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Why Bountiful? Why Desolation?

by ZRF Staff

Recently several of us were reviewing the geography information in the *Overview* to update it for reprinting. As we looked at the headings for each major land—such as “land of Nephi”—someone commented, “Bountiful and Desolation don’t seem to fit the Nephite custom of naming lands.” The Nephite custom is described by Mormon as follows:

Now it was the custom of the people
of Nephi to call their lands and
their cities and their villages,
Yea, even all their small villages,
After the name of him who first
possessed them. . .

Alma 6:8

Explanations are given in The Book of Mormon for naming the lands Bountiful and Desolation. We are told that the Nephites called the land Bountiful because of the abundance of wild animals (Alma 13:75). We were also reminded of the area in the Old World named Bountiful by the Nephite travelers “because of its much fruit and also wild honey” (1 Nephi 5:62). They called the land Desolation (in the New World) because the people of that land had been destroyed (Alma 13:74; Ether 3:43).

Still we wondered, Why these exceptions to the prescribed manner of naming lands? At that point

someone said, “I wonder what the Hebrew words are for ‘bountiful’ and ‘desolation?’”

Checking our Hebrew sources, we found that the Hebrew word for “bountiful” is *tob* or *tov*. Associated with its meanings are such descriptions as “good,” “beautiful,” “bountiful,” “prosperous,” “pleasant for eating,” “fruitful,” “fertile,” “valuable” (referring to house or animal). We also discovered that there is a specific region called by the literal Hebrew word *Tob* in the Bible.

Tob is described as a fertile district or region located east of the Jordan River which extended northeast of Gilead into Syria. We saw that the abundance associated with the land Bountiful in The Book of Mormon is also reflected in its name.

The Hebrew word *samem* and its derivatives are translated “desolate” or “desolation.” The meaning is “a barren, empty land, wasted and made bleak by some disaster. The disaster may be natural or a result of war. But usually this word group is associated with divine judgment.” It usually applies to places and things (Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 222). This is a perfect description of the land of Desolation in The Book of Mormon.

When the Nephites chose this particular word for the land, it was

with the full application of its meaning. In other words, the destruction of the Jaredite nation which had occupied that land was one of divine judgment.

The meanings of the two Hebrew words fit perfectly the explanations given by Mormon for naming the corresponding lands in the New World. The names of the lands Bountiful and Desolation are based on a quality or condition just as names of lands in the Old World. This significant departure from the Nephite custom of naming their lands for the first person to possess them seems to imply that maybe the lands Bountiful and Desolation were not “possessed” by a people in the usual sense. This insight led us to another question, Could it be that the regions extended over specific “possessed” lands or boundaries rather than being specific bounded lands—similar to national parks, or the “plains area” or even the “desert Southwest” in the United States which spreads across state lines?

Ultimately, all references to the lands Bountiful and Desolation warrant reexamination for new understanding in relation to the geography of The Book of Mormon. Once again the “learning of the Jews” provides an increased understanding of Book of Mormon geography. ZRF

A preview of textual corrections in the new corrected edition of The Book of Mormon

Variations Between the Printer's

This is the second in a series of articles presenting some of the results of the textual comparison research which will be incorporated into our forthcoming new edition of The Book of Mormon. The first part (ZR #51) presented variations between the Original and Printer's manuscripts.

The Printer's manuscript, a handwritten copy made from the Original manuscript, was used by the printer to prepare the 1830 First Edition (Palmyra). A word-for-word comparison of the Printer's manuscript with the 1830 edition of The Book of Mormon has revealed a number of variants. These differences are retained in the 1837, 1840, 1874, 1892 and 1908 editions. They will be corrected in the new edition.

We saw in the first article that there are differences between the two manuscripts. Thus, examples presented within each of the following sections have been separated into two groupings, one where we have the Original manuscript for comparison and the other where we do not. The tables are only a partial listing. Also *First Nephi* Study Book of Mormon examples are not included here.

Printer's ms editing prior to 1830 edition

Where we have the Original manuscript for comparison, we can readily determine cases in which some words on the Printer's manuscript were later incorrectly changed or edited. These markings—strike-outs and word changes—appear darker and/or in a different handwriting. We know that this editing occurred before the 1830 edition because the changes appear in that edition. Most changes are insignificant. The meaning is weakened in one example found in Alma in which of the word "always" is removed (Alma 17:70). Here Alma's instruction is that our hearts be full of thanks when lying down and when rising; his conclusion should read: "And if ye *always* do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

Where we do not have the Original manuscript for comparison, evaluating whether a change written on the Printer's manuscript is a copying correction or an editorial change made prior to the 1830 edition becomes more complicated.

The first consideration is, Could the strike-out or change be a correction made at the time of copying or proofing? If it appears in the same handwriting and is not bolder than the rest of the text, the implication is that a scribal correction was made during copying. If the marking is bolder, whether in the same or different handwriting, a correction could possibly have been made

after a fresh application of ink on the pen tip, or it could be a proofing correction done before the printing of the 1830 edition. It may, however, be evidence of an editorial change.

This possibility leads to further considerations. Both the unaltered text and the alteration must be studied for changes in meaning by evaluating the context, looking for similar wording nearby (keeping in mind that repetition and parallelism are basic to the Hebrew nature), conducting a word study throughout The Book of Mormon, and, if warranted, doing a comparison check for similar wording in the Bible. In all but a few cases a clear conclusion can be reached.

Table 1 contains examples which qualify as editorial changes made on the Printer's manuscript which appear in the 1830 edition. (The italicized words in Tables 1, 2 and 3 will be restored in the new edition.)

TABLE 1 - PRINTER'S MANUSCRIPT EDITING PRIOR TO 1830 EDITION

COMPARED TO ORIGINAL

Verse	Printer's Manuscript	P editing
A 15:21	things <i>which</i> had happened to them	that
A 17:70	if ye <i>always</i> do these things	≠
A 20:52	their <i>rites</i> and their religion	rights

NO ORIGINAL

2 N 6:79	the Lord, the Holy One <i>of Israel</i>	≠
2 N 9:44	waters of Shiloah that go softly <i>along</i>	≠
2 N 12:10	there is no harm in <i>doing these things</i>	this
2 N 12:36	line upon line <i>and</i> precept upon precept	≠
A 9:39	if thou eat <i>thereof</i> thou shalt surely die	≠
Hel 3:90	thou art confederate <i>with</i> this man	who is
3 N 4:33	their wickedness and <i>their</i> abominations	≠
3 N 5:10	and <i>they</i> wist not what it meant	≠
3 N 9:87	and which I shall <i>deliver</i> unto you	declare
Eth 1:60	<i>therefore the brother of Jared</i> went forth	≠
Eth 1:85	kept from <i>beholding</i> within the veil	≠

(Italics = words restored from P
≠ = marked out on P and omitted from 1830)

1830 edition word changes

In some places, a different word appears in the 1830 edition than that which is written on the Printer's manuscript. Some of these errors may have been caused by misreading the manuscript. Table 2 presents some examples of word differences between the Printer's manuscript and the 1830. An example of an apparent misreading is found in 2 Nephi 1:120. The word

Manuscript and the 1830 Edition

“mediator” on the Printer’s manuscript reads “mediation” in the 1830. The phrase “great Mediator” in this verse is consistent with verse 122:

And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great *Mediator* of all men. . .

And now my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator. . .

TABLE 2 - WORDS ON PRINTER’S MANUSCRIPT CHANGED IN 1830 EDITION

COMPARED TO ORIGINAL

Verse	Printer’s Manuscript	1830
A 16:96	offer up <i>these</i> same prayers	the
A 16:187	ask if ye have read <i>these</i> scriptures	the
A 19:58	a hair of <i>their heads</i> shall not be lost	the head
A 21:53	if we <i>should</i> fall into transgression	shall

NO ORIGINAL

2 N 1:120	through the great <i>Mediator</i> of all men	mediation
Jac 1:11	let them be of <i>whatsoever</i> name	whatever
Jac 2:55	given unto our <i>father</i>	fathers
Jac 5:41	with their <i>arms</i> and with all their might	armies
Mos 10:7	granted unto him that he <i>may</i> speak	might
Mos 13:10	which <i>will</i> be the cause of shedding	would
Mos 13:42	I <i>commanded</i> you to do these things	command
A 3:22	and my father Alma <i>believed</i> them	believe
A 6:30	high priest over the <i>churches</i> of God	church
A 10:1	the holy order <i>or</i> this high priesthood	of
A 16:148	in whatsoever circumstances <i>he</i> might	they
A 30:14	carry forth provisions unto <i>those</i> people	the
Hel 2:45	<i>deserting</i> away into the land of Nephi	deserting
Hel 3:44	and they <i>departed</i> hither and thither	parted
Hel 5:119	did flee out of their <i>hands</i>	lands
3 N 2:5	because of <i>their</i> many wrongs	the
3 N 2:63	<i>but</i> in the twenty and first year	and
3 N 2:92	they <i>could</i> not all be written	can
3 N 3:17	to the <i>buffeting</i> them up	puffing
3 N 3:31	to be judged of <i>their</i> crime	the
3 N 4:33	the prophets and the saints <i>should</i> not	shall
3 N 9:7	<i>but</i> behold they did cause	and
3 N 12:3	if it <i>should</i> so be that	shall
3 N 13:2	by them <i>should</i> their works be known	shall
Mn 4:23	let him <i>be aware</i> lest he commandeth	beware

(Italicized words are restored from P)

1830 edition word omissions

Other variants are the result of leaving out words in the 1830 edition which are on the Printer’s manuscript (see Table 3). In Jacob 5:44 an intensifying attribute

“wild” is restored before the word “wilderness:” “Born in tribulation, in a *wild* wilderness.”

TABLE 3 - WORDS ON PRINTER’S MANUSCRIPT OMITTED FROM 1830 EDITION

COMPARED TO ORIGINAL

Verse	Printer’s Manuscript
A 15:24	protect our brethren in the land of Jershon
A 20:8	against the Nephites <i>and</i> this he
A 24:17	march towards the land of Bountiful
A 26:44	and as we suppose <i>that</i> it was their intent

NO ORIGINAL

1 N 1:10	that he should read <i>it</i>
2 N 2:35	I will make <i>one</i> a spokesman for him
2 N 8:32	upon all <i>the</i> pleasant pictures
2 N 8:62	it shall <i>all</i> come to pass
2 N 8:66	fruit of the earth <i>and</i> excellent and comely
Jac 2:6	yea <i>and</i> it grieveth my soul
Jac 4:16	repent ye and enter <i>ye</i> in
Jac 5:44	born in tribulation in a <i>wild</i> wilderness
Mos 1:102	the Father of heaven and <i>of</i> earth
Mos 1:104	they shall consider him <i>as</i> a man
Mos 11:69	they called <i>the name</i> of the valley Alma
A 1:67	prepared <i>for</i> to meet the Amlicites
A 1:118	nevertheless <i>as</i> they had come out in open
A 3:28	his image in your <i>own</i> countenances
A 6:16	<i>and</i> he departed thence
A 6:29	Alma ate bread and <i>he</i> was filled
A 8:70	all these will I give <i>unto</i> thee
A 8:76	<i>for</i> thou saidst unto me behold
A 11:16	mangled by dogs and <i>by</i> wild beasts
A 12:77	should prepare his horses and <i>his</i> chariots
A 29:26	come <i>up</i> upon the top of the wall
A 29:31	it came to pass that <i>as</i> many of the Lamanites
Hel 3:4	to rule and <i>to</i> do according to their wills
Hel 3:11	therefore <i>as</i> Nephi had bowed himself
Hel 3:56	that Jerusalem was <i>not</i> destroyed
Hel 5:125	but <i>behold</i> it came to pass
Hel 5:126	<i>and</i> thus in this year
3 N 1:19	yea <i>and</i> in fine all the people upon the face
3 N 3:41	combination of the friends and <i>the</i> kindreds
3 N 4:64	into the praise and <i>the</i> thanksgiving
3 N 5:60	<i>and</i> I give unto you to be the salt
3 N 6:13	and <i>he</i> did open his mouth unto them
3 N 9:85	<i>and</i> then shall this covenant
3 N 10:35	<i>and</i> he cast his eyes upon them
4 N 1:56	<i>and</i> Amos died
Mn 1:6	<i>and</i> I remembered the things
Mn 1:68	<i>and</i> the king of the Lamanites sent
Mn 1:77	and <i>I</i> had loved them
Mn 3:12	yea <i>or</i> even my ten thousand
Mn 4:63	a holy and <i>a</i> just God

(Italicized words are restored from P)

1830 word additions

This final section includes a listing of words which were added to the text in the 1830 edition but do not exist on the manuscripts (Table 4). The printer may have added a word to make a sentence complete. Incomplete sentences are also typical in the Bible and are obviously evidence of a literal translation from one language to another. E.g., the words which appear in italics in the King James Version of the Bible are words which were added by the translator.

**TABLE 4 - WORDS ADDED IN 1830 EDITION
NOT ON PRINTER'S MANUSCRIPT**

COMPARED TO ORIGINAL

Verse	Reference
A 19:82	and [a] flaming sword

NO ORIGINAL

2 N 9:7	and he laid [it] upon my mouth
2 N 9:24	ask [it] either in the depths
Jac SS	[a] few words concerning
Jac 3:67	I have nourished [it] also
Enos 1:20	brought forth [at] some future day
Mos 11:31	their wives and [their] children
Mos 11:175	that their prayers may [be] answered
Mos 13:47	troubles [of] a righteous king
Mos 13:67	being sixty and three years [old]
A 1:44	[an] abundance of flocks and herds
A 1:78	watch [the] camp of the Amlicites
A 8:3	who was a descendant [of] Manasseh

A 11:30	and [also] the resurrection of the dead
A 20:76	but we believe [that] it is your cunning
A 21:7	and [the] Lord shall prosper thee
A 26:61	because of [the] fall of their leaders
Hel 5:104	which is [the] knowledge of their Redeemer
Hel 5:128	come to pass [of] which has been spoken
3 N 1:13	all that [which] I have caused to be spoken
3 N 2:64	yield themselves [up] according to their wishes
3 N 3:56	by angels and also [by] the voice
3 N 4:14	and [thus] the face of the whole earth
3 N 5:74	verily [verily] I say unto thee
3 N 5:82	but verily [verily] I say unto you
3 N 9:69	the fullness of my gospel [shall] be preached
3 N 9:90	that these [things] might come forth
3 N 11:14	[and] he shall not destroy the fruits
3 N 11:16	saith [the] Lord
4 N 1:8	the thirty and ninth and [the] forty and first
4 N 1:29	there were [many] churches in the land
4 N 1:59	and [he] did hide them up unto the Lord
Mn 3:13	save it [were] twenty and four of us
Mn 3:31	may believe that and if ye [may] believe that
Eth 1:34	not bring down [the] fullness of the wrath of God (Brackets indicate the added words)

The next article in this series will discuss the variants introduced in the 1837 edition which will be corrected in the new edition. Some of the most significant changes were introduced in that edition.

Note: For a more in-depth presentation on the history of the editions of The Book of Mormon, consult ZR #37,38. Additional copies are available on request. [ZRF](#)

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