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Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon, V

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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 fifth part continues in covering Hebrew proper names and translation conventions.

Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS W. BROOKBANK.

V.

Respecting the terms *new*, *twelve*, *tower* and *wonderful*, it is observed that they are not Nephite names at all; but simply English words used for the originals, and the occurrence of the letter *w* in them is of no consequence to invalidate the claim that the Nephite names are spelled without a *q*, *x* or *w*.

A few words of explanation respecting the use of the proper name, Red Sea, in the Book of Mormon, instead of the Hebrew name for that body of water, may not be out of place. It appears that as far back as B. C. 285, when the work of translating the Hebrew scriptures into Greek was in progress, into the version called the Septuagint, or the LXX, (seventy) the waters in question were known by the name *Erythra Thalassa*, the first of these words meaning *red* and the other *sea* (Exodus 15: 4). Later it was called in Latin *Mare Rulrum*—*Mare* meaning *sea* and *Rulrum*, *red*. It does not appear, therefore, that the Jews or any other ancient people had any name for this body of water that could not also be given in a foreign language under the proper term for *red* and *sea*, or, in other words, it is a proper name raised to that order or position from common translatable terms; and the Book of Mormon is perfectly consistent in the use of the English name—as much so as it is when it translates the originals for *white* or *black*, instead of giving us the Hebrew for those words.

With respect to the name *Hebrew*, it is not a properly con-

structed Jewish name at all. Some authorities are of the opinion that it is derived from Eber, or Heber, one of the later descendants of Shem. If this be true, the form of the name, according to principles of analogy for forming Jewish names, should be Eberites, or Heberites. Other learned men are of the opinion that it is derived from *ibrhi*, which has practically the meaning of *stranger*, or *foreigner*, and, on this ground, the name in the plural would be *Ibrhim*. *Jew* and *Jews* are names given to the children of Israel by their neighbors, and both *Hebrew* and *Jew* are foreign terms, though both are derived from Jewish bases. Now, if it had been necessary, for instance, to use the Gentile name Alexander Quincy Law in translating the Book of Mormon, we should expect to see it spelled as here given, and there is, therefore, nothing unusual, strange, or inconsistent about the case when the Book of Mormon spells the Gentile name *Jew* and *Hebrew*, each with a *w*. If they were strictly Jewish names the matter would appear in a different aspect. As the case stands, the statement that the Book of Mormon proper names, if of purely Nephite origin, make no use of the Gentile *q*, *x* or *w*, cannot be controverted; there is no possible ground for argument or denial. The Hebraisms and Jewish analogies that have now been passed upon demonstrate that the Prophet Joseph Smith was not the author of the Book of Mormon. He knew nothing of the Hebrew language, while the records in question are full of evidences that their writers were thoroughly familiar with its principles and use. Sidney Rigdon was not the author of that book, for he did not see it or Joseph Smith until after the work was published. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on the sixth day of April, 1830, and Sidney Rigdon was not admitted to fellowship in it until the following October. The Book of Mormon was first published in 1829.

PROBABLE HEBRAIC ORIGIN OF JAREDITE NAMES IN THE BOOK OF
ETHER.

In the foregoing groups of names, those that are of Jaredite use are listed together with those of the Nephites as having a Jewish origin. It is very probable that some of our readers desire to know upon what grounds this common classification is based.

In reply, it is admitted that with our present information on this matter, nothing sufficiently definite to remove the last remnant of doubt from every mind can be submitted, but it appears, nevertheless, from more than one consideration, that no palpable mistake has been made in assuming that the Jaredite and the Nephite names belong to peoples who had a common racial origin.

Certainly no one claims that the first writers of the Book of Ether (a subdivision of the Book of Mormon) are to be numbered among those whom the Christian world now recognizes under the names of Hebrews, Israelites or Jews. The name *Hebrew*, from *Eber* or more probably from *Ibrh* or *Ibr*, was doubtless not coined in any form until about the time that Abraham left his native land in obedience to the command of the Almighty—long after the Jaredites had colonized America—and the names *Israelites* and *Jews* are of still later origin. No one should conclude, however, from these facts, that the Jewish race—the chosen people of God—did not exist for many centuries before the new names, just mentioned, were applied to them,—did not exist in pre-diluvian days. Jesus Christ was a Jew by birth and his genealogy is traced back to Adam without any admixture of known Gentile blood.

That the Jewish race existed before the dispersion at Babel is quite clearly shown by the fact that the Hebrew language came out of the confusion of tongues almost, if not wholly unimpaired. Speaking with respect to its preservation, Dr. Angus, in the *Bible Hand Book*, paragraph 26, (3), says: "It may be added that the Hebrew of Abraham's day was probably closely allied to the original tongue, if it were not itself identical with it. This conclusion is based chiefly on the proper names of the early chapters of Genesis. These names are all significant in *Hebrew*, and the meaning in that tongue always explains the reason why they were given." Dr. Adam Clark commenting on Genesis 11: 1, says: "All mankind *was of one language*, in all likelihood the HEBREW; *and of one speech*; articulating the same words in the same way. It is generally supposed that after the confusion mentioned in this chapter, the Hebrew language remained in the family of *Heber*. The proper names and their significations given in the scripture, seems incontestible evidence that the Hebrew language was the original language of the earth—the language in which

God spake to man, and in which he gave the revelation of his will to Moses and the prophets. 'It was used,' says Mr. Ainsworth, 'in all the world for one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven years, till Phaleg, the son of Heber, was born, and the tower of Babel was in building, *one hundred* years after the flood (Gen. 10: 25, 11: 9). After this it was used among the Hebrews or Jews, called, therefore, the *Jew's language* until they were carried captive into Babylon, where the holy tongue ceased from being commonly used, and the *mixed* Hebrew (or Chaldee) came in its place.'

"It was the universal belief among the rabbins, the Christian fathers and the older theologians, that the Hebrew was the language of Adam and Eve, and that it prevailed among all mankind till the dispersion at Babel,"—*Johnson's New Universal Encyclopedia* (appendix) Art. Semitic Languages. Thus it appears that there has been a very general concensus of opinion among theologians that the Hebrew language existed long before the dispersion, and after that event, in a state of remarkable purity even down to the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. It appears, further, that the main foundation for this opinion, is based on the proper names and their significations in the first few chapters of Genesis. There are altogether about two score only of such names in the whole of the Mosaic pre-diluvian history, and for convenience in comparing them with those of a later date and use, the list is herewith presented, omitting those that belong to the Deity: Abel, Adah, Adam, Assyria, Cain, Cainan, Ethiopia (Cush), Eden, Enoch, Enos, Euphrates, Eve, Gihon, Ham, Havilah, Hiddekel, Irad, Jabel, Jared, Japheth, Jubal, Lamech, Mahalaleel, Mehujael, Methusael, Methuselah, Naamah, Noah, Nod, Pison, Seth, Shem, Tubal Cain, Zillah.

The termination of a number of these names occur in the familiar *ah*, several others in the well known *el*, and some of them are transmitted entirely down to later Jewish times. It will, further, be noticed how some of these early names in Genesis are compounded, as, Tubal-Cain, from Tubal and Cain; Mehujael, from Jael and a prefix; Methuselah, from Selah and a prefix.

Further strong evidence that the Hebrew language was in use before the flood, and that it was not confounded when the build-

ing of the tower of Babel was stopped by the confusion of tongues, is found in the fact that the names of the Deity and of persons are used before the deluge and the dispersion that are used immediately after the latter event without any explanation of the divine personages or ancient worthies that were to be identified. If the language of Noah and his people was confounded, the names for God and Jehovah, and the whole list of worthies from Adam to Noah, would have been meaningless and indistinguishable to every post-Babelite without an explanatory guide to let him know, for instance, that the *Z* of his day was identical with the *A* of Adamic times, but just where it should appear, if needed at all, the Bible supplies us with no reference keys. God's chosen people knew who JEHOVAH was after the dispersion just as readily and as fully as they did before it, without having his identity revealed anew to them. It appears, further, from the Biblical records, that genealogies were kept by the people of the Lord from the days of Adam to those of Noah and his descendants, who lived at the time of the dispersion. Christ's lineage is traced to Adam, and it is scarcely possible that no other pre-diluvian families left a genealogical record also, but even if they did not, the fact that one single family lineage was preserved for about one thousand seven hundred years is quite conclusive evidence that there were written records in existence before the deluge. Learned men who have studied the subject are of the opinion that the present Biblical account of creation was largely copied by Moses from earlier records.

From this standpoint it is apparent that if the Hebrew were the universal language at the time of the dispersion, its preservation was essential, unless every record that was in existence before the building of the tower of Babel was to become sealed and useless to mankind, just as the Egyptian hieroglyphics were not decipherable before the discovery of the Rosetta stone, which gave the keys to them through a KNOWN language. If there were many languages in use at the time in question, the preservation of ONE of them to serve as a key to decipher the records of the past was also necessary. If they were all confounded, the history and records of anti-diluvian days might just as well have been written in the language of the supposed inhabitants of Mars. But we have

evidence that one language did come out of the general confusion of tongues at Babel unimpaired; and the consistency of the Book of Mormon in stating (Ether 1: 35) that the language of Jared was not confounded affixes a broad seal of divinity to that work. What "unlearned youth," if an impostor, would even have thought of covering the point in question; and of doing it by the preservation of the Hebrew? Deeply laid, indeed, in the foundations of truth is that work which God has brought forth in the last days by the hands of Joseph Smith, his prophet, seer and revelator.

In the statement just made that the Book of Mormon provides for the preservation of Hebrew when the language of the rest of the world was confounded, a few necessary remarks have been anticipated. The grounds upon which such men as Dr. Angus and Dr. Clark base their opinion that the Hebrew was in use before the building of Babel, and after it practically unmodified, is found in the earlier and later Biblical names and their significations. The evidence thus afforded is considered incontestible. Now, while we cannot give the meaning of the Jaredite names, an examination of them will show that they are largely built upon Biblical Hebrew models, and that is sufficient for present purposes—the evidence sustains the classification as heretofore given. It is scarcely necessary to add that it is taken for granted that those who used the Hebrew language were of the Jewish race. Gentiles have never been eager to adopt Jewish manners, customs or speech.

The keeping of genealogies, too, by the Jaredites, while not conclusive that they were of the Jewish race, is, nevertheless, in line with Jewish customs or obligation. If, further, St. Paul understood the situation aright, they were Jews; for he says that to these people,—not to Gentiles—the oracles of God have been committed, and the Jaredites certainly received from him a code of his laws and authority to administer them.

(THE END.)