

Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon

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VII

17. *The Possessor Expressed by Nouns in Construct Relation, as, "the Temple of Jehovah."*

Why, says one, there is nothing particularly Hebraic in such a construction as that! It is used in English very often. But let us remember, however, that the Hebrew had a decided preference for the construct state as a means of expression where applicable, and their writings abound with examples of its use. We have just seen how they employed it when substituting nouns for adjectives, and if we find, further, 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 tend strongly to show that no English author wrote that work.

Omitting pronominal possessives, which the Hebrews did employ freely, the first common noun form of the English possessive occurs in I Nephi 3:16: "let us go down to the land of our father's inheritance;" and the second time in I Nephi 10:8: "whose shoe's latchet." It is, therefore, evident that chapter after chapter may be read in the Book of Mormon without finding a single possessive of the foregoing form in them, and the total number of such forms in the whole work is surprisingly small, considering the size of that volume and the frequent occasions which arise for expressing the possessive relation. Those which do occur are given in the following list:

Father's, I Nephi 3:16; Mos. 6:4; 9:1; Alma 21:1; 22:28.	Cockatrice's, II Nephi 30:14.
Shoe's, I Nephi 10:8.	Neighbor's, Mos. 13:24 (three times), 26:31.
Men's, Ether 10:5.	Dav's, Mos. 9:4; Alma 8:6; Hela. 4:7.
Name's, I Nephi 20:9; III Nephi 12:10.	Man's, Alma 24:17, 18; 30:7; 4:17.
King's, Mos. 7:7; 18:34; 20:17; 24:9; Alma 18:3, 13; 22:2, 20.	Lehonti's, Alma 47:12, 13.
High Priests', Alma 30:23.	Righteous', Alma 45:15; 46:10; 62:40; Hela. 13:14.
Word's, Alma 38:4.	Wisdom's, Mos. 2:36.

Gadianton's, Hela. 6:18.	Other's, Alma 55:2.
Lord's, II Nephi 28:3 (twice).	Another's, Mos. 18:8.
Moses', Mos. 13:5; III Nephi 27:8 (twice).	Amalickiah's, Alma 47:8.
Christ's, Alma 4:13; Jacob 1:4.	God's, Alma 12:18; III Nephi 12:34.
People's, Hela. 13:17.	Half's, Alma 22:32.
Lamanite's, Mormon 5:7 (twice).	Son's, Alma 46:24 (twice).
Potter's, II Nephi 27:27.	

The possessives occurring in the quotations from Isaiah are not included, nor are those which are found in the "contents" of books or chapters. In this list there are only twenty-seven different possessives, which together are used fifty-eight times. Of this number one writer alone, Alma, has employed twenty-five, and another, Mosiah, fourteen, leaving for the other dozen authors of the several parts of the Book of Mormon, after deducting thirty-eight pages for the quotations found in their writings, one noun possessive, on an average, for every 18.5 pages of their record. This showing is so remarkable in all respects that some may question the completeness of the list of possessives as given.

As to that point the writer does not, of course, claim that it is absolutely not subject to additions; but it is a complete list so far as painstaking search can make it.

But 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 expressions such as "commandments of the Lord," "name of the Lord," "people of the Lord," "presence of the Lord," "promises of the Lord," etc., etc. It would not be strange in view of these facts if the form "Lord's" were itself found more times than all the noun possessives in the whole book; but to find it *twice* only out of a possible *three hundred* approaches closely to its absolute non-use. When we come to consider the name "God" in this same relation, the facts are still more noticeable. In a possessive sense it is used more than *four hundred and fifty* times, but only *twice* as "God's." The phrase "church of God" occurs thirty-two times "commandment of God," or "commandments of God," fifty-eight times; kingdom of God," thirty-eight times; "power of God," fifty-nine times; "Spirit of God," twenty-one times, and "word" or "words of God," over one hundred times.

This state of affairs is plausibly accounted for by referring the writing of the Book of Mormon to authors who, like ancient Hebrews in general, were partial to the use of nouns in the construct relation.

As it can not possibly serve our purpose any further to cite other nouns used in the possessive relation, according to the prin-

ciples of the construct state, we pass to view this form of expression in another aspect.

18. *The Construct Relation in Consecutive Usage.*

Quoting Prof. Greene again, we find that "three, four, or even five nouns are sometimes joined together in the relation of the construct state," as, "the heads of the houses of their fathers" (Ex. 6:14; "the number of the tribes of the children of Israel" Josh. 4:5); "the fruit of the greatness of the heart of the king of Assyria" (Isa. 10:12).—*Heb. Gram.*, par. 255, 3.

EXAMPLES FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON.

Submitting first a whole verse, we have, "And it came to pass that we gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind" (I Nephi 8:1).

In this passage, the disposition of the writers of the Book of Mormon to build constructions of this nature one upon another, is very manifest:

"the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah" (I Nephi 1:4); "down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah" (I Nephi 5:12); "caught hold of the end of the rod of iron" (I Nephi 8:24, 30); "unto the visiting of the remnants of the house of Israel" (I Nephi 13:33); "many of the kings of the isles of the sea" (I Nephi 19:12); "the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven" (I Nephi 22:9); "commencement of the ninth year of the reign of the judges" (Alma 4:20); "sharpness of the power of the word of God" (II Nephi 1:26); "knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers" (Alma 17:9); "revelation of the truth of the word" (Alma 6:8); "the other side of the river of water" (I Nephi 8:26).

Single verses containing two examples, in each of which three nouns occur in this relation, are not infrequent, as "the power of the Lamb of God," and "the Saints of the Church of the Lamb," are readings in I Nephi 14:14, and "an account of the reign of the kings," and, "part of the reign of the kings," are both in I Nephi 9:4. For three such constructions in a single verse see I Nephi 13:38.

(TO BE CONTINUED)