for a single passage to exemplify both exergasia and another form such as climactic parallelism, antimetabole, anabasis, or catabasis. Incidentally, this is true of many verses that have several Hebrew writing forms included within them. Thus it helps to place the separate repetitions in parallel lines to follow the steps that lead to the desired understanding. An easy-to-identify biblical example is found in Psalm 18:1–2:

*I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

It is often difficult to differentiate between cycloides, exergasia, and other writing forms in which both repetition and a strong parallel structure are found. However, in my view exergasia seems to involve far more personal pronouns than do other similar forms. Furthermore, exergasia does not necessarily build to a climax, nor is it always found in parallel form. Although such forms may cause a working through in many ways, they all configure their elements in such a way that one word builds on the other, or one element plays off the previous element. An example of exergasia that is not climactic or parallel is Psalm 35:1–3:

*Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me:
fight against them that fight against me.
Take hold of shield and buckler,
and stand up for mine help.
Draw out also the spear,
and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

To further clarify, we continue with verses 4–9:

*Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul:
let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.
Let them be as chaff before the wind:
and let the angel of the Lord chase them.
Let their way be dark and slippery:
and let the angel of the Lord persecute them.
For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit,
which without cause they have digged for my soul.
Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
and let his net that he hath hid catch himself:
into that very destruction let him fall.
And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation.*

I call these verses the “let scriptures” because that element is used nine times. The writer of these verses is originally in a defensive mode because he has been attacked. He then works through an offensive stance by asking the Lord to plead his cause, fight against his enemies, and take up the shield and stand up to help (see verses 4–6). In verse 7 we see a defensive tactic: the writer wants the Lord to remove the net that his enemies “hid for me . . . in a pit.” In verse 8 the writer moves to a stronger offensive mode when he asks, “Let destruction come upon him, . . . let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.”

Jonah 2:2–4 also provides us with an example of exergasia:

*I cried by reason of
mine affliction
unto the Lord,
and he heard me;
out of the belly of hell
cried I,
and thou heardest my voice.
For thou hadst cast me
into the deep,
in the midst of the seas;
and the floods encompassed me about:
all thy billows
and thy waves passed over me.
Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;
yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.*

In the New Testament, a good example of this form is found in Luke 15:11–32, in which a son asks for his inheritance, takes it, wastes it, and finally returns home as the prodigal to a loving father and dissatisfied brother. All works out in the end as the father teaches love and forgiveness to the obedient son.

In the Book of Mormon an interesting example of exergasia is found in 1 Nephi 4:7–27. Here Nephi finally slays Laban, working through a series of circumstances that seem to render the obtaining of the plates impossible.

With these last two examples, you will likely have noticed that I have taken the form exergasia and expanded its definition to include experiences found in scriptures that need to be worked through and cannot be left standing at midpoint.

Nephi inscribes some lines using exergasia in 1 Nephi 8:1:

*we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind,
both of grain of every kind,
and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.*

Another Book of Mormon example follows:

And now, behold, the Lamanites could not retreat either way,

*neither on the north,
nor on the south,
nor on the east,
nor on the west,
for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites.
(Helaman 1:31)*

A religious application of the idea of exergasia is found in Alma 42:4, where one of the great reasons for earth life—working out our salvation—is explained:

*And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man to repent,
yea, a probationary time,
a time to repent and serve God.*

Another exergasia is located near the end of the Book of Mormon:

*And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God,
and say that they are done away,
that there are no revelations,
nor prophecies,
nor gifts,
nor healing,
nor speaking with tongues,
and the interpretation of tongues
(Mormon 9:7)*

In all communication there periodically comes a time when a concept or idea needs to be worked through. That is what the ancients did when they clarified points of doctrine by using exergasia.

Other examples include Psalm 17:1; Zechariah 6:12–13; 1 Nephi 2:20; 10:4, 9; 11:21, 32; 2 Nephi 5:21; 9:19, 21–23, 43; Mosiah 7:9, 22; 14:4–5; 25:2–3, 5; Alma 7:4; 15:17; 22:1, 15, 17.

Ellipsis: Being Left Out

The word *ellipsis* comes from a Greek word that means “a leaving out.” Bullinger explains, “The figure is so called, because some gap is *left in* the sentence, which means that a word or words are *left out*.”¹⁷ That is, words are omitted that the sentence would ordinarily include but that are not necessary for the sentence to be understood. Bullinger further states that the words left out in an ellipsis are “words which are necessary for the grammar, but are not necessary for the sense.”¹⁸ Further, it is “a figure of speech in which one or more words are omitted in order to emphasize the idea or theme.”¹⁹

Ellipsis means an omission of a word or words that would be logically necessary to the sentence construction, but whose absence does not greatly obscure the meaning.²⁰ It is “the omission of one or more words in a sentence, which would be needed to complete the grammatical construction or fully to express the sense.”²¹ Similarly, it can be defined as “the omission of a particle, word or group of words within a poetic or grammatical unit, where its presence is expected.”²² It is a form of shortened writing. The author assumes that the reader can discern from the context the full intent of the message. Especially in parallel lines, an element may be dropped the second time, because it can easily be implied by clear allusions to that which was left out. Even pronouns can function elliptically, when their antecedents are not immediately obvious.²³

The fact that the ellipsis is used so many times in scripture indicates that perhaps early scriptural students and scholars had such an intense and thorough knowledge of the verses they were learning that the reiteration of every word was not needed. Many examples of this form are found throughout the scriptures. In the Old Testament we read:

***If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he [the creditor] take away thy bed from under thee?
(Proverbs 22:27)***

The reader must take a moment to figure out who “he” is because it is not delineated in this verse. Following is an example in the simple alternate form:

***A It is not for kings
B to drink wine;
A nor [is it] for princes
B [to drink] strong drink
(Proverbs 31:4)***

Here the phrase *is it* is left out, as is *to drink*. Because both series of words were used earlier in the verse, it is automatic, almost, to add them mentally. Another ellipsis, one of many in the Old Testament, omits the word *Lord*, although we automatically include it as we read:

***Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine [Lord] anger against the rivers? was thy [Lord] wrath against the sea, that thou [Lord] didst ride upon thine [Lord] horses and thy [Lord] chariots of salvation?
(Habakkuk 3:8)***

Following are two more ellipses from the Old Testament:

***[You shall receive] sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper [thou false tongue].
(Psalm 120:4; for implied elements, see verse 3)***

***I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and [I put] a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and [I put] earrings in thine ears, and [I put] a beautiful crown upon thine head.
(Ezekiel 16:11–12)***

In Psalm 120, the second verse, we add the words in parentheses to determine whether we would have understood the verse without the ellipsis that David used:

Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and [deliver my soul] from a deceitful tongue.

In the remarkable twenty-ninth and thirtieth chapters of 3 Nephi, where so many Hebrew writing forms are found, we observe two ellipses:

Therefore ye need not suppose that ye can turn the right hand of the Lord unto the left [hand of the Lord], that he may not execute judgment unto the fulfilling of the covenant.

(3 Nephi 29:9)

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent [all ye Gentiles] of your evil doings.

(3 Nephi 30:2)

The Book of Mormon, having passed through just one modern-day translator, is usually a little simpler to follow than are the Old Testament verses with their omitted words or phrases. However, there are still many ellipses in the Book of Mormon—instances where the prophet-writers left out words that need to be understood by the reader. For example, Nephi established that his father is prayerful “in behalf of his people”:

And it came to pass as he [father Lehi] prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him [father Lehi, not the Lord]; and he [father Lehi] saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

(1 Nephi 1:6)

Following are some further examples of ellipsis in the Book of Mormon:

And it came to pass that he [father Lehi] saw One [the spirit of the Lord] descending out of the midst of heaven, and he [father Lehi] beheld that his [Lord] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

(1 Nephi 1:9)

And it came to pass that after many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger against the Nephites, and they [the Lamanites] began to come into the borders of the [Nephite] land round about. Now they [the Lamanites] durst not slay them [the Nephites], because of the oath which their [Lamanite] king had made unto Limhi; but they would smite them [Nephites] on their cheeks, and exercise authority over them [the Nephites].

(Mosiah 21:2–3)

And we have entered into their [Lamanite] houses and [we have] taught them, and we have taught them [the Lamanites] in their [Lamanite] streets; yea and we have taught them [the Lamanites] upon their [Lamanite] hills; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have also entered into their [Lamanite] temples and their [Lamanite] synagogues and taught them; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our [Ammon and his brethren] cheeks; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords.

(Alma 26:29)

And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he [Nephi] kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it [this last record] in his [Nephi's] stead; and he [Amos] kept it upon the plates of Nephi also.

(4 Nephi 1:19)

Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and [why do ye] yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and [yet suffer] the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

(Mormon 8:39)

Additional examples of ellipsis are numerous in all books of scripture, and they are so easily identified that other references have not been listed.

Eleutheria: Bold Speech

Jesus himself best demonstrated eleutheria in this way: “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world” (John 18:20). This fascinating form is used in many languages and cultures, but it is always most effective when used by a prophet. This is because it is characterized by a “perfect freedom and boldness” of expression, often the hallmark of a prophet preaching the gospel.²⁴ It is the form where those who speak do not mince words.

The principle of teaching with boldness and candor was prized by the ancients, as portrayed by this passage:

The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

(Luke 13:31–32)

There were not many that had the courage to call Herod a “fox” or the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” “fools and blind,” “blind Pharisee,” “whited sepulchers . . . full of dead men’s bones,” murderers (“partakers with them in the blood of prophets”), “serpents,” and “generation of vipers.” These are words that Jesus spoke in just one chapter of Matthew (see Matthew 23:13–33). Jesus, as recorded by Matthew, uses eleutheria in its most pure form at this time.

Because the religious atmosphere was such that the people Jesus encountered in the Western Hemisphere were much more receptive to his teachings than the Jews, a chapter like Matthew 23 is not found in 3 Nephi. However, we can find in Helaman 9:21–22 words just as powerful:

But Nephi said unto them: O ye fools, ye uncircumcised of heart, ye blind, and ye stiffnecked people, do ye know how long the Lord your God will suffer you that ye shall go on in this your way of sin? O ye ought to begin to howl and mourn, because of the great destruction which at this time doth await you, except ye shall repent.

Because the Jews, Nephites, and Lamanites had so hardened their hearts, boldness was vital. Thus we read in Matthew 7:6 (see 3 Nephi 14:6):

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.

Jesus asks, “Why do ye not understand my speech?” (John 8:43). He answers his own inquiry by stating:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

(John 8:44; see 1 John 3:10)

The necessity of such open and bold speech is commented on relatively often in scriptures, such as when Jesus speaks openly to Peter, as recorded in Mark 8:32–33:

And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Often prophets find need to speak in great candor, and those that obey are immediately blessed through the power of the prophets' messages. Paul writes about his boldness of speech (see 2 Corinthians 7:4) and uses *eleutheria* often (see Romans 1:16). However, Jacob is grieved to use so much boldness:

And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God; . . . Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained . . . to admonish you according to your crimes. . . . and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations. . . . the truth according to the plainness of the word of God.

(Jacob 2:7–11)

Thus these verses have become one of the greatest examples of *eleutheria* ever written.

The Book of Mormon prophets, some of which carried with them the direct influences of their roots in Jerusalem, occasionally spoke and wrote using *eleutheria*:

And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.

(1 Nephi 14:17)

Another example of *eleutheria* is found in 2 Nephi 25:28–30, where plainness of speech is powerfully used in both negative and positive ways:

And now behold, my people, ye are a stiffnecked people; wherefore, I have spoken plainly unto you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they are sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law. And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in nowise be cast out. And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses.

We read more examples of this interesting, bold form in 2 Nephi 28:9–12, in which strong words warn those who lived then and us today of wicked leaders:

Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark. And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

(2 Nephi 28:9–10)

In 3 Nephi 11:29 and 34, inscribed anciently on metal plates, we learn that the principle of speaking plainly, openly, and with much candor was still with the prophets 550 years after their forefathers came to the Western Hemisphere. As Moroni abridged the writings of Ether, he edited in many additional examples of candor. One of the most clear is Ether 8:23, where these words are written:

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

It could hardly be clearer. This form of openness, freedom of expression, and candor leaves us knowing what our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want us to do as spoken by their mouthpiece, the prophet. I am thankful for explicit communication.

Additional examples of eleutheria include Leviticus 23:29–30; 26:27–33; Deuteronomy 4:25–26; 28:15–68; 32:21–26; 1 Nephi 7:8–15; 17:44–48; 2 Nephi 1:13–29; Jacob 2:12–16, 22–23, 34–35; Mosiah 17:9–10, 15–19; Alma 5:14–43, 51–57; 11:23–25.

Eironeia: An Opposite Expression

Eironeia is also called irony. This form is so named because the speaker intends the use of irony “to convey a sense contrary to the . . . words employed: not with the intention of concealing his real meaning, but for the purpose of adding greater force.”²⁵ It is also used to communicate contrast or to reveal the foolishness of those who feel there are powers greater than those of Jehovah. Bullinger divides eironeia into five categories:

- I. Divine Irony** *Where the speaker is either the Father or the Son.*
- II. Human Irony** *Where the speaker is a human being.*
- III. Peirastic Irony** *Where the words are not spoken ironically in the normal sense, but . . . by way of trying or testing.*
- IV. Simulated Irony** *Where the words are used by man in hypocrisy.*
- V. Deceptive Irony** *Where the words are not only hypocritical, but false and deceptive.*²⁶

Another example of divine irony is:

Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

(Judges 10:14)

In this sarcastic statement, God unmistakably implies that these gods cannot rescue the one who is in trouble.

An interesting example of irony is found in Ezekiel 3:24–26, where the Spirit tells Ezekiel, “Go, shut thyself within thine house.” Jehovah then communicates to Ezekiel that the house of Israel will find him even in that place of resort and there “shall put bands upon” him, for they themselves “are a rebellious house.”

The name Lucifer, which was given to Satan, seems still to be identified as “son of the morning,” a significant irony (see Isaiah 14:12; 2 Nephi 24:12).

The Lord speaks prophetically in an interesting manner when he states:

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord.

(Isaiah 2:10)

Little good will it do us to hide, because the Lord knows where we are at all times. A rather gruesome example of irony is found in Isaiah 3:24, where we read:

And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

These words all come after the Lord has described what the daughters of Zion will do to attempt to be beautiful and earn praise for their outward appearance. This is pure eironeia.

It seems to me that Isaiah uses irony perhaps more than almost any other scriptural author. In Isaiah 8:9–10, we learn that no matter how much the people unite against the Lord they “shall be broken in pieces,” a phrase that is repeated three times for emphasis (a perfect cycloides; see pages 33–35).

One language scholar takes an interesting look at the subject by describing a person who uses irony as “a dissembler, one who says less than he thinks or means.”²⁷ Yet another author comments that when accusations occur, in addition to using satire, “there is more latitude for sarcasm and irony,”²⁸ which is certainly true in several scriptural passages.

Jesus, in his sermonizing in the Western Hemisphere, unravels a familiar divine irony pertaining to the lost tribes of Israel when he states:

For they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he has taken them.

(3 Nephi 17:4)

Irony is sometimes found when the obvious is stated, as Jesus does here. In that sense, as we all know, the lost sheep were never lost.

A fascinating irony is located in Ether 8:1–9:15, where Moroni writes about Akish, who desires the daughter of Jared to be his wife after she has schemed with Jared to dance for Akish. When Akish asks for Jared’s daughter, Jared says, “I will give her unto you, if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king” (Ether 8:12). The Lord warns Omer, Jared’s father, to leave the land. Jared is then anointed king because of the wickedness of Akish and his associates. Ironically, Akish later kills Jared by beheading him. Jared dies the way he hoped his father would die, killed by the person he directed to kill his father. A double irony, also involving poetic justice, eventually develops when Omer is restored again as king.

A human irony is found in Mosiah 17:13–19. Abinadi warns the evil people who dwell where he is preaching that they will be destroyed by fire. Abinadi is burned to death himself. Irony often intensifies a tragic situation. Earlier in his ministry Abinadi taught the ten commandments and other powerful words of the

Lord to the children of Israel and their priests, but the priests, of all people, ironically did not understand the law (see Mosiah 12:25–27). The false priests knew the words of scripture but did not know their meaning.

In Alma 30:59–60 is found the highest form of deceptive irony. After Korihor is trampled down and killed, we read:

And thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.

Satan’s ministry is saturated with eironeia, but his not standing by his evil fellow servants is perhaps the most significant irony of all.

Another passage describes a circumstantial irony in the Book of Mormon:

The armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them. . . . when the armies of Giddianhi saw this they began to shout with a loud voice, . . . for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear.

(3 Nephi 4:8–9)

The irony here is obvious: while the Giddianhites think the Nephites are fearful of them, they have in fact fallen to the ground to pray. After a terrible struggle, the Nephites are victorious (see 3 Nephi 4:12).

Finally, another wonderful example of irony in the peirastic form is found in Alma 55, where the Nephites under Moroni cause the Lamanites who are guarding the Nephite prisoners to become drunk. The Nephites easily liberate those who are incarcerated and are able to retake the city. Later the Lamanites try to get the Nephite guards drunk using the same procedure, but the scheme does not work a second time for obvious reasons.

Additional examples of eironeia include Genesis 22:2–13; Deuteronomy 32:37–38; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Isaiah 21:5–9; Matthew 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:4; 1 Nephi 22:23; 2 Nephi 24:9; Mosiah 3:9; 11:11; Alma 8:14–15; 24:30; 47:36.

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968), 871.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “anthropopathic.” (Hereafter cited as *OED*.)
3. *Ibid.*, s.v. “anthropopathy.”
4. *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., s.v. “likeness.”
5. See David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies* 35/4 (1996): 7–94.
6. See Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 144–49.
7. Donald W. Parry, “Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, October 1989, 60.
8. “This is the best definition of infinity that I have seen,” stated H. Clay Gorton, conversation with author, 23 May 1996.
9. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 145.
10. *Ibid.*, 329.
11. See *ibid.*, 329–31.
12. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 399.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *OED*, s.v. “exergasia.”
17. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 1.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Christina Ruse and Marilyn Hopton, *Cassell Dictionary of Literary and Language Terms* (London: Cassell Publishers, 1992), 100.
20. See *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “ellipsis.”
21. *OED*, s.v. “ellipsis.”
22. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 303–4.

23. This is especially true in ancient languages that often expressed personal pronouns only through verb conjugations.

24. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 932.

25. *Ibid.*, 807.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Walter W. Skeat, *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 268, s.v. "irony."

28. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 142.

Epilogue

We have merely scratched the surface of a discipline that can fascinate, inspire, and alter your thinking about the sophisticated writing abilities of the prophets who lived from 4000 BC to AD 400. From them we have received the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the book of Abraham, and other scripture. They were a faithful group of prophets and leaders who recorded in the language of their fathers many of God's interactions with and instructions to those on earth. I predict that the study of this art form and writing system will increase in popularity as the years unfold. It could become an integral facet of your own scripture study.

A number of additional forms are not delineated in this book, but they will be addressed by others in the future, I am sure. It is possible that all we now know about how the ancients wrote and the forms they used is just a microscopic percentage of what there is yet to learn.

As I observe the effort in this field expended by scholars today, much of which is published and preserved by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), I am persuaded that our own testimonies can expand beyond what they presently are to levels not even imagined or predicted.

It is easy to know what our Savior desires for us to learn when we observe the energy expended by those who wrote his words to us. My prayer for you, as you study and analyze the scriptures more deeply, is that you will find peace and joy in a troubled world.

Glossary and Pronunciation Guide

Pronunciation Key:

/ə/ abut	/ɪ/ ice
/a/ ash	/ō/ go
/ä/ mop, mar	/ɔ/ law
/e/ bet	/ü/ loot
/ē/ easy	/y/ yet
/i/ hit	

Glossary

alternate. Sentences, words, concepts, or phrases are stated two or more times in the same parallel order.

A Then the **children** of Ammon

B were gathered **together**,

C and **encamped** in Gilead.

A And the **children** of Israel

B assembled themselves **together**,

C and **encamped** in Mizpeh.

(Judges 10:17)

A If ye will **repent**,

B and **harden not your hearts**,

C then will I have **mercy** upon you,

D through mine **Only Begotten Son**;

A Therefore, whosoever **repenteth**,

B and **hardeneth not his heart**,

C he shall have claim on **mercy**

D through mine **Only Begotten Son**

(Alma 12:33–34)

amoebaeon. (ə' mē bē ōn) The repetition of the same word, phrase, or sentence at the ends of paragraphs that follow one another or are in proximity.

The phrase *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord* appears five times in Amos 4:6, 8–11 (see page 40, above).

In Jacob 5, the phrase *unto mine own self* is used to terminate verses 18, 19, 23, 29, and 33.

Incidentally, this particular phrase is found nowhere else in scripture.

anabasis. (əˈnabəˌsɪs) Successive phrases that increase in importance to explain a concept or truth. Often referred to as the “up the staircase” form.

D *But his delight is in the law of the Lord*
C *nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*
B *nor standeth in the way of sinners,*
A *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,*
(Psalm 1:1–2)

F *and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.*
E *and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God;*
D *that he may watch over you in your sleep;*
C *yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord,*
B *and he will direct thee for good;*
A *Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings,*
(Alma 37:37)

anaphora. (əˈnaf(ə)rə) Phrases that begin the same.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days
without a king, and
without a prince, and
without a sacrifice, and
without an image, and
without an ephod, and
without teraphim
(Hosea 3:4)

And now, behold,
who can stand against the works of the Lord?
Who can deny his sayings?
Who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord?
Who will despise the works of the Lord?
Who will despise the children of Christ?
(Mormon 9:26)

anthropatheia. (anˈθrəpəˈpɑːθiə) Ascribing human characteristics to deity.

And I will set my **tabernacle** [body] among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

(Leviticus 26:11–12)

And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed unless he shall make bare his **arm** in the eyes of the nations. 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.

(1 Nephi 22:10–11)

antimetabole. (an-tē-mə-ˈtab-ə-lē) Opposing words or phrases repeated in inverse order. In other words, antithetical chiasmus.

A *Woe unto them that call evil*

B *good,*

B *and good*

A *evil;*

A *that put darkness*

B *for light,*

B *and light*

A *for darkness;*

A *that put bitter*

B *for sweet,*

B *and sweet*

A *for bitter!*

(Isaiah 5:20)

A *For if there be no Christ*

B *there be no God; and if there be no God*

C *we are not,*

C *for there could have been no creation.*

B *But there is a God,*

A *and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.*

(2 Nephi 11:7)

antithetical parallelism. A concept, word, idea, or meaning that is the opposite of another that follows it in proximity.

A *we wait for light,*

B *but behold obscurity;*

A *for brightness,*

B *but we walk in darkness.*

(Isaiah 59:9)

A *They that have done **good***
B *shall have **everlasting life**;*
A *and they that have done **evil***
B *shall have **everlasting damnation**.*
(Helaman 12:26)

catabasis. (kəˈtəːbɪsɪs) Phrases that decrease in importance as they explain a principle or truth. Often referred to as the “down the staircase” form.

A *though they climb up to heaven, thence*
B *will I bring them down:*
C *And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel,*
D *I will search and take them out thence;*
E *and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea,*
F *thence will I command the serpent,*
G *and he shall bite them*
(Amos 9:2-3)

A *And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men,*
B *yea, not only men but women also.*
C *Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned.*
(Alma 32:23)

chiasmus. (kɪˈʌzːməs) Parallelism in which the message is repeated in the opposite order of the first presentation.

A *And the **Lord said unto Moses,***
B *The man shall be surely put to **death**:*
C *all the congregation shall **stone him with stones***
D ***without the camp.***
D *And all the congregation brought him **without the camp,***
C *and **stoned him with stones,***
B *and he **died**;*
A *as the **Lord commanded Moses.***
(Numbers 15:35-36)

A *for ye ought to **tremble**;*
B *for the Lord redeemeth none such*
C *that **rebel** against him*
D *and **die in their sins**;*
X *yea, even all those*

D that have **perished in their sins** ever since the world began,

C that have wilfully **rebelled** against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them;

B these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

A Therefore ought ye not to **tremble?**

(Mosiah 15:26–27)

climax. The word or phrase at the end of one expression repeated at the beginning of the next.

Tell ye **your children** of it,
and let **your children** tell **their children**,
and **their children** another generation.

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the **locust** eaten;
and that which the **locust** hath left hath the **cankerworm** eaten;
and that which the **cankerworm** hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.
(Joel 1:3–4)

And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is **no sin**.
If ye shall say there is **no sin**, ye shall also say there is **no righteousness**.
And if there be **no righteousness** there be **no happiness**.
And if there be no righteousness **nor happiness** there be **no punishment nor misery**.
And if **these things** are not there is **no God**.
And if there is **no God we are not, neither the earth**;
for there could have been **no creation** of things
(2 Nephi 2:13)

cycloides. (sī'kloi:dēz) A word or phrase that circulates at regular intervals through a text, often delineating a single message.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
and be ye lift up, **ye everlasting doors**,
and the **King of glory shall come in**. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
even lift them up, **ye everlasting doors**;
and the **King of glory shall come in**.
(Psalm 24:7–9)

And now if ye have **judges**,
and they do not **judge** you according to the law which has been given,
ye can cause that they may be **judged** of a higher **judge**.
If your higher **judges**
do not **judge**

*righteous judgments,
ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together,
and they shall judge
your higher judges, according to the voice of the people.
(Mosiah 29:28–29)*

eironeia. (iˈrɒːneɪə) Also called irony. Communicates a sense contrary to the strict meaning of the words used.

*Go cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.
(Judges 10:14)*

The armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them. . . . when the armies of Giddianhi saw this they began to shout with a loud voice, . . . for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear.

(3 Nephi 4:8–9)

eleutheria. (el-yüˈthi-r-ə) A bold statement intended to reprehend or shock.

The “thou shalt not” message of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:3–17) found in the Old Testament is an example of this form in which the author speaks boldly and freely.

*Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.
(Moroni 8:21)*

ellipsis. (iˈlɪp-sɪs) A word or words are left out, but the reader can still understand the meaning of the text. In Hebrew, pronouns are elliptical.

Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he [Amasai] said, Thine [David] are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace, be unto thee [David], and peace be to thine helpers [the army and loyal subjects? Jehovah?]; for thy God helpeth thee [David? Israel?]. Then David received them, and made them [children of Benjamin and Judah?] captains of the band. And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he [David?] came with the Philistines against Saul to battle: but they [Philistines? Manasseh?] helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads.

(1 Chronicles 12:18–19)

And thou [Jacob] hast beheld in thy [Jacob] youth his [Jesus Christ] glory; wherefore, thou [Jacob] art blessed even as they [those who would know Jesus in Jerusalem and the Western Hemisphere during his earthly ministry] unto whom [see preceding] he [the Savior] shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is that same, yesterday, today and forever.

(2 Nephi 2:4)

epibole. (i:'pi:b:lē) The repetition of the same phrase or words at irregular intervals.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful;

the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

(Psalm 29:3-8)

*But behold, as the seed swelleth, and **sprouteth, and beginneth to grow**, then you must needs say that the seed is good;*

*for behold it swelleth, and **sprouteth, and beginneth to grow**.*

*And now, behold, will not this strengthen your faith? Yea, it will strengthen your faith: for ye will say I know that this is a good seed; for behold it **sprouteth and beginneth to grow**.*

*And now, behold, are ye sure that this is a good seed? I say unto you, Yea; for every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness. Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away. And now, behold, because ye have tried the experiment, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and **sprouteth, and beginneth to grow**, ye must needs know that the seed is good.*

(Alma 32:30-33)

epistrophe. (i:'pis:trə:fē) The repetition of the same word or words at the end of sentences that follow one another.

*And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: **and my people shall never be ashamed**.*

*And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: **and my people shall never be ashamed**.*

(Joel 2:26-27)

*Yea, do ye suppose that they would have been led **out of bondage**, if the Lord had not commanded Moses that he should lead them **out of bondage**?*

*Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage; and ye know that they were laden with tasks, which were grievous to be borne; wherefore, ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought **out of bondage**.*

(1 Nephi 17:24-25)

exergasia. (ex:ər:'gäzēə) Repetition of an idea in order to work out or explain more clearly what has already been stated.

*I cried by reason of
mine affliction
unto the Lord,*

*and he heard me;
out of the belly of hell
cried I,
and thou heardest my voice.
For thou hadst cast me
into the deep,
in the midst of the seas;
and the floods compassed me about:
all thy billows
and thy waves passed over me.
(Jonah 2:2–3)*

*And the meek also shall increase,
and their joy shall be in the Lord,
and the poor among men shall rejoice
in the Holy One of Israel.
For assuredly as the Lord liveth
they shall see that the terrible one is brought to naught,
and the scorner is consumed,
and all that watch for iniquity are cut off
(2 Nephi 27:30–31)*

gender-matched parallelism. Masculine and feminine nouns in parallel combinations.

*I will make your heaven (m.) as iron (m.) And your earth (f.) as brass (f.)
(Leviticus 26:19)*

inclusio. (in-'klü:zēō) A word or phrase that begins and ends a verse or verses with a major message between the two words or phrases.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared
all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will
meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget **thy word**.
(Psalm 119:11–16)

And now, my brethren, **I have spoken** plainly that ye cannot err.
And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he
should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes
unto the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock
and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God
liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ,

of which **I have spoken**, whereby man can be saved.

(2 Nephi 25:20)

numerical parallelism. Numbers are repeated or listed sequentially in a text, often exaggerated to convey a point or concept.

*How should **one** chase a **thousand**, and **two** put **ten thousand** to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?*

(Deuteronomy 32:30)

*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 Jeneum had fallen with his **ten thousand**; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their **ten thousand** each. And it came to pass that there were **ten** more who did fall by the sword, with their **ten thousand** each; yea, even all my people, save it were those twenty and four who were with me.*

(Mormon 6:14–15)

paradiastole. (per-ə-dī-'astō-lē) A concentrated use of *either/or* or *neither/nor* in Hebrew texts.

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer. . . .

Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron,
nor the inhabitants of Nahalol. . . .

Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho,
nor the inhabitants of Zidon,

nor of Ahlab,

nor of Achzib,

nor of Helbah,

nor of Aphik,

nor of Rehob

(Judges 1:29–31)

And there could be no light, because of the darkness,

neither candles,

neither torches;

neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all; And there was not any light seen,

neither fire,

nor glimmer,

neither the sun,

nor the moon,

nor the stars

(3 Nephi 8:21–22)

polysyndeton. (pā-lē-'sin-dē-tān) A conjunction used repeatedly at the beginning of successive clauses.

*And they came to the place which God had told him of;
and Abraham built an altar there,
and laid the wood in order,
and bound Isaac his son,
and laid him on the altar upon the wood.
And Abraham stretched forth his hand,
and took the knife to slay his son.
And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven,
and said, Abraham, Abraham:
and he said, Here am I.
And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad
(Genesis 22:9–12)*

*And it came to pass in this year there began to be a war between the Nephites, who consisted of the Nephites
and the Jacobites
and the Josephites
and the Zoramites;
and this war was between the Nephites,
and the Lamanites
and the Lemuelites
and the Ishmaelites.
(Mormon 1:8)*

repetitive parallelism. Two or more clauses, verses, or sentences found closely aligned in the text.

*A Adah and Zillah, hear my voice
A ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
B for I have slain a man to my wounding,
B and a young man to my hurt.
(Genesis 4:23)*

synonymia. (sɪˈnɒˌnɪmˌēə) The repetition of words or phrases that have the same or similar meanings.

*And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed,
The Lord,
The Lord God,
merciful
and gracious,
longsuffering,
and abundant in goodness
and truth,
Keeping mercy for thousands,
forgiving iniquity*

and transgression

and sin

(Exodus 34:6–7)

Now those priests who did go forth among the people

did preach against all **lyings,**

and **deceivings,**

and **envyings,**

and **strifes,**

and **malice,**

and **revilings,**

and **stealing,**

robbing,

plundering,

murdering,

committing **adultery,**

and all manner of **lasciviousness**

(Alma 16:18)

synonymous parallelism. A group of words in a general classification.

*And again I speak unto you who **deny the revelations of God,***

*and **say they are done away,***

*that there are no **revelations,***

*nor **prophecies,***

*nor **gifts,***

*nor **healing,***

*nor **speaking with tongues,***

*and the **interpretation of tongues***

(Mormon 9:7)

Wash you,

make you clean;

put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;

cease to do evil;

Learn to do well;

seek judgment,

relieve the oppressed,

judge the fatherless,

plead for the widow.

(Isaiah 1:16–17)

synthetic parallelism. Two or more elements placed together; the second element further develops the first. Some synthetic parallelisms are simple, and some are extended.

*Where there is no vision, the people perish:
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
(Proverbs 29:18)*

*Adam fell that men might be;
and men are, that they might have joy.
(2 Nephi 2:25)*

*Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.
Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen,
and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.
Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back?
and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the Lord.
Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape;
they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.
(Jeremiah 46:3–6)*

*and those who had fled with him into the wilderness; for, behold, he had taken those who went with him, and went up in the land of Nephi among the Lamanites, and did stir up the Lamanites to anger among the people of Nephi,
insomuch that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation throughout all his land, among all his people, that they should gather themselves together again to go to battle against the Nephites.
(Alma 47:1)*

word pairs. Parallel lines created by the use of pairs of words that have generally synonymous or antithetical meanings.

*A before the **fierce anger** of the Lord
B come upon you
A before the day of the Lord's **anger**
B come upon you.
(Zephaniah 2:2)*

*A I will visit them
B in my **anger**
B yea, in my **fierce anger**
A will I visit them
(Mosiah 12:1)*

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