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Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi

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HEBREW IDIOMS IN THE SMALL PLATES
OF NEPHI

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of Biblical Languages
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

E. Craig Bramwell

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Prophet Joseph Smith, upon completing his work of translating the record which had been placed in his hand by the angel Moroni,¹ made this comment:

I wish to mention here, that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal² translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title-page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation. Therefore, in order to correct an error, which generally exists concerning it, I give below that part of the title-page of the English version of the Book of Mormon, which is a genuine and literal translation of the title-page of the original Book of Mormon, as recorded on the plates.³

Nephi, the initial author of the record,⁴ states that his father, Lehi, was a native of the city of Jerusalem.⁵ It is evident, therefore, that Lehi would speak Hebrew, and there seem to be indications that 1,000 years later his descendants living on the American continent were acquainted with it.

¹Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1946), I, pp. 9-18.

²All italics in this thesis are mine unless otherwise indicated.

³Smith, op. cit., p. 71. See Book of Mormon title page.

⁴I Ne. 1:1.

⁵I Ne. 1:4.

Moroni, a historian of that later period, states that if their plates had been "sufficiently large," they would have written in Hebrew, and that if they could have done so, there would have been no imperfection in their record.¹

Definition of the Problem

Thomas W. Brookbank published a series of articles in The Improvement Era over a period of months relative to Hebrew idioms and analogies apparent in the Book of Mormon. As a result of his studies, Brookbank concluded that some curiosities of the Book of Mormon

must be viewed in their true light, as peculiarities necessarily associated with the use of Hebrew idiom, and hence as affording unimpeachable evidence that the Book of Mormon was not written by Joseph Smith, nor any other man not thoroughly familiar with some peculiar principles of the Jewish language.²

Brookbank did a creditable work abstracting principles of the language from Hebrew grammars and correlating with these the aforementioned curiosities of the Book of Mormon. He was limited, apparently, by a lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language.

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether there are idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi that are typically Hebraic in cast which have been retained in translation. Interest in this problem originated in conversations with my Hebrew instructor, Ellis Rasmussen. These conversations

¹Morm. 9:33.

²Thomas W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in The Book of Mormon," The Improvement Era, XIII (1910), p. 235.

stimulated curiosity to the extent that a preliminary investigation was made. This investigation induced a desire to further examine these unique expressions, to compare them with the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and to judge them by comments of lexicographers to determine if there were justification for such an unequivocal statement as that made by Brookbank.

For the purpose of this study, an idiom is defined in its broadest sense as any peculiar character or genius of a language. This definition of an idiom does not confine it to peculiar verbal expressions but includes the syntactical structure and the grammatical form. It is recognized among students of languages that while "words are combined with one another to make larger structures that convey more meaning than the mere aggregate of the independent meanings of words themselves,"¹ each language has unusual grammatical constructions of its own. Whereas languages may borrow words from one another, an exchange of syntactical construction is most uncommon.²

There are three assumptions which underlie the research and writing of this thesis:

(a) The Book of Mormon is a record of the Nephites, a people whose cultural, lingual, and social milieu originated in the land of Israel.

¹W. Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958), p. 291.

²William Chomsky, Hebrew: The Eternal Language, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), p. 160.

(b) The Book of Mormon was originally written according to a Hebrew pattern of thought and communication.

(c) Joseph Smith, as a young man inexperienced with languages and inept by training as a translator, tended to adhere closely to the Hebrew pattern of expression.

Justification of the Problem

If the above assumptions are correct, and the Book of Mormon is an English translation of a record written by a people originating from a Hebrew-speaking community, there should be found within its pages oddities of expression, thinking processes, and grammatical construction that would be infrequent in our own tongue. Some have found it to be so. Dr. Hugh Nibley states:

Our Book of Mormon people never think of themselves as an indigenous or autochthonous culture in the New World, but always and only as heirs of Old World civilization. The very metal plates on which the book was preserved from generation to generation were made in imitation of older records brought from Palestine (I Ne. 19:1-6); its language and style from the first were consciously modeled after the literary and linguistic usage of the Old World. (I Ne. 1-2) The Book of Mormon in many ways declares itself to be an authentic product of the Near East.¹

The testing of this hypothesis is the purpose and the justification of this research.

Delimitation of the Problem

The scope of the research of this problem has been limited to the Small Plates of Nephi because the research involved for a comparable study of the entire Book of Mormon

¹Hugh Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1957), p. 14.

would be too extensive to undertake in this thesis.

The main emphasis of research has been directed toward idiomatic verbal expressions rather than idiomatic syntactical structure, although Chapter Three is devoted to elementary principles of syntax and grammar. The primary restriction on any research is the ability of the researcher. It has been recognized by the writer and the members of his committee that the mastery of Hebrew idioms would necessitate years of exposure to the culture and language of the Jewish people.¹ This is the foremost reason why the writer has not ventured further into the area of syntax with its different constructions and with all the fine nuances which result from changes from the normal sentence structure.

This thesis can be no more than a preliminary attempt to expose to investigation this idiomatic facet of the Book of Mormon. Others with greater acuity in the language could explore this area and make a valuable contribution to an awareness and appreciation of this aspect of the Book of Mormon.

The area of Biblical research has been confined to the Old Testament because in this there is a ready source against which to check. In the New Testament there can be found many expressions which appear to be Semitic in nature, and this is as it should be. The common language of Palestine at the time

¹As Nephi said, "There is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews." (II Ne. 25:5).

of Christ was Aramaic, a Semitic language cognate to Hebrew.¹ Dr. Sidney Sperry thinks it likely that the Jewish followers of Jesus were a record-keeping people and that they recorded all that transpired in the vernacular of the day which would be Aramaic. Consequently, many Greek manuscripts would be translations of original Aramaic writings.² This could account for the Semiticisms in the New Testament.

Another delimiting factor of this study has been the accuracy of the "complete" Bible concordances used. It has been found that these concordances do not always give the same number of entries under a given topic; therefore, there might be inadvertent omissions of some pertinent Biblical references. Whenever it seemed necessary, each of the three concordances used were carefully checked, item by item, to obtain all possible information, but the tremendous amount of time necessary to do this for every item considered in this thesis precluded this as a general practice.

Another matter of relevance is to know to what extent the common speech of Joseph Smith and his American contemporaries was interspersed with archaic Biblical expressions. It is possible that some of the idioms found in the Book of Mormon might be a reflection of a Biblical-type speech used on the American frontier in the 1820's rather than the results of a translation of a purported oriental record. A thorough

¹Chomsky, op. cit., pp. 157-58.

²Sidney B. Sperry, private conversation and classroom lectures, Brigham Young University, Summer Quarter, 1956.

investigation of this problem is beyond the scope of this thesis but would seem to be an appropriate subject for research.¹

Procedure

The procedure involved in the research was varied. During the process of learning Hebrew, the writer kept notes on material that he thought would be important to such a study as this. When the time arrived for actual research to begin, there were three major activities that occupied the interest of the writer. The first was a careful perusal of almost all the entries in Davidson's lexicon² for the purpose of acquiring a working knowledge of idiomatic expressions and constructions as a point of beginning. As these idioms were discovered, an attempt was made to find a corollary in the Book of Mormon.

The second activity was complementary to the first. The Small Plates were read carefully many times. With each reading there were extracted those expressions that seemed to the writer to be of a Hebraic nature. An attempt was made to analyze and identify each peculiar grammatical construction and each unusual phrase either by reference to books of grammar, usage in the Old Testament, or through the medium of lexicons. An attempt has been made to indicate those instances

¹Cursory examination of letters, journals, and sermons of the time fails to indicate "Bible-like" phrases to be as common in them as in the Book of Mormon. Further consideration of this problem is given in chap. II of this thesis.

²B. Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1956).

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in which it has not been possible to document the expression or to understand fully the connotation.

The third activity was a lineal comparison of the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon with the recently published reprint of the first edition of the book.¹ It was understood that some minor changes had been executed in the later editions, mostly of a grammatical nature. Studies in Hebrew led the writer to believe that some usages which might be considered grammatically incorrect in English would not be so in the former language. It is to be remembered that one of the assumptions underlying the research was that the Prophet Joseph Smith probably tended to be literal in his translations. The writer was interested in attempting to ascertain whether these English errors were in reality a reflection of the translator's limited education or whether they were a product of Hebrew sentence structures that were retained in the translation.

The entire study has been a most stimulating preoccupation, one that has been challenging and satisfying.

¹Wilford C. Wood, Joseph Smith Begins His Work, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1958).

CHAPTER II

THE IMPINGEMENT OF HEBREW ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A consideration that merits some discussion in this thesis is the extent to which Biblical idioms had become a component of the American language prior to the year 1830. If there are Hebrew idioms found in the Book of Mormon, do they reflect the culture that produced Joseph Smith, or are these idioms in reality a rendition from an original and authentic oriental record?

That the Bible has had notable influence upon the English literature is indisputable. Abraham Katsh, in his analysis of Hebrew influence on American life, suggests that "were one to eliminate from the English literature whatever it owes to the Bible and Hebraic writings, the remainder would be 'barely recognizable.'"¹ He states:

All modern literatures have borrowed unsparingly from the scriptures and their subsequent Hebrew writings, and have been, as a result, influenced by the latter. But English literature has so thoroughly assimilated those scriptures and writings that they seem to have rendered the Hebrew Patriarchs and Prophets as people born on English soil.²

¹Abraham Katsh, Hebrew in American Higher Education, (New York: New York University Bookstore, 1941), p. 6.

²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Dr. Katsh concludes that these

long-range influences reached our present day English literature, which is steeped in scriptures. The biblical precepts, injunctions, nobility of thought, and matchless eloquence are the source of much that is greatest in English literature.¹

Among others, one prime reason for this vast and far-reaching influence is the esteem in which the Bible was held for generations by English-speaking peoples and their integrity in earnestly studying it.

For centuries the Bible has been the most popular book. Unlike any other book, the Bible was and is constantly read and reread. Some people have, by virtue of frequent repetitious reading of the Bible, committed to memory whole chapters, even books, in the exact phraseology. Again, up to well-nigh in the nineteenth century the Bible was the only book that many homes owned. And that book was invariably finger-stained.²

As a result of this intimate knowledge that people had with the Bible

the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures penetrated deeply into our everyday language, although we may not be fully aware of this. Since the Bible has found its definite place in the English literature, its effect on our vernacular is not only self evident but also inevitable. A philological examination of our speech finds numerous phrases, the origin of which is biblical.³

The extent to which English literature has been moulded by the Hebrew scriptures is not questioned, but it should be pointed out that these numerous adopted phrases to which Dr. Katsh refers are not necessarily idiomatic but rather graphic or picturesque. As examples he cites "a place in the sun," "go to the ant, thou sluggard," "the ways of a man with

¹Ibid., p. 50.

²Ibid., p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 54.

a maid," "that call black white and white black," etc.¹

Upon contrasting the above phrases with idiomatic expressions, such as "to cast one's eyes," "carried away on the wings of the spirit," "from before," "by the hand of," "to say in one's heart," "to lift up one's head," etc., the difference is immediately apparent, for the latter either have a meaning that is obscure to one that is not acquainted with Hebrew, or they have a form that is alien to English expression.

We then ask ourselves the question, "Was common English speech ever like the Bible?"

Here an interesting question presents itself: Was there ever a time when the English people used naturally the kind of speech that is used in our Bibles? and if so, when? Like many another question, this one is more easily asked than answered. But to answer it first and then qualify the answer afterward, it may be said that between 1500 and 1540 the normal manner of speech and writing was more like the English of the Bible than at any other time.

At first sight we might suppose that the King James Bible would have been written in the language current in 1611, but we must recollect that this version was based on those translated earlier, more particularly on those published from 1525 to 1560.²

Butterworth quotes from the literature of Shakespeare and Francis Bacon to show that they echo an established Biblical style, but notes that these are not "typical examples of a current way of writing that parallels the prose of the Scriptures."³ He points out that John Bunyan wrote in a style patterned after the King James Bible but that this style was

¹Ibid., pp. 54-56.

²Charles C. Butterworth, The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1941), p. 12.

³Ibid., pp. 12-13.

not typical of his time. Because of other influences which were setting up newer fashions of writing, the general trend of writers of prose was away from the style of the Scriptures and not toward it.¹

Butterworth discovered, however, a notable exception to the trend of prose writers away from the Scriptures. If Joseph Smith copied a Biblical style of expressing his thoughts when he was writing of things that by nature were religious, he was doing that which seemed to be a natural tendency for writers of prose of earlier days, for this is the phenomenon the aforementioned writer describes:

There seems to have been, even in much earlier times, a line of distinction between the language of religious things and that of secular things. It is observable that when the theme is religious, the prose takes on a tone that makes it not unlike the Bible, whereas the normal style of writing about ordinary affairs in the same period might show no such resemblance. As early as 1400 you can find passages of religious writing that approximate the biblical style, but the similarity turns out to be due to the subject matter more than to the common habits of speech that were then actually in use.

Evidently, then, 1400 is too early, and 1600 too late, for us to find a current manner of speaking and writing which resembles that of the Bible.²

Mention has been made above that Joseph Smith may have imitated earlier writers of prose by employing a Biblical style whenever the subject matter pertained to religious values, but another hypothesis obtains. To bring this into perspective,

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid., pp. 13-14. See also Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Commandments as Found in the Bible" (unpublished Master's thesis, Div. of Religion, Brigham Young University, 1951), chap. IV, particularly.

again Butterworth is quoted:

We have seen that the English of the Bible corresponds in a general way to the mode of writing that was current in the first half of the sixteenth century. The resemblance even at that time was, of course, only general; for in one respect the style of the Bible could never really have become wholly identified with the native English speech, inasmuch as the Bible is essentially a translation from other and more ancient languages. Being a translation, our Bible inevitably carries over into its pages certain concepts, certain traits of thought and peculiarities of expression, that are not natural to the English habit of speech but belong to the languages of the original texts.¹

The crucial point of this discussion is to what extent these "certain traits of thought and peculiarities of expression" of Hebrew had been integrated into the vernacular of the American frontier.

B. H. Roberts enters into a considerable and detailed treatise on the manner in which the translation of the Book of Mormon was accomplished.² He comments that

the Prophet saw the Nephite characters in the Urim and Thummim; through strenuous mental effort, the exercise of faith and the operation of the inspiration of God upon his mind, he obtained the thought represented by the Nephite characters, understood them in the Nephite characters, understood them in the Nephite language, and then expressed that understanding, the thought, in such language as he was master of.³

There can be no doubt . . . but what the interpretation . . . obtained was expressed in such language as the prophet could command, in such phraseology as he was master of and common to the time and locality where he lived; modified, of course, by the application of that phraseology to facts and ideas in the Nephite Scriptures he was translating--ideas new to him in many respects, and above the

¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

²B. H. Roberts, Defense of the Faith and the Saints, (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1907), I, pp. 253-311.

³Ibid., p. 305.

ordinary level of the Prophet's thinking; and also the phraseology was superior to that he ordinarily used, because of the inspiration of God that was upon him.

This view of the translation of the Nephite record accounts for the fact that the Book of Mormon, though a translation of an ancient record, is, nevertheless, given in English idiom of the period and locality in which the Prophet lived; and in the faulty English, moreover, both as to composition, phraseology, and grammar, of a person of Joseph Smith's limited education; and also accounts for the sameness of phraseology and literary style which runs through the whole volume.¹

No attempt will be made here to correlate the last quotation of Butterworth with the last one of Roberts. It seems that a valid research problem would be an investigation of the degree to which Hebrew-like idioms were common in western New York in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is a problem of such magnitude that it cannot be undertaken in this thesis. The researcher would agree with Roberts that Joseph Smith did understand the inscriptions on the plates in the language in which they were written. Also to be considered is a statement of Dr. Sidney B. Sperry in which he is explicit that the prime failing of most inexperienced translators is that their translations tend to follow the language and the form of the original tongue.²

Thus, while it is important to know whether Biblical-like idioms were employed in the common language of the early 1800's, under the definition of the problem of this thesis,

¹Ibid., p. 265. See Glade Burgon, "An Analysis of Style Variations in the Book of Mormon" (unpublished Master's thesis, Div. of Religion, Brigham Young University, 1958), for a discussion of various literary styles and forms in the Book of Mormon.

²Sidney B. Sperry, Our Book of Mormon, (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1948), pp. 81-82.

the researcher will investigate the assumption that any such peculiarities in the Small Plates are there as a legitimate reflection of the original inscriptions.

CHAPTER III

EVIDENCES OF PECULIARITIES OF HEBREW GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE IN THE SMALL PLATES

Each language has certain peculiarities and characteristics unique to itself which are readily discernible to students of languages. One of the most important keys for differentiating between languages is the grammatical construction.

It is a well-established principle in linguistics that the nature of a language is determined not by its words, but by its grammar and structure. Languages borrow words, but do not generally borrow grammar from one another, or do so only to a very limited degree. The majority of words in the English language are Roman. They have come into the language through the influence of French after the Norman conquest. Yet English is regarded as a Germanic language by virtue of the fact that its grammar is generally Germanic.¹

For the purposes of this thesis, there will be discussed some peculiarities of the Hebrew language and grammar in order to examine certain properties of the Book of Mormon.

Vocabulary

Benjamin Davidson, in commenting on the Biblical vocabulary, expresses himself thus:

The working vocabulary of Hebrew is comparatively small. Many rare words occur, as we should expect, in books like Job; but the running vocabulary of average prose is

¹Chomsky, op. cit., p. 160.

meagre [sic] and simple.¹

Dr. Sperry has observed that Isaiah has a larger vocabulary than any other prophet of the Old Testament, and that his vocabulary is 2186 words.²

A cursory count of the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon reveals approximately 2696 word roots.³ Thus in the employment of a limited number of words, it is found that the Book of Mormon parallels the Old Testament. If there happen to be words in the Small Plates that are not found in the Bible, it must not be assumed that they did not occur in the Hebrew language, because the vocabulary of the Old Testament was not the entire range of the spoken vocabulary of that day. It is possible that Book of Mormon writers were not as circumscribed by convention in written expression as apparently were Old Testament writers.

The biblical style was apparently a specialized literary genre, which was studied and cultivated by the artists and writers of that period. The early prophets and poets of the Golden Era of Hebrew literary creativity must have founded a classical tradition which served as a model for subsequent generations of prophets and writers. . . . The fledgling prophets may have been drilled in these classical models and trained to cast their ideas and feelings

¹A. B. Davidson, An Introductory Hebrew Grammar, (24th ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 2.

²Sidney B. Sperry, The Voice of Israel's Prophets, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1952), p. 15, citing G. L. Robinson, The Book of Isaiah, p. 23.

³By word roots is meant the basic word from which comes all derivatives: the verb, substantive, adjective, etc. For example, prophecies, prophecy, prophesied, prophesies, prophesieth, prophecy, prophesying, prophesyings, prophet (s), prophetess, for the purposes of tabulation were all considered as one because they all derive from the same root stem.

Although c. 500 more than most OT. text.

into the established stylistic molds. . . .

It may, however, be safely assumed that the classical models of the biblical language are not typical of the daily conversational language employed by "the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker." Undoubtably, the conversational language was simpler, more flexible, and lacking the artistry characteristic of the biblical style. It had more in common with the so-called mishnaic or post-biblical Hebrew. It made up in simplicity, flexibility, and dynamic qualities for what it lacked in grandeur and elegance.

. To conclude, there seems to have existed, side by side, in pre-exilic Palestine two distinct linguistic traditions, the literary or classical and the popular-conversational. The first tradition followed generally the Canaanitic or Ugaritic literary models, which date back to the pre-biblical days. In its poetic style, its parallelisms, vocabulary, metaphors, and locutions, the Bible frequently evinces a striking resemblance to these ancient documents. The second tradition had its roots, apparently, in the vernacular, which the early Hebrew ancestors had brought with them from their native homeland in Mesopotamia, namely, Aramaic.¹

To reiterate the above point:

It is certainly inconceivable that the seven or eight thousand vocables found in the Hebrew Bible constituted all the words that were current in the language during that period, just as it would be absurd to assume that the 25,000 words used by Shakespeare or the 12,000 words employed by Milton represent the total vocabulary in vogue in their respective periods. Even the close to 30,000 words--an unusually high number--used by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, fall far below the number of words recognized by the average reader. The size of the recognition vocabulary of college students has been estimated to be between 150,000 and 200,000.²

[One facet of the limited vocabulary of Hebrew is the notable paucity of adjectives in the Hebrew language. Although it may appear to the English-speaking reader of the Old Testament that there seems to be an abundance of descriptive words and phrases, especially in degrees of comparison, it

¹Chomsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49. Italics are Chomsky's.

²*Ibid.*, p. 209.

must be remembered that this comparison is achieved through devious means. Comparison is achieved by using the simple form of the adjective followed with the use of the preposition *מִן* (from).¹ The comparative quality, e.g., "they were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions," is achieved frequently by the use of a stative verb.² The superlative degree can be expressed either by use of the simple adjective with the article, or the simple adjective followed by the genitive of a noun or a pronoun.³ Hence, what appear to us in English to be bonafide adjectival phrases are not in reality such in Hebrew.

There has been an equally observed paucity of adjectives in the early pages of the Book of Mormon:

In the first five chapters of I Nephi--covering about eleven pages--there are only some sixty or seventy different adjectives in all, not counting a few numerals . . . and the demonstratives. . . . Those that were employed are of the most simple kind. . . . Those writers reduced the use of adjectives to the minimum by substituting nouns for them.⁴

It seems a matter of no small consequence to find such a sparing use of adjectives in the Book of Mormon. Limited adjectives and vocabulary of themselves are not conclusive evidence that the Book of Mormon is a product of a Semitic-speaking people, but coupled with all the other grammatical evidences that forthwith will be presented, it is felt that

¹A. B. Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, reprinted 1950), p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 48.

³Ibid.

⁴Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVII (1914), p. 975.

one should be hesitant to assume that an unschooled lad of twenty-one could be the author of a work that is so completely consistent with rules of grammar and structure of the Hebrew tongue.

The Conjunction

Hebrew syntax is relatively simple because of the ever recurring and. The Hebrews are an and-loving people; among them "there is a dislike to begin a sentence without 'and', hence even Books are commenced with it, Ex. 1:1, [sic] Ruth 1:1."¹ A glance at any literal translation of the Old Testament will immediately reveal the affinity that the writers possessed for this conjunction.

The clauses in a Greek or Latin sentence are built together. By the use of particles, participles, relative and other subordinate clauses, a number of thoughts are expressed in those languages in their perspective and relation to each other and presented as an artistic whole--it may be with only one principal verb. The Hebrew habit is to coordinate rather than subordinate, and one principal verb follows another with a regularity which reminds one of the simple speech of children.²

One need only to select a few verses in the Small Plates in order to ascertain that this pattern of Hebrew syntax is observed.

And it came to pass that when I, Jacob, had spoken these words, the power of the Lord came upon him, insomuch that he fell to the earth. And it came to pass that he was nourished for the space of many days. And it came to pass that he said unto the people: Gather together on the morrow, for I shall die; wherefore, I desire to speak unto the people before I shall die. And it came to pass that on the morrow the multitude were gathered together; and he

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 184.

²Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, p. 2.

spake plainly unto them and denied the things which he had taught them, and confessed the Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels. And he spake plainly unto them, that he had been deceived by the power of the devil. And he spake of hell, and of eternity, and of eternal punishment. And he said: I fear lest I have committed the unpardonable sin, for I have lied unto God; for I denied the Christ, and said that I believed the scriptures; and they truly testify of him. And because I have thus lied unto God I greatly fear lest my cause shall be awful; but I confess unto God.¹

In addition to the common use of the conjunction and to connect words, in Hebrew it often stands before each word in a series as illustrated in Genesis 20:14 or I Samuel 13:20.² We find in the Book of Mormon these statements that follow this pattern: "The pointers . . . in the ball . . . did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed which we did give unto them."³ "They will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks."⁴ Similar examples are found in II Nephi 26:3; 28:12,14; and 5:17. These references do not exhaust the list but demonstrate that and often stands before each word or phrase in a series in the Book of Mormon.

Sometimes and is used only prior to the last word or phrase in a series, e.g., with the last of three.⁵ An example of this is found in the Small Plates: ". . . unto every kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders."⁶

¹Jac. 7:15-19. See also I Ne. 3:8-11; Om. 1:28,29.

²Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 184.

³I Ne. 16:28.

⁴II Ne. 25:12.

⁵Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 184.

⁶II Ne. 26:13.

An additional facet of the use of the conjunction is that if several nouns are coupled by and, the possessive pronoun must be repeated with each.¹ Of this principle there is ample demonstration in the Small Plates. The observant reader will notice such expressions as: ". . . for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations";² "And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things";³ "slaying food by the way, with our bows and our arrows and our stones and our slings."⁴

The Prophetic Perfect

To comprehend this peculiarity we must understand that in early Hebrew the idea of a perfect or imperfect tense of a verb was unknown in the sense that we impute to these forms.

Classical or biblical Hebrew has an intricate design of expressing time of action or state in verbs. Unlike the Indo-European language, biblical Hebrew, as well as other Semitic languages, makes no time-distinction (that is, past, present and future) in the verb forms. The tense-idea in these languages is related not to the time but to the kind of action. The difference in tense is determined by whether the action, in the mind of the speaker, is completed or uncompleted. . . . The perfect may thus denote also action which is represented as accomplished, or absolutely definite, even though it is continued into the present time, or is even still in the future. . . . When Ephron wants to assure Abraham that he will give him the field and the cave of Makhpelah in order to bury Sarah therein, Ephron says ha-sadeh natati lakh (Genesis 23:11), the literal translation of which is "the field I gave unto you," as if to convey the impression that the field is already in Abraham's possession, even

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 2.

²I Ne. 1:19.

³I Ne. 2:4.

⁴I Ne. 16:15. See also I Ne. 2:11; 3:24; 10:1; 13:36; 15:15; 6:35; 18:6; II Ne. 9:14; 28:12; Jac. 2:7; 3:13.

before the matter of payment was negotiated.¹

To comprehend the function of the prophetic perfect, one must understand that an action still in the future but which in the mind of the speaker will be brought to fruition permits use of the definite perfect tense.

This usage is very common in the elevated language of the Prophets, whose faith and imagination so vividly project before them the event or scene which they predict that it appears already realized. It is part of the purpose of God, and therefore, to the clear eyes of the prophet, already as good as accomplished.²

B. H. Roberts was confronted on one occasion with this very problem in a challenge that appeared in the pages of the Salt Lake Tribune.³ There were a number of issues put to Roberts, among them the following:

This alleged Prophet Nephi gives himself away even worse in the 31st chapter of the second book by forgetting that he was pretending to write in the sixth century before Christ and treating the baptism of Christ as actual history, which it really was. He not only refers to it in the past tense, but actually indulges in a regular camp-meeting exhortation to the "brethren," exhorting them, in accordance with the revival style of 1828, to "repent of their sins," and "follow their Lord and Savior down in to the water," promising that after that they shall have "the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost."⁴

Our knowledge of the prophetic perfect resolves this problem and it is evident what Nephi has done. If this chapter is read carefully, it is seen that Nephi is projecting in- to the future, but that he does use the past tense as if the

¹Chomsky, op. cit., p. 162. Italics are Chomsky's.

²Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, pp. 156-57.

³Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 22, 1903, quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 318-27.

⁴Roberts, op. cit., p. 322.

baptism of Christ were an accomplished fact. This is emphasized in order to point out that this grammatical structure, the prophetic perfect, is used consistently by Nephi in his prophecies and predictions.

The reader's attention is directed to the fact that chapters 25-32 of II Nephi comprise one prophetic passage and that there are other instances within these chapters wherein the prophetic perfect appears to be used.¹ Also, the prophetic discourse of Nephi, as recorded in I Nephi 11-14, contains many statements of events which are in the future but are described by Nephi as if already transpired. These would appear to meet the criterion of the prophetic perfect tense.

The Cognate Accusative

In Hebrew, "it is convenient to consider the verb as the root out of which the other parts of speech grew, though there are many nouns not traceable to extant verbal stems."² The use of a word as object of the verb derived from the same root as the verb is called the cognate accusative. Frequently the function of the cognate accusative is to produce "a concrete instance of the effect or product of the action."³ So in Genesis 40:8 is found וַיִּחְלֶם אֶת־חֲלֻמּוֹ (we have dreamed a dream).

The repetition of the same sound, or paronomasia,

¹II Ne. 27:33-35; 28:11-14; 29:5,6.

²Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, p. 54.

³Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 96.

which results from the use of the cognate accusative is repugnant to English-speaking people and is avoided whenever possible. In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament this phenomenon occurs frequently. Below are some examples, followed by the Authorized translation in parentheses: "kill a killing," (slay and make ready);¹ "serve a service," (perform the service);² "and David fasted a fast," (and David fasted);³ "conspired a conspiracy," (made a conspiracy);⁴ "wept a great weeping," (wept very sore).⁵

In the following passages also there is employment of the cognate accusative. Only the marginal reading will be given instead of the Authorized translation of the phrase as embodied within the text of the Bible. These marginal readings are: "fled a flight,"⁶ "wall a wall,"⁷ "feared a fear,"⁸ "fashioner of his fashion,"⁹ and "the desire of Solomon which he desired."¹⁰

With the above definition, some cognate accusatives from the Book of Mormon will be examined which demonstrate their harmony with the construction of Semitic languages: "dream a dream";¹¹ "speak a word" (both from the root דבר);¹² "see a vision" (from either the verb ראה or חזה);¹³

¹Gen. 43:16. ²Num. 4:23. ³II Sam. 12:16.

⁴II Chron. 25:27. ⁵Ezra 10:1. ⁶Jer. 46:5.

⁷Hos. 2:6. ⁸Job 3:25. ⁹Hab. 2:18.

¹⁰I Kings 9:19. ¹¹I Ne. 3:2; 8:2.

¹²I Ne. 7:4; 15:7; II Ne. 29:9.

¹³I Ne. 1:16; 5:4; 8:2,36; 10:17; II Ne. 1:4.

"speak a thing" (both also from the root אָדַב);¹ "work a work";² "write a writing";³ "sow a seed";⁴ "build buildings";⁵ "desire a desire";⁶ "curse with a curse";⁷ and "yoke with a yoke."⁸

There is one very curious passage in the first edition of the Book of Mormon in which the Prophet employs a word that is extremely uncommon today. It is postulated that he was following a pattern of translating rather strictly and when the original writers used an apparent cognate accusative, the Prophet translated its equivalent. Nephi states that there is a place prepared, "even that awful Hell [sic] . . . and the Devil [sic] is the preparator of it."⁹ In the current edition the word preparator has been replaced by foundation.¹⁰ In other first edition passages the Prophet has used either founder or foundation,¹¹ but it is strange that the word preparator should be used in this single instance in which it appears to be a derivative of a preceding verb.

Enumeration

The style of enumeration in the Book of Mormon follows

¹I Ne. 10:17; II Ne. 2:14; 9:3. ²I Ne. 14:7; 18:1.

³I Ne. 16:29; II Ne. 3:18. ⁴II Ne. 5:11.

⁵II Ne. 5:15. ⁶Enos 1:13. ⁷I Ne. 2:23.

⁸I Ne. 13:5. ⁹Wood, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁰~~II~~^I Ne. 15:35.

¹¹George Reynolds, A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon, ed. Philip C. Reynolds (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1957), p. 241.

the principles of the Hebrew language extensively--much more consistently than does the Authorized translation. This would seem to be an indication that the translation made by the Prophet was more than a matter of expressing in conformance with his native culture and word usage the concepts that he acquired through his study of the plates.

Numbers composed of tens and units, e.g., 23, usually appear in the older writings with the larger number first and the two numbers joined by and, therefore, twenty-and-three.¹ When there are higher numbers involved, this order usually maintains, thus: hundreds and tens and units.²

There are only six instances in the Small Plates wherein the writers had occasion to enumerate the number of years that had passed away and we find that they adhere to the standard form. Hence is read "for behold . . . fifty and five years had passed away";³ "I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away";⁴ "Yea, and in fine, two hundred and eighty and two years had passed away."⁵ The remaining three occasions are found in Jarom 1:13, Omni 1:3, and Omni 1:5.

Prepositions

In regard to the usage of some of the prepositions and prepositional phrases used in the Small Plates, one would not have the temerity to suggest what exact form was used in the

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 54.

²Ibid.

³Jac. 1:1.

⁴Enos 1:25.

⁵Om. 1:3.

original records (because it would often be possible in Hebrew to use one of many variations in a given circumstance), but it can be pointed out that these expressions do meet the requirements of correct usage. The first phrase to be examined might appear to be a bonafide English expression, but this is not crucial to the stated purpose of this discussion. It is of concern whether this and the subsequent prepositions could be grammatically correct in Hebrew or if there is similar usage in the Old Testament.

Before the Wind

In I Nephi 18:8 and 9 is found the expression "driven forth before the wind." As an English nautical term this phrase is meaningful. It has the connotation of the direction in which the wind blows. (It is noted that in the instance quoted above in I Nephi, the context is nautical). But, ordinarily, land-bound Americans would probably be inclined to think that an object is driven by the wind instead of before it. In the Old Testament the expressions על-פני-רוח (upon the face of the wind)¹ and לפני-רוח (to the face of the wind)² have been translated "before the wind" as objects are so moved by it.

Into a Mountain

Nephi states "As I sat pondering in my heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an

¹Ps. 18:42 (18:43 in Hebrew text).

²Ps. 35:5; Isa. 17:13.

exceeding high mountain."¹ On another occasion he said, "I, Nephi, did go forth into the top of the mountain."² He also "arose and went up into the mountain."³ When Nephi felt a pressing need to obtain direction and counsel from God, he "did go into the mount oft . . . and did pray oft unto the Lord."⁴

For us the preposition into expresses motion or direction toward the inner part or place of a thing, and we sense that when one is standing upon the surface of a mountain he is upon it and not into it. The latter is not an uncommon usage in the Old Testament.⁵ The Hebraic forms commonly used are בְּהָר (in the mountain),⁶ הַהָרָה (mountainward),⁷ and אֶל-הָר (to, or toward, or unto a mountain).⁸ It should be noted here that the preposition בְּ on rare occasions after verbs of motion means into.⁹ At least on one occasion אֶל-רֹאשׁ-הָהָר (unto or to the head of the mountain) has been translated "into the top of the mountain,"¹⁰ which translation parallels the Book of Mormon statement that Nephi went forth "into the top of the mountain."¹¹

¹I Ne. 11:1.

²I Ne. 16:30.

³I Ne. 17:7.

⁴I Ne. 18:3.

⁵Exod. 24:12; 24:13; Num. 27:12; Deut. 10:1.

⁶Exod. 19:12; Deut. 5:5.

⁷Exod. 24:12; Deut. 9:9; 10:1,3.

⁸Exod. 24:13,18; Deut. 32:49.

⁹Davidson, Lexicon, p. LVI.

¹⁰Num. 14:40.

¹¹I Ne. 16:30.

The King James' translators have not been consistent in rendering into English the above Hebrew prepositions, because at times they have translated them in a different manner from that indicated above.¹ Evidently there is sufficient basis for Joseph Smith to have translated some Hebrew phrases "into the mountain." Attention is called to the fact that the translation of the Small Plates is more consistent relative to the use of this preposition than is the Old Testament for not once is the idea of movement to be found in the former other than into a mountain. It is curious that in the revelation given to Joseph Smith in June, 1830, which is a restoration of a revelation given to Moses, we read: "The words of God, which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain."²

Arrived To

In the current edition of the Book of Mormon one reads that in speaking to Nephi, the Lord said: "After ye have arrived in the promised land . . ."³ Subsequently, Nephi records "after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land."⁴ The point observed here is that in each passage in the original edition, the arrival of Nephi and his party is to the promised land.⁵ The feeling that

¹The preposition לָא has been translated as unto in Exod. 34:24. Also, הָהָרָה has been rendered "unto the mountain" in Josh. 2:22.

²Moses 1:1. ³I Ne. 17:14. ⁴I Ne. 18:23.

⁵Wood, op. cit., pp. 43 and 49, respectively.

comes from reading these passages is one of movement toward the promised land. The preposition in Hebrew that is used to indicate motion is ל , which is best translated to. Grammatically, then, these instances could be proper Hebrew idiomatic constructions being correctly translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, "arrived to," in the first edition of the Book of Mormon.

To Wife

In a few instances in the Small Plates wherein a man takes a woman to be his wife there is noted a characteristic Hebrew expression; e.g., "his sons should take daughters to wife."¹ In Hebrew a man does not marry a woman but he "takes her to wife" or "she is given to him to wife."²

By the Hand Of

This is a very interesting Hebrew phrase that shows instrumentality. It is common in the Old Testament as illustrated in Exodus 9:35, "as the Lord has spoken by Moses" (literally "by the hand of Moses"), and in I Samuel 28:15, "neither by prophets (literally "by the hand of prophets").³ This expression appears twice on the title page of the Book of Mormon. (Joseph Smith stated "that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf,

¹I Ne. 7:1. See also I Ne. 16:7.

²John McFadyen, Key to Introductory Hebrew Grammar, (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), p. 13.

³Sperry, Our Book of Mormon, p. 33.

on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates.")¹ This expression, "by the hand of," is found in the singular form many times in the Small Plates.² The plural form, "by the hands of," is not found in the Small Plates but is used eight times in the rest of the Book of Mormon.³ "By the hand of," בִּיד , could reflect the proper, less evolved Hebrew of the Small Plates, whereas in Mormon's abridgment of the remainder of the records, the Hebrew which had been altered (Mormon 9:32-33) could possibly be similar to the later, common, non-typical plural בִּידִי (by the hands of). Another expression, which in Hebrew would be the same construction, but translated differently because of the context, is "in the hand of."⁴

From Before

This is another typically Hebrew expression which could have been translated from at least two Hebrew compounds, אֶת־פָּנַי or אֶת־פָּנָי (both can readily be translated "from before the face" or "presence of").⁵ Expressions such as "our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God"⁶ and "they were carried away in the Spirit from before my face"⁷ are most quaint to our

¹Smith, op. cit., p. 71.

²I Ne. 5:14; 13:26; II Ne. 1:5,6; Jac. 1:18.

³Reynolds, op. cit., p. 283.

⁴II Ne. 1:24; 3:24.

⁵Davidson, Lexicon, p. DCXXVII.

⁶II Ne. 9:8.

⁷I Ne. 11:29. See also I Ne. 4:28 and 11:12.

ears. From a practical point of expediting speech, we would tend to drop the word before without much ado. Illustrative Semitic usage of this phrase is found in the marginal readings of Ezra 7:14; Ecclesiastes 10:5; and Daniel 2:18; although Ezra and Daniel are in Aramaic.

Repetition of the Preposition

It is common in Hebrew, when several words are united under the power of the same preposition, to repeat the preposition before each word.¹ There are many instances of this in the Old Testament, a few of which are cited. In Hosea 2:19 (verse 21 in the Hebrew) one reads "I will betroth them unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." See also Genesis 40:2; II Samuel 6:5; and Hosea 1:7. In the Small Plates there are many illustrations of adherence to this grammatical rule. In I Nephi 14:1 one reads "that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed." Another example is found in I Nephi 16:23: "Wherefore I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones." On one occasion Nephi quoted the prophet Zenos who predicted the calamities that would befall mankind at the time of the crucifixion:

The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day . . . and others with the thunderings, and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 138.

earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.¹

Related to this phenomenon of repetition, although not to the preposition, is the repetitive use of the article; however, this is not employed in every case. For illustrations of this practice in the Book of Mormon, see I Nephi 18:25; II Nephi 2:12, and 32:7.

Enallage

This grammatical term is defined as the substitution of one form of speech for another.

Again, we find that the Nephite authors made frequent use of a figure of speech called enallage, which is a convenient term to express the substitution of one gender, person, number, case, mode, tense, etc., of the same word for another; and learned commentators inform us that it was frequently applied by the ancient Hebrews.²

Brookbank continues by stating that the plural forms are often employed instead of singular in order to imply that there is more than one person or thing in the mind of the speaker although the reference or address is made directly to only one. To restate this, the plural usage, when the communication was directly to one individual, showed that this person was not the only one to whom the message was pertinent, but that others were to share in the thought, sentiment, or promise, etc. This grammatical curiosity worked conversely, also. When the singular form was used, in reference to a group, the individual was singled out as one of those who

¹I Ne. 19:11. See also I Ne. 1:16, 18:25; II Ne. 1:18, 5:15, 6:15, 31:21; Jar. 1:8.

²Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XIII (1909), p. 118. Italics are Brookbank's.

formed the collective mass and thus was made to know that he individually had responsibility. A good example of this latter form is found in the account of the giving of the ten commandments to the Israelites in Exodus 20. In the introductory matter the plural form "ye" is used as the entire body of Israel is addressed. But

there occurs a remarkable and uniform substitution of the singular for the plural, when the obligation of the law is being laid upon the same people. By the use of "thou" and "thy" instead of "ye" and "your," however, every individual is searched out and made to feel his personal accountability before the law almost as sensibly as if he had been commanded by name to observe it.¹

A parallel to this instance in the Old Testament is found in I Nephi 17:55. In the preceding verses, Nephi had vehemently condemned the wickedness of his brothers; the fear of the Lord came upon them and they fell to the ground and were about to worship Nephi when he forbade them. In so doing, he employed the singular thy instead of the plural your. This "exhortation to his brothers to refrain from their idolatrous act is thus made with all the force of an appeal to each of them individually."²

In I Nephi 2:19,20, the Lord commends Nephi for his faith and diligence and then promises "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper." This passage illustrates the first explanation of the enallage as it is given above. The Lord, in his address to Nephi, commends him individually for his rectitude and uses the singular pronoun. But when the Lord states the blessings which will attend Nephi,

¹Ibid., p. 119.

²Ibid., pp. 120-21.

and seems to imply that these blessings will also be extended to his posterity, the plural form ye is substituted for the singular thou.¹

Our attention is directed by Brookbank to a few passages in the Old Testament wherein enallage is used: Exodus 22:22,23 and Deuteronomy 8:19; 9:7; 11:20,21; 12:15-17. As the language of the Small Plates is examined, it is observed that the appearance of the enallage is common, especially in the second person.² There are also some instances in which it is employed in the third person.³ In the lineal comparison made of the current edition of the Book of Mormon with the original edition, it was found that in three verses of the former this grammatical phenomenon has been corrected to correspond to correct English usage.⁴ One wonders why only three of these "apparent" English grammatical mistakes were corrected to conform to English standards and the remainder were allowed to stand.

Construct State

It is believed by some that early Hebrew, like classical Arabic as preserved to this day, had three cases: the

¹Ibid., p. 120.

²I Ne. 10:20,21; 11:7; 17:12-14,19; II Ne. 2:13 (used four times) 29:6-10 (In verse 6 the Lord says "thou fool" and in the subsequent four verses uses "ye" ten times). This does not exhaust the list.

³I Ne. 10:19; II Ne. 1:7; 25:8; 26:31.

⁴I Ne. 3:29; 7:8; II Ne. 9:4.

nominate, the genitive, and the accusative. The genitive is characterized by an extremely close connection between the governing and governed words. This phenomenon which has no parallel in Greek or Latin is called the construct state.¹

The most common demonstration of this relation is found in the usage of the preposition of. However, under certain circumstances, the preposition in may be used in such expressions as "great in power," "fair in appearance," "broken in heart."² A Book of Mormon illustration of this last usage of the construct state is "large in stature."³

The function of the construct state, generally, then, is to show possession, which is achieved in the English language by use of the apostrophe to denote the possessor.

It is . . . evident that chapter after chapter may be read in the Book of Mormon without finding a single possessive . . . and the total number of such forms in the whole work is surprisingly small, considering the size of the volume and the frequent occasions which arise for the possessive relation.⁴

In the Small Plates, according to Brookbank's list, there are only seven words with the possessive s, and one of these, Lord's, is employed twice. These are: father's (I Nephi 3:16); shoe's (I Nephi 10:8); name's (I Nephi 20:9); potter's (II Nephi 27:27); Lord's (II Nephi 28:3); cockatrice's (II Nephi 30:14); and Christ's (Jacob 1:4).⁵ There are

¹Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, p. 58.

²Ibid., pp. 58-59.

³I Ne. 2:16.

⁴Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVII (1914), p. 1061.

⁵Ibid., pp. 1061-62.

occasions when the possessive apostrophe occurs in chapter superscriptions, but these are not part of the Nephite writings, having been added at a later date.¹ The superscription at the beginning of II Nephi, which appears to have been written by Nephi, contains one possessive apostrophe.

One does not begin to appreciate the statistical insignificance of the infrequently employed possessive s in the Book of Mormon until one realizes the innumerable opportunities to employ it that exist.

The remarkable thing concerning the non-use of nouns in the common possessive form is not yet half-told; for we find the form Lord's 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 in a possessive sense in such expressions as "commandments of the Lord," "name of the Lord," "people of the Lord," "presence of the Lord," "promise of the Lord," etc. . . . To find it twice only out of a possible three hundred approaches closely to its non-use.²

Our attention is directed by the above-quoted writer to the fact that the form God's is used twice out of four hundred and fifty possibilities. The following phrases occur in the construct form the number of times indicated within parentheses, but never in the English possessive manner: church of God (32); commandment or commandments of God (58); kingdom of God (38); power of God (59); Spirit of God (21); and word or words of God (over 100).³

¹The first edition of the Book of Mormon is devoid of any chapter headings; but there are superscriptions at the beginning of I and II Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Helaman, III Nephi, and IV Nephi.

²Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVII (1914), p. 1062.

³Ibid.

There are additional facets of the construct form other than denoting possession. Adjectival phrases, e.g., "an iron rod," are handled differently from the English manner by means of the construct case. In Hebrew, consequently, the correct form would be "rod of iron." The translation of the Small Plates has been rather consistent in this respect. Examples are "rod of iron," used eight times in this fashion and never as the "iron rod"; "house of Laban"; and "the daughters of Ishmael." There have been some cases in which the translation was rendered in more common English grammar; e.g., "to the tent door," and "brass plates^(?)."

Another facet of the construct form is that a succession of constructs constitutes a unity and is a normal syntactical structure.¹ An excellent example of this is found in Genesis 25:7 where, in the Hebrew text, it reads, "And these are the days of the years of the life of Abraham." Parallel forms are found in the writings of Nephi and Jacob. Nephi, in describing the preparations made for the journey into the wilderness, comments that they gathered all manner of grain "and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind."² Jacob, in the parable of the olive tree, says "that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard."³ On another occasion, Nephi quotes the prophet Zenos who describes conditions which will be prevalent at the time of the crucifixion and predicts "many of the kings of the

¹Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, p. 61.

²I Ne. 8:1.

³Jac. 5:10.

isles of the sea shall be wrought upon."¹

There are two very peculiar statements in the Small Plates which are in the construct state and which indicate a very literal translation of it. In a sermon, Jacob describes the return of the house of Israel from its long dispersion and the part that the Gentiles shall have in this return. He expresses the sentiments that the Lord will manifest toward the Gentiles and quotes the Lord as saying that the "Gentiles shall be great in the eyes of me."² In his parable of the olive tree, Jacob again quotes the prophet Zenos: "Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the words of me, a prophet of the Lord."³

Passive Participles in the Construct State

Attention is directed to another usage of the construct state, that of the passive participle being put in the construct before the subject of the action; e.g., "stricken of God." (Isaiah 53:4).⁴

According to the usual English construction, when using passive verbs or passive participles the subject of the action is generally preceded by the preposition "by," as "he was esteemed by many," not "of many." The Book of Mormon, however, in numerous passive constructions, follows the strict rendering of the Hebrew construct relation, and uses "of" before the subject of the action, contrary to the English idiom in general.⁵

This clarifies a usage found in the Book of Mormon

¹I Ne. 19:12. ²II Ne. 10:8. ³Jac. 5:2.

⁴Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 131.

⁵Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVII (1914), p. 1148.

that may have sounded to some as being somewhat stilted and perhaps artificial. In reality it reflects through the translation a strict adherence to Hebrew grammatical construction. Thus we read: "And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him";¹ "yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world";² "he will be rejected of the Jews, or of the house of Israel";³ and "I was instructed of the Lord."⁴

In summary, it can be said that the construct form in Hebrew is a very common grammatical structure, and

if we find . . . that there is more than the customary resort, as English practice goes, to the equivalent form of the construct state in Hebrew instead of our common form with an apostrophe to denote the possessor, that fact will put the Book of Mormon on a basis which is distinctly Jewish in this particular aspect, and tends strongly to show that no English author wrote that book.⁵

The Copula

One aspect of this grammatical form is seen in its functions as a connecting link between the subject and the predicate of a sentence. The verb "to begin" is a copulative; examples of its peculiar usage are seen in the Old Testament: "And Noah began to be a husbandman."⁶ A very literal translation of the Hebrew original is found in Genesis 10:8 in which we read that Nimrod "began to be a mighty one in the earth."⁷

¹I Ne. 11:27. ²I Ne. 11:32. ³I Ne. 15:17.

⁴I Ne. 17:18. See also I Ne. 3:6,8; 12:9; 17:26; 19:2; II Ne. 3:5,14; 6:2; 11:4; 25:18,22; 26:33; 33:11.

⁵Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVII (1914), p. 1061.

⁶Gen. 9:20.

⁷See also I Chron. 1:10; Neh. 4:7; 13:19; I Sam. 3:2.

This particular copulative, "began to be," is found sixteen times in the Small Plates.¹ One example of it is given here:

"And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all nations. . . ."2

It is also possible for the predicate of a sentence to be connected directly with the subject without the use of a connective copula:³ כֹּל-נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם (all her paths peace), translated "all her paths are peace"; טוֹב הָאֵץ (good the tree), translated "the tree was good." Thus, under certain circumstances in Hebrew, the copula is noted by its absence. According to Gesenius, "the syntactical relation existing between the subject and predicate of a noun-clause is as a rule expressed by a simple juxtaposition, without a copula of any kind."⁴ He states that one has to deduce from the context the time of the statement. Hence, אִם-יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים (if Jehovah the God), rendered "if the Lord be God," I Kings 18:21, and אַתְּ אֵשֶׁתוֹ (thou his wife), rendered "thou art his wife," Genesis 39:9.

An example of this type of construction is found in the Small Plates. We read "and know that he be their God,"⁵ and "they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified."⁶ A singular occurrence is found in

¹Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 80-81. ²I Ne. 14:16.

³William H. Green, An Elementary Hebrew Grammar, (2d ed.; New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1871), p. 71.

⁴William Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, trans. Cowley (2d ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 453.

⁵II Ne. 10:4.

⁶II Ne. 10:5.

II Nephi 16, one of the chapters of Isaiah quoted by Jacob.¹ In three of the verses of this chapter, in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, there occurs a juxtaposition of noun to predicate without the use of a verb. Thus is found "woe me!";² "because I a man of unclean lips;"³ and "here I; send me."⁴ These have later been edited and the appropriate form of the verb "to be" has been inserted. On at least one other occasion in the first edition the same phenomenon has been observed.⁵ Gesenius notes that the form הִנְנִי (behold me), which could be rendered as readily "here I," is used by way of answer when a person is called and that it "implies readiness" and "prompt obedience."⁶

Two other examples of the copula as they appear in the first edition should be considered. Nephi asserts "I know that the record which I make, to be true,"⁷ and "he loveth those who will have him to be their God."⁸ The latter still appears in the present editions although the former has been changed to read "the record which I make is true." This first form seems to be not only the verbatim meaning of the Hebrew לִיּוֹר אֶמֶת, but also seems appropriate to the manner in which the Hebrew phrase would be used.

¹Isa. 6.

²Wood, op. cit., p. 91. (II Ne. 16:5).

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 92. (II Ne. 16:8).

⁵Ibid., p. 95. (II Ne. 19:5).

⁶William Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon, trans. Edward Robinson (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1836), p. 283.

⁷Wood, op. cit., p. 5. (I Ne. 1:3).

⁸Ibid., p. 45. (I Ne. 17:40).

Causation

The Hebrew verb has a certain form, the hiph'il, to convey the idea of causation. Brookbank calls to our attention some passages in the Old Testament which in translation do not indicate the hiph'il usage of the verb, but which, in reality, are so employed by the Hebrew writers: ". . . and took her, and pulled her [caused her to come] in unto him into the ark" (Genesis 8:9); ". . . and I will rid [cause to cease] evil beasts out of the land" (Leviticus 26:6). Another interesting example of this is found in II Kings 15:20: "And Menahem exacted [caused to come forth] the money of Israel." These cases are not quite so obvious to the English reader. However, there can be found in the Old Testament more evident renderings of the hiph'il. And examination of Cruden's Concordance under Cause will indicate many passages similar in nature to this: "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to . . ." (Isaiah 27:6). Obviously it would be impossible to check for such illustrations in the Book of Mormon without having the plates to compare, but some Book of Mormon examples of the hiph'il are: "He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me";¹ "nevertheless only these things have I caused to be written."² Another example is found in I Nephi 17:2: "Our women did give plenty of suck for their children." The hiph'il ה'נ'י from the verb

¹II Ne. 4:22.

²II Ne. 11:1. See Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Cause."

סָּוֹ means "to give suck, to suckle, as a mother her infant."¹

Plural Nouns

One observes in the Small Plates an unusual practice of making plural many nouns which would seem to require the singular form. This practice is not alien to proper Hebrew usage as indicated by examining the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, in Hebrew the plural is often used to heighten the idea of the singular.² Another use of the plural is to present an idea in a general and indefinite way.³ Attention is drawn to an illustration of this in Job 17:1, "the graves are ready for me." Below are listed examples from the Old Testament and then citations from the Small Plates wherein a plural form of the ^{noun}~~verb~~ is used, which usage would seem to be contrary to English idiomatic expression. From the Old Testament: bloods (Genesis 4:10); wraths (Job 21:30); salvations (Psalms 28:8, 53:6; Isaiah 33:6); revenges (Psalms 94:1); wisdoms (Proverbs 1:20); the goings out of lives (Proverbs 4:23); creators (Ecclesiastes 12:1); desolations (Ezra 9:9; Psalms 74:3; Isaiah 61:4); righteousnesses (Isaiah 64:6; Daniel 9:18); deaths (Jeremiah 16:4; Ezekiel 28:8,10); destructions (Psalms 9:6; 35:17, 107:20).

In light of the above, one should not be critical of such expressions in the Small Plates as "I considered that

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 427.

²Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 19.

³Ibid.

mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destructions of my people" (I Nephi 15:5); "yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul" (I Nephi 15:25); "wherefore by laboring with our mights¹ their blood might not come upon our garments" (Jacob 1:19); "ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites" (Jacob 2:35); "the Lamanites . . . whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursings² which hath come upon their skins" (Jacob 3:5).

Just as there are situations in Hebrew in which plural nouns are used instead of singular, conversely, the singular can be employed when the plural would be used in English. This situation obtains when reference is made to the organs or parts of the body, such as the head, hand, mouth, etc.³ For one of many potential illustrative passages, the reader is referred to Psalms 78:36. In the Authorized Version, the translation reads: "And they lied unto him with their tongues." In the original, however, the word is tongue, in the singular, and not tongues as the translation would indicate. A counterpart of the employment of this particular word is found in the Small Plates when Nephi says that those who are baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost will be able to speak with "the tongue

¹In this verse and in Jac. 5:61,62,71 the word mights has been used in the original edition (pp. 137-38) but has subsequently been "corrected" to the singular. Jac. 5:72 in the current edition still reads mights.

²Corrected to singular in present edition. See first edition, p. 128.

³Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 20.

of angels."¹

Collective Nouns

There are two expressions in the Small Plates which, if one were not acquainted with Hebrew grammatical rules, could easily be assumed to be cases of improper English grammar: "I will judge the world, every man according to their works"² and "On the morrow the multitude were gathered together."³ Both, however, would seem to reflect a literal translation from a Hebrew source. In the first passage, the subject, according to common English acceptance, is singular yet the possessive pronoun is in the plural. The second instance is a case of a collective noun with a plural form of the verb. In Hebrew a collective noun may take the verb, and whatever suffixes that pertain to it, either in the singular or in the plural.

There is a great tendency to construe according to the sense rather than strict grammatical law, hence gramm. [sic] singulars, such as collectives and words that suggest a plurality, are often joined with plur. pred. [sic], especially when they refer to persons.⁴

It is curious to note that it is even permissible in Hebrew to alternate in consecutive verses a singular and plural verb with a collective noun. In Judges 9:36 and 37 there are statements concerning people who are "coming down." The Hebrew construction is הַנִּי-עַם יֹרֵד (behold a people--one coming down) and הַנִּי-עַם יֹרֵדִים (behold people--ones coming down)

¹II Ne. 31:13,14; 32:2. ²II Ne. 29:11. ³Jac. 7:17.

⁴Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 156. Italics are Davidson's.

respectively. Continuing the consideration of this peculiarity of the language with one additional illustration, it is noted that occasionally the construction of a sentence may begin in the singular, especially when the predicate precedes, but is carried on in the plural after the collective subject has been mentioned. Exodus 1:20 is a good example of this:

וַיִּרְבּוּ הָעָם וַיִּשְׁעָצְמוּ מְאֹד (and the people multiplied [singular] and waxed very mighty [plural]).

The rules of the language will sometimes permit the use of a singular pronoun to refer to a collective plural noun.¹ This principle would seem to make acceptable, then, the statement from the Small Plates, "And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus . . . and it speaketh harshly against sin."²

Compound Subject

One of the most striking indications that the Book of Mormon was originally written by one well versed in Hebrew is manifested through the grammatical principle of the compound subject. This would also seem to bear witness to a rather literal translation of the original as opposed to the idea that the concept or the meaning was given to the Prophet and that he was then left to his own devices and experiences to express the concept. The rule states that when a compound

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 160. ²II Ne. 33.4.

subject is of different persons, the first person precedes the second and the second precedes the third.¹ An example of this is found in I Kings 1:21: "I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders."²

Several examples of the syntax, "I and my brethren" or "I and my father,"³ are found in the Small Plates. This is immediately recognized as being poor English grammatical construction but can be defended by its Hebrew origin.

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 159.

²See also I Sam. 14:40; Gen. 43:8.

³I Ne. 3:9,10; 5:20; 7:2,3,22; 22:31.

CHAPTER IV

HEBREW GENIUS OF EXPRESSION EVIDENT IN THE SMALL PLATES

Traditionally it has been accepted that the culture of a people determines and molds the expression of that people--not only the prosaic language, but the subtle nuances, the inflections, the various colorings that attend the idioms (and here the term is employed in the commonly restricted sense) that enhance and give richness to the language.

Students of language have come to recognize that the experiences of a group, its mental and emotional habits, its modes of thought and attitudes are registered and reflected in the words and idioms of the group's language. Thus, for example, the word shalom, usually rendered by "peace," has in effect little in common with its English equivalent. Shalom does not have the passive, even negative, connotation of the word "peace." It does not mean merely the absence of strife. It is pregnant with positive, active and energetic meaning and association. It connotes totality, health, wholesomeness, harmony, success, the completeness and richness of living in an integrated social milieu. When people meet or part they wish each other shalom or they enquire about each other's shalom.¹

Colin Cherry in one of his works refers to the contributions of Ogden and Richards² and observes that they

distinguish between the symbolic and the emotive uses of language. The first, they say, serves for identifying or

¹Chomsky, op. cit., p. 4. Italics are Chomsky's.

²C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1949).

cataloguing things, actions, or relationships. Many scientific words perform this function.¹

Cherry proceeds to state that at the other "polar extreme" of language is poetry which largely

dispenses with such symbolic, logical use of words. When the words were wrung from Macbeth - "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day" - he was not speaking of time and velocity! Words in poetry are selected, not for their "correctness" but to achieve certain results, to produce certain effect upon the reader's mind.²

These quotations from Chomsky and Cherry form the basis for the presentation of the material in this chapter. In the previous chapter the intent was to demonstrate that there are to be found in the Small Plates peculiarities of grammar, syntax, and language principles that are typically Hebraic in nature, and to suggest that because of the multitudinous evidences of the same, the record referred to would perforce need to have been written by one extremely well acquainted with the language.

In the present chapter, there will be introduced emotive, poetic, imaginative expressions from the Small Plates which reflect the tenor of Hebrew picturesqueness, imagery, and style.

To be familiar with the mere content of any work of literature is in no sense to understand it. For it is never the subject matter which confers distinction and power upon a work of art, but rather the manner in which that matter is presented. This manner not only includes the choice of words itself, but style and tone, form and

¹Colin Cherry, On Human Communication, (Cambridge: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1947), p. 73.

²Ibid., pp. 73-74.

pattern, various and distinctive literary devices.¹

To reiterate, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Book of Mormon expressions are either of a literary style and form similar to that of the Old Testament or that they evoke images and a picturesqueness that are essentially peculiar and vital to the genius of the Hebrew tongue.

One of the most interesting and unusual phrases in the Small Plates is found in the writings of Jacob who is quoting from the prophet Zenos.² This phrase is "trees of the vineyard."³ To our prosaic Western minds, grape vines are found in vineyards and trees are confined to the orchard. It is noted that the Prophet Joseph Smith was not far afield when he translated this particular expression. The Hebrew word כרם (vineyard) is also considered to be "a field or yard of the nobler plants and trees, cultivated in the manner of a garden or orchard."⁴ The phrase כרם-זית (vineyard of olive trees) could be the basis for the Book of Mormon "[olive] trees of the vineyard."⁵ The word "orchard" is used on but two occasions in the Old Testament⁶ and not at all in the Book of Mormon. Not in any instance could the writer find in the Old Testament the expression "trees of the vineyard." It is

¹Mary Ellen Chase, Life and Language in the Old Testament, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1955), pp. 141-42. Italics are Chase's.

²Jac. 5. (The allegory of the tame and wild olive trees).

³Jac. 5:42,49,60,65,66. ⁴Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 501.

⁵Ibid. ⁶Eccles. 2:5; Song of Sol. 4:13.

curious that the Prophet would adhere so closely to the concept of the Hebrews in his translation with no English equivalent in the Scriptures for him to model.

In the allegory of the olive trees the statement is made: "Behold, the branches of the wild trees have taken hold of the moisture of the root thereof, that the root thereof hath brought forth much strength."¹ The word moisture invites attention. Investigation shows that it is employed by a writer of one of the Psalms wherein he records "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."² The noun moisture in the Psalm is טֶבַח, which has as its meaning, according to Gesenius, juice, sap, vital moisture.³ Davidson defines it as vital power.⁴ It is curious that the Prophet should use in his translation a particular word that is used only twice in the Bible⁵ instead of using the more common term sap. It is recognized by the writer that an archaic meaning of moisture has reference to the "humors believed in the Middle Ages to be inherent in all living things"⁶ (which humors are defined as the juices or fluids of animal and plant life) and a point of pertinence would be whether on the New York frontier of 1829 moisture was or was not common to the vernacular. If common, the parallel usage in the Bible and Book of Mormon is easily understood. But if it was an uncommon term, one is left with

¹Jac. 5:18

²Ps. 32:4.

³Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 535.

⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. CCCLIV. ⁵Ps 32:4; Luke 8:6.

⁶Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 2d ed.

the alternative of providing a satisfactory hypothesis as to why a rare word from the Scriptures, yet functional Hebrew, should have been selected in the process of translation.

Another expression from the Small Plates could have significance if it could be determined that it was not common to the lingual and cultural milieu of Joseph Smith. Nephi declares: "Behold, I am full of the Spirit of God, insomuch that my frame has not strength."¹ Elsewhere, in commenting on a spiritual rebuke administered to Laman and Lemuel by his father, Lehi, Nephi observes that the latter was "filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him."² The word frame is properly defined as body structure or physical constitution, although today this connotation is not too prevalent except perhaps as a colloquialism.

Some of the Old Testament Hebrew equivalents for frame are דגל (bone), which Professor Lee translates as "framework,"³ and to which Gesenius gives the connotation "body," also "the very bone, substance of anything."⁴ Another, but poor possibility, is דצצ (bone or body).

An examination of the Biblical phrase "for he knoweth our frame"⁵ discloses the noun צל which Gesenius translates as "formation" or "frame."⁶ That Joseph Smith translated a special word in the Book of Mormon as frame would seem to be

¹I Ne. 17:47.

²I Ne. 2:14.

³Davidson, Lexicon, p. CXLI.

⁴Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 224.

⁵Ps. 103:14.

⁶Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 438.

borne out by the fact that this particular word, either in the plural or singular, can be found a total of ten times, and the words body and bodies have been used 109 times in the entirety of the Book of Mormon.

The research undertaken on the Small Plates brought to the fore a number of interesting passages which contain unusual images associated with the heart. Hebrew is adapted to such usages. Gesenius details the following functions, characteristics, and attributes of the heart.¹ First, as the vital principle, "the heart is said to live" (Psalm 22:27); "to be sick" (Isaiah 1:5); and it is even possible for it to sleep and wake (Ecclesiastes 2:23 and Song of Solomon 5:2). "To stay the heart" is an act of refreshment of food and drink. Second, the heart functions as the seat of feelings, affections, and the following emotions: love, as in Judges 16:15, "thy heart is not with me," i.e., "thou lovest me not"; confidence (Proverbs 31:11); contempt (Proverbs 5:12); joy (Psalm 104:15); sorrow (Psalm 109:16); bitterness (Psalm 73:21); despair (Ecclesiastes 2:20); fear (Psalm 23:3); and fortitude (Psalm 40:13). Also, poetically, the heart can be sick, wounded, or grieved (Proverbs 13:12; 14:13; Isaiah 61:1). The timid can have a "heart that melts" (Isaiah 13:7). To the obstinate is ascribed "a hard heart, like a stone" (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26) and "a heart not circumcised" (Leviticus 26:41). Other poetic feelings are ascribed to the heart; it is said to "cry

¹Ibid., p. 517.

out" (Hosea 7:14); "to lament" (Isaiah 15:5); to "pant and sigh" (Psalm 38:9). To "pour out the heart" (Lamentations 2:19), is to "pour out one's tears."

A third category of functions and attributes of the heart pertains to disposition and character: The heart can be clean (Psalm 51:12); sincere (I Kings 3:6); faithful (Nehemiah 9:8); upright (I Kings 9:4); perverse (Psalm 101:4); froward (Proverbs 7:10); deep, i.e., crafty (Psalm 64:7); and un-godly (Job 36:13). A heart or mind that is wide (Proverbs 21:4), great (Isaiah 9:9), or high (Ezekiel 28:5) signifies pride, although wide can also denote joy. A fourth function of the heart pertains to will, determination and purpose, and a fifth characteristic ascribed to the heart is understanding, intelligence, wisdom, and the faculty of thinking (Isaiah 10:7). A "fat heart," i.e., "covered with fat," is one calloused and dull of understanding (Isaiah 6:10).

This description of the qualities of the heart serves as a background for some expressions found in the Small Plates. In terms of the heart as the vital principle, we find these: "My heart might leave this world" (II Nephi 1:21) and "because of the strictness of the word of God, . . . many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35).

Relative to the function of the heart as the seat of feelings, one observes: "According to the feelings of his heart" (II Nephi 4:12); "my heart sorroweth because of my flesh" (II Nephi 4:17); "my heart groaneth because of my sins" (II Nephi 4:19); "why should my heart weep?" (II Nephi 4:26);

"because of you . . . my heart is pained" (I Nephi 17:47); "rejoice, o my heart" (II Nephi 4:28); "my heart delighteth in righteousness" (II Nephi 9:49); "did stir up their hearts to anger" (I Nephi 16:38); "my heart hath been weighed down with sorrow" (II Nephi 1:17); "at that day shall he [Satan] rage in the hearts of the children of men" (II Nephi 28:20); "prayed . . . with all his heart" (I Nephi 1:5); "he did soften my heart" (I Nephi 2:16); "my heart is broken" (II Nephi 4:32); "pure in heart" (Jacob 2:10); "hardness of hearts" (I Nephi 2:18; 15:3); "puffed up in their hearts" (II Nephi 28:9); and "sobblings of their hearts" (Jacob 2:35).

Referring to the attributes of character and disposition, we read: "full purpose of heart" (Jacob 6:5); "because ye were proud in your hearts" (Jacob 2:20); "lowliness of heart" (I Nephi 2:19); and "ye are murderers in your hearts" (I Nephi 17:44). Pertinent to the functions of wisdom, understanding, intelligence, and the faculty of thinking ascribed to the heart, the Book of Mormon offers: "foolish imaginations of his heart" (I Nephi 2:11); "to say in one's heart" (I Nephi 4:10; 21:21);¹ "magnifying of God's name" (II Nephi 25:13); "pondering in my heart" (I Nephi 11:1); and "my heart exclaimeth" (II Nephi 4:17).

Jacob uses another figure of speech, "pride of your hearts,"² chastising some for having succumbed to this condition. In Jeremiah 49:16 and Obadiah 1:3 is found the

¹This is one way the Hebrew has of expressing the reflexive.

²Jac. 2:13,16. Also II Ne. 28:15.

expression, זָדוֹן לִבָּךְ (pride of thy heart). This term not only seems to indicate pride and haughtiness, but also insolence. It might be due to this latter quality that pride is so vehemently condemned by the Lord.

One expression which Gesenius categorizes as poetic will be considered with more detail. We read: "Wo unto the uncircumsized of heart, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them."² In Leviticus 26:41 and Ezekiel 44:7, mention is made of the "uncircumsized heart." (Reference is also made in the Old Testament to uncircumsized lips³ and uncircumsized ears⁴). The Hebrew adjective is עֵרֵל; Gesenius tells us that such a heart is so shut up that the "precepts of religion and piety cannot penetrate."⁵ This seems to be the concept that Jacob is attempting to implant in the minds of his listeners.

It would seem that the Book of Mormon usage relevant to the functions and characteristics of the heart is correct. There is at variance in some cases, however, from proper grammatical form. The plural hearts (לִבֹּבוֹת) occurs only once in the Old Testament (I Chronicles 28:9).⁶ "The Hebrews practically always say 'our, your, their heart' (in the sing.) [sic] not 'hearts.'"⁷ The Prophet generally rendered the Nephite references to the heart in the plural (it is posited that the proper Hebraic form was employed in the original

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 294. ²II Ne. 9:33.

³Exod. 6:12. ⁴Jer. 6:10. ⁵Gesenius, Lexicon, p.799.

⁶McFadyen, Key to Hebrew, p. 22. ⁷Ibid.

record), but he is in good company if the Authorized Version is accepted as a standard.¹

There are a number of expressions in the Small Plates that have no relationship other than that they pertain to different members of the body. For the sake of continuity these will be considered as a unit.

References to the voice will be considered first. Nephi comments that men would trample under their feet the "very God of Israel" and then affirms that they "set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels."²

In English we do not "hearken to the voice" of a man's counsels, but rather to his words and to his counsel. However, it is typical for the Hebrew to think in such terms. In Deuteronomy 5:28 the Lord hears "the voice of the words of the people." Elsewhere, one "obeys the voice" of the Lord or of some individual.³ In II Nephi 1:28 is stated: "If ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish." A comparable statement is made in Deuteronomy 4:30,31 wherein the people are told that if they will "be obedient unto his voice," the Lord will not forsake them.

The expression "to lift up the voice" found in the Book of Mormon⁴ is also common to the Hebrew mind as indicated

¹Cruden, op. cit., sub voce "Hearts."

²I Ne. 19:7.

³Deut. 21:20, 27:10 are only two of many passages. The reader is directed to the entry "voice" in a concordance.

⁴II Ne. 4:35 is the only instance in Small Plates but found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

by Biblical usage.¹ Related imagery is portrayed in the Small Plates by such expressions as "my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee"² and "I did still raise my voice high."³ A beautiful bit of imagery is effected by Nephi when he says "my voice have I sent up on high."⁴ A similar statement, "to make your voice to be heard on high," is found in Isaiah 58:4, but it doesn't have the vigor and strength that Nephi's manifests.

Nephi states "the voice of the Lord spake unto my father,"⁵ and Jacob exclaims "I had heard the voice of the Lord speaking."⁶ This is almost identical with a statement of Isaiah, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying."⁷ In these last statements is perceived the Hebrew picturesqueness and quality of a voice that is speaking, instead of a person so doing. Enos arouses one's curiosity with his "the voice of the Lord came into my mind again."⁸ Grammatically, this is not impossible. The Hebrew verb כָּנַע (to enter) can be used in the sense of entering one's body and is so done in Ezekiel 2:2,⁹ but the grammatical construction is not of concern here. That which is notable is the imagery of the voice of the Lord entering Enos' mind again.

Consideration is next given to the mouth. In the Small Plates are noted other appropriate Hebraisms; e.g.,

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 691. ²II Ne. 4:35.

³Enos 1:4. ⁴II Ne. 4:24. ⁵I Ne. 16:9.

⁶Jac. 7:5. ⁷Isa. 6:8. ⁸Enos 1:10.

⁹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 130.

"spoken by the mouth of"¹ or phrases of similar cast. The Old Testament substantiates such Book of Mormon usage: "Neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth";² "all that proceedeth out of one's mouth";³ "call the damsel and enquire at her mouth";⁴ "it is my mouth that speaketh unto you";⁵ "put words in his mouth";⁶ and "with him will I speak mouth to mouth."⁷

Similarly, in the Small Plates are such expressions as "opened his mouth to utterance";⁸ "go forth out of one's mouth";⁹ "proceeds forth out of the mouth";¹⁰ and "by the mouth of his holy prophets."¹¹ The Book of Mormon passages that refer to the mouth seem to be compatible with the usage in the Old Testament.

Attention is directed to a concept from the Book of Mormon which is notably different from the manner in which we express ourselves in English; i.e., give ear, instead of our imperative listen. Cruden, in describing the function of the ear as understood by the Hebrew mind, says:

The use of the word ear in the Bible is used most often as attention, hearing, etc., rather than of the actual physical ear. To have the ears heavy is to pay no attention; to open the ear is to pay attention; uncircumcized ears are those which are deaf to the word of God. To

¹I Ne. 3:20; 5:13; II Ne. 25:1. ²Josh. 6:10.

³Num. 30:2; 32:24; Deut. 8:3. ⁴Gen. 24:57

⁵Gen. 45:12. ⁶Exod. 4:15. ⁷Num. 12:8.

⁸II Ne. 1:27. ⁹I Ne. 20:3; II Ne. 9:17.

¹⁰I Ne. 13:23,24,38; 14:23; II Ne. 29:2; 33:14.

¹¹II Ne. 9:2.

tell something in the ear is to speak in secret."¹

In the Small Plates are the expressions "give ear to my word"² and "lend an ear unto my counsel."³ Curiously, a change was effected by the Prophet Joseph Smith in one of the Isaiah passages quoted in the Book of Mormon, which change, incidentally, has subsequently been edited out of the present edition. The passage is found in II Nephi 7:5 (See Isaiah 50:5) and was altered by the Prophet to read "hath appointed my ear," rather than the form in the Authorized Version which reads "hath opened my ear." In the 1927 edition of the Inspired Version of the Bible, and also the fifth printing (February, 1953) of the corrected 1944 edition, the rendition of this verse is identical with the first edition of the Book of Mormon. The significance of the change, assuming that it was consciously and intentionally done by the Prophet, is not apparent. As a matter of fact, it does not seem to clarify any point of doctrine or philology.

Another Hebrew image, the condition of being stiff-necked, is expressed in the Small Plates. A careful check of the concordances to the Old Testament discloses that some form of the expression stiffneck is used twelve times in that Scripture. In the Small Plates, counting the various tenses of the verb (stiffen, stiffened their necks), the adjectival (stiff necks, stiffnecked people), and the substantive

¹Cruden, op. cit., p. 168, sub voce "Ear."

²II Ne. 4:3; 9:40; 25:4.

³II Ne. 28:30.

(stiffneckedness, ye are stiffnecked) forms, this expression is used a total of fifteen times.¹

Derivations from the verb *נָפַץ* (to be hard) are the ones almost exclusively employed in the Old Testament to connote stiffneckedness.² One example is *עַם-נָפִיצִים הֵם* (they are a stiffnecked people).³

Idiomatic concepts pertaining to the use of the hand are abundant in the Book of Mormon. The Hebrew phrase *שָׁלַח יָד* is translated in the Old Testament "to stretch out," "to send out," or "send forth the hand."⁴ This is not an uncommon idiom to the Book of Mormon, nor even to the limited portion of it which is being investigated.⁵ The most frequent usage of it in the Small Plates is in Isaiah chapters.⁶

The hand of the Lord can be upon any one either for good or evil, but generally in the sense of aiding or favoring.⁷ This conception aids in understanding the statement, "and the Lord has lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for a standard."⁸ This statement appears in an exposition of Nephi upon chapter 49 of Isaiah who appears to be the

¹Reynolds, op. cit., p. 661.

²Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (22d ed. rev.; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1936).

³Exod. 32:9.

⁴Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 1016.

⁵I Ne. 17:53, 54; Jac. 5:47; 6:4.

⁶Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Stretch."

⁷Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 399.

⁸I Ne. 22:6.

author of the above reference to the Gentiles.¹ It is curious to note that either Nephi or the Prophet Joseph Smith changed one word in the above-quoted phrase which in Isaiah reads לְעַלְיוֹתָם (to the Gentiles); in I Nephi it is "upon the Gentiles." Davidson comments that לְ (hand) followed by עַל (unto), translated "upon" or "against anyone," is to trouble him, usually not in a good sense; but לְ (hand) followed by עָלָם (upon), translated "upon anyone," is to strengthen and inspire him.²

Another expression, "the Lord setting his hand again the second time to restore his people," evidently is one of a number of characteristic Hebrew phrases found in the Book of Mormon that has been introduced through the Isaiah texts³ in the possession of the Nephites and subsequently used by the Book of Mormon writers.⁴ A manner of expression that is somewhat similar is: "And behold, according to the words of the prophet, the Messiah will set himself again the second time to recover them,"⁵ apparently a singular instance of this usage.

A final phrase pertaining to the hand is "the hand of providence hath smiled upon you."⁶ This is evidence of the Hebrew ability to personify objects and give them human

¹I Ne. 21:22. See Isa. 49:22.

²Davidson, Lexicon, p. CCXCVI.

³II Ne. 21:11. See Isa. 11:11.

⁴II Ne. 25:17; 29:1; Jac. 6:2.

⁵II Ne. 6:14.

⁶Jac. 2:13.

characteristics. That such personifications are characteristic is attested by Young:

Abstract and inanimate things are frequently personified, e.g. - Ears are attributed to the heavens, the earth, death and destruction; hands to the deep; eyes to the sea and the mountains; a voice to the deep, wisdom, and understanding; a will to the flesh and the mind; . . . speaking to the ear, eye, foot, days, years, blood, law, righteousness, and blood of sprinkling.¹

The phrase, "hand of providence hath smiled," is unique to all the Scriptures. It is interesting that on only three other occasions is the word smile to be found in the Standard Works, according to the concordances. One of these occasions is in III Nephi 19:25 in which it is recorded that the countenance of Jesus "did smile upon them," and again in verse 30 where it states "he did smile upon them again." The third instance is in the Doctrine and Covenants: "And the heavens have smiled upon her."²

Jacob is the author of another singular expression: "And if there was preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, . . . I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates."³ The writer was unable to find an expression identical to this in the Old Testament or elsewhere in the Small Plates. Hebrew רִאשׁוֹן (head) has as one of its meanings the idea of principal or chief or head of a thing and is so employed in the Old Testament.⁴ This would seem to be the sense in which Jacob is using the word heads.

¹Young, op. cit., p. vi.

²D. & C. 84:101.

³Jac. 1:4.

⁴Exod. 30:23; I Chron. 24:31; Neh. 11:17.

In the imagery of the Hebrew language, there are expressions which, when translated, do not fail to make sense of a sort, but yet to the Western mind have no connotative implications. Such an expression is "to lift up one's head." This is spoken of one who is happy and cheerful.¹ To understand this gives breadth of meaning to II Nephi 9:3, "I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow."²

A phrase similar to the last is *נִשָּׂא עֵינַי* (to lift up the eyes) or to "cast one's eyes upon any person or thing, i.e., in love, desire, longing."³ Thus it is possible that in his dream, Nephi was longingly looking for his family as he was standing by the tree of life as recorded in I Nephi 8.⁴ Another phrase is *נִשָּׂא קוֹל* (to lift up the voice) which is often employed antecedent to verbs of weeping, calling, rejoicing aloud.⁵ Thus the following statement by Nephi is strictly compatible with Hebrew usage:

Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God.⁶

¹Gesenius, *Lexicon*, p. 690. ²See also Jac. 3:2.

³Gesenius, *Lexicon*, p. 690.

⁴See I Ne. 8:13,17,25,26; II Ne. 25:20.

⁵Gesenius, *Lexicon*, pp. 690-91.

⁶II Ne. 4:35. Note also the picturesque "my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee."

Another characteristic Hebrew phrase is "he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes."¹ No identical phrase was found in the Old Testament, but there are verbs that conceivably could lend themselves to such usage, either לִכְזֹּב or $\text{לְשׁוֹאֵל$. The former has the meaning of dealing fraudulently or acting deceitfully,² and the latter connotes to deceive, seduce, or to corrupt.³ Both verbs have been translated as beguile in the Old Testament.

The Book of Mormon expression "to gain favor in the sight" of anyone⁴ has its equivalent in Hebrew: לְבַרְכָּתוֹ (find grace in the eyes of).⁵ As found in the Old Testament, the translation is usually "find favor in the sight of,"⁶ but Gesenius informs us that the verb לְבַרַּךְ has as one of its meanings to gain or obtain any good, wisdom, or favor.⁷

There is an interesting expression, "fruit of the loins," that is used only in chapter three of II Nephi (which is a recounting by Lehi to his son, Joseph, of the words of the Lord and the promises made to Joseph who was sold into Egypt) and in Jacob 2:25 where reference is made again to the posterity of Joseph. There is no exact equivalent of this in the Old Testament, although there are such expressions as

¹I Ne. 16:38.

²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 669.

³Ibid., p. 693.

⁴I Ne. 7:4.

⁵Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 354.

⁶Gen. 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 32:5.

⁷Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 606.

בטן (fruit of the womb)¹ and צא' ירך (the comers out of the thigh),² translated as those "which come out of his loins." These would seem to establish a possible basis for such a concept as "fruit of the loins," especially if we allowed the Book of Mormon authors the liberty of substituting words within the general framework of a given imagery.

A very interesting picture is created by the Hebrew when he uses the term "nursing fathers"³ which has been derived from the basic Hebrew root יאצ (to establish, maintain, support).⁴ Twice the derived noun from the above stem has been translated "bringers up" of children.⁵ This stem is appropriately different from the more common one נא' (to give milk, to suckle)⁶ from whence derives nurse. "Nursing fathers" is used three times in the Book of Mormon. Actually the source of the term in the Small Plates must be attributed to Isaiah. The expression first appears in chapter 49 of Isaiah which Jacob quotes verbatim.⁷ Jacob subsequently uses it twice.⁸

The term fathers has the meaning of forefathers or ancestors and is used hundreds of time in this sense in the Old Testament.⁹ It is used similarly forty-two times in the Small

¹Isa. 13:18; Micah 6:7 is translated as "fruit of the body."

²Gen. 46:26; Exod. 1:5. ³Num. 11:12; Isa. 49:23.

⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. XXXII. ⁵II Kings 10:1,5.

⁶Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 427. ⁷I Ne. 21. See vs. 23.

⁸II Ne. 6:7; 10:9. ⁹Cruden, op. cit., pp. 207-09.

Plates excluding the chapters of Isaiah. The word forefathers is used once in the Old Testament¹ as is ancestors.² The former is found twice in the Small Plates³ and the latter not at all according to Reynolds' concordance. Fathers as employed in the Book of Mormon is compatible with good Hebrew usage.

One phenomenon noticed in the Small Plates is the usage of what would be in Hebrew the pronominal suffix attached to the noun father. In referring to Lehi, Nephi uses "my father" ninety-eight times. He refers to "our father" twelve times when he and his brothers are engaged in a joint project or undertaking; e.g., returning to Jerusalem to obtain the plates, etc. On four occasions he refers to "their father" when he speaks of his brothers' rebellion against Lehi. The reason for the different pronominal suffixes might be due to the principle that the sense rather than grammatical or logical propriety dictates the choice. "They are doing something to their father which we ought not do to ours, or I would not do to mine." The sense conveyed is that they are ignoring proper laws of conduct.

There is an expression in the Small Plates that lends itself to some speculation: "And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceeding high mountains."⁴ It is not suggested that Nephi was not transported by the Spirit, in other words, that this is not to be accepted

¹Jer. 11:10.

²Lev. 26:45.

³I Ne. 3:3; 15:14.

⁴II Ne. 4:25.

literally, but there is an intriguing alternative. In the Hebrew tongue there is an idiom כנפי רוּחַ (wings of the wind) which is a metaphor for swiftness¹ but could as properly be translated "wings of the spirit," since רוּחַ means wind, breath, spirit, etc. If the metaphor were allowed for the purpose of speculation, we then have Nephi transported swiftly to the high mountains. It could be postulated that this might be another instance of a too literal translation of the record on the plates. The meaning of the metaphor would be lost upon one not acquainted with the idiomatic connotations of the expression; consequently, the literal meaning only could be translated.

It would be interesting to know the original of each of the three following phrases in the Small Plates. It would seem that there is good reason to posit that in each case the translations might have been too literal. As a premise, the writer would like to point out that the Hebrew word which has been translated most frequently in the Old Testament as children is בֶּן (son).² The plural, בָּנִים (sons), is at times used for the immediate children, boys and girls, and also for children in the sense of descendants or posterity, as בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (children of Israel) and בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה (children of Judah).³ The first of the three expressions referred to above is "the children of Israel" which is used four times in the

¹Davidson, Lexicon, p. CCCXXXV.

²Young, op. cit., sub voce "Children."

³Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 155.

Small Plates¹ and which has just been noted as authentic. This has been cited as a basis to help clarify the form of another Book of Mormon expression, "children of men." Gesenius tells us that בְּנֵי אָדָם (man) is used as a collective noun and that it is equivalent to our English plural men.² Therefore, $\text{בְּנֵי אָדָם בְּנֵי}$ (sons of man) is properly translated "children of men"; it is a periphrastic plural for men,³ as is also בְּנֵי אָדָם (sons of man)⁴ which is appropriately translated "children of men." The connotation of the multitudinous usage of the expression "children of men" in the Small Plates⁵ seems to be mankind, apparently a quite literal translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The third expression, "children of the land," apparently is equivalent to inhabitants. This is found twice in the Small Plates.⁶ Although it was not found in the Old Testament, the phrase "people of the land" is common. In light of the above discussions, it is suggested that the form of this last-cited expression from the Book of Mormon is not without the scope of correct usage, grammatically and connotatively.

"People of my seed"⁷ and "seed of my and/or thy brethren"⁸ is unique and picturesque usage in the Small Plates connoting posterity which is not found in the Old Testament in this exact manner but which seems to fit a proper Hebrew form.

¹Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Israel."

²Gesenius, Lexicon, pp. 49-50. ³Ibid., p. 50.

⁴Ibid., p. 16. ⁵Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 127-28.

⁶I Ne. 17:32,33. ⁷I Ne. 12:15,19. ⁸I Ne. 12:1.

There are four phrases which, for the want of a better term, are classified as "geological" Book of Mormon expressions. The first, "face of the earth (or land),"¹ is common enough in English, but it is noted that its usage antedates the English language by milleniums. This expression is found many times in the Old Testament, as well as are related ones such as "face of the country,"² "face of the deep,"³ "face of the field,"⁴ "face of the waters,"⁵ and "face of the world."⁶ Tropically, the Hebrew noun פנים (face) is used when speaking of inanimate things⁷ just as we employ it in English.

The second phrase is "foundation of the world"⁸ for which an equivalent is found in II Samuel 22:16 and Psalm 18:15. A parallel, "foundation of the earth,"⁹ is also found in the Old Testament.

The third is a peculiar expression, "fountain of the Red Sea,"¹⁰ the structure of which is decidedly not idiomatic English. This is discussed in a following chapter.¹¹

The fourth and last expression appears in another statement of Nephi which the Prophet Joseph Smith seems to

¹Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Face."

²II Sam. 18:8. ³Job 38:30. ⁴II Kings 9:37.

⁵Gen. 1:2. ⁶Isa. 14:21.

⁷Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 829.

⁸I Ne. 10:18; II Ne. 9:18; 27:10.

⁹Job 38:4; Ps. 102:25; 104:5; Jer. 31:37; Isa. 24:18; 51:13,16; Zech. 12:1.

¹⁰I Ne. 2:9.

¹¹See pp. 109-10 of this thesis.

have handled quite literally; i.e., "we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord hath made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea."¹ He continues, "but great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea; wherefore, as it says isles, there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren."²

If Joseph Smith had been attempting to present an accurate record without obvious mistakes, it seems he would not have permitted such a glaring incongruity to have passed. But an examination of Hebrew idiom demonstrates the validity of such statements and indirectly demonstrates that the Prophet translated what was on the record without making changes to conform to his own pattern of thinking. The Hebrew word for isle is 'א, but it has as its primary meaning "habitable ground," or "dry land" as opposed to water.³ The second given meaning of this word is "land adjacent to the sea; a sea coast, whether on the shore of the mainland or an island."⁴ Thus, 'א can mean an island, but this is not its primary significance. Pertinent to the statement in verse 21, Gesenius informs us that the plural form of the word is used "very often for coasts, maritime regions, especially beyond the sea . . . hence generally of coasts and islands far remote."⁵ So it would seem that the usage of Nephi in both verses is good Hebrew.

¹II Ne. 10:20. ²II Ne. 10:21.

³Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 44. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid.

A series of idioms follow pertaining to the process of aging, death, the grave, and passing away--not only the passing away of human beings but also of abstractions. "Stricken in years" is found in the Old Testament¹ although not frequently. It is found once in the Small Plates² and is used one other time in the Book of Mormon.³ The Hebrew expression אָבַד בְּיָמָיו, which means "to advance in years,"⁴ has been translated "stricken in age" on four occasions in the Old Testament.⁵

To give expression to a similar concept, that of aging, the Book of Mormon writers used "he waxed old."⁶ (There are other passages in the Small Plates employing the verb wax; i.e., "face waxing pale,"⁷ "waxing in iniquity,"⁸ "waxing bold,"⁹ etc.). In Isaiah 50:9 and 51:6, the Hebrew verb בָּלָה (to waste away, to fail, to decay) has been translated to "wax old." One of the English definitions of wax is "to pass from one state to another; to grow, as to wax strong."¹⁰ It would seem most likely that the verb under consideration is archaic English and was employed alike by the King James translators and the Prophet in order to facilitate a translation that might otherwise be somewhat awkward.

Many phrases of moribundity abound in the Small Plates,

¹Josh. 13:1; I Kings 1:1. ²I Ne. 18:17. ³Alma 1:9.

⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. LXX.

⁵Gen. 18:11; 24:1; Josh. 23:1,2. ⁶II Ne. 4:12.

⁷II Ne. 27:33. ⁸Jac. 2:23. ⁹II Ne. 4:24.

¹⁰"Wax," Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed.

one such being "to give up the ghost,"¹ which is common to the Bible² and to our English vernacular. A form that is not quite so prosaic is to "go the way of all the earth."³ The Hebrew equivalent is כל-הדרך הלך and it means "to die".⁴ A singular expression in the Small Plates is "I am about to lie down in my grave."⁵ There are similarities in the Old Testament, but the writer was unable to locate an identical phrasing. To illustrate the ability of the Hebrew mind to turn a phrase and to be creative in expression, a few passages are quoted from the Jewish Scripture: "Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave";⁶ "I will gather thee unto my fathers, and thou shall be gathered into thy grave";⁷ "and he laid his carcase in his own grave";⁸ "that my mother might have been my grave";⁹ and to conclude, "he made his grave with the wicked."¹⁰

From the Small Plates come these poetic bits: "They were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their god";¹¹ "their gray hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust";¹² they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave";¹³ "whose limbs ye must soon lay down in

¹Jac. 7:20,21.

²Gen. 25:8,17; 35:29; Job 3:11; 10:18; Lam. 1:19.

³II Ne. 1:14. Also Josh. 23:14; I Kings 2:2.

⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. CLIV. ⁵Om. 1:30.

⁶Gen. 42:38. ⁷II Kings 22:20. ⁸I Kings 13:30.

⁹Jer. 20:17. ¹⁰Isa. 53:9.

¹¹I Ne. 18:18. ¹²Ibid. ¹³Ibid.

the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return";¹ "and I Jacob saw that I must soon go down to my grave";² "slumber of death";³ and "wherefore we did mourn out our days."⁴

The collocation of the following words in various Book of Mormon passages is unusual: death, hell, the devil, monster, and lake of fire and brimstone. It is curious that with but one exception all are found in the same chapter.⁵ A full explanation awaits additional resources; for now, it is suggested that the word monster in each of the cited passages may well be the same as is rendered dragon in Isaiah 27:1 (תַּנִּין). The connotation there, as aided by Ugaritic passages using the same word, seems to be of the forces of chaos and destruction (which equals death in the Book of Mormon case) as contrasted to the creative and governing powers of God. The noun תַּנִּין is rendered monster in Lamentations 4:3 and used literally, not figuratively.

In the Book of Mormon, life is "taken away,"⁶ whereas in the English idiom, one's life is taken. In I Kings 19:4,10,14 and Psalm 31:13 is found substance for the Book of Mormon expression. IN II Kings 6:32 is the very picturesque "this son of a murderer is sent to take away my head."

Associated with the concept of "taking life away" is

¹II Ne. 1:14.

²Jac. 7:27.

³Jac. 3:11.

⁴Jac. 7:26.

⁵II Ne. 9:10,12,19,26; 28:23.

⁶I Ne. 1:20; 17:44; II Ne. 5:2,4,19, to cite a few.

that of life "passing away," and also of time "passing away." The verb עבר (to pass over or to pass away) readily lends itself to the expression of such concepts¹ which are abundant in the Book of Mormon.²

A Hebrew manner of describing time lapses is "for the space of" any given time length. The Old Testament yields these: "And he abode with him the space of a month";³ "and the space of the seven sabbaths of years";⁴ "within the space of two full years."⁵ Parallel expressions have been produced by Book of Mormon writers perhaps with more frequency than they appear in the English Bible. Only a few from the Small Plates are listed: "And after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time";⁶ "we did pitch our tents for the space of a time";⁷ and "after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness."⁸ Incidentally, the use of hour(s) in the Book of Mormon is a curiosity. Hour is used only once in the Old Testament⁹ and is thought to be a product of the Babylonian exile.¹⁰ It is used only once in the Small Plates, in the above-quoted passage, but in the remainder of the Book of Mormon, it is used either in the singular

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, pp. 732-33.

²Jac. 7:26; I Ne. 12:3. See Reynolds, op cit., sub voce "Away."

³Gen. 29:14.

⁴Lev. 25:8.

⁵Jer. 28:11. See also Lev. 25:30; Ezra 9:8.

⁶I Ne. 11:19.

⁷I Ne. 16:17.

⁸I Ne. 8:8.

⁹Dan. 4:19.

¹⁰Cruden, op. cit., p. 314.

or plural twelve additional times.¹ The word in the book of Daniel which has been rendered hour in our English Bible is נִזְוָה (a moment of time). Gesenius informs us that it is of Chaldean derivation and that the Arabian equivalent means "moment, also hour."² Davidson adds that "in the Targums and elsewhere [it is] an hour."³

We are informed that

In place of hours, which meant nothing to him, the Hebrew often lived and thought in terms of seasons, these not of course the natural seasons of the year, but, instead, some indefinite portions of time. He tarried for a season in some places; he remembered the season during which his people had come out of Egypt; he cried unto God in the night season.⁴

This information given by Chase makes significant the use of the word season in Jacob 5. In the parable of the tame and wild olive trees, the Lord repeatedly states that the "fruit thereof shall be laid up against the season."⁵ It is noted that in the expression "laid up against the season," against seems to be employed in the sense of "preparation for" the season. As a final statement in the parable, the Lord is quoted as saying, "and then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."⁶

Not only is time measured by the space of a given time lapse, a distance traveled can also be, indeed is, measured by

¹Reynolds, op. cit., p. 332.

²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 1036.

³Davidson, Lexicon, p. DCCXXXI.

⁴Chase, op. cit., pp. 36-37. Italics are Chase's.

⁵Jac. 5:13,18,19,20,23,27,29,31,46,76. ⁶Jac. 5:77.

the passage of time.

In traveling in Bible lands, it is often customary to measure distances in units of time rather than in terms of space. One village is said to be three hours distant from one to another. In Old Testament days distance in traveling was similarly noted. It was 'three days' journey,' 'seven days' journey,' etc. (Genesis 30:36; 31:23).¹

The distance from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by way of Mount Seir is an eleven day journey.² This instance would seem to be more definite and precise than others in the Old Testament. In some passages it would seem difficult to determine whether the writer was prosaically commenting that the journey was of, say, three days, much as we might state that one "packed" back into some rugged hills for three days, or whether he was actually measuring a particular distance by the amount of time necessary to pass from one point to another. Such a passage which would present this writer with an obstacle of interpretation is found in II Kings 3:9,³ "and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey." Gesenius' version of the Hebrew phrase is "and they went about, around . . . a way of seven days."⁴ The question is moot. Did the kings take seven days to go about the way, or was the way (road) they traveled seven days' distance in length?

That for which groundwork is being laid is a number of similar statements from the Small Plates; e.g., "When he had--

¹Fred H. Wight, Manners and Customs in Bible Lands (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 271.

²Deut. 1:2. See also Gen. 30:36; Jonah 3:3,4.

³See I Kings 19:4.

⁴Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 701.

traveled three days in the wilderness"¹ or "we traveled for the space of four days."² It would seem that the interpretation of these Book of Mormon passages is open to discussion, but that the pattern for either inference is established in the Old Testament.

An expression of time found in Omni 1:21 is provocative: "And he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons." This is not necessarily "Indian talk" even though the Book of Mormon is purported to be the history of the ancestors of some western American Indian groups. But it does project to the fore the question "From what source did the American Indians acquire the custom of determining the amount of time elapsed by enumerating the number of new moons?" It is entirely a matter of speculation, but it is submitted that it might have been acquired through the Nephites from the Hebrew whose language employed two words, יָרַח and חֹדֶשׁ, which could be translated either as moon or as month.

How many readers of the Book of Mormon have conjectured about the quaint expression of Nephi when he exclaimed:

I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth. . . . I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters.³

The verb יָשָׁב means to sit or dwell. "To sit

¹I Ne. 2:6.

²I Ne. 16:13.

³I Ne. 14:11,12.

upon waters" is the direct translation of יָשַׁב עַל מַיִם ,
and to those who understand Hebrew, it denotes contiguity,
i.e., one is sitting or living by or near waters.

CHAPTER V

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF HEBREW GENIUS OF EXPRESSION IN THE SMALL PLATES

The ability of the Hebrew to creatively execute a provocative conception is a skillful art that has not gone without recognition and comment among those sensitive to literary composition. The vividness of imagery projected by the Hebrew is difficult to duplicate.

The Hebrew mind has distinctive and peculiar habits of thought which marked the ancient Hebrews as a people, which, indeed, set them apart from other nations and races of their time.¹

Although their peculiar genius was not bequeathed to future ages in any remarkable works of their hands or in philosophical conceptions and ideas, it was bequeathed in words, in the literary monument known as the Old Testament; and their rare gifts of literary expression owed more to their sense of wonder and their instinct for worship than to any other of their spiritual and mental endowments.²

In the preceding chapter it was endeavored to incorporate illustrative material from the Book of Mormon as well as from the Old Testament to demonstrate that, to a degree, the aptness of the Book of Mormon writers paralleled that of Old Testament writers in their ability to strikingly and graphically turn a phrase.

¹Chase, op. cit., p. 17

²Ibid., p. 61. Italics are Chase's.

The objective of this chapter is identical to that of the previous one. In addition there will be presented some words and phrases which may not qualify as great bits of imagery but which have the apparent distinctive powers of typical Hebrew expression.

Under first consideration will be a few phrases pertaining to the "Spirit." There is an impressive phrase from the Small Plates that appears to be unique to the Book of Mormon; the writer was unable to locate a similar expression in the Old Testament. Lehi is recorded as saying, "Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me."¹ Elsewhere Jacob employs the same composition: "And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me."² Similar in context but differently phrased is, "For behold, I have workings in the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak."³ These could be bonafide Hebrew idioms by virtue of their construction and content. Some Old Testament passages seem to describe similar phenomena, although not phrased identically.⁴

In Genesis 6:3 there is in the Hebrew tongue the expression, **לֹא-יִדּוֹן רוּחַ בָּאָדָם לְעַלְמָא**, which has been translated as "my spirit shall not always strive with man." Gesenius interprets the Hebrew to read, "my Spirit shall not forever be made low in man, i.e., the superior and divine

¹II Ne. 1:6. ²Jac. 4:15. ³I Ne. 19:20.

⁴Exod. 31:3-5; 35:31; Isa. 11:2; 61:1; Ezek. 2:2; 3:24.

nature shall not forever be humiliated in the inferior."¹ He presents also a variant interpretation, "the spirit not dwelling or ruling in man."² In the Small Plates, the concept of "the Spirit not striving with man" is found three times.³ From the cited usage of it in the Old Testament, its employment appears to be valid.

To "be carried away in the Spirit,"⁴ or some variation, such as "carried away in a vision,"⁵ or "caught away in the Spirit,"⁶ are expressions that seem to be original with the Book of Mormon, at least the phrasing. An apparent legitimate basis for such concept is supplied by Ezekiel: וַתֵּשְׁבֵנוּ (and the spirit lifted me up).⁷ The verb stem of this phrase is שָׁבַע which symbolizes not only "to lift up" but also "to bear, carry, take away."⁸

A question has been raised by some as to the validity of the concept, "the feeling of words," as used in the following passage: "Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words."⁹ One Hebrew verb that seems to qualify for such usage is בִּין which can be translated

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 239. ²Ibid., p. 240.

³I Ne. 7:14, and twice in II Ne. 26:11.

⁴I Ne. 11:19,29; 14:30; 15:1.

⁵I Ne. 1:8.

⁶I Ne. 11:1.

⁷Ezek. 8:3.

⁸Davidson, Lexicon, p. DLXIII.

⁹I Ne. 17:45.

feel.¹ Gesenius defines its English equivalents as "to discern mentally," "to discern, to perceive," "to attend, give heed to."²

Akin to the phrase "ye could not feel his words" is the choice gem "blind in your minds."³ This is an excellent bit of imagery for which it appears the Prophet Joseph Smith could not have found a model in the Old Testament. Yet there is a Hebrew adjective רָאָה (blind) which has as one of its connotations, mental blindness, as in the metaphorical use in Isaiah 29:18, 42:18; 43:8.

A number of phrases from the Book of Mormon might be subsumed under the general concept of apostasy. The first of these is "to turn aside" or "to turn away." Typical illustrations are: "And as for those who are at Jerusalem . . . they shall be scourged . . . because they crucify the God of Israel, and turn their hearts aside";⁴ "and because they turn their hearts aside . . . they shall wander in the flesh";⁵ and "they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel."⁶ The verb רָאָה signifies "to turn aside" or "to turn away" or "to depart,"⁷ hence to apostatize. Thus authenticity is given to the Book of Mormon usage of turning aside.

¹Ps. 58:9.

²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 140.

³I Ne. 7:8. See also I Ne. 14:7; 17:30; Jar. 1:3.

⁴I Ne. 19:13.

⁵I Ne. 19:14. (Note the uncommon descriptive phrase "they shall wander in the flesh").

⁶I Ne. 19:15.

⁷Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 708.

In I Nephi 13:32 is a statement that the Lord will not "suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness." It is noted that in the first edition, the last phrase reads "awful state of woundedness." The change is not of great importance, but there is a loss of a picturesque word woundedness which could be a rendition of וַיַּד (stroke or blow, specifically of judgments that God sends)¹ or וַיַּד (wound).²

An apostate condition is also reflected by "ripened in iniquity"³ or some related form. The Old Testament is devoid of this expression, but, interestingly, it is found in the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴

Nephi graphically condemns men for trampling under feet "the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and the soul. . . . Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet."⁵ The verb דָּלַד has as a meaning "to trample under foot," and is so employed in Psalm 91:13.

The prophet Zenos relates the consequences that will befall those at Jerusalem who reject the God of Israel. One consequence is descriptively portrayed by "they shall . . . become a hiss and a by-word, and be hated among all nations."⁶ This exact phrase was not found in the Old Testament, although

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 647.

²Ibid., p. 837.

³I Ne. 17:35, 43; II Ne. 28:16.

⁴D. & C. 18:6. See also 61:31.

⁵I Ne. 19:7.

⁶I Ne. 19:14.

the concept of becoming a hiss or hissing is encountered. The expression *היה לשרקה* signifies "to become a hissing, i.e., object of scorn."¹ In Deuteronomy 28:37 there is a phrase of similar meaning and construction *והיית לשמה לשל* *ולשנינה*, which translated is "and thou shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword." It is not difficult to generalize that the Nephite writers could have substituted a word and thus have created the verbal image a hiss and a byword.

The familiar term stumbling-block as employed in the Book of Mormon² could possibly have as its basis the Hebrew *מכשול* (cause of stumbling)³ which has been translated in the Old Testament as stumbling-block.

We read in the Book of Mormon:

And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have a safe foundation. But behold, according to the scriptures, this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation, upon which the Jews can build.⁴

The Hebrew *אבן* (stone) is spoken of as a foundation stone in Isaiah 28:16. In this same verse, the phrase *פנת מוסד מוסד* is also found which translated is a "corner stone of preciousness of a sure foundation."

In continuance of his remarks relative to the stumbling of the Jews and their rejection of the stone upon which

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 1048.

²I Ne. 14:1; II Ne. 4:33; 26:20.

³Davidson, Lexicon, p. CCCXCVI.

⁴Jac. 4:15,16.

to build, Jacob comments, "And now, my beloved, how is it possible that they [the Jews] after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may become the head of their corner?"¹ This last is an unusual expression which gives one a feeling of incompleteness. A model for such usage is found in the Hebrew of Psalms 118:22 **הִיְתָה לְרֹאשׁ פֶּנֶת**, which literally means "become as head of the corner" but has been translated in the Authorized Version "is become the head stone"² of the corner," and in the version of the Jewish Publication Society "is become the chief corner-stone."

A striking expression from the Book of Mormon is "to be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations."³ This figure of speech undoubtedly has its roots in the graphic bit of imagery conjured up by Old Testament writers "drunken with blood."⁴ Obviously one does not become drunken with blood in the sense that is usually denoted to drunkenness; i.e., the state of inebriation. One Hebrew word used to express this image is **שָׂכַר** which means basically "to drink to the fill," or as we might say in English, "to drink to the point of being satiated." A second word **רָוַה** means "to become satiated with drink." It would seem evident that this state of being "drunken with blood" refers to a state of being

¹Jac. 4:17.

²The italicized "stone" indicates a word furnished by the translators to clarify the meaning of the original Hebrew.

³II Ne. 27:1.

⁴Deut. 32:42; Isa. 49:26; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 39:19.

satiated with bloodshed. At least Nephi seems to have this concept as he employs the phrase when he talks about the strife that will be fostered by the great and abominable church.¹

To depict appropriate reverence or piety toward the Lord, the Hebrew employs the phrase *יראת אלהים* or *יהוה* (the fear of God or Jehovah). It implies a more profound symbolism than the commonly accepted connotation of the word fear. In its most pregnant sense it carries the implication of reverence toward God, of religion, and of piety.² The Book of Mormon usage of the phrase "fear of God" as it has been defined is compatible with that of the Old Testament.³

It is notable that "the Hebrew language has no word 'religion.' The true religion is designated as 'the fear of God (or Yahwe).'"⁴ Chomsky declares that the concept of religion is defined through the medium of the word *תורה* (torah, teaching).⁵ Religion does not appear in the Small Plates, but, curiously, it is used ten times in the Book of Alma and in no other place. It is noted that public speakers sometimes are attracted to a particular expression and use it so frequently that it becomes identified with them. It might be that Alma had a "special" word, different from that employed by other Book of Mormon writers, which the Prophet Joseph Smith

¹I Ne. 22:13. ²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 441.

³II Ne. 27:34; Enos 1:23.

⁴Cyrus Gordon, Introduction to Old Testament Times. (Ventnor, N.J.: Ventnor Publishers, Inc., 1953), p. 55.

⁵Chomsky, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

translated religion.

In describing conditions of the last days as they had been revealed to him, Nephi predicts that there would be some with the philosophy of "eat, drink, and be merry . . . yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor."¹ This italicized phrase is used tropically of snares, devices, or plots against anyone;² its usage in the Book of Mormon appears bonafide.

The Hebrew שחן פני עני (to grind the face of the poor)³ has its counterpart in this passage from the Small Plates:

And the Gentiles are lifted up . . . they have built up many churches . . . they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach . . . their own wisdom and their own learning that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor.⁴

For those who kill the prophets it is predicted in the Small Plates that "buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder."⁵ There is a legitimate basis for this striking bit of imagery in the Hebrew שחן עד אשר יד-ד for which the English equivalent is "and he brake it in pieces until it was made fine, like powder."⁶

Lehi records that "the days of the children of men were

¹II Ne. 28:8; I Ne. 14:3 (twice); 22:14.

²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 499. ³Isa. 3:15.

⁴II Ne. 26:20. Note the collective singular face. See p. 46 of this thesis.

⁵II Ne. 26:5.

⁶Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 255. Italics are Gesenius'.

prolonged . . . that they might repent while in the flesh."¹

The concept of prolonging one's days is compatible with good Hebrew usage as illustrated by the employment of the verb

והארכת (to make long, prolong) as seen in I Kings 3:14: 'והארכתי

את-ימיך translated "then I will lengthen thy days."

A phrase comparable to the Biblical "throw off the yoke of captivity" is noted in this Book of Mormon passage:

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.²

Similarly, Jacob counsels, "Shake yourselves that ye may awake from the slumber of death; and loose yourselves from the pains of hell."³

The imagery of shaking or arousing one's self to an awareness of impending or threatening circumstances is expressed by two Hebrew verbs נער and נתר. Each has the connotation of shaking, particularly shaking off foliage. But the former, in the niph'al form of the verb, has the implicit meaning of shaking or rousing one's self,⁴ and the latter implies the shaking off of a yoke of captivity.⁵ The similarity of "throwing off a yoke of captivity" to "throwing off the chains with which ye are bound" is so apparent as to need no elaboration and would tend to support a claim of legitimacy

¹II Ne. 2:21.

²II Ne. 1:13. See also II Ne. 1:23; 9:45.

³Jac. 3:11. ⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. DLV.

⁵Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 699.

for the Book of Mormon descriptive phrase.

An uncommon bit of imagery is presented by Nephi with his "bellows wherewith to blow the fire"¹ and "that I might have wherewith to blow the fire."² The Hebrew פּוֹחַ signifies to "blow up a fire, to kindle up,"³ as does פּוֹחַ. As noted, this expression from the Book of Mormon which is not common to English is a legitimate Hebraism grounded in the Old Testament. Ezekiel speaks in terms of blowing a fire.⁴ In and of itself, this phrase is quite inconsequential, but as a part of the aggregate, it adds weight to the assumption that the Nephites were of Semitic origin and that this is to be indicated in their records.

Another well-executed phrase of Nephi is "they did breathe out much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me."⁵ The pronouncement is employed only this once in the Small Plates but is used subsequently in the Book of Mormon.⁶ A similar construction is found in Psalm 27:12: פִּי כַּחַם אֵשׁ (breathe out cruelty) or, according to Davidson, to breathe out violence, wrong, or injury.⁷

The Hebrew has a peculiar, characteristic manner of speech to indicate the termination of any given act; viz.,

¹I Ne. 17:11.

²Ibid.

³Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 676.

⁴Ezek. 22:20.

⁵I Ne. 18:17.

⁶Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 102-03.

⁷Davidson, Lexicon, p. CCCXXXIV.

"make an end of speaking," "make an end of blessing," etc.¹

The Hebrew verb that seems to be predominantly used to convey this sense is כלה.² The Book of Mormon writers likewise indicate cessation by making an end to these activities:

"speaking,"³ "sayings,"⁴ "propheying,"⁵ and "writing."⁶ It is curious to note that Book of Mormon writers also just "make an end."⁷

The Hebrew uses another phrase to convey the same meaning, i.e., to cease an activity. These examples are typical: "Ceasing to pray,"⁸ "cease from troubling,"⁹ "cease to answer,"¹⁰ and "cease to hear."¹¹ Book of Mormon parallels are the ceasing of "fleeing,"¹² "striving,"¹³ and "speaking."¹⁴ The idea of making an end to one's activity, especially to one's speech, is not in harmony with our English idiom. As has been observed, this is a peculiar characteristic "wholly foreign to the genius of our language."¹⁵

Lehi, speaking to his son Jacob of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, states that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice "to answer the ends of the law"¹⁶ and that this sacrifice

¹Young, op. cit., p. 298 for further examples.

²Ibid. ³I Ne. 14:30; Jac. 2:22; 3:14; Om. 1:30.

⁴II Ne. 30:18. ⁵II Ne. 31:1. ⁶Jac. 7:27.

⁷I Ne. 22:29; Om. 1:9,11. ⁸I Sam. 12:23. ⁹Job 3:17.

¹⁰Job 32:1. ¹¹Prov. 19:27. ¹²I Ne. 4:29.

¹³I Ne. 7:14,19; II Ne. 26:11. ¹⁴I Ne. 8:38.

¹⁵Brookbank, The Improvement Era, XVIII (1914), p. 138.

¹⁶II Ne. 2:7.

is effective only for those with a broken heart and contrite spirit, for "unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."¹ Lehi then declares that the "ends of the law . . . answer the ends of the atonement."² The rare Hebrew noun **מַעֲנֶה** (end, intent) lends itself readily to this phrase. It is derived from the verb **עָנָה** (to answer). It will be remembered that the Hebrew finds delight in effecting paronomasia which is commonly achieved by the process of deriving a noun from a verb.³

The following passage portrays authentic Hebraisms:

And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses.⁴

"Flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind" is delightfully unusual. The Hebrew **עֲדָר־מִקְנָה** **כָּל־מִיִּנּוֹת** **וְעֲדָר בְּהֵמֹת** could easily and properly be rendered as found in the Book of Mormon. It could just as properly be translated "herds of cattle (the larger or bovine species) and flocks of animals (the small 'cattle' of the King James translation--such domesticated animals as sheep) of all kinds." Either translation is correct; the one is a bit awkward.

Nephi properly differentiates between goats and wild goats in the above passage. In Hebrew there are multiple words to categorize the following types of goats: **עֲלִים** (wild

¹Ibid.

²II Ne. 2:10.

³See pages 24-26 of this thesis.

⁴Enos 1:21.

goats);¹ עֵז (she-goats);² and either עֵזֹד,³ שְׂעִיר,⁴ or צִפִּיר,⁵ (he-goats). It would be of interest to know at what stage the general term goats was introduced, whether by Nephi or by Joseph Smith who may have failed to distinguish between he- and she-goats.

Nephi speaks of the return of the children of God from the four quarters of the earth and comments that the Lord "numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture."⁶ There are interesting ramifications of the word pasture beyond that of feeding. Tropically, as a verb it signifies to lead, govern, or rule; it has the sense of taking pleasure or delight in and of associating with. In its declined state as a noun, it symbolizes a friend, a companion, a lover.⁷ In moments of speculation, it is visualized how the Savior in his relationship to his people would satisfy any desired connotation of the word.

There are some word images in the Book of Mormon which would require no elaboration as to their authenticity because their Old Testament usage is so common; e.g., "And I beheld multitudes of people, yea, even as it were in number as many as the sand of the sea";⁸ "come unto the Holy One of Israel,

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 431. ²Ibid., p. 751.

³Ibid., p. 808. ⁴Ibid., p. 973. ⁵Ibid., p. 876.

⁶I Ne. 22:25. ⁷Davidson, Lexicon, p. DCLXXXVI.

⁸I Ne. 12:1. The two other usages in the Small Plates are from Isaiah chapters, I Ne. 20:19; II Ne. 20:22.

and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness";¹ and "we cast lots--who of us should go unto the house of Laban. And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman."²

Although the expression round about may be common to the English vernacular, the manner in which it is used in the Small Plates is strange, e.g., "Yea, after the Lord God shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them. . . ."³ There are over 200 similar expressions in the Old Testament, the majority of them translated from the substantive **סָבִיב** (circuit) which is properly used as an adverb or a preposition.⁴ This expression is used four other times in the Small Plates and eighty-three times in the remaining part of the Book of Mormon.⁵

Jacob is the author of an unusual expression:

. . . lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they [the children of Nephi] should not enter in [into his rest] , as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.⁶

This is somewhat parallel to the Old Testament **אל־תִּקְשֹׁן**
לִבְבְּכֶם כַּמֶּרִיבָה כִּיּוֹם מִטָּה translated "harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation."⁷
 The basic meaning of **מֶרִיבָה** (rendered provocation) is

¹II Ne. 9:51; Isa. 55:2. ²I Ne. 3:11.

³II Ne. 26:15. ⁴Davidson, Lexicon, p. DLXXI.

⁵Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 599-600. ⁶Jac. 1:7.

⁷Ps. 95:8. Italicized words indicate those inserted by the translators.

contention,¹ and that of נִסָּה (rendered temptation) is trial.² This clarifies the message of the Psalmist. He is saying "harden not your heart, as in the contention in the days of trial while the children of Israel were in the wilderness." This is the message of Jacob, warning Lehi's posterity that they should not become contentious in moments of strife as the children of Israel did while they were in the desert following their release from Egypt.

The following picturesque expressions from the Small Plates in the majority seem to be unique to the Book of Mormon. Due to the fact that they are in the genitive case, it would not be difficult to translate them back into adequate Hebrew using the "construct state". The first of these is mother of abominations³ to which there is a closely related term mother of harlots.⁴ The other expressions are fullness of wrath;⁵ fullness of the wrath of God;⁶ vapor of darkness;⁷ vapor of smoke;⁸ mist of darkness;⁹ nations of the Gentiles;¹⁰ and cavity of a rock¹¹ (which is reminiscent of Isaiah's cleft of a rock).¹² Two other expressions, not in the genitive case

¹Davidson, Lexicon, p. DCLXXXIII. ²Ibid., p. DLII.

³I Ne. 14:9,10,13,16. ⁴I Ne. 13:34; 14:16,17.

⁵I Ne. 22:17; II Ne. 1:17. ⁶I Ne. 17:35; 22:16.

⁷I Ne. 12:5; 19:11. ⁸I Ne. 22:18.

⁹I Ne. 8:23 (twice), 24; 12:4,17 (mists of).

¹⁰I Ne. 13:4; 13:29 (twice); 14:13; II Ne. 10:8; 27:1.

¹¹I Ne. 3:27. ¹²Isa. 2:21.

are "dwindle in unbelief"¹ and "we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness."²

One construct phrase is no longer evident in the current editions of the Book of Mormon, but the phraseology found in the first edition is worthy of mention; i.e., "wherefore let us be faithful in him,"³ and "if it so be that we are faithful in him, we shall obtain the land of promise."⁴ In each instance the word in has been changed to read to. In Hebrew the preposition ל (in) is grammatically more correct than is the preposition ל (to) in each of the above cases. Evidence of this is seen in part of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 1:32. This part has been translated "ye did not believe the Lord your God." However, in this passage the active verb believe is not employed, but the illusion of a verb has been achieved through the use of the hiph'il participle. The phrase would be more properly rendered "ye were ones not believing in the Lord" or, just as correctly, "ye were ones not faithful in the Lord your God." In the Hebrew text, ביהוה (in the Lord) is used in this passage but has not been so translated.

A number of provocative expressions have been displayed by Jacob in his writings and sermons; e.g., "I have hitherto been diligent in the office of my calling";⁵ and

¹Used eleven times in the Small Plates. See Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Dwindle," "Dwindled," "Dwindling," p. 195.

²I Ne. 17:1. ³Wood, op. cit., p. 16. See I Ne. 7:12.

⁴Ibid. See I Ne. 7:13. ⁵Jac. 2:3.

similarly, "we did magnify our office unto the Lord";¹ and "according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness."²

Further illustrations of the creativity and unusual expressiveness found in Jacob's sermons and writings follow:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech you in words of soberness that ye would repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you. And while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day, harden not your hearts.³

Also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore we did mourn out our days.⁴

And it came to pass that after many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; but behold, the main top thereof began to perish.⁵

Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed to him.⁶

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall.⁷

Looking beyond the mark could have been rendered from the Hebrew **אָוַן** (to miss the mark) which also connotes the act of sinning or erring.⁸ An understanding of this verb clarifies Jacob's statement.

In referring to the allegory of the tame and wild olive

¹Jac. 1:19. ²Jac. 2:2. ³Jac. 6:5. ⁴Jac. 7:26.

⁵Jac. 5:6. ⁶Jac. 4:8. ⁷Jac. 4:14.

⁸Gesenius, Lexicon, pp. 331-32.

trees, Jacob uses the word cumber¹ which appears once in the New Testament² and nowhere in the Old Testament. (However, cumbrance is used in Deuteronomy 1:12, which is a translation of טָרֵב [a burden or trouble]).³

It is possible that this allegory of the olive trees, which is attributed to the Prophet Zenos,⁴ is the antecedent of the various Biblical and Book of Mormon quotations that have a similar cast. This could account for the common use of cumber in Jacob and in Luke. The short parable of Jesus quoted by Luke (Luke 13:6-9) has some similarities to the parable of the olive trees. It is interesting that Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, speaks of the process of grafting a wild branch into a "good" olive tree and the subsequent grafting of the natural back into their own trees.⁵ Isaiah's parable of the vineyard⁶ could have been patterned after the allegory of Zenos.

Although Jacob is the source of numerous curiosities, Nephi is the author of two of the unique statements to be found within the pages of the Book of Mormon. After inscribing the bulk of the words of Isaiah to be found in the Small Plates,⁷ Nephi makes some lengthy comments and predictions,⁸ in the course of which he reflects on the record of his people which will have been preserved in the dust and which would come forth out

¹Jac. 5:9,30,44,49,66. ²Luke 13:7.

³Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 393. ⁴Jac. 5:1-3.

⁵Rom. 11:24. ⁶Isa. 5:1-7. ⁷II Ne. 12-24.

⁸II Ne. 25-33.

of it. Of the part this record would have in the establishing of the word and the work of the Lord, Nephi testifies:

And now, behold, my brethren, I have spoken unto you, according as the Spirit hath constrained me; wherefore I know that they must surely come to pass.

The things which shall be written out of the book, shall be of great worth unto the children of men, and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house of Israel.¹

Out of the book translates readily into the Hebrew

רצה מן which is the coalesced form of two Hebrew words:

רצה (of) from which comes the idea, from the partitive significance of the word, of proceeding out of or from anything, according to Gesenius,² and רצה מן (the book). It would seem that this awkward Book of Mormon expression is an authentic Hebraism for a concept which in English would be phrased differently, i.e., "the things written in this book shall be of great worth."

Subsequently, the Lord speaks through Nephi, saying:

But behold, there shall be many--at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel.³

The italicized phrase in this last passage would seem to infer that the Lord would accept the Nephite record as

¹II Ne. 28:1,2.

²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 584.

³II Ne. 29:1,2.

scripture and that at some future time it would be revealed to the descendants of Nephi as the word of the Lord with all the force as if spoken by his mouth.

A comment would seem to be appropriate on the word hiss as it is employed in the above passage. Ordinarily, hiss is used in the Scriptures in the sense of scorn or derision. The meaning of the verb פָּרַשׁ is to hiss or to whistle.¹ Derived from this is the tropical meaning, as used by Isaiah (and Nephi), to call the nations to assemble from the ends of the earth.²

Lehi speaks graphically of a gulf of misery and woe in a discourse to his descendants wherein he exclaims, "O that ye would awake . . . even from the sleep of hell . . . and shake off the awful chains . . . which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe."³ In speaking of this gulf, Lehi may have had the concept denoted by the Hebrew יוֹרְדֵי-בֹר (ones going down to the sepulchre), signifying the dead;⁴ or לַאֲשֵׁר (the under world) which Gesenius describes as "a vast subterranean place, full of thick darkness . . . in which are congregated the shades of the dead"⁵ (the significance of which is a matter of debate among Biblical scholars); or בֶּרֶךְ (pit) which is symbolic of the many Hebrew words that are emblematic of death

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 1047.

²Isa. 5:26.

³II Ne. 1:13.

⁴Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 134. See Pss. 28:1; 30:3.

⁵Ibid., p. 980.

and destruction.¹

The full implication of a thought expressed by Nephi is probably lost upon those lacking discernment of the idiomatic imagery of the Hebrews. It is necessary to know somewhat of the context from which the expression is extracted in order to better comprehend these implications.² In essence, Nephi speaks of the fate of those who fight against Zion. He describes the awe-promoting conditions of the last days and comments that the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked. He states that those who belong to the kingdom of the devil "will fear, and tremble, and quake; they . . . must be brought low in the dust; they . . . must be consumed as stubble."³

Nephi then asserts "that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory."⁴ Ordinarily, the expression "calves of the stall" seems to connote the quality of fatness, or of being well attended. This conception would seem to be substantiated in the proverb "better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."⁵ The Hebrew verb used in this proverb is סלל (to fatten cattle). When Amos refers to calves of the stall, he seems to have reference to sleek, well-fed calves.⁶ However, this does not seem to be the connotation that Nephi desires to convey. He seems to imply that when the

¹Ibid., p. 1003. ²See I Ne. 22. ³I Ne. 22:23.

⁴I Ne. 22:24. ⁵Prov. 15:17. ⁶Amos 6:4.

calves are led up to the stall it will be as a protective measure against the calamities that others will be experiencing, that they may be brought to their proper place and cared for adequately. One Hebrew verb which seems to be appropriate to the conditions portrayed by Nephi is נהל which has as its primary meaning "to lead" or "to conduct" with care and protection. Hence, a secondary meaning is "to protect," "to provide for," and "to sustain."¹

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 652.

CHAPTER VI

LEXICAL IDIOMS AND CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS

The objective of the last two chapters has been to present idiomatic expressions that evoke an imagery not common to our western minds, yet understandable to a degree, being idioms that are comparable to the literary style and form of Old Testament idioms. The premise of this chapter is somewhat different.

It is generally recognized among students of languages that there are some phrases so fused with cultural connotations and involvements that, while the expression may have significance in translation, the full, rich import of it will be lost.

In themselves words have no meanings; it is our reactions to them or our experiences with them that lend them their meaning. What the words "mean" or convey to us depends on the nature, extent and intensity of our experiences, direct or vicarious, with them. . . . Words are set in the orbit of the experience of the people employing them. When transposed from one experiential orbit into another by means of translation or borrowing, the words change their "meaning."¹

Roger Brown further develops this idea:

A more common sort of lexical difference is one of imperfect coincidence of partially overlapping terms. The German Vaterland is much like the American fatherland. The two words may have identical referents. If, however, we extend our notion of semantics to include all the contexts in which a word may be used--and all the things said of it, all the adjectives applied to it, all the emotional

¹Chomsky, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

slogans in which it appears--it will be clear that Vaterland and fatherland are not identical. . . . A full description of the meaning of any one of these words would involve a description of the greater part of the culture to which the word belongs. Ruth Benedict has actually presented the Japanese culture by attempting to give the full meanings of a few Japanese words. The Japanese equivalent of elder brother, for example, is partially identical with our term, but a full definition involves a description of Japanese law and family life.¹

An attempt will be made in this chapter to initially explore selected idioms from the Book of Mormon that are lexically understood but for which the complete, rich complex of connotations is forfeited in translation. Chomsky affirms that

words in one language cannot be rendered by their equivalents in another language without losing something vitally and essentially peculiar to the mentality and genius of the people employing the tongue. It is a delusion to assume that one can fully understand the essence of Judaism in any language but Hebrew.²

It would seem logical, then, that it is of interest and vital importance to those who accept the Book of Mormon as a genuine scripture to be able to perceive more adequately the cultural connotations in the book. The term wilderness is a case in point. Nibley states:

The desert into which Lehi first retreated and in which he made his first long camp has been known since Old Testament times as the wilderness par excellence. Thanks to the Bible, it is this very section of the earth's surface to which the word wilderness most closely applies, so that Nephi is using the word in its fullest correctness. From I Nephi 8:4 and 7, we learn that by wilderness he means waste, i.e. desert, and not jungle.³

¹Roger Brown, Words and Things (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 259-60.

²Chomsky, op. cit., p. 12.

³Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishing Co., 1952) pp. 55-56. Italics are Nibley's.

Nibley quotes Kenyon to the effect that the wilderness refers not only to "uninhabitable wastes" but also to terrain that is characteristic of "oases and wadies where crops may be raised."¹

The Hebrew word מדבר is the term most frequently employed in the Old Testament to signify wilderness. Its two basic meanings are (a) "an uninhabited region, not mountainous nor desert, but adapted to pasturing,"² and (b) "a desert, a sterile, sandy region."³ The latter concept may have been predominant in the thinking of Lehi and his party as they traversed the Arabian peninsula⁴ and the former definition expressive of the conditions they encountered on this continent after their arrival. Neither of these impressions coincides with that called to mind by us in this country for whom wilderness suggests forests and woods, clearings and tangled underbrush. Nor to the English idiom are desert and wilderness synonymous terms as they are for the Hebrew. It is curious that desert is found only twice in the Book of Mormon, these instances being in the Isaiah chapters,⁵ whereas wilderness is employed hundreds of times.⁶

Lehi waxes poetic in his usage of the word wilderness:

And now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. Thou wast born in the wilderness of mine afflictions; yea, in

¹Ibid., p. 56. ²Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 543. ³Ibid.

⁴Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, pp. 54-55.

⁵II Ne. 8:3; 23:21.

⁶Reynolds, op. cit., sub voce "Wilderness."

the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee.¹

And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed.²

Nephi records that after leaving Jerusalem, Lehi and his party "traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea."³ Traveling "in the borders near a body of water" does not fit our western pattern of thinking; we are insensitive to the full implications that such a construction might convey to a Semite. Of the many Hebrew words in the Old Testament which have been translated borders, the most frequently used is גבול⁴ which has as its meaning, bound, limit, border, or territory.⁵ Evidently, the party of Lehi was not traveling along the shore (Hebrew: שפ, lips) of the Red Sea but rather in the regions or the territory near the Red Sea. Subsequently Nephi records: "And we did go forth again in the wilderness, following the same direction, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea."⁶

In logging the events that occurred after their departure from Jerusalem, Nephi observes that after Lehi had traveled "three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water."⁷ The full import of such a statement would elude most of us of the Western

¹II Ne. 3:1. ²II Ne. 3:3. ³I Ne. 2:5.

⁴Young, op. cit., p. 105.

⁵Davidson, Lexicon, p. CXXIX.

⁶I Ne. 16:14. ⁷I Ne. 2:6.

culture, because the only rivers with which we have had experience are so called because they have water; otherwise, they are referred to as river beds. Nibley concludes that

the very fact that Nephi uses the term "a river of water," to say nothing of Lehi's ecstasies at the sight of it, shows that they are used to thinking in terms of dry rivers--the "rivers of sand" of the East. . . . One only speaks of "rivers of water" in a country where rivers do not run all the time.¹

An interesting passage in the Old Testament confirms this observation. The setting is in the desert in which the Children of Israel are wandering following their release from bondage. An unknown scribe records: "From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters."²

While the Nephite exiles encamped "by the side of a river of water," Lehi "saw that the waters³ of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea."⁴ Regarding this passage, Nibley comments:

Is the Red Sea a fountain? For the Arabs any water that does not dry up is a fountain. Where all streams and pools are seasonal, only springs are abiding--water that never runs away or rises and falls and can therefore only be a "fountain." This was certainly the concept of the Egyptians, from whom Lehi may have got it.⁵

¹Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, pp. 91-92. Italics are Nibley's.

²Deut. 10:7.

³Note the use of the plural waters from the Hebrew מֵי. The singular מֵא is an unused form. See Davidson, Hebrew Grammar, p. 57. This would seem to add weight to the assumption that much of the translating of the Prophet was very specific.

⁴I Ne. 2:9.

⁵Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, p. 234.

The writer has no disagreement with the idea that fountain may have the explicit meaning to the Hebrew of a source of water that does not dry up, but there is a question as to whether this type of fountain (one that never dries up) is equivalent to the "fountain of the Red Sea" spoken of by Lehi. Nor, to the writer's satisfaction, do the entries in the various lexicons under the many Hebrew equivalents of English fountain offer any clues to aid in the clarification of the matter. Consequently, the phrase is left as one noted but whose cultural connotation is presently undetected.

In speaking to his son Lemuel, Lehi exclaims, "O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!"¹

As to this valley, firm and steadfast, who, west of Suez, would ever think of such an image? We, of course, know all about everlasting hills and immovable mountains, the moving of which is the best-known illustration of the infinite power of faith, but who ever heard of a steadfast valley? The Arabs to be sure. For them the valley, and not the mountain, is the symbol of permanence. It is not the mountain of refuge to which they flee, but the valley of refuge. The great depressions that run for hundreds of miles across the Arabian peninsula pass for the most part through plains devoid of mountains. . . . The qualities of firmness and steadfastness, of reliable protection, refreshment, and sure refuge when all else fails, which other nations attribute naturally to mountains, the Arabs attribute to valleys.²

This, however, is not to say that the Hebrew did not also attribute to mountains strength, permanence, and refuge as well as other qualities. Psalm 30:7 reads: "Lord, by thy favour thou has made my mountain to stand strong." There

¹I Ne. 2:10.

²Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, pp. 234-235.

comes to mind, also, the lofty expression of Isaiah 2:2, "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains."

The term "to go down from" or "up to Jerusalem" is properly employed in the Book of Mormon. While it is topographically appropriate due to the fact that Jerusalem is situated in the heights of the central mountain range in Israel, there also seems to be a richer cultural meaning. It is posited that the high position of Jerusalem was achieved because it was the locus for the secular and religious historical movements in that country. This conception apparently was not confined to the Hebrews but was also understood by Egyptians contemporary to Lehi's time:

Though he "dwelt at Jerusalem," Lehi did not live in the city, for it was after they had failed to get the plates in Jerusalem that his sons decided to "go down to the land of our inheritance" (1 Ne. 3:16,21), and there gather enough wealth to buy the plates from Laban. Loaded with the stuff, they "went up again unto the house of Laban" in Jerusalem. (Id. 22f.) The Book of Mormon employs the expressions "to go down" and "to go up" exactly as the Hebrews and Egyptians did with reference to the location of Jerusalem, and thus clearly establishes that Lehi's property lay somewhere in the country and not within the walls of Jerusalem.¹

Another important item in the above quotation merits attention. Paradoxically, "though he dwelt at Jerusalem, Lehi did not live in the city." Nibley offers an explanation:

When we speak of Jerusalem, it is important to notice Nephi's preference for a non-Biblical expression, "the land of Jerusalem," in designating his homeland. While he and his brothers always regard "the land of Jerusalem" as

¹Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, pp. 5-6.

their home, it is perfectly clear from a number of passages that "the land of our father's inheritance" cannot possibly be within, or even very near, the city, even though Lehi "had dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days." (I Nephi 1:4). The terms seem confused, but they correctly reflect actual conditions, for in the Amarna letters we read of "the land of Jerusalem" as an area larger than the city itself, and even learn in one instance that "a city of the land of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib has been captured." It was the rule in Palestine and Syria, as the same letters show, for a large area around a city and all the inhabitants of that area to bear the name of the city. . . . The same conservatism made it possible for Socrates to be an Athenian, and nothing else, even though he came from the village of Alopeke, at some distance from the city. This arrangement deserves mention because many have pointed to the statement of Alma 7:10 that the Savior would be born "at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers," as sure proof of fraud. It is rather the opposite, faithfully preserving the ancient terminology to describe a system which has only been recently discovered.¹

The Book of Mormon reference to Lehi's tent apparently would evoke a much greater significance to a tent dweller than to the non-tent dwellers of our culture.

The editors of the Book of Mormon have given a whole verse to Nephi's laconic statement, "And my father dwelt in a tent" (I Nephi 2:15), and rightly so, since Nephi himself finds the fact very significant and refers constantly to his father's tent as the center of his universe. To an Arab, "my father dwelt in a tent" says everything. . . . One of the commonest oaths of the Arabs, Burckhardt reports . . . is "by the life of this tent and its owners," taken with one hand resting on the middle tent pole. If a man's estate is to be declared void after his death, "the tent posts are torn up immediately after the man has expired, and the tent is demolished." . . . And the cult of the tent was important to the Hebrews as well. Indeed, Hebrew tent (ohel) Arabic family (ahl) were originally one and the same word. . . .

So with the announcement that his "father dwelt in a tent," Nephi serves notice that he had assumed the desert way of life, as perforce he must for his journey: any easterner would appreciate the significance and importance of the statement, which to us seems almost trivial.²

The power of the oath is vividly depicted in the

¹Ibid., pp. 4-5. Italics are Nibley's.

²Ibid., pp. 57-58. Italics are Nibley's.

incident that occurred between the servant Zoram and Nephi after the former had followed the latter outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Zoram had supposed erroneously that Nephi was his master Laban. Upon discovering that he had been deceived, Zoram turned as if to flee to the city when Nephi,

a powerful fellow, held the terrified Zoram in a vice-like grip long enough to swear a solemn oath in his ear, "as the Lord liveth, and as I live" (I Nephi 4:32), that he would not harm him if he would listen. Zoram immediately relaxed, and Nephi swore another oath to him that he would be a free man if he would join the party: "Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shall have place with us." (I Nephi 4:34.)

What astonishes the western reader is the miraculous effect of Nephi's oath on Zoram, who upon hearing a few conventional words promptly becomes tractable, while as for the brothers, as soon as Zoram "made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth . . . our fears did cease concerning him." (I Nephi 4:35,37.)¹

To the Semites, the oath, as an invocation, was a witness to the honesty of one's words and motives. One of several forms might be selected; e.g., "as Jehovah liveth" (I Samuel 14:39); "God do so to me and more also" (I Samuel 14:44); and "Jehovah is a witness between thee and me forever" (I Samuel 20:23).²

The terminology utilized by the Book of Mormon writers when reference is made to the color of skin of the Lamanites after they have been cursed is interesting. In no instance are the Lamanites referred to as being cursed with a red skin

¹Ibid., p. 109-10.

²"Oath," Funk & Wagnalls Bible Dictionary, eds. Melancthon W. Jacobus, et. al. (3d ed. rev.; Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, 1936).

but either with a dark skin or, significantly, with a black skin.¹ Dr. Nibley states that for "the Arabs, to be white of countenance is to be blessed and to be black of countenance is to be cursed; there are parallel expressions in Hebrew and Egyptian."² As he elaborates, he attempts an explanation of the processes whereby the Lamanites become "a dark and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations."³ He concludes that this condition is cultural and although it "may not be the whole story of the dark skin of the Lamanites, . . . it is an important part of that story and is given great emphasis by the Book of Mormon itself."⁴ The interest of the researcher is not in the process but in the terms that have been employed to designate the differences of skin color. Köhler makes this comment on the color of complexions:

Even though the skin color of the Mediterranean people appears dark to us, we must not be led astray by this. For the basic color is white. It is only pigmentation and sunburn which make it appear dark. In Syria today the color which ranks as best for the human body is 'el-lon 'el hinti, the color of wheat. Wheat in both Hebrew and Arabic gets its name, however, from its color, which is defined as a mixture of yellow, white, and reddish tints. 'Wheat ripened like the cheeks of a maiden,' says a Palestinian Arab folk song. Reddish in the East means the color of the white man in contrast with that of the Negro.⁵

¹III Ne. 5:21. ²Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, p. 84.

³I Ne. 12:23.

⁴Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, p. 85. See the entire section "Characters and Complexions," pp. 83-85.

⁵Ludwig Köhler, Hebrew Man, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 22. Italics are Köhler's.

If Köhler's analysis is accurate, it is understood why the Nephites could not refer to the Lamanites as being cursed with a red skin for in the East the color red is ascribed to white men. The Nephite authors, then, faced the dilemma of describing the changed color, being subjected to the limitations of their culture to select an appropriate and accurate descriptive term. A Hebrew word that might have been employed by them is $\gamma\gamma\beta$ "to be of a dirty, dusky color; to be dark colored, e.g., the skin as scorched by the sun,"¹ and which has been translated as black in Jeremiah 4:28; 8:21; and 14:2.

Köhler is the source of the interesting suggestion that "in Palestine two or more people do not walk beside one another, but one behind the other. This is clearly expressed in the Hebrew preposition 'achare'."² Certainly "to follow after" has different connotations than to "walk with." In the Book of Mormon are such examples as: "nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem";³ "and I also bade him that he should follow me";⁴ "wherefore he [Zoram] did follow me";⁵ and, "he [a heavenly messenger] . . . bade me follow him, and . . . as I followed him. . . ."⁶

In the Book of Mormon, the term Hebrew is not used to refer to a people (although it is employed by Moroni three times in one verse when he refers to the Hebrew language).⁷

¹Gesenius, Lexicon, p. 887. ²Köhler, op. cit., p. 85.

³I Ne. 4:4.

⁴I Ne. 4:25.

⁵I Ne. 4:26.

⁶I Ne. 8:6,7.

⁷Morm. 9:33.

Nor is the term Israelite used to designate the descendants of Jacob; they are referred to as the "children of Israel" or "house of Israel."¹ Chomsky makes this observation:

It is to be noted, however, that the name ibri [Hebrew] is employed in the Bible only in a restricted sense. The name preferred there is benei Yisrael (the children of Israel, or Israelites), which was apparently a national name of honor, having religious and national connotations (see Genesis 32:29). The name ibri was generally employed by foreigners to identify an Israelite. . . . This name is used . . . when the Israelites speak of themselves in contrast to foreigners.²

It would be interesting to know the source of the term Hebrew that designates the language which the descendants of Nephi spoke--whether the term was actually Moroni's or whether Joseph Smith supplied it as an equivalent to a term from the plates. Chomsky states:

The Hebrew language is always designated in the Bible as Sefat Canaan . . . "the language of Canaan," or Yehudit . . . "the language of Yehudah," the dominant tribe in the southern kingdom. . . . Furthermore, the Jewish people or the Israelites were not the only ones who employed the Hebrew language; it was spoken and used for written communication also by the Moabites, Edomites, and other "Hebrew" peoples. Hence the language was given a geographic rather than a national designation. It was referred to as the language spoken in Canaan or in Judea.

During the Second Commonwealth, however, after the "Hebraic" peoples, outside of Israel, were wiped out or assimilated . . . the term ibrit, "Hebrew" or the "Hebrew language," was employed by Jewish writers, as well as by the Greeks and the Romans, in reference to the language of the Scriptures and to that employed by the Jews at the time. . . .

The first use of the term Hebrew in reference to the Hebrew language is found in The Book of Jubilees, which probably dates back to about the third century B.C.E., if not earlier.³

¹He. 8:11 is the one exception.

²Chomsky, op. cit., p. 43. Italics are Chomsky's.

³Ibid., pp. 44-45.

In speaking of the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

Nephi always speaks of "the Jews at Jerusalem" with a curious detachment, and no one in First Nephi ever refers to them as "the people" or "our people" but always quite impersonally as "the Jews." It is interesting in this connection that the Elephantine letters speak only of Jews and Arameans, never of Israelites.¹

Nephi refers to the Bible as the record that "proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew."² Sjudahl attempts an explanation in the following manner:

The books of the Old Testament were composed by, or under the supervision of men whose names they bear. It was therefore, "a record of the Jews." The books of the Law were deposited in the ark of the covenant in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards in the temple of Jerusalem. To the first collection were gradually added the various historical and prophetic writings. . . . What became of the sacred books when the sanctuary was destroyed is not known. . . . After the captivity, Ezra made a collection of the sacred writings. Tradition has it that he presided over a body of learned men, one hundred and twenty in number, known as The Great Synagogue, associated for the purpose of collecting and editing sacred books. Ezra may therefore well be considered as "the Jew" Nephi saw in his vision, from whom the book came, for to his literary labor we are largely indebted for the Old Testament as we know it today. And in Nehemiah 8:2-18 it is recorded that Ezra brought the Law before the congregation of Israel and read it to their hearing. On that occasion the book literally "proceeded out of the mouth of a Jew."³

An alternative interpretation could be suggested for the phrase "it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew," which interpretation is based upon an idiomatic concept:

Names of nations are construed three ways: (a) with masculine singular, the name being that of the personal ancestor . . . (b) Or with plural . . . (c) Or with

¹Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, pp. 58-59.

²I Ne. 13:23,24,38; 14:23 (three times).

³J. M. Sjudahl, "A Study of Book of Mormon Texts," The Improvement Era, XXVI (1923), pp. 882-83.

feminine singular when the reference is to the country or when the population is treated as a collective, often personified.¹

The statement that the Bible "proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew" conforms to definition (c) above, as do two other phrases, "I have charity for the Jew--I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came";² and "now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words."³

¹Davidson, Hebrew Syntax, p. 161.

²II Ne. 33:8.

³II Ne. 33:10.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Although some exploratory work has been done by Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, Dr. Hugh Nibley, and Thomas W. Brookbank, as far as is known, this has been the first attempt to systematically examine the verbal usage and structure of an entire portion of the Book of Mormon in order to evaluate the claims made in its behalf that it is a product of the Near East.

That the problem is important to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can hardly be questioned. One of the tenets of their faith is the unquestionable acceptance of the Book of Mormon as a divine scripture. This book is an integral part of the foundation upon which the superstructure of their religious complex rests.¹

The purpose of this inquiry has been to discover what verbal and syntactical structures there are in the Small Plates that deviate from that which is common to the English manner of expression and to examine them from the perspective of the Hebrew tongue. At no time has an attempt been made in this research to extract or analyze idioms that are not of a Semitic tenor.

¹Pearl of Great Price, "The Articles of Faith," No. 8.

One of the assumptions stated at the beginning of this work was that Joseph Smith would tend to translate quite literally. Those passages in the Small Plates which seemed to betoken a literal adherence to the Hebrew mode of expression were so indicated as they were considered. This procedure seemed justified since it was felt that to adequately present each in the conclusion, it would be necessary to give it again in its contextual background.

In many cases one could conclude that when Joseph Smith selected a particular expression to convey the thought from the plates, he found it expedient to continue its usage without endeavoring to make any variations. To illustrate, the expression "and it came to pass" is as frequently employed in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as in the Book of Mormon, but the King James translators were skillful in devising various ways of stating it.

Some examples of evidence of a strict rendering of Hebrew to English are: (a) the prepositional phrases "into a mountain," "from before," and "arriving to the promised land"; (b) the awkward manner of enumeration; (c) the almost total non-use of the possessive s; (d) the collocating (in some instances) of the noun and predicate in juxtaposition without using a verb; and (e) the repetition of the preposition before each of several words united under the power of that preposition.

Grammatical evidences are these: The Hebrew manner of using (a) the prophetic perfect; (b) the conjunction and to

string simple sentences together, and before each word in a series, or before the last word in a series; (c) collective nouns; (d) the copula; (e) the enallage; (f) compound subjects; (g) the cognate accusative; and (h) the construct state. Additionally, there is seen: (i) the manner of using plural nouns when English singular is customary; (j) the noted lack of adjectives and the limited vocabulary; (k) the repetition of the personal pronoun; and (l) the power of the hiph'il form of the verb which makes the verb a causitive agent.

Each of the above, as a single item, would not be very impressive nor an adequate basis from which to infer that the Book of Mormon is what it purports to be; but considered collectively, it would seem difficult to conceive that such a mass of items could appear in the Book of Mormon fortuitously.

Although much of the richness of the English language may be due to the influence of Hebrew, this contribution results from the figure of speech, the comparative description, or the choice, definitive, and succinctly stated metaphor borrowed through the medium of the Old Testament. However, English has not been particularly enriched by adopting Semitic grammatical structures, nor has it incorporated some very common Hebrew idioms such as "by the hand of," "lift up the head," "stretch forth the hand," etc. The borrowing from Hebrew has probably been selective and limited to such modes of expression as were readily adaptable to the English tongue. Since many of the idioms in the Small Plates are so unconventional, it is concluded that they arrived in the Book of

Mormon through the direct process of translation rather than indirectly through having been adopted into English first.

Evidences of striking imagery in the Small Plates include: (a) "trees of the vineyard"; (b) the functions and characteristics of the heart; (c) the personification of the parts of the body; (d) "to lift up the voice or eyes"; (e) nursing fathers; (f) the quality of swiftness denoted by "upon the wings of his Spirit"; (g) the unusual reference to the American continent as an "isle"; (h) the picturesque phrases relevant to aging and death; (i) the usage of time intervals to indicate distance; (j) "drunken with blood or iniquity"; (k) "blind in your minds"; and (l) the process whereby one "makes an end" to any activity.

Examples of idioms fused with cultural connotations which may require an explanation to be understood are:

(a) the term wilderness; (b) borders which are nearer the Red Sea; (c) rivers of water; (d) a firm and steadfast valley; (e) the land of Jerusalem; (f) the making of an oath; and (g) the Book of Mormon description of the color of the skin of the Lamanites.

It was found that to adequately analyze all the changes made in editions of the Book of Mormon subsequent to the first would be an exhaustive research project in and of itself. It would seem that many of the errors in the first edition were purely grammatical; e.g., misuse of verb tenses, the substitution of which for who, and the confusing of the singular and plural of the intransitive verb to be. Changes

made in one chapter will be indicated here, giving the original and the current texts,¹ to show the scope of such a problem.

The first change occurs in verse 3 wherein "genealogy of my forefathers" has been changed to "thy forefathers," probably because of the context. However, because of the implied meaning, in Hebrew my forefathers would be as proper as thy or our forefathers. In verse 11, which has been changed to who. This change has consistently been made in later editions; yet which is as literal and proper equivalent of Hebrew וְכִי as who. In verse 19, might has been changed to may. For he knew has been substituted in the current edition for the odd form found in the first in verses 16 and 17: "And all this he hath done, because of the commandments of the Lord: for he knowing that Jerusalem must be destroyed, because of the wickedness of the people." This apparently obvious "error" could easily be the literal translation of the participial form of the verb "to know" coupled with the appropriate understood tense of the verb "to be," i.e., "for he (was) one knowing that Jerusalem must be destroyed." This is common construction in Hebrew.

In verse 29, the ye of the present edition was thou in the first, a case of enallage which has been corrected to conform to English standards. Finally, in verses 18, 23, 30, and 31, the Hebrew preposition after that has been reduced to read after. The form after that is similar to because that which is discussed in the appendix. These two forms have consistently been edited out of the present editions of the Book of

¹Wood, op. cit., pp. 9-11; current ed. I Ne. 3.

Mormon; both are correct in Hebrew.

As the writing of the findings of this research was in process, reference was made to other changes that have been made in the current editions of the Book of Mormon. A study of all the changes might prove to be a fertile area for productive research. It would be useful to have these changes categorized and an analysis made. In addition to the above possibility, other studies suggest themselves:

1. The most obvious problem for further research would be to extend the study initiated and to study Hebrew-like idioms in the remainder of the Book of Mormon.

2. To investigate the possibility that some of the idioms in the Book of Mormon may actually be a reflection of the cultural setting of which Joseph Smith was a product. B. H. Roberts asserts this¹ but does not substantiate his claims. It is felt by this writer that many of the idioms in the Book of Mormon are Hebraic, but this is not to infer that this is true of all constructions in the Nephite record.

3. To further investigate in the Book of Mormon apparent Hebraic syntactical constructions; such as, "When Laman saw me he was exceedingly frightened, and also Lemuel and Sam";² "they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison";³ "the people of Nephi . . . began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves in somewhat wicked practices, such as like unto David of old, desiring

¹Roberts, op. cit., p. 265.

²I Ne. 4:28.

³I Ne. 7:4.

many wives and concubines, and also Solomon his son."¹ There are many quaint syntactical constructions in the Book of Mormon. In his series of articles in the Improvement Era, Brookbank suggests other grammatical structures which might well be investigated.

4. To investigate to what extent the imagery of Nephi and Jacob was influenced by Isaiah. Such a problem could be extended to cover the entire Book of Mormon. It seemed, as the current study proceeded, that much of the unusual of Nephi and Jacob resulted from their acquaintance with the writings of Isaiah. Particularly after they quoted him, their sermons seemed to be dotted with reconstructed figures of speech first presented by Isaiah.

5. To make a lineal comparison of the Isaiah texts in each of these four sources: (a) Authorized Version; (b) "Inspired" revision; (c) Book of Mormon, first edition; and (d) Book of Mormon, 1920 edition. From the little cross checking that has been done for the purposes of this research, it would appear that the results would prove of value.

6. To examine the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham to determine the content of Hebraic idiomatic construction in each. Reference has been made to one peculiarity in the former when Moses was "caught up into an exceedingly high mountain."² In a subsequent chapter there is found another provocative item. In a discourse with Enoch, the Lord comments that those who perish in the flood will be shut up in a prison

¹Jac. 1:15.

²This thesis pp. 29-30.

and then states, "and That which I have chosen hath plead before my face. Wherefore he suffereth for their sins."¹ That which is the English equivalent of $\gamma\psi\alpha$ $\alpha\iota\eta$ which can be as accurately translated He whom. Thus the verse could read, "He whom I have chosen hath plead before my face." In view of the fact that the Book of Moses is a restoration of some of the writings of Moses as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith and is a record that is not a translation as are the Book of Mormon and the Bible, such a study might prove especially interesting.

All of these studies would be valuable to the extent that they contributed to an understanding of the scriptures.

¹Moses 7:39.

APPENDIX

Because That

A conjunction used in the Small Plates because that is unusual to the English idiom. For example, in speaking of the coming of the Messiah to redeem the children of men, Nephi says, "and because that they are redeemed from the fall. . . ." ¹ It is interesting to note that in the first edition of the Book of Mormon this conjunction was used not only the eight times indicated below ² but an additional thirteen times which subsequently have been edited to read because. ³ On four occasions it appears that a different Nephite word from the above-mentioned conjunction was translated because in the first edition. ⁴

There is substantial evidence in the Old Testament that because that is a legitimate Hebrew idiom, although an attempt to treat it adequately is difficult because of the inconsistencies of the translators of the Authorized Version. It is hoped that the following tabular arrangement will more clearly demonstrate the problem. In the first column is given a Hebrew phrase with a paraphrase beneath. In the second and third

¹II Ne. 2:26

²II Ne. 2:26; 4:32; 29:8,9,10; Jac. 5:37 (twice), 60.

³I Ne. 2:11; 16:22,35; II Ne. 2:18,26; 25:4; Jac. 2:13 (twice), 20; 5:45,48,75; 7:19.

⁴I Ne. 17:22; II Ne. 9:6; 28:13; 29:3.

columns are cited Biblical passages in which the phrase has been rendered because or because that, respectively.¹

<u>The Phrase</u>	<u>Rendered Because</u>	<u>Rendered Because That</u>
יַעַן אֲשֶׁר (because which)	Gen. 22:16 Deut. 1:36	Josh. 14:14 Judg. 2:20 Ps. 109:16 Ezek. 26:2
עַל אֲשֶׁר (upon which)	Exod. 32:35 II Sam. 12:6	---
עַקֵּב אֲשֶׁר (the heel of which)	Gen. 22:8 II Sam. 12:6	Gen. 26:5
מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר (from the face of which)	Exod. 19:18 Jer. 44:23	---
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר (under which)	Num. 25:13 Deut. 21:14	---
עַל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר (upon the thing which)	Deut. 22:24	---
יַעַן (because)	Ezek. 25:3,6,15	Ezek. 25:8,12
יַעַן כִּי (because that)	I Ki. 21:19 Isa. 3:16	Num. 11:20
כִּי (that)	435 times, approximately	Gen. 2:3; 41:57 Judg. 21:15

This small compilation does not begin to illustrate the

¹This information has been obtained by a careful reading of every entry sub voce "Because" in the concordances of Strong and Young.

complexity of Hebrew usage relevant to these and other conjunctive phrases and the variant translations of them. An attempt has been made solely to demonstrate because that is a bonafide idiomatic expression. Whether the usage in the Book of Mormon is attributable to a tendency on the part of the Prophet to conform to a pattern as he translated or to a literal translation of a single Nephite phrase is a question that could be resolved only by a study of the plates.

By Night

By night is one of the minutiae of the Book of Mormon¹ worthy of identification because it cleaves to conventional Hebrew formation and is contradistinct to the manner in which the phrase is formulated in English; i.e., at night. As far as can be determined, at night occurs only three times in the King James translation of the Old Testament: Genesis 49:27; Leviticus 6:20 (6:13 in the Hebrew text); and Numbers 22:20. The Hebrew correspondent in each case, respectively, is ולערב (and to the evening) which just as correctly reads "at the evening"; בערב (in the evening); and לילה (night).

At night is improper Hebrew usage and, as far as could be determined, does not appear in the Book of Mormon at any time.

¹I Ne. 4:5,22; 16:9; 17:30; II Ne. 9:52; 14:5; 33:3.

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HEBREW IDIOMS IN THE SMALL PLATES
OF NEPHI

An Abstract of
A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Biblical Languages
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
E. Craig Bramwell

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ABSTRACT

The Problem

The problem of this thesis is: To determine whether there are Hebraic idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi in the Book of Mormon that have been retained in translation. An idiom is defined as any peculiar genius of the language: grammatical, syntactical, or verbal imagery. Non-Hebraic idioms were not considered.

The assumptions underlying the problem are:

1. The Book of Mormon is a record of the Nephites whose cultural, social, and lingual milieu originated in Israel.
2. The Book of Mormon was originally written according to a Hebrew pattern of thought and communication.
3. Joseph Smith, as a young man inexperienced with languages and inept by training as a translator, tended to translate literally.

Procedure

The researcher kept notes on items pertinent to the subject while studying Hebrew. During actual research, there were three activities:

1. A careful study was made of nearly all entries in Davidson's lexicon to extract idiomatic expressions for which

parallels were then sought in the Book of Mormon.

2. With each reading of the Small Plates, apparent Hebrew constructions were extracted; the Bible, Hebrew grammars, and lexicons were used to determine their authenticity.

3. A lineal comparison of the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon was made with the first edition to determine whether any of the faulty English structures of the latter might be due to a close adherence to the Hebraic pattern of the original plates.

Findings

Some examples of apparent literal rendering of Hebrew to English are: (a) the prepositional phrases "into a mountain"; "from before"; and "arriving to the promised land"; (b) the awkward manner of enumeration; (c) the almost total non-use of the possessive s; (d) the collocating (in some instances) of the noun and predicate in juxtaposition without using a verb; and (e) the repetition of the preposition before each of several words united under its power.

Some grammatical evidences are: The Hebrew manner of using: (a) the prophetic perfect; (b) the conjunction and to string simple sentences together; (c) collective nouns; (d) the copula; (e) the enallage; (f) the cognate accusative; and (g) the construct state. Additionally, (h) the manner of using plural nouns when English singular is customary; (i) the marked lack of adjectives; and (j) the power of the hiph'il form of the verb which makes the verb a causitive agent.

Some evidences of Hebrew-like imagery in the Small

Plates are: (a) "trees of the vineyard"; (b) the functions and characteristics of the heart; (c) the personification of the parts of the body; (d) the quality of swiftness denoted by "upon the wings of His Spirit"; (e) the unusual reference to the American continent as an "isle"; (f) the picturesque phrases relevant to aging and death; (g) the usage of time intervals to indicate distance; and (h) the "making an end" to any activity.

It was found that to adequately analyze all the changes made in editions of the Book of Mormon subsequent to the first would be an exhaustive research itself. I Nephi Chapter 3 was analyzed to show the scope of such a problem.

It could be concluded that although much of the richness of the English language may be due to the influence of Hebrew, this contribution results from the figure of speech and the succinct metaphor readily assimilated by English, not by adopting Hebrew grammatical structures nor some common Hebrew idioms, e.g., "by the hand of." Since many of the idioms are so unconventional, it is concluded that they appeared by translation rather than by adoption into English first.

It would seem that there are too many Hebraisms in the Small Plates to have been employed fortuitiously and that writers versed in the intricacies of Hebrew are responsible for their abundance.

APPROVED:


