Word Studies
of the Book of Mormon
### Chiasmus in Leviticus 24:13–23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Scripture</th>
<th>Leviticus 24:13–23</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td>Chiasmus is a style of writing known in antiquity and used by many ancient and some modern writers. It consists of arranging a series of words or ideas in one order, and then repeating it in reverse order. In the hands of a skillful writer, this literary form can serve several purposes. The repeating of key words in the two halves underlines the importance of the concepts they present. Furthermore, the main idea of the passage is emphasized by its placement at the turning point where the second half begins. Thus chiasms, in general, place their most important elements in the center. Chiasmus can be found in biblical texts, as Leviticus 24:13–23 demonstrates. It is one of the clearest examples of chiasmus in the Bible. In this case “breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” is the central formulation. Other words important to the structure of the chiasm are italicized.</td>
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Chiasmus in Leviticus 24:13–23

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him . . . stone him.

And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying,

Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin . . . the stranger, as [well as] he that is born in the land. . . .

And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.

And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;

Breach for breach,

eye for eye,

tooth for tooth:

as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.

And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it:

and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.

Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country. . . .

And Moses spake to the children of Israel,

that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones.

And the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.
### Chiasmus in Matthew 13:13–18

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<th><strong>Key Scripture</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td>The Savior used chiasmus on occasion. In this chart Jesus Christ is quoting Isaiah (Esaias), embedding Isaiah’s chiastic structure in his own larger discourse, which is also a chiasm. The Savior here begins and ends with a reference to parables and includes as the center of his chiasm the prophecy of Isaiah that many will close their eyes and refuse to see that Jesus is the Christ.</td>
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Chiasmus in Matthew 13:13–18

Therefore speak I to them in *parables*:

because they seeing *see* not; and hearing they *hear* not, neither do they understand.

And in them is fulfilled the *prophecy* of Esaias, which saith,

By hearing ye shall *hear*, and shall not understand;

and seeing ye shall *see*, and shall not perceive:

For this people’s *heart* is waxed gross,

and their *ears* are dull of *hearing*,

and their *eyes*  
    they have *closed*;

lest at any time they should *see*

with their *eyes*,

and *hear* with their *ears*,

and should understand with their *heart*, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they *see*:

and your ears, for they *hear*.

For verily I say unto you, That many *prophets* and righteous men  
have desired to *see* those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to *hear* those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Hear ye therefore the *parable* of the sower.
Chiasmus in Mosiah 3:18–19

Key Scripture  Mosiah 3:18–19

Explanation  King Benjamin’s complex ceremonial speech in Mosiah 2–5 contains several excellent examples of chiasmus. The overall structure of the speech is chiastic and houses smaller chiasms within it. (For a more detailed representation of the speech of Benjamin as a whole, see chart 87.) This chart shows only one of the chiasms found in Benjamin’s speech. Notably, the main chiasms in Benjamin’s speech concern the doctrine of Jesus Christ—the doctrine Benjamin wants to emphasize. This particular chiasm, which comes at the midpoint of the entire speech, concerns the crucial process of being spiritually reborn through the atonement of Christ.

Chiasmus in Mosiah 3:18–19

except they humble themselves
and become as little children, and believe that
salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning
blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

For the natural man
is an enemy to God,
and has been from the fall of Adam,
and will be, forever and ever,
unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,
and putteth off the natural man
and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,
and becometh as a child,
submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things
Key ScriptureMosiah 5:10–12

Explanation King Benjamin uses chiasmus several times in his great speech in Mosiah 2–5. In Mosiah 5:10–12 he emphasizes the central importance of taking upon oneself the name of Christ. In this concluding section of his speech, the people enter into a covenant with God and are called the children of Christ. They receive the name of Christ, which will never be blotted out, except by transgression. Transgression therefore receives the focus as the center of this chiasm, which stands at the center of this final section of the entire speech. Benjamin’s skillful use of this literary form shows that he carefully and deliberately prepared his masterful oration.

Chiasmus in Mosiah 5:10–12

And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ

must be called by some other name;

therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God.

And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you

that never should be blotted out,

except it be through transgression;

therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress,

that the name be not blotted out of your hearts.

I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts,

that ye are not found on the left hand of God,

but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called,

and also,

the name by which he shall call you.
**Chiasmus in Alma 36**

**Key Scripture** Alma 36

**Explanation** In his blessing to his son Helaman, Alma uses chiasmus in recounting his conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This chart illustrates the deep structure of Alma 36. Jesus Christ is the crux of the chiasm, just as he is the center of the gospel and the only means whereby salvation can be attained. The turning point in Alma’s conversion was not the appearance of the angel or the fear of eternal banishment, but calling on the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Fittingly, Alma makes this spiritual turning point the literary focal point of this entire chapter, one of the finest examples of chiasitic composition anywhere in world literature.

Chiasmus in Alma 36

My son give ear to my words (v. 1)

*Keep the commandments* and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v. 1)

Do *as I* have done (v. 2)

*Remember the captivity* of our fathers (v. 2)

They were in *bondage* (v. 2)

He surely did *deliver* them (v. 2)

*Trust* in God (v. 3)

Supported in *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v. 3)

Lifted up at the *last day* (v. 3)

*I know* this not of myself but *of God* (v. 4)

*Born of God* (v. 5)

I sought to destroy the church (vv. 6–9)

My *limbs* were paralyzed (v. 10)

Fear of being in the *presence of God* (vv. 14–15)

*Pains* of a damned soul (v. 16)

*Harrowed up by the memory of sins* (v. 17)

I remembered *Jesus Christ, a son of God* (v. 17)

I cried, *Jesus Christ, son of God* (v. 18)

*Harrowed by the memory of sins no more* (v. 19)

Joy as exceeding as was the *pain* (v. 20)

Long to be in the *presence of God* (v. 22)

My *limbs* received strength again (v. 23)

I labored to bring souls to repentance (v. 24)

*Born of God* (v. 26)

Therefore *my knowledge is of God* (v. 26)

Supported under *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v. 26)

*Trust* in him (v. 27)

He will *deliver* me (v. 27)

And *raise me up at the last day* (v. 28)

As God brought our fathers out of *bondage* and captivity (vv. 28–29)

Retain a *remembrance of their captivity* (v. 29)

Know as *I* do know (v. 30)

*Keep the commandments* and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v. 30)

This according to his *word* (v. 30)
Chiasmus in Helaman 6:7–13

Key Scripture  Helaman 6:7–13

Explanation  Yet another example of chiasmus, in this case a report of the events in a particular Nephite year, is found in Helaman 6:7–13. Because the report is a fine literary unit, the account was most likely originally written as a single entry in the Nephite annals that Mormon copied verbatim into his record from the large plates of Nephi. The sixty-fourth year of the reign of the judges was an unusual year, one in which the Nephites and Lamanites cooperatively enjoyed economic prosperity, peace, and free trade—an unprecedented occurrence. The chiastic form of the report for this year underscores its importance. In the chart, notice that Zedekiah and Lord are paired together at the center of the chiasm. The -yah at the end of Zedekiah represents the Hebrew word for “Lord”; thus the chiasm was probably even more evident in its original language than it is today in English.

And behold, there was peace in all the land,

[Freedom of travel and trade in both lands is discussed]

And it came to pass that they became exceedingly rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites;

and they did have an exceeding plenty of gold, and of silver, and of all manner of precious metals, both in the land south and in the land north.

Now the land south

was called Lehi, and

the land north

was called Mulek,

which was after the son of Zedekiah;*

for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north,

and Lehi into

the land south.

And behold, there was all manner of gold in both these lands, and of silver, and of precious ore of every kind;

and there were also curious workmen, who did work all kinds of ore and did refine it; and thus they did become rich.

[Economic prosperity in both lands is discussed]

And thus the sixty and fourth year did pass away in peace.

*The Hebrew word for Lord constitutes the theophoric suffix -yah, which is at the end of the name Zedekiah.
“It Came to Pass”
Occurrences in the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture  1 Nephi 1:4

Explanation  This chart compares the frequency of the phrase “it came to pass” and its closely related formulations in books of the Book of Mormon. The number of times the phrase is used (expressed as a total and as a percentage) and the rate of occurrence (expressed as one occurrence every so many words) are listed for each individual book, varying considerably. Some readers wonder why these words occur so often in the Book of Mormon compared with the Bible. Actually, the Hebrew word wayehi is translated in the King James Version of the Bible as “it came to pass,” but it is also translated as “it happened, came, had come, became, arose, was, now,” and so forth. Therefore, what was an extremely common phrase in the Bible appears to be less so because it was translated into various phrases instead of a single one. Apparently, Joseph Smith was quite consistent in translating it with the phrase “it came to pass” every time. Incidentally, in much the same way, some books in the Bible have a high frequency of “it came to pass,” while others do not.

Source  Robert F. Smith, “‘It Came to Pass’ in the Bible and the Book of Mormon” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1984).
## “It Came to Pass”
### Occurrences in the Book of Mormon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Instances of “it came to pass” in the 1830 edition</th>
<th>Percentage of total “it came to pass” phrases</th>
<th>Average rate of occurrence (instances/words)</th>
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*Charting the Book of Mormon, © 1999 Welch, Welch, FARMS*
Wordprints and the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture  Helaman 3:13

Explanation  Modern computers have given birth to a new science of analyzing word patterns in documents whose authorship is disputed. By wordprint analysis, it is now possible with a high degree of certainty to tell which suspected authors did not write a given work. Wordprinting is based on the somewhat surprising fact that every author that has been studied thus far subconsciously uses sixty-five identifiable patterns, involving words such as and, the, of, and that, at rates that, from a statistical standpoint, differ significantly from those of other authors. The higher the number of “rejections” or differences, the less likely it is that the tested samples were written by the same person.

This chart shows the results of tests that were run by John L. Hilton, comparing writings of Nephi and Alma with the words of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Solomon Spaulding. In every set comparing the Book of Mormon texts against these three writers, at least seven (and often many more) rejections were measured. These results yield strong statistical evidence that the wordprints of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Solomon Spaulding are not measurable in the Book of Mormon.

# Wordprints and the Book of Mormon

## Tests vs. Number of Rejections

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Clearly different author