Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon III

Author(s): T. W. Brookbank

Abstract: A series that produces evidence that the Book of Mormon is an ancient Hebrew work, containing Hebraisms. Emphasizes: (1) The Book of Mormon contains peculiar grammatical structures that are similarly found in the Bible, (2) many of the proper names in the Book of Mormon possess a notable Jewish character, and (3) many of the Jaredite proper names contain Hebraic similarities that date back to the period predating the Tower of Babel. The third part covers "the severance of associated ideas."

Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon

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

III.

5. *The Severance of Associated Ideas.*

No attempt will be made to explain what is meant by the "severance of associated ideas," since the examples which follow manifest the meaning clearly. The first one is taken from Gen. 6:1, 2, reading thus, "And it came to pass * * * that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair." This passage unadorned with a Hebraism would read in plain English, "* * the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair," —the daughters of men and their fairness being comprehended in one view,—while it almost appears from the Hebraic coloring of the text as if those men first saw the daughters spoken of, and after that, by a second effort, they discovered that they were fair. At any rate, if such was not their mode of perceiving and thinking, the form for expressing the ideas contained in the text, is peculiar. Another: "And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham; the land wherein thou liest, to thee will I give it," Gen. 28:13; or, according to the English form of expression, "I will give thee the land whereon thou liest." "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your land, strangers devour it."—Isa. 1:7. "The bed whither thou art gone up; thou shalt not come down from it."—II Kings 1:6.

Compare with these Hebraic constructions the following examples of a like character taken from the Book of Mormon: "And I beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people." —I Nephi 11:32. "I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together."—I Nephi 11:34. "And I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent."—I Nephi 12:4. In this same verse, the next one, and in verse 20, several other illustrations are found. "And I saw the devil, that he was the foundation of it."—I Nephi 13:6. "And I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down, and wrought upon the man."—I Nephi 13:12. See also verses 13, 14, 15, 38, and I Nephi 8:7; 14:14; 16:28. These examples by no means include all that occur in the Book of Mormon.

Before submitting illustrations of other Hebraisms, let us pause briefly to fix our attention upon the peculiar constructions observed in the passages just quoted from the Bible and the Book

of Mormon, respectively. Notice how the different propositions or ideas are made, as far as possible, to stand alone—separate and distinct from their fellows even though closely related. To conceive of ideas or to express them in this manner, betokens a mentality which is not common to humanity. The strangeness of the whole thing is remarkable, and we find ourselves obliged to account for it by referring its existence to some peculiarity of the mental faculties or activities of a people by whom the involution of sentences in the expression of thought was "sedulously" avoided —perhaps repugnant and doubtless impossible with the paucity of connectives which the Hebrew supplied.

Trained thus for generation after generation in certain peculiar modes of thinking, the mind becomes a kind of mold, and in general the conceptions which pass through it take on something of the form in which they are cast, and so the Nephite, as a Jew, was bound to disclose his racial identity by signs and marks which no English Gentile bears. When almost every page, indeed, we might, without much exaggeration, say, when almost every verse of the Book of Mormon proclaims its Jewish origin in one way or another—by the abounding use made of the simple conjunction *and*, by the frequent use of *and* for but or for *or*, by the use of this connective to express a co-existing act or condition; *i. e., and* for *when*, by the lack of any greatly involved sentences, by the operations of that strange Hebraism which, as it were, tears associated conceptions to pieces and shows us the parts separately —when, we repeat, such features mark that book, some of them found in it from the first chapter to the last one, how puerile it is for any person to claim that they were put there by an alleged impostor, let him be either the unschooled Joseph Smith or the better educated Sidney Rigdon.

6. *The Hebrew Equivalent for "To Signify" or "To Denote."*
In the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, as used in the originals of the Old Testament, there is no term which expresses, "to signify," or, "to denote," and in a number of instances, where necessary, the writers of the Bible have used a figure to express the sense of these words, and say that the figure employed *is* that which it stands for or represents, as, "The seven * * * kine are [represent] seven years."—Gen. 41:26, 27. In later years Daniel wrote, "The ten horns are [signify] ten kings."—Dan. 7:24. When the Savior explained to his disciples the parable of the man who sowed good seed in his field, he made use of this Hebraism a number of times. See Matt. 13:38, 39. St. John, in his book of Revelation, follows an identical form of expression, as, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks * * * are the seven churches."—Rev. 1:20.

Turning, now, to the Book of Mormon for illustrations of this Hebrew idiom, we find one occurs in I Nephi 11:25, as follows: "I beheld that the rod of iron which my father had seen, was [represented] the word of God;" and in chapter 15:24, in the course of an explanation to his brothers of the meaning of the "rod of iron," Nephi again states that it *was* the word of God. Again: "Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are [represented] the depths of hell." "And the mists of darkness are [signify] the temptations of the devil. * * * And the large and spacious building which thy father saw is [typifies] vain imaginations."—I Nephi 12:16, 17, 18; see also chap. 11:36. And again: "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is [represents] the love of God."—I Nephi 11:21, 22.

7. Concerning Verbs in the Infinitive.

We have already observed that the Hebrew uses a plural noun, in some instances, where we employ a singular; and that another peculiar idiom of that language occurs where the singular is employed instead of the plural, according to English usage,—practices respecting nouns and pronouns which involve a double contrariety. Now, we find that by discovering the use of the infinitive form of the verb at times, on the one hand, and by making use of the infinitive on the other, in some constructions where we do not, the Hebrew contrasts with the English in the relation of another double contrariety.

To illustrate these different idioms in connection with one another, which should be done in order that the reader may readily perceive the difference between the Hebrew and the English, we shall have to review some points treated on heretofore. Omitting the quotation from Green's *Hebrew Grammar,* (See the ERA, Vol. XIII, p. 117), which relates to the co-ordination of verbs, a few illustrations of this Hebraism shall be submitted as follows:

"How can I endure and see" (Est. 8:6), or "How can I endure to see."

"I know not [how] I shall flatter" (Job 32:22), *i. e.,* "I know not how to flatter."

Corresponding Hebraisms found in the Book of Mormon read thus:

"They also sought his life, that they might take it away" (I Nephi 1:20), for "They also sought to take away his life."

"How is it that he can not instruct me, that I should build a ship?" (I Nephi 17:51); or, supplying the infinitive, "instruct me how to build a ship?"

Examples of the same, or of a similar, character are quite

numerous in the Book of Mormon, and, being readily found, no other passages are now quoted.

It is worthy of note in this connection that the many illustrations in that book which show an infinitive discarded, disclose at the same time that peculiar trait of the Jewish mind which often severed closely associated ideas, and held them up to view as separate conceptions. How remarkably does the Book of Mormon manifest that it was written by Jews who "sedulously avoided" complexity in form of expression!

So much, then, respecting the Hebraism which relates to the non-use of the infinitive where we employ it. What follows under this number shows the Hebraic use of the infinitive in cases where the English idiom requires us to discard it, and to resort to some other construction to express the same thought: Thus, first citing illustrations from the Bible, "created and made," (Gen. 2:3,) reads literally, "created to make." Again, the Hebrew of Deut. 6:3, according to Dr. Adam Clarke is, "Ye shall hear, O Israel, and thou shalt keep to do (them),"—the reference being to the commandments of God. "Ye shall hear, O Israel, and shall keep them," is all that is necessary in English to express these commands. "Keep to do" is not an Anglicism, "And when he had broken down the altars and the groves,and had beaten the graven images into powder," etc., (II Chron. 34:7). This reading is proper from an English point of view; but if the Hebrew be followed, and we say "beaten the * * * images to make powder," the construction will strike us as quite strange. "And threw down the high places and the altars * * * until they had utterly destroyed them all," (II Chron. 31:1)—until "to make an end" is the Hebrew phraseology here. The commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," (Ex. 20:8) is an example of the Hebraic use of an infinitive contrary to the English idiom; but so familiar have we become with this passage that we usually fail to notice any peculiarity in its structure, yet this feature will be observed at once if we change an expression of frequent use among ourselves into an identical form. Thus, for instance, a teacher does not enjoin his pupuils to remember *to* keep the rules of the school, but to remember them *and* keep them.

Book of Mormon Examples: "And had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance," (I Nephi 2:11). "Led them to leave" is not English form, and a participial construction is suggested, as, "leaving" or "forsaking at once the land of their inheritance, and their gold." "And whoso was found to commit iniquity"—Moro. 6:7. "Yea, and I beheld that the fruit was white to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen"—I Nep. 8:11. We would recast this passage about as follows: "the fruit was whiter than anything I had ever before seen." "And I desire that ye should remember to observe

the statutes * * * of the Lord."—II Nep. 1:16. "And we did observe to keep the judgments."—II Nep. 5:10, * * * "Ye are eternally indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him all that you have and are;" (Mos. 2:34,) "and should render" harmonizes better with our idiom. "Have ye taught this people that they should observe to do?" Mos. 13:25. "He doth remember all my commandments to execute them."—Alma 18:10. "But ye do always remember your riches, not to thank God for them."—Hela. 13:22.   See also Alma 49:14; 57:21; 58:40; Hela. 3: 20; Moro. 7:30.

<div align="center">(TO BE CONTINUED)</div>

Stand by the Right, Always

BY J. C. HOGENSON, OF THE STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

There are many people in the world who are afraid to stand up for the right, and to state and act their convictions, because those convictions, though known to be right, are not popular with the general crowd; and the person stating or acting them might lose his social standing and prestige.

Leaders among men, men who have achieved prominence in the world, have always been fearless in standing up for the right, and in stating their convictions, no matter what the consequences that follow might be. Take such men as Christopher Columbus, Martin Luther, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Joseph Smith. All were fearless and true to their ideas of truth and right. That is the only brave, true, manly, and God-fearing way.

Let us, if we are ever tempted to do otherwise, remember the poem on "Freedom," by James Russell Lowell, which says:

> "They are slaves who fear to speak
> For the fallen and the weak;
> They are slaves who will not choose
> Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
> Rather than in silence shrink
> From the truth they needs must think;
> They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three."

> "Stand close to all, but lean on none,
>   And if the crowd desert you,
> Stand just as fearlessly alone
>   As if a throng begirt you."

Remember our own beautiful hymn: "Do what is right, let the consequence follow;" and, "God will protect you, do what is right."

LOGAN, UTAH