
REPETITION OF *AND*

“and their wars, and contentions” (Helaman 3:14)

The frequent use of *and* in the Hebrew Bible is unlike its use in nineteenth- and twentieth-century English texts.¹ In fact, *and* (*waw* in Biblical Hebrew) is the most common word in the Hebrew Bible, occurring an astonishing 50,524 times, representing about 12 percent of all the words in the Hebrew Bible. Translators of the Bible occasionally omit the more superfluous instances of *and* in their translations.

Joshua 7:24 is an excellent example, with thirteen instances of *and*: “*And* Joshua, *and* all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, *and* the silver, *and* the garment, *and* the wedge of gold, *and* his sons, *and* his daughters, *and* his oxen, *and* his asses, *and* his sheep, *and* his tent, *and* all that he had: *and* they brought them unto the valley of Achor.” Conventional English gets by with only four *ands*: “*And* Joshua, with all Israel, took Achan the son of Zerah, *and* the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, daughters, oxen, asses, sheep, tent, *and* all that he had: *and* they brought them unto the valley of Achor.”

In many ways, Book of Mormon usage of *and* matches that of the Old Testament.² The Book of Mormon has 16,349 occurrences of *and*, about

“**and** the silver, **and** the garment, **and** the wedge of gold, **and** his sons, **and** his daughters, **and** his oxen, **and** his asses, **and** his sheep, **and** his tent, **and** all that he had” (Joshua 7:24)

וְאֵת הַכֶּסֶף וְאֵת הָאֲדָרֶת וְאֵת לְשׁוֹן הַזָּהָב וְאֵת בְּנָיו וְאֵת בְּנֹתָיו
וְאֵת שׁוּרֵי וְאֵת חֲמֹרֵי וְאֵת צֹאנֵי וְאֵת אֵהָלוֹ וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ

The context of Joshua 7:24 pertains to one Achan who sinned against the Lord when he stole a large sum of gold and silver and other items of great value from among the spoils of Jericho. As a result, he and his household were stoned and then burned, along with the stolen items. Note the frequent use of the conjunction *and*, as required in Biblical Hebrew grammar. In the Hebrew text above, the conjunction appears in bold so English readers can identify it.

13 percent of all the words therein. We have an example of this Hebraic usage in Helaman 3:14:

But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites *and* of the Nephites, *and* their wars, *and* contentions, *and* dissensions, *and* their preaching, *and* their prophecies, *and* their shipping *and* their building of ships, *and* their building of temples, *and* of synagogues *and* their sanctuaries, *and* their righteousness, *and* their wickedness, *and* their murders, *and* their robbings, *and* their plundering, *and* all manner of abominations *and* whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.

The Book of Mormon has many other examples of this usage. First Nephi 11:30–32, which describes Nephi’s vision of the Lamb of God ministering among his people, has twenty-two *ands*; 1 Nephi 12:4, part of Nephi’s vision of things to come, contains twelve *ands*; Mosiah 10:8 contains eight *ands* in a list of weapons; Helaman 1:14 has nine *ands* in another list of weapons; and Alma 46:12–13 contains fifteen *ands* in a description of Moroni and his title of liberty.

Some original instances of *and* in the Book of Mormon manuscripts were removed in printed editions of the Book of Mormon to provide a better idiomatic English translation. The extra *ands* were good Hebrew, but as will be seen below, they can be jarring in English.³

“if he should command me that I should say unto this water: be thou earth *and* it shall be earth” (1 Nephi 17:50; *and* in the original manuscript was removed for the printed editions)

“and thus if ye shall say unto this temple: it shall be rent in twain *and* it shall be done” (Helaman 10:8; *and* in the printer’s manuscript was removed for the printed editions)

“that perhaps I might discover my family also *and* I beheld a river of water” (1 Nephi 8:13; *and* was removed in the printer’s manuscript)

“and because he speaketh flattering words unto you and he saith that all is well *and* then ye will not find fault with him” (Helaman 13:28; *and* was removed for the 1837 edition)

“and when Nephi had brought forth the records and laid them before him *and* he cast his eyes upon them” (3 Nephi 23:8; *and* was removed from printed editions)

Although the conjunctive *and* is a common and seemingly unimportant function word, it has a significant role in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, Hebrew *waw* (frequently translated as *and*) performs some thirty different functions.⁴ For example, *waw* can link two words or two phrases, can be paired to mean “as well as” or “both . . . and,” can have a disjunctive meaning (translated as *but*), can connect a series of imperatives, can introduce the second part of a conditional clause (translated as *then*), and often introduces the expression “and it came to pass.” It is unfortunate that we lack a rigorous and exhaustive study of *and* in the Book of Mormon.

Notes

1. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 208–37. Tvedtnes points out that Biblical Hebrew “uses the conjunction ‘and’ (*w*) much more frequently than English. It is frequently used at the *beginning* of a sentence, even when there is no reason for linking that sentence up with the preceding sentence (in English, we use ‘and’ to link up syntactically related words, clauses, and sentences only).” Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey,” 53. For the importance of *and* in the Hebrew Bible, see Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 98–99; and Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 152–56.
2. For a brief treatment of *and* in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, see Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon*, xxxvi–xxxvii; and Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities,” 177–78.
3. Examples are taken from Skousen, *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part 1*, 362–63.
4. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 257–59.