

HEBRAISMS AND OTHER ANCIENT PECULIARITIES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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At the end of the seventh century B.C., Lehi and his family lived in Jerusalem or its environs (see 1 Nephi 1:4), where Hebrew was spoken, written, and read. They took their knowledge of Hebrew with them to the New World, as Moroni 9:32–33 indicates: “We have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large *we should have written in Hebrew*; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also.” Because some form of Hebrew was used among the Nephites, the Book of Mormon reads like an ancient Hebrew book¹—even in its English translation.

Indeed, many words, phrases, and expressions in the religious speeches and writings of Lehi, Nephi, and subsequent Book of Mormon prophets reflect biblical and idiomatic Hebrew rather than nineteenth-century American English. In the following pages I examine several such

peculiarities in the Book of Mormon—literary forms and aspects of syntax, grammar, and usage that are unnatural in English yet characteristic of the language of Old World prophets as recorded in the Hebrew Bible (the basis of the Christian Old Testament). Of the numerous possible vestiges of ancient Hebrew in the Book of Mormon, I will discuss those that are conspicuously Hebraic and—particularly in their collective force—strongly indicative of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Simile Curses

Simile curses are well-attested literary forms in the Old Testament and ancient Near East.² They also appear in the Book of Mormon.³ A simile curse combines the elements of a simile (a comparison of two things or a resemblance, customarily marked with *like* or *as*) with a curse (a statement that misfortune, injury, or death will befall the recipient of the curse). They are found in prophecies, treaties between suzerains and vassals, and in texts pertaining to religious covenants.

A treaty between Ashurnirari V, king of Assyria, and his vassal Matiʿilu contains an example of an ancient Near Eastern simile curse, wherein Matiʿilu is cautioned against breaking the treaty:

If Matiʿilu sins against [this] treaty made under oath by the gods, then, just as this spring lamb, brought from its fold, will not return to its fold, will not behold its fold again, alas, Matiʿilu, together with his sons, daughters, officials, and the people of his land [will be ousted] from his country, will not return to his country, and not behold his country again.



SIMILE
CURSES

This head is not the head of a lamb, it is the head of Matiʿilu, it is the head of his sons, his officials, and the people of his land. If Matiʿilu sins against this treaty, so may, just as the head of this spring lamb is torn off, . . . the head of Matiʿilu be torn off.⁴

An example of an Old Testament simile curse appears in 1 Kings 14, which registers Jeroboam’s evil deeds and idolatries in verses 7–8 and then records the curse in verse 10: “Therefore, behold, I [the Lord] will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam . . . and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.” Note the simile marker *as*, which connects the two points of comparison (house of Jeroboam and dung) to graphically portray the manner whereby the remnant of Jeroboam’s family will be exiled. In another example, in 2 Kings 21:12–13, the Lord curses Judah’s king Manasseh, members of the tribe of Judah, and Jerusalem for their considerable iniquities. The curse compares the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah to the cleaning of a dirty dish: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. . . . I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.”

Given the ancient Near Eastern background of the Book of Mormon, the presence of simile curses therein is not surprising to those who embrace it as an authentic

SIMILE CURSES

“I . . . will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung.”
(1 Kings 14:10)

“I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish.” (2 Kings 21:13)

“The life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace.” (Mosiah 12:3)

Noah “shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field.”
(Mosiah 12:11)

“God may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression.”
(Alma 46:22)

ancient record translated through divine inspiration. For those who believe otherwise, the presence of simile curses in that record is hard to explain, since not many examples of simile curses appear in the Old Testament and it is doubtful that Joseph Smith was aware of their form or setting in scripture.

In the Book of Mormon, the Lord, speaking through his prophet Abinadi, curses king Noah because of his great wickedness. Following the Lord's command, Abinadi stretches forth his hand, introduces his words with the phrase "Thus saith the Lord," and pronounces three curses upon Noah's head, each in the form of a simile. In the first, Abinadi says, "And it shall come to pass that the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace; for he shall know that I am the Lord" (Mosiah 12:3; see v. 10). In the second, Abinadi promises that Noah shall be "as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot" (v. 11); and in the third, the prophet promises the king, "Thou shalt be as the blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land" (v. 12). King Noah, the point of comparison in each similes, is likened to a garment, a dry stalk, and the blossoms of a thistle. Noah's subsequent death by fire is recorded in Mosiah 19:20.

The narrative of commander Moroni's raising the title of liberty contains three simile curses. The first is recorded in Alma 46:21: "And it came to pass that when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or

fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, *the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments.*” In the very next verse the people throw their garments at Moroni’s feet and declare: “We covenant with our God, that *we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward*, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, *he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot*, if we shall fall into transgression” (v. 22).

The simile curses in the Book of Mormon have the same form as those of the Bible and ancient Near East, and they appear in similar religious contexts, thus providing additional indications that this volume of scripture was framed in antiquity.

Peculiarities regarding Names

Of all the names of persons mentioned in the Old Testament, none are surnames. Biblical characters, whether notable or not, were known by one name only. And those names, as translated into the English language, neither use the letters *q*, *x*, or *w* nor begin with *F*.⁵

The Book of Mormon shares those same peculiarities: not one surname is mentioned among its 337 proper names, which, as transcribed into English, do not use the letters *q*, *x*, or *w* and do not begin with *F*. Had Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon in an attempt to pass it off as an ancient record, he might easily have slipped up by giving at least a few of his characters surnames, as was the custom for centuries before the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And even if he were careful to model his expression after the Bible and thereby avoid obvious pitfalls,



chances are slim that he would have noticed that in the Bible the letters *q*, *x*, and *w* are not used in proper names.

Poetic Parallelisms

In 1898 E. W. Bullinger, an Anglican clergyman and biblical scholar, authored *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*,⁶ which describes and illustrates in great detail seven types of parallelisms found in the Old Testament. Although Bullinger had expanded upon the work of other biblical scholars, especially the pioneering efforts of Robert Lowth,⁷ no one before him had articulated the variety of poetic parallelisms in the Bible. These parallelisms are classified as synonymous, synthetic, antithetic, alternate, repeated alternate, extended alternate, and chiasmus.⁸ Bullinger provided multiple examples of these parallelisms as well as brief reports regarding their significance.

The Book of Mormon contains numerous examples of each of the seven types of parallelism presented in Bullinger's work. Due to space considerations, I will discuss and illustrate only three kinds of parallelism in the Book of Mormon. Interested readers may wish to consult my book *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* for additional discussion and examples.⁹

Synonymous Parallelism

This form consists of two lines of text: the idea or subject of the first line is either repeated directly or echoed (in what is termed a "synonymous repetition") in the second line. An example appears in 2 Nephi 9:52:

pray unto him continually by day,
and give thanks unto his holy name by night



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In this example the verb *pray* in line 1 is a synonymous counterpart to *give thanks* in line 2, and the phrase *by day* corresponds to *by night*. A third parallel is the correspondence between the pronoun *him* and *his holy name*, both referring to God.

A second example of synonymous parallelism is found in 2 Nephi 25:2:

their works were works of darkness,
and their doings were doings of abominations

Note the parallels between these two lines: the possessive pronoun *their* and the verb *were* are repeated, and the phrase *works of darkness* is a synonymous expression for *doings of abominations*.

Speaking of those who deny the works of God, the writer of 3 Nephi 29:5 crafted a synonymous parallelism by restating *wo unto him* and by pairing *that spurneth* with *that shall deny*, *Lord* with *Christ*, and *doings* with *works*.

Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord;
yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!

Antithetic Parallelism

This form¹⁰ is characterized by an opposition or contrast of thoughts, or an antithesis between two lines. A common feature that joins the two lines is the conjunction *and* or the disjunction *but* (both *and* and *but* are represented by a single character in the Hebrew, *waw*). Often the second line is introduced with one of these two words and immediately follows the contrasting element. 1 Nephi 17:45 is an example:

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

The contrast is apparent, the word *swift* standing opposite of *slow* and the phrase *to do iniquity* counterpointing *to remember the Lord*.

The following antithetic parallelism from Alma 5:40 contrasts *good* with *evil* and *God* with the *devil*. The expressions *whatsoever is* and *cometh from* are featured in both lines:

For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh
from God,
and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil.

Another example is found in Alma 22:6. When Aaron visits King Lamoni in the land of Nephi, the troubled king asks him what Ammon meant in saying

If ye will repent ye shall be saved,
and if ye will not repent, ye shall be cast off at the
last day.

The opposites in this simple summation of the gospel plan are evident: *repent ye* contrasts with *ye will not repent*, and *saved* stands opposite to *cast off*.

Repeated Alternate

In this form the parallel lines alternate, creating an AB, AB, AB pattern. The following verse, from 1 Nephi 19:10, features a number of prophecies concerning the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ.

A the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself,
B according to the words of the angel,
A as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up,
B according to the words of Zenock,
A and to be crucified,
B according to the words of Neum,
A and to be buried in a sepulchre,
B according to the words of Zenos

Four messengers of the sufferings of Christ are mentioned: an unidentified angel, Zenock, Neum, and Zenos. Each prophetic message pertaining to the atoning sacrifice of the Lord alternates with the documentary citations of the prophet who delivered the message. In this manner the burden of the scriptures—the atonement of the Redeemer—is inseparably connected with those who carried the good tidings to humankind—the prophets.

The alternating AB, AB, AB pattern in Alma 30:10 sets forth violations of the law—murder, robbery, thievery, adultery (the lines marked with *A*)—followed by references to punishment (the lines marked with *B*).

A But if he murdered
 B he was punished unto death;
A and if he robbed
 B he was also punished;
A and if he stole
 B he was also punished;
A and if he committed adultery
 B he was also punished;
A yea, for all this wickedness
 B they were punished.

“And It Came to Pass”

The expression *and it came to pass*¹¹ is the translation of a Hebrew expression used frequently in scriptural histories and chronologies and far less frequently in poetry, prophecies, or direct speech. Although in its Hebrew form the expression is found in the Hebrew Bible some 1,200 times, it was translated in the King James Version as “and it came to pass” only about 727 times. The King James translators probably found the expression redundant and cumbersome,



“IT CAME
TO PASS”

which would explain why they often translated it as “and it became,” “and it was,” or “and.” On a number of occasions they simply ignored the expression altogether.

Given the Semitic background of the Book of Mormon and the fact that it contains histories and chronologies comparable to those of the Old Testament, it is not surprising that *and it came to pass* is a characteristic feature of the book. Novelist and humorist Mark Twain once joked that if Joseph Smith had left out the many instances of *and it came to pass* from the Book of Mormon, the book would have been only a pamphlet.¹²

Similar to Old Testament usage, the phrase *and it came to pass* is rarely found in Book of Mormon psalms, lamentations, proverbs, blessings, curses, prayers, speeches, and dialogues where the first-person pronoun (*I* or *we*) is used. The expression is obviously missing from the Psalm of Nephi (2 Nephi 4:16–35); the speeches of such personalities as King Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma, and Jesus Christ; and the several epistles found in the Book of Mormon.

The Prophetic Perfect

The “prophetic perfect” is the use of the past tense or past participle verb forms (present and past perfect tenses) when referring to future events in prophecy. On occasion, Old Testament prophets prophesied using these forms “to express facts which are undoubtedly imminent, and therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already accomplished.”¹³ Isaiah used the prophetic perfect in Isaiah 53 to prophesy of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice more than seven hundred years before Jesus’ mortal ministry. Note the use of the past and perfect tenses (both in italics) in the following phrases, each of which expresses a future event:



PROPHETIC
PERFECT

he *has borne* our griefs and *carried* our sorrows (v. 4)

he *was wounded* for our transgressions (v. 5)

he *was bruised* for our iniquities (v. 5)

the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him (v. 5)

the Lord *hath laid* on him the iniquity of us all (v. 6)

he *was oppressed*, and he *was afflicted* (v. 7)

he *was cut off* out of the land of the living (v. 8)

for the transgression of my people *was he stricken* (v. 8)

Book of Mormon prophets also used the prophetic perfect in their prophecies. Lehi declared, “I have obtained a land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:5) long before he actually arrived in the promised land; and Nephi spoke of Jesus’ baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost as though those events had already happened: “Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove” (2 Nephi 31:8).

After quoting Isaiah 53, Abinadi taught a concept that seems to indicate he was aware of the prophetic perfect: “And now if Christ had not come into the world, *speaking of things to come as though they had already come*, there could have been no redemption” (Mosiah 16:6). Similarly, Jarom recorded, “Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come *as though he already was*” (Jarom 1:11). Further, King Benjamin stated, “And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men . . . that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with

exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them” (Mosiah 3:13; compare Mormon 8:35).

The Book of Mormon, with its prophetic perfect forms, reads like an ancient scriptural work rather than a nineteenth-century text.

Climax: A Unique Poetic Form

In 1898 the biblical scholar E. W. Bullinger identified a poetic form in the Bible that he called “climax” (Greek for “ladder”).¹⁴ He described this unique form in the Bible as “a beautiful figure, very expressive; and at once attracts our attention to the importance of a passage.”¹⁵ Climax occurs when the same word or words found at the end of one clause are repeated at or near the beginning of the next clause. Bullinger also refers to this form as “gradation,” because the structure of a passage presents an ascension of thought, going up by steps from one level to the next.

Bullinger provides the following biblical example of climax, found in Joel 1:3–4. To make the form easily recognizable, the verse has been structured with the repeated words aligned on the left:

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.



Note the four sets of repeated words: *your children, their children, locust, and cankerworm*. This duplication creates a continuation of thought from one segment to the next. In a dramatic way, four generations of one family are spoken of (*ye, your children, their children, and another generation*). This structure indicates an ascension of thought from the first generation to the last. The four generations parallel another gradation of thought—the four “generations” of the caterpillar family: the palmerworm, locust, cankerworm, and caterpillar.

The following climax, from Moroni 8:25–26, demonstrates the existence of this poetic form in the Book of Mormon:¹⁶

And the first fruits of repentance is
baptism; and
baptism cometh by faith unto
the fulfilling the commandments; and
the fulfilling the commandments bringeth
remission of sins; And the
remission of sins bringeth
meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of
meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation
of the
Holy Ghost, which
Comforter filleth with hope and perfect
love, which
love endureth by diligence unto prayer,
until the end shall come, when all the saints shall
dwell with God.

There are six repeated words or phrases in this climax—*baptism, the fulfilling the commandments, remission of sins, meekness and lowliness of heart, Holy Ghost* (paralleling *Comforter*), and *love*. The beginning point of

the climax (or ascension of expression) is repentance, an essential step onto the path of eternal life. Repentance is followed by baptism, obedience, and so on, finally culminating in salvation as the righteous receive an eternal station with God.

A climactic passage in Mormon 9:12–13 begins with the fall of Adam but concludes with humankind’s being “brought back into the presence of the Lord” because of Jesus Christ.

Behold, he created
Adam, and by
Adam came
the fall of man. And because of
the fall of man came
Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of
Jesus Christ came the
redemption of man. And because of the
redemption of man, which came by
Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the
presence of the Lord.

The key words and concepts repeated in this passage—*Adam*, *fall of man*, *Jesus Christ*, and *redemption of man*—create a series of parallel statements. Through the alternating parallelism coupled with these climactic lines, Adam is seen as a character complementary to Jesus Christ, and the concept of the fall of man stands opposite to the redemption of man. Through Adam (the “first man Adam,” the Apostle Paul says) came the fall of man, but through Jesus Christ (the “last Adam”) came the redemption of man (see 1 Corinthians 15:45). A similar passage is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22, where the words *Adam* and *Jesus* and *die* and *alive* are found in the couplet—“For as in

Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Because of Jesus Christ’s infinite atonement, repentant souls “are brought back into the presence of the Lord.”

The fact that climactic forms appear in the Book of Mormon is good evidence that this volume of scripture belongs to the ancient world of its companion volume, the Bible. Bullinger discovered climax in the Bible more than six decades *after* the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. For that reason, and because of the scarcity of climax in the Old Testament, it is highly improbable that Joseph Smith was aware of this poetic device. Rather than attribute the approximately twenty examples¹⁷ of climax in the Book of Mormon to happenstance or to Joseph Smith’s uncommon literary knowledge and skill, it is more reasonable to accept that the Book of Mormon authors who used climax belonged to an ancient Near Eastern literary tradition corresponding to that of the Old Testament.

Prophetic Speech Formulas

In *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, biblical scholar David E. Aune sets forth the various formulaic expressions that characterize prophetic speech in the Old Testament.¹⁸ Often employed at the beginning of a prophetic speech, prophecy, or revelation, these expressions serve to formally introduce vital, sacred utterances and to announce that the Lord is the source behind them. The Book of Mormon prophets used the same formulas in their prophetic discourse. The formulas are as follows:

The messenger formula—“Thus saith the Lord . . .” (e.g., Amos 1:3, 6). The purpose of the expression, found thirty-nine times in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 1 Nephi 20:17;



PROPHETIC
SPEECH
FORMULAS

Mosiah 3:24; Alma 8:17), is to indicate the origin of the revelation. The revelation is directed to the messenger (i.e., a prophet) from the Lord himself.

The proclamation formula—“Hear the word of the Lord . . .” (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19; Amos 7:16; Isaiah 49:1). The declaration is an emphatic summons to hear God’s word. Book of Mormon instances of this formula include “hearken to the word of the Lord” (Jacob 2:27), “hear the words of Jesus” (3 Nephi 30:1), and “hearken unto the words which the Lord saith” (Helaman 13:21).

The oath formula—“The Lord God hath sworn . . .” (e.g., Amos 4:2; 8:7) or “as the Lord liveth” (e.g., Judges 8:19; Ruth 3:13). This formula presents an oath. The phrase *As the Lord liveth* is found in 1 Nephi 3:15 and 4:32 and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

The revelation formula—“The word of the Lord came to . . .” (e.g., 1 Samuel 15:10; Zechariah 7:1). This expression indicates the origin of the message and the authority of the speaker. Of the Lamanite prophet Samuel, the Book of Mormon states, “Behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him” (Helaman 13:3; see also vv. 5, 7; Jacob 2:11; Alma 43:24).

The woe oracle—“Woe unto . . .” (e.g., Isaiah 5:8, 11, 20; Habakkuk 2:9, 12, 15). Approximately forty examples of this formula are found in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 1 Nephi 1:13; 2 Nephi 9:27; 15:21). Often part of a judgment speech, it is used to pronounce anguish and distress upon a person or group of people.

It is not by chance that the Book of Mormon contains these formulas, and a writer who wished to imitate the Bible would likely have overlooked them, employed them in improper contexts, or failed to integrate them into the text in a natural manner.

Names and Titles of Deity

Many of the ancient Babylonian gods, including Enlil, Adad, Nannar, Shamash, Nergal, Ishtar, and Marduk, had multiple names and titles. The chief weather god, Adad, for example, was known as God of Clouds, God of the Storm Cloud, God of Earthquake, God of Thunder, God of Lightning, God of Inundation, God of Rain, God of Storm, and God of the Deluge; and Shamash, the sun god, was called God of Brightness, God of Sunrise, God of Offerings, God of Peoples, and God of Hosts.¹⁹ Deities from ancient Near Eastern religions also had multiple names: “Certain deities in the Ancient Near East are celebrated for the multiplicity of their names or titles, e.g. the 50 names of Marduk in *Enuma Elish*, the 74 names of Re in the tomb of Thutmosis III and the 100–142 names of Osiris in Spell 142 of the *Book of the Dead*.”²⁰

Similarly, the Old Testament contains scores of names and titles of deity, including Shepherd, Savior, Redeemer, Lord, God, Rock, Almighty, Branch, Creator of Israel, Deliverer, Everlasting Father, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, Shield, Jehovah, Lawgiver, Light, Ruler, Stone, Star, Prince of Peace, Servant. Such divine epithets are found in every Old Testament book except Esther. Isaiah and other books of the Old Testament attest scores of different names for God.

According to Book of Mormon scholar Susan Easton Black, the Book of Mormon contains 101 epithets for Christ.²¹ Black’s tally includes Redeemer of Israel, Son of the Living God, and Lord God Omnipotent (each of which appears once); True Messiah, Great Creator, and Stone (each found twice); Lamb of God, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy One of Israel, and Messiah (each found 10 or more times);



MULTIPLE
NAMES
OF GOD

and God, Jesus, Lord, Lord God, and Christ (each found at least 100 times in the book). In all, the 101 names or titles of Christ appear 3,925 times in the Book of Mormon's 6,607 verses. Black's tabulation shows that, on average, a name or title of Christ appears once every 1.7 verses.

The frequent occurrence and variety of deific names and titles in the Book of Mormon distinguish the book from religious works created in the nineteenth century and place it squarely within the tradition of ancient religious texts.

Compound Prepositions

Describing a characteristic feature of Hebrew grammar, Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor write: "Compound prepositions are the result of the piling up of two or more simple prepositions. . . . Hebrew frequently piles up prepositions to represent more accurately the relation in question. . . . The combinations and their nuances are too numerous to catalog here."²²

The expressions *from before*, *from behind*, and *to behind* are examples of compound prepositions from the Old Testament. For instance, "The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites *from before* his people Israel" (Judges 11:23, emphasis added). Sometimes the compound preposition is lost in the English translation, as in 2 Kings 9:18, which reads "turn thee behind me," though the Hebrew literally reads "turn *to behind* me."

The Book of Mormon, with its Hebrew background, similarly features compound prepositions. For example, the expression *from before* is found in 1 Nephi 4:28; 11:12; 2 Nephi 9:8; Mosiah 17:4; Alma 44:12; and 3 Nephi 4:12. The latter reads, "And notwithstanding the threatenings and the oaths which Giddianhi had made, behold, the



Nephites did beat them, insomuch that they did fall back from before them.”

Plural Amplification

In order to amplify or emphasize an idea, biblical Hebrew sometimes uses a noun in the plural when a singular is expected.²³ The King James translators translated these Hebrew plural nouns into the English singular. In the following examples from the Old Testament the Hebrew readings appear in brackets.



PLURAL
AMPLIFICATION

thy brother's blood [bloods] crieth unto me from the
ground (Genesis 4:10)

and strength of salvation [salvations] (Isaiah 33:6)

O Lord God, to whom vengeance [vengeances]
belongeth (Psalm 94:1)

Wisdom [wisdoms] crieth without; she uttereth her
voice in the streets (Proverbs 1:20)

the wicked . . . shall be brought forth to the day of
wrath [wraths] (Job 21:30)

In many instances the Book of Mormon contains Hebrew-like plural nouns instead of the expected singular:

there shall be bloodsheds (2 Nephi 1:12)

the understandings of the children of men (Mosiah 8:20)

great condescensions unto the children of men (Jacob 4:7)

labor with their mights (Jacob 5:72)

great slaughters with the sword (1 Nephi 12:2)

there were . . . magics (Mormon 1:19)

their cunning and their lyings (Alma 20:13)

mine afflictions were great above all (1 Nephi 15:5)

destructions²⁴ of my people (1 Nephi 15:5)

foolish imaginations of his heart (1 Nephi 2:11)

Notes on Numbers

The Book of Mormon consistently agrees with the usage of numbers in the Old Testament, as illustrated in the following three items:



NUMBER
USAGE

1. *Avoidance of complex numeric forms.* Biblical Hebrew uses cardinals (*one, two, three*), ordinals (*first, second, third*), multiplicatives (*double, sevenfold*), and fractions (*half, third, tenth*) but avoids complex numeric forms using prefixes such as *mono-, bi-, di-, uni-, tri-, multi-,* and *poly-*.

2. *The number without the noun.* Often in biblical Hebrew, an expected noun does not follow a number. For instance, Genesis 45:22 states that Joseph “gave three hundred of silver” to Benjamin, without stating that the three hundred probably refers to pieces of silver. In order to fix what would have been an awkward omission in English, the King James translators supplied the word *pieces* but italicized it to show that it is not part of the original text. Other biblical examples of the number without the noun include “ten weight of gold” (Genesis 24:22; the KJV adds *shekels* to its translation: “ten *shekels* weight of gold”), “he measured six of barley” (Ruth 3:15; the KJV adds *measures*: “he measured six *measures* of barley”), and “a captain of fifty with his fifty” (2 Kings 1:9).

In the Book of Mormon, Laman and Lemuel ask, “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?” (1 Nephi 3:31). The number fifty, used twice in this passage, is not followed by a noun. Does *fifty* refer to men, warriors, princes, commanders of armies? The context does not make this certain. Other Book of Mormon examples

include “my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately” (Alma 57:19); “Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word” (2 Nephi 11:3); “And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty” (Alma 57:25).

3. *Joining two or more numbers with the conjunction “and.”* It is common in biblical Hebrew to join two or more numbers with the conjunction *and*; for instance, “thirty and two kings” (1 Kings 20:1) rather than “thirty-two kings.” Examples in the Book of Mormon include “an army of forty and two thousand” (Mormon 2:9), “three hundred and twenty years” (Omni 1:5), and “being sixty and three years old” (Mosiah 17:6).

The Construct State

Biblical Hebrew juxtaposes two or more nouns to form a construct chain. When this Hebrew form is translated into English, the term *of* is often added to show the relationship between the nouns. In Hebrew one says “tables of stone” (Exodus 24:12) or “the word of the Lord” (Genesis 15:4), not “stone tables” or “the Lord’s word.”

There are numerous examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon. These include “plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:24), “rod of iron” (1 Nephi 8:19), “sword of Laban” (2 Nephi 5:14), “temple of Solomon” (2 Nephi 5:16), “the commandments of the Lord” (2 Nephi 5:19), “land of promise” (1 Nephi 17:33), “works of darkness” (2 Nephi 25:2), and “plans of awful wickedness” (Helaman 6:30). Also, the term *Lord’s* is found “but twice in the entire Book of Mormon, while the equivalent of the construct state of nouns using his name occurs about three hundred times



CONSTRUCT
STATE

in a possessive sense in expressions such as ‘commandments of the Lord,’ ‘name of the Lord,’ ‘people of the Lord,’ ‘presence of the Lord,’ ‘promises of the Lord.’”²⁵ Similarly, the term *God’s* is found twice in the Book of Mormon, while the construct forms “church of God,” “commandments of God,” “kingdom of God,” “Spirit of God,” and so on are found more than 450 times.²⁶ The overwhelming practice of preferring the construct state over the possessive and related forms is a strong indication of Hebraic writing.

Repetition of the Definite Article

Unlike English, in which a series of nouns can be introduced by a single definite article (*the*), Hebrew repeats the definite article for each noun. This kind of repetition is seen throughout the Book of Mormon. A prime example is “We did observe to keep *the* judgments, and *the* statutes, and *the* commandments of the Lord” (2 Nephi 5:10). Of course, it would be much more usual in English to render this as “We did observe to keep the judgments, statutes, and commandments of the Lord.” Similarly, Hebrew also repeats the conjunction *and* in some sequences (see the section titled “Many ‘Ands.’”)



REPETITION
OF “THE”

Cognate Accusative

The cognate accusative is a direct object noun that shares the same root as the preceding verb, as in Joseph “dreamed a dream” (Genesis 37:5) instead of the more customary English rendering “Joseph had a dream.” The Hebrew Bible contains numerous examples of the cognate accusative (e.g., Genesis 1:11; 9:14; Numbers 11:4; Psalm



COGNATE
ACCUSATIVE

14:5; 144:6; Isaiah 35:2; Joel 3:1), although literal representations of this form is generally not used in translation.

The Book of Mormon contains many instances of the cognate accusative, including “I will curse them even with a sore curse” (1 Nephi 2:23; see 2 Nephi 1:22; Jacob 3:3), “Behold I have dreamed a dream” (1 Nephi 3:2; 8:2), “yoketh them with a yoke” (1 Nephi 13:5), “I will work a great and a marvelous work” (1 Nephi 14:7), “build buildings” (2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 23:5), “this was the desire which I desired of him” (Enos 1:13), “succor those that stand in need of your succor” (Mosiah 4:16), “taxed with a tax” (Mosiah 7:15), “work all manner of fine work” (Mosiah 11:10; Ether 10:23), “judge righteous judgments” (Mosiah 29:29, 43), “sing the song” (Alma 5:26), and “fear exceedingly, with fear” (Alma 18:5).

COGNATE
ACCUSATIVES

“I will curse them even with a sore curse.” (1 Nephi 2:23)

“Behold, I have dreamed a dream.” (1 Nephi 3:2; 8:2)

“yoketh them with a yoke”
(1 Nephi 13:5)

“I will work a great and marvelous work.” (1 Nephi 14:7)

“build buildings” (2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 23:5)

“This is the desire which I desired of him.” (Enos 1:13)

“work all manner of fine work”
(Mosiah 11:10)

“judge righteous judgments”
(Mosiah 29:29, 43)

“sing the song” (Alma 5:26)

Many “Ands”

Biblical Hebrew uses the equivalent of the conjunction *and* much more than English uses *and*, especially in historical narrative and prose but also in poetry and direct speech. Its frequent appearance in English sounds irregular and repetitive. Consider the ten *ands* in the King James Version of 1 Samuel 17:34–35:

And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, *and* there came a lion, *and* a bear, *and* took a lamb out of the flock:



MANY
“ANDS”

And I went out after him, *and* smote him, *and* delivered it out of his mouth: *and* when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, *and* smote him, *and* slew him. (emphasis added)

Compare also the thirteen *ands* in a single verse of Joshua:

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: *and* they brought them unto the valley of Achor. (Joshua 7:24, emphasis added)

The Book of Mormon corresponds to the Old Testament in its use of many *ands* throughout its historical and prose sections. There are twenty-two *ands* in 1 Nephi 11:30–32, which describes Nephi’s vision of the Lamb of God ministering among his people; 1 Nephi 12:4 contains twelve *ands* in a single verse pertaining to Nephi’s vision of the destruction of the land shortly before Christ’s coming; Mosiah 10:8 contains eight *ands* in a list of weapons; and Alma 46:12–13 contains fifteen *ands* in a description of Moroni and his title of liberty. Helaman 3:14, with its eighteen *ands* in a single verse, is a good example of how an awkward construction in the English translation of the Book of Mormon makes perfectly good sense in Hebrew and reflects the ancient character of the book:

But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, 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. (emphasis added)

Repetition of the Possessive Pronoun

In lists the Hebrew language repeats the possessive pronoun (e.g., *their, our, your, thy, his, her*) before each of the nouns to which it refers, a convention that is uncommon in English usage. The Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) preserves many examples of this Hebrew usage. For instance, the pronoun *our* is used six times in the King James Version of Exodus 10:9: “And Moses said, We will go with *our* young and with *our* old, with *our* sons and with *our* daughters, with *our* flocks and with *our* herds will we go” (emphasis added). Other biblical examples include the repetition of *our* five times in Deuteronomy 26:7, *their* four times in Genesis 10:20, *your* five times in Exodus 12:11, *your* four times in Leviticus 26:30, and *our* six times in Nehemiah 9:32.

Many examples of this usage appear in the Book of Mormon. For instance, the possessive pronoun *your* is used twelve times in 3 Nephi 30:2:

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 *your* idolatries, and of *your* murders, and *your* priestcrafts, and *your* envyings, and *your* strifes, and from all *your* wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of *your* sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (emphasis added)



PRONOUN
REPETITION

Other examples of the repeated possessive pronoun in the Book of Mormon include *your* four times in Mosiah 4:30, *their* eight times in Mosiah 11:3, *your* three times in Alma 32:42, *our* nine times in Alma 44:5, *thy* four times in Alma 38:3, and *their* twelve times in Helaman 3:14.

Emphatic Pronoun

For purposes of emphasis, biblical Hebrew sometimes repeats the personal pronoun. This usage, termed the “emphatic pronoun,” occurs when the pronoun is the subject, as in Genesis 6:17, where the Lord states, “Behold, *I, even I*, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth” (emphasis added); or when the pronoun is the object, as in Genesis 27:38, where Esau implores his father to “bless *me, even me* also, O my father” (emphasis added). Some translators do not translate the emphatic pronoun, perhaps considering it unnatural or simply redundant in English.

The Book of Mormon also has examples of the emphatic pronoun. King Benjamin, speaking to a Nephite multitude, says, “*And I, even I*, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are” (Mosiah 2:26; see v. 4).

Conclusion

The seventeen topics covered in this paper are but a sampling of the linguistic evidence that supports the Book of Mormon’s claim of ancient authorship. The scriptural examples for each topic could be multiplied, and many related topics could be added. The present coverage, however, seems more than adequate to support these concluding observations:



PRONOUN
EMPHASIS

1. The Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon attest to the book's Near Eastern background and antiquity. Their presence cannot be explained as a matter of coincidence, nor could a modern writer have integrated them so effectively (naturally and correctly) throughout the narrative. It is very unlikely that Joseph Smith had technical knowledge of these various archaic modes of expression, for many of them are subtle in their Book of Mormon contexts and are similarly inconspicuous in the Old Testament. Joseph's level of education and familiarity with the Bible could not have equipped him with the requisite literary knowledge and skill to craft so many Hebraisms so seamlessly and correctly into the Book of Mormon text. This is especially obvious in light of statements by his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, and his wife.²⁷

2. The literary forms covered in this paper were generally uncommon in, if not altogether foreign to, the English of Joseph Smith's day. One must search beyond the nineteenth century for the origin of the Book of Mormon text.

3. It is significant that many changes in the Book of Mormon from the first edition in 1830 to subsequent editions pertain to Hebrew literary style. Joseph Smith and others apparently changed many awkward-sounding Hebraisms to idiomatic English. This does not mean, however, that the meaning of the text has changed. For instance, English and linguistics professor Royal Skousen has found in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon fourteen examples of a common Hebrew-like construction whose literal translation ("if . . . and") is not significantly different in meaning from its present adjusted version. One passage is Moroni 10:4, which originally read, "If ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent

having faith in Christ and he will manifest the truth of it unto you.” The passage now reads, “If ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you.”

4. When properly understood, the topics discussed in this paper enhance the readability of the Book of Mormon. For example, readers who come upon a simile curse will recognize its form and function and will thus better appreciate the cultural and religious world of the prophets of both the Old and New Worlds. Similarly, readers who encounter the cognate accusative (e.g., “dreaded a dream”) will recognize it is an ancient Hebrew form instead of being distracted by it.

5. The peculiar expressions in the Book of Mormon that reflect ancient literary forms in the underlying text reveal Joseph Smith to be a careful, faithful translator of the text inscribed on the gold plates.

6. The seventeen topics covered in this paper, as significant and interesting as they are, are far less important than the primary objective of the Book of Mormon: to bring people to Christ and his atonement. Although some people may attempt to argue against the validity, significance, or even existence of the ancient literary forms I have identified in the Book of Mormon, they cannot argue against the fact that the book has the power to transform lives, a power that has converted millions of people into followers of Christ. The Book of Mormon accomplishes that by encouraging people to believe in Jesus Christ and his gospel, to repent of and forsake their sins, to become Christlike in their dealings with others, and to make the atonement meaningful in their lives (see Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32).

In connection with the power of the Book of Mormon to change lives, I refer to an article by Robert Detweiler titled “What Is a Sacred Text?” in which he establishes seven traits of a sacred text:

1. Sacred texts claim to be divinely inspired.
2. They reveal sacred messages from deity or deities.
3. They have veiled or hidden messages in the form of mysteries, parables, and so on.
4. They require an authoritative interpreter.
5. They effect the “transformation of lives.”
6. They serve as the foundation of religious ritual.
7. They are “evocative of divine presence.”²⁸

The Book of Mormon bears all seven traits. Concerning the fifth trait (the one I consider most important), Detweiler states that sacred texts “purport to change lives. They effect such transformations indirectly or directly. Indirectly they do so by describing some extra-textual path to salvation. . . . Generally it involves a formula to follow, a discipline to exercise, a trip to undertake, a savior figure to recognize, emulate, and obey. In these instances the text is not the instrument of transformation but the document of instruction toward change. But sometimes the sacred text is actually the instrument itself. Its very language claims a redemptive or transformational power, as if divinity indwelt the words and caused them, through articulation of them, to bring about altered states of being.”²⁹

The fact that the Book of Mormon changes lives is evident worldwide in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—one simply needs to witness the testimonies of young and old church members at a monthly testimony meeting in a local chapel to understand the effect of this

ancient record on its believers. Note its life-changing influence on Willard Richards, who read the Book of Mormon in the summer of 1835:

[He] opened the book, without regard to place, and totally ignorant of its design or contents, and before reading half a page, declared that, “God or the devil has had a hand in that book, for man never wrote it.” He read it twice through in about ten days; and so firm was his conviction of the truth, that he immediately commenced settling his accounts, selling his medicine, and freeing himself from every incumbrance, that he might go to Kirtland, Ohio, seven hundred miles west, the nearest point he could hear of a Saint, and give the work a thorough investigation; firmly believing that if the doctrine was true, God had some greater work for him to do than peddle pills.³⁰

Parley P. Pratt, another early convert, had a similar experience when reading the Book of Mormon for the first time. Note how the book filled his soul with “joy and gladness”:

I opened [the Book of Mormon] with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true. . . .

This discovery greatly enlarged my heart, and filled my soul with joy and gladness. I esteemed the Book, or the information contained in it, more than all the riches of the world.³¹

Just as the Book of Mormon changed the lives of Willard Richards and Parley P. Pratt, it continues to speak from the dust across the ages to change the lives of hundreds of thousands of people as it brings them to Jesus Christ and his atonement.

NOTES

1. Thomas W. Brookbank pioneered the study of Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon. See his multipart article “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, December 1909–April 1910, January 1914–October 1914, December 1915. Others have also discussed this phenomenon. See Sidney B. Sperry, “Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, October 1954, 703, 728–29; E. Craig Bramwell, “Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi,” *Improvement Era*, July 1961, 496, 517; Angela Crowell, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” *Zarahemla Record*, nos. 17–18 (summer/fall 1982): 1–7, 16; and, more recently, three studies by John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey,” *BYU Studies* 11 (autumn 1970): 50–60; “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” *I Have a Question, Ensign*, October 1986, 64–66; and “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 77–91.

2. For a discussion of curses found in the Old Testament and ancient Near East, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* 16 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), Ph.D. diss.; Herbert Chanan Brichto, *The Problem of the “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1963); Stanley Gevirtz, “West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” *Vetus Testamentum* 11 (1961): 157–58;

and Sheldon H. Blank, “The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950–51): 73–95.

3. For a brief but systematic study of Book of Mormon simile curses, see Mark J. Morrise, “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 124–38.

4. In James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 532.

5. See Arthur G. Pledger, “The *W* and *I*,” *Ensign*, September 1976, 24–25. See also Donald W. Parry, “The Book of Mormon: Integrity and Internal Consistency,” in *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars*, ed. Susan Easton Black (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 211.

6. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1968).

7. Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 2 vols. (1787; reprint, New York: Garland, 1971).

8. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 349–62.

9. Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992). See also Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999).

10. See my discussion of antithetic parallelism in “Teaching in Black and White: Antithetic Parallel Structure in the Book of Alma, Its Form and Function,” in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 281–90.

11. This expression is commonly mentioned in Hebrew grammars. See, for example, Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), 107. For a brief, popular discussion on this phrase, see Donald W. Parry, “Why is the phrase ‘and it came to pass’ so prevalent in the Book of Mormon?” *I Have a Question*, *Ensign*, December 1992, 29.

12. Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing, 1901), 133.

13. Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 312–13; cited by Stephen D. Ricks, “Many times in prophecy, the present and past tenses are used, even though the prophecy refers to a future event. Can you explain the use of verb tenses in prophecy?” *I Have a Question, Ensign*, August 1988, 27–28.

14. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 256–59.

15. *Ibid.*, 256.

16. See Donald W. Parry, “Climactic Forms in the Book of Mormon,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 290–92.

17. See, for example, 1 Nephi 15:13–20, 33–35; 2 Nephi 1:13; Mosiah 2:17–19; Alma 42:17–20; Helaman 5:6–8; Ether 3:15–16; Mormon 9:12–13.

18. David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 88–97. See Donald W. Parry, “‘Thus Saith the Lord’: Prophetic Language in Samuel’s Speech,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 181–83.

19. For the multiple names and titles of these Babylonian deities, see *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, Part XXIV* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1967), 10–13.

20. H. B. Huffmon, “Name,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1148.

21. See Susan Easton Black, “Names of Christ in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, July 1978, 60–61. See also Susan Easton Black, *Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), *passim*.

22. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 220–21.

23. For a brief discussion of this phenomenon, see E.

Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 396–98.

24. The printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon read the plural *destructions*. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimiles of the Entire Text in Two Parts* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 1:101.

25. T. W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era*, September 1914, 1062.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Both Lucy Mack Smith and Emma Smith made statements that indicated that the Prophet had only a partial knowledge of the Bible. Emma recalled assisting her husband as he translated the Book of Mormon: "When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them. . . . When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation, and one time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, 'Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?' When I answered, 'Yes,' he replied, 'Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.' He had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls" (as quoted in Russell M. Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," *Ensign*, July 1993, 61).

On one occasion the Prophet's mother revealed: "From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth—all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had

never read the Bible through in his life: he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958], 82).

28. Robert Detweiler, “What Is a Sacred Text?” *Semeia* 31 (1985): 213–30. See page 223 for an explanation of the characteristics of the seven traits on pages 218–23.

29. *Ibid.*, 220–21.

30. Susan Easton Black, ed., *Stories from the Early Saints Converted by the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 66.

31. *Ibid.*, 64.