AND AS A DISJUNCTIVE MARKER

"and they answered them nothing" (Alma 14:18)

In the simplest terms, a conjunction such as *and* connects clauses or sentences, while a disjunctive conjunction (or disjunctive) such as *but* disconnects them or signals a contrast. In Biblical Hebrew the letter *waw* may serve as either a conjunction or as a disjunctive, depending on the context.¹ In the great majority of instances, translators render *waw* as "and," but also sometimes as "but." For example, in the proverb "A wise son maketh a glad father: but (*waw*) a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Proverbs 10:1), the term *waw* is translated with the disjunctive *but* to contrast a "wise son" and a "foolish son."

Interestingly, sometimes in the Book of Mormon *and* is used where *but* is expected.² Such examples are indicative of a literal translation from a Hebrew-like text, as opposed to a smooth, idiomatic translation into English. Here are two examples:

There is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh from the devil. (Omni 1:25)

וַיּפָּל אַבְרָהֵם עַל־פָּגֵיו וַיִּצְחֵק וַיָּאמֶר בְּלִבּוֹ הַלְבֵן מֵאֲה־שָׁנָה יִוְיֵּד וְאָׁם־שָׁרָה הַבַת־תִּשְׁעִים שְׁגֵה מֵלֵד:

וַיָּאמֶר אַבְרָהֶם אֶל־הֲאֱלֹהֵים לְוּ יִשְׁמָעֵאל יִחְיֶה לְפָנֵידְ:

ויָאמֶר אֱלהׁים אֲבָל שֶׂרֶה אִשְׁתִּוּ יֹלֶדֶת לְוּ בֵּו וְקָרֵאתָ אֶת־שְׁמְוֹ יִצְחֵק וַהַקַמֹתִי אַת־בִּרִיתֵי אָתָּוֹ לְבָרֵית עוֹלֵם לְזֵרְעָוֹ אַחֵרֵיו:

> A page from the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible, encompassing Genesis 17:17-18:10. The close-up features Genesis 17:17-19, the account of God instructing Abraham, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac," and so forth.

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Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence. (2 Nephi 4:4)

In both cases, *but* would read more naturally than *and* in conventional English.

The earliest text of the Book of Mormon has a great number of instances that read *and* where *but* is expected.³ Here are two examples:

After Alma and Amulek were cast into prison, several men came to interrogate them, "and they questioned them about many words, *and*

they answered them nothing" (Alma 14:18). That *and* was changed to *but* in the 1830 edition: "And they questioned them about many words, *but* they answered them nothing."

The second example reads, "There were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla; *and* the people were afflicted" (Alma 4:1–2). Again, the *and* was changed to *but* in later editions: "There were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla; *but* the people were afflicted."

Notes

- For a grammatical exploration of *and*, serving as either a conjunction or a disjunctive, examine Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 648–55; Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 162–65; and Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 153.
- 2. See Bokovoy and Tvedtnes, Testaments, 221-22.
- 3. See the analysis and other examples in Skousen, *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part 1*, 192–95.