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## Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon - VIII

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# Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon

BY THOMAS W. BROOKBANK, ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE "MILLENNIAL STAR"

## VIII

### 19. *Indefiniteness sometimes a result of the use of nouns in construct relation.*

It is interesting to note that an indefiniteness in meaning is sometimes occasioned by the use of nouns in the construct state. In such cases the sense has to be gathered from the connection.

Prof. Greene gives illustrations as follows: "the zeal of Jehovah," which he feels, and "zeal of the people," which is felt for them.—*Heb. Gram.*, par. 254, A. a.

There is no difference in construction here, yet the difference in meaning is as great as that which exists between subject and object.

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While not identical in every respect, the meaning, nevertheless, in the first example, must be gained from the context; and in the second, from certain conditions which would naturally govern in the case. (a) "prisoners of the Lamanites."—Alma 53:1, 5. Directly opposite to the most apparent meaning of this phrase, these prisoners were not soldiers who had been captured by the Lamanites; but were Lamanites who had surrendered as prisoners of war to the Nephites; (b) "beasts of prey."—II Nephi 5:24; Enos 1:20.

While it is not our province to say that the Lamanites had not in the days of Nephi and of Enos become so degraded that they would eat such animals as we recognize as "beasts of prey," it is evident from the fact that these people lived on flesh alone, as Enos informs us in chapter 1:20, that the wide difference which exists between subject and object should be observed when interpreting the meaning of "beasts of prey," in these passages. How can any one suppose that the wild and ferocious beasts, which are truly "beasts of prey," would be hunted for food by a numerous people, while the more easily entrapped and less dangerous animals would be passed by. The "beasts of prey" spoken of by Nephi and Enos were doubtless those of any and all kinds which the Lamanites made *their* prey.

It is not claimed that it is a Hebraism to express the relation of nouns so as to cause at times an indefiniteness in meaning, such

as we have just noticed. It is simply an incidental to the construct state of nouns in the Hebrew, and to equivalent constructions in English in some cases; but as an incidental, merely, it is of more value to our cause than if it were an evident Hebraism, for what imposter would think it worth while to go into the nooks and corners, so to speak, for material in order to put his work on a Jewish foundation, when the open field afforded him all that was needed. This gleaning of the field shows ownership equally as well, or perhaps better, than the robbery of a few choice sheaves does.

20. *Passive participles in construct relation.*

Passive participles in the Hebrew may be put in construct state before the subject of the action, as, "smitten of God"—Isa. 53:4; *Heb. Gram.*, par. 254, 9 b.

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 most strict rendering of the Hebrew construct relation, and uses "of" before the subject of the action, contrary to the English idiom in general, as,

|                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ordained of Nephi, III Nephi 7:25. | judged of God, Mos. 2:27.         |
| favored of the Lord, I Nephi 3:6.  | instructed of the Lord, I Nephi   |
| called of him, III Nephi 5:13.     | 17-18.                            |
| given of God, II Nephi 11:4.       | warned of the Lord, Omni 1:12.    |
| given of Jesus Christ, III Nephi   | called of God, II Nephi 6:2.      |
| 11:25.                             | forbidden of the Lord, Mormon     |
| commanded of him, II Nephi         | 8:18.                             |
| 33:11.                             | visited of the Lord, Mormon 1:15. |
| blessed of the Lord, I Nephi 3:8.  | inspired of God, Moroni 7:13.     |

21. *Active participles may also be put in the construct state before the object which they govern.—Heb. Gram.*, par 254, 9, b—as, "restoring (of) the soul," and "loving (of) thy name." From the Book of Mormon some examples of this kind are submitted, as,

knowing of the prophecies, Alma 43:23; knowing of their courage, Alma 62:19; knowing of their spirit, III Nephi 3:4; knowing of their hatred, III Nephi 3:4; knowing of their weakness, III Nephi 4:24; exceeding of all beauty, I Nephi 11:8.

From what has already been observed respecting the use of equivalent forms for the Hebrew construct relation, as found in the Book of Mormon, it is manifest that that work, in this respect, is so largely founded upon Jewish construct models, that, may we not justly say, it is a volume abounding in illustration of them in terms which English people can understand? That work is characterized by the use of "of," as fully as it is by "and."

22. *Concerning the use of "therefore."*

To those who are not aware of the meaning which the ancient Jews frequently gave to the word in their language which is translated "therefore" into ours, the following remarks respecting this point will doubtless prove interesting, and may serve to remove not a little perplexity from the minds of many who have noticed that this word is sometimes employed in the Book of Mormon where it is not at all proper, according to its English signification of "for this" or "that reason," or "consequently," or "by consequence." In this sense that work often makes palpable mistakes when using it; but we shall find that in these instances, of supposed misuse and ignorant blunder, there is concealed a strong testimony respecting the Hebraic origin of the book in question.

Turning to the *Bible Hand Book*, by Dr. Anger, par. 290, we read this statement:

"Therefore itself generally expresses an inference or conclusion from what precedes; but it sometimes indicates that the sentence has been interrupted by a parenthesis, or is repeated; and means, 'as I said before;' or, 'to resume.'"

The author then gives several references, but for the convenience of our readers, a few passages shall be quoted in full:

"The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone: (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples"—John 6:22-24.

In this question verse 23 is parenthetical, and "therefore" in verse 24, does not have its usual English meaning, but instead, that of "to resume." Again:

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. \* \* \* Now therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me."—Ex. 3:7-9.

"Therefore," in this quotation, has the sense of "as I said before, referring to verse 7.

For additional illustrations see, with connections, Mat. 7:24 (to verse 21); I Cor. 8:4 (to verse 1); Gal. 3:5 (to verse 2); Eph. 4:1 (to chap 3:1); Deut. 11:1 (to chap. 10:12) and 11:8 (to chap. 10:13).

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"And these are the names of the cities of the Lamanites which were converted unto the Lord; and these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanites. And the Amalekites were not converted save only one, neither were the Amulonites. \* \* \* Therefore we have named all the cities of the Lamanites in which they did repent, \* \* \* and were converted."—Alma 23:13-15.

It is illogical to say that some Lamanite cities were named for the reason that certain people were not converted to the truth, and "therefore" in this case has the meaning of "as I said before," or, "to resume."

"For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beasts, neither of any manner of fowl, for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice." [Note, now, the digression:] "Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood, which will atone for the sins of another. Now if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay. But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore, there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement, which will suffice for the sins of the world. Therefore it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice."—Alma 34:10-13.

These last words are simply a verbatim repetition of what was said at the beginning of verse 13, and "therefore" here plainly means "as I said before."

In Alma, chap. 37:28, is parenthetical, and "therefore" standing at the head of verse 29 with the sense of "as I said before," or, "to resumee," is connected with verse 27. See also Alma 43:4 (connect with verse 3).

Other examples illustrating this peculiar use of "therefore" occur in the Book of Mormon, and the careful reader will have but little difficulty in finding a number of them.

### 23. *Concerning the use of "wherefore."*

This word, meaning "for which reason," differs so very little from that of "for this" or "that reason" as signified by "therefore," that we find the former sometimes used in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon to serve the same special purpose that we have just seen the ancient Jews required of their word for the latter, though "wherefore" is so employed more frequently in the Book of Mormon than "therefore" is.

A good Biblical illustration of this special meaning attached to "wherefore" is found in Deut. 19:2-7—too lengthy to quote here in full; but the second and the seventh verse in part read thus: "Thou shalt separate three cities for thee." "As I said

before," may here be substituted very appropriately for, "wherefore."

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"And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness. \* \* \* And I knew not at the time when I made them, that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates. Wherefore the record of my father, \* \* \* and the more part of our proceedings in the wilderness," etc.—Nephi 19:1, 2.

What is here written between "And I knew," and "plates," inclusive, is parenthetical, and "wherefore" with the senses of "as I said before," or, "to resume," connects with verse one.

In II Nephi 25:15, "wherefore," used after a side remark, means to resume, or, standing for "as I said before," connects with chap. 10:6.

For other examples see I Nephi 13:28 (to verse 26); I Nephi 3:4 (to verse 2); I Nephi 6:5 (to verse 3); I Nephi 22:8 (to verse 6); II Nephi 2:27 (to verse 26); II Nephi 4:3 (to verse 1).

Attention to this special Hebraic use of the word for "wherefore" should be observed by readers of the Book of Mormon, for in quite a number of instances the reading is not logically connected if this word be understood in its common English signification; and in one instance, at least, the conclusion is sufficiently inconsistent to cause a smile:

"And it came to pass that Coriantum did walk in the steps of his father, and did build many mighty cities, and did administer that which was good unto his people in all his days. And it came to pass that he had no children even until he was exceeding old. And it came to pass that Coriantum took to wife in his old age, a young maid, and begat sons and daughters. Wherefore he lived until he was an hundred and forty and two years old."—Ether 9:23, 24.

"Wherefore" in this passage evidently means, "to resume," and connects with remarks made previously concerning the great age of this patriarch, Coriantum. Another, scarcely less illogical, is found in Jacob 1:1:

"For behold, it came to pass that fifty and five years had passed away, from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; wherefore, Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates upon which these things are engraven."

This commandment was not given, we are sure, for the reason that a certain number of years had passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem. "Wherefore," in this passage, has about the meaning of "as you already know," and the connection is thus made with I Nephi 19:4.

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NOVEMBER ERA.]