



Type: Journal Article

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Author(s): John Gee

Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,  
Volume 50 (2022)

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Page(s): 33-50

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# INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT  
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 50 · 2022 · Pages 33- 50.j

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John Gee

Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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# VERBAL PUNCTUATION IN THE BOOK OF MORMON I: (AND) NOW

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John Gee

**Abstract:** *The Book of Mormon, being an ancient book, was originally written without typographic punctuation and employs verbal punctuation instead. This article looks at the use of “and now” as verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon. The phrase is used to mark major breaks in the text, not only for chapters but also within chapters of the text. The Book of Mormon usage is borrowed from Classical Biblical Hebrew (the Hebrew used before the exile) and follows the pattern set by pre-exilic Hebrew scribes. While this usage dropped in the Old World after the Babylonian exile as Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the major language spoken, the Book of Mormon preserved the usage until the end of Nephite civilization.*

According to John Gilbert, the typesetter, the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon was unpunctuated: “Every Chapter, if I remember correctly, was one solid paragraph, without a punctuation mark, from beginning to end.”<sup>1</sup> This is in keeping with many ancient languages and scripts that work without punctuation marks. Ancient languages tend to do without typographic punctuation; they use words for punctuation instead. This verbal punctuation provides the signposts that control and structure the flow of the narrative.

## Historical Examples of Verbal Punctuation

Sentences in Anatolian languages like Hittite and Luwian, usually start with a particle to which various enclitic particles are attached. The

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1. John H. Gilbert, “Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert Esq, Sept. 8th, 1892” in *A Documentary History of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Larry E. Morris (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 469.

particle functions as verbal punctuation because it signals where a new sentence starts. Consider, for example, the simple Hittite sentence:

*nu-wa-ra-aš TI-an-za*  
Now he will live.<sup>2</sup>

The Hittite particle *nu* “now” (the Hittite and English words are, in fact, cognates)<sup>3</sup> functions as verbal punctuation to let the sentence start.<sup>4</sup> To this the quotative particle *wa(r)*<sup>5</sup> and the enclitic pronoun *-aš* are attached.<sup>6</sup> The verb follows. This sentence is taken from the Apology of Hattušilis III, written in the twelfth century BC.

Or consider the following sentence in Luwian, a closely related language:

*wa-sá za-ti LOCUS-ta<sub>4</sub>-ti-i (“PES<sub>2</sub>”) HWI-HWI-ta*  
And he marched here in the district.<sup>7</sup>

Here the quotative particle *wa*<sup>8</sup> begins the sentence on its own and the enclitic pronoun *-sa*<sup>9</sup> is attached to it. This sentence, taken from an inscription by Yariri, the regent of Carchemish in the first part of the eighth century BC,<sup>10</sup> dates to slightly before the time of Isaiah.

Egyptian also has a set of non-enclitic particles that help structure the narrative. Consider the following sentence:

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2. Apology of Hattušilis III = KUB I 1.i.16 = KBo III 6.i.14, in Heinrich Otten, *Die Apologie Hattusilis III* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), 4; H. H. Figulla, E. Forrer, and E. F. Weidner, *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* (Leipzig, DEU: J. C. Hinrichs, 1923), 3:30; Johannes Friedrich, *Hethitisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1960), 2:10; Th. P. J. van den Hout, “Apology of Hattušili III” in William H. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2003), 1:199.

3. Edgar H. Sturtevant and E. Adelaide Hahn, *A Comparative Grammar of the Hittite Language* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1933), 40.

4. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., and H. Craig Melchert, *A Grammar of the Hittite Language* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 1:390–92.

5. *Ibid.*, 1:354–57.

6. *Ibid.*, 1:135.

7. KARKAMIŠ A6 §9, in John D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 1.1:124.

8. Annik Payne, *Hieroglyphic Luwian*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 2014), 40.

9. *Ibid.*, 25.

10. Trevor Bryce, *The World of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94–97, 302.

*ḥ<sup>c</sup>.n hb.n ḥm=f n ḥztyw-<sup>c</sup> mrw-mš<sup>c</sup> ḥr Kmt ṯs Pwzrmz ḥn<sup>c</sup> ṯs  
Rw<sup>c</sup>mrskny ḥn<sup>c</sup> ṯs nb nw ḥm=f ntt ḥr Kmt*

Then his majesty sent to the governors and generals who were over Egypt: the commander Puarma, and the commander, Lamersekny, and all the commanders of his majesty who were over Egypt.<sup>11</sup>

The particle *ḥ<sup>c</sup>.n* at the beginning of the sentence marks a new section in the narrative.

Hebrew sentences often start with particles or other expressions that signal what is happening in the narrative.

The Book of Mormon claims to be an ancient record, and the form of the narrative without any explicit punctuation supports this claim. To date, no significant scholarship has been done on the verbal punctuation of the Book of Mormon.

### Chapter Breaks in the Book of Mormon

While the most famous and probably most frequent mark of verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon is “it came to pass,” it is not the best one with which to begin a discussion of the verbal punctuation of the Book of Mormon. First we need to establish that there is some system of verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon and show what difference it makes in understanding the text. So we will focus on a less complicated example.

In 1994, Professor Royal Skousen noted that in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, the beginning of a chapter was marked simply “Chapter,” and the numbering was filled in later. He hypothesized that “as Joseph Smith was translating, he apparently saw some mark (or perhaps extra spacing) whenever a section ended, but was unable to see the text that followed. At such junctures, Joseph decided to refer to these endings as chapter breaks and told the scribe to write the word ‘chapter’ at these places, but without specifying any number of the chapter since Joseph saw neither a number nor the word ‘chapter.’”<sup>12</sup> These original chapter divisions are not the same as those

11. Piye Stele 8, in N.-C. Grimal, *La stèle triomphale de Pi(ankh)y au Musée du Caire* (Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1981), 23; Karl Jansen-Winkel, *Inschriften der Spätzeit Teil II: Die 22.-24. Dynastie* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 2007), 338.

12. Royal Skousen, “Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 137.

used in the current Book of Mormon but were used in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. An examination of the beginning and ending sections of each original chapter will help clarify the verbal punctuation used to distinguish chapters in the original Book of Mormon.

The various beginnings and endings can be analyzed. We rank them here according to most common among the 114 beginnings and endings using only the initial phrases of the original chapters:

And now	60	(52%)
Amen (ending)	37	(32%)
Now	18	(16%)
Behold	11	(10%)
And it came to pass	6	(5%)
I, (personal name)	2	(2%)

One can observe that many of these beginning or ending phrases may be concatenated at chapter breaks, but the most common of all beginnings or endings is “and now” or “now,” which, combined, account for more than two thirds of the original chapter beginnings of the Book of Mormon. From Book of Mormon usage we can see that the phrase “and now” functions as a major break in the narrative. We can view “now” as a lesser used variant.

In some places, a number of these phrases are stacked together, which reveals both a complexity of use and an order of use of these phrases. Here we will only look at the initial phrases in the chapters, which are arranged according to the appearance of elements in the standard Book of Mormon order.

<b>And now</b>	60	(52%)
And now	10	
And now + behold	4	
And now + behold + it came to pass	1	
And now + it came to pass	29	
And now + it came to pass + I, (personal name)	3	
And now + I, (personal name)	13	
<b>Now</b>	18	(16%)
Now	5	
Now + behold + it came to pass + I, (personal name)	1	
Now + behold + I, (personal name)	1	
Now + it came to pass	7	
Now + it came to pass + I, (personal name)	1	
Now + I, (personal name)	3	

<b>Behold</b>	11 (10%)
Behold	1
Behold + now + it came to pass	6
Behold + it came to pass	1
Behold + it came to pass + I, (personal name)	3
Behold + I, (personal name)	1
<b>And it came to pass</b>	6 (5%)
And it came to pass	5
And it came to pass + I, (personal name)	1
<b>I, (personal name)</b>	2 (2%)
<b>(Other)</b>	16 (14%)

The standard order of these phrases is:

- (And) now
- Behold
- It came to pass
- I, (personal name)

The variants indicate some stylistic preferences among individual authors, which we will not explore here. There is also indication of chronological variation. Starting at the time of Alma, a variant in the order appears with “behold” preceding “now.” In general, the phrase “(and) now” is the most frequent and most prominent phrase to begin a chapter. The phrase “and now” is more significant and more prominent in designating chapter breaks than the phrase “it came to pass.”

### Examples of Book of Mormon Usage

Not only does the phrase “and now” serve as a chapter break but it also functions as a marker of a major break within the chapter. Consider these examples of internal breaks within chapters:

Which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever — And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations — **And now**, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ. (Book of Mormon, Title Page)



In the title page, the phrase “and now” signals a change in narrative. Before the phrase “and now,” the discussion is about the purposes of the book. After the phrase, Moroni asks the reader not to condemn what he wrote. The phrase marks a change in topic.

And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

**And now** I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. (1 Nephi 1:15–16)

In this case, Nephi had been speaking about his father’s experiences but shifts topic to talk about the record that he is making. The phrase “and now” transitions between the different topics.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

**And now** I, Jacob, would speak somewhat concerning these words. For behold, the Lord has shown me that those who were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive. (2 Nephi 6:7–8)

In this example, Jacob had been quoting Isaiah and uses the phrase “and now” to signal that he is finished with quoting Isaiah and is about to talk about what he has quoted.

And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine.

**And now** it came to pass that I, Enos, went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I had heard and seen. (Enos 1:18–19)

Here Enos quotes what the Lord said to him and uses “and now” to transition to an account of his deeds among the people.

... for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh from the devil.

**And now**, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved.

**And now** I would speak somewhat concerning a certain number who went up into the wilderness to return to the land of Nephi; for there was a large number who were desirous to possess the land of their inheritance. (Omni 1:25–27)

In this example, Amaleki switches between three different subjects. In the first, he is discussing spiritual gifts. In the second, he invites the reader to come unto Christ. In the third, he discusses historical events. At each break he includes the words “and now.”

And he also unfolded unto them all the disadvantages they labored under, by having an unrighteous king to rule over them;

Yea, all his iniquities and abominations, and all the wars, and contentions, and bloodshed, and the stealing, and the plundering, and the committing of whoredoms, and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated — telling them that these things ought not to be, that they were expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.

**And now** it came to pass, after king Mosiah had sent these things forth among the people they were convinced of the truth of his words. (Mosiah 29:35–37)

Here Mormon, narrating, changes from a summary of king Mosiah’s words to a description of his actions and at the narrative change employs the phrase “and now.”

Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

**And now**, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. (Alma 36:18–19)

In Alma's narration to his son about his conversion experience, he finishes quoting the prayer of his heart, and after using the transitional phrase "and now," he tells the result of his prayer.

And the Lamanites had also retained many prisoners, all of whom are chief captains, for none other have they spared alive. And we suppose that they are now at this time in the land of Nephi; it is so if they are not slain.

**And now** these are the cities of which the Lamanites have obtained possession by the shedding of the blood of so many of our valiant men. (Alma 56:12–13)

In his letter to Moroni, Helaman outlines the desperate circumstances in which he found himself and then transitions to a list of the cities that have been lost. The transition is marked by the phrase "and now."

Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.

**And now** it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen. (3 Nephi 15:10–11)

Here Jesus changes the audience whom he has been addressing from the multitude to the disciples. The transition is marked with the phrase "and now."

... therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land.

**And now**, the Lamanites had a king, and his name was Aaron; and he came against us with an army of forty and four thousand. (Mormon 2:8–9)

Here Mormon shifts from a general description to a specific event and transitions with the phrase "and now."

Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but

serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.

**And now** I proceed with my record. (Ether 2:12–13)

In this case, Moroni changes from his prophecy to his historical record and uses the phrase “and now” as a transition.

... and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

**And now**, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?

**And now** I come to that faith, of which I said I would speak. (Moroni 7:19–21)

In this passage, Mormon switches from talking about judging to identify what is good, to asking a rhetorical question, to starting to talk about faith. He uses “and now” to change topics.

These examples show how the phrase “and now” is used not just to mark changes in chapters but also to mark changes in topic within a chapter. In the Book of Mormon, the phrase “and now” is used to mark breaks or transitions in the narrative and allows the narrative to be structured. As an example of verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon, the phrase “and now” serves as the rough equivalent of a new paragraph marker. It can mark a change of topic, the end of a quotation, the beginning of a new chapter, or some other major transition in the text.

### Hebrew Antecedents

The Book of Mormon use of the phrase “and now” has historical roots. In the Isaiah passages, the expression is used to translate the Hebrew expression *wě-‘attāh*, which literally means “and now” (2 Nephi 15:3, 5; Isaiah 5:3, 5). The phrase comes up in letters, the basics of which were part of scribal training since one of the jobs of scribes was to write letters.

In Hebrew letters, typical elements begin an introduction (*praescriptio*) that includes an address formula. The introduction sometimes includes a greeting formula or a divine benediction. The introduction is then followed by a formal transition to the body of the letter, “and now (*w‘t*).”<sup>13</sup>

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13. William M. Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 108.

An example of this can be found in an early sixth century letter from Arad:

’l. ’lyšb.

w’t. ntn. lktym yyn b1 111 wktb. šm hym.

wm’wd. hqmḥ hr’šn. trkb. 1 kr<sup>14</sup> qmḥ l’št. lhm lḥm.

myyn h’gnt. ttn

To Eliashib: **And now**, give to the Cyprians 1 bath and 3 hin of wine and write the date. And the rest of the first-rate flour you will transport one kor of flour to make bread for them. You will give from the wine of the amphora.<sup>15</sup>

The contents of this letter are rather mundane at first appearance. The letter begins with the address. This is followed by the phrase w’t “and now” that designates the beginning of the letter. This is followed by the contents of the letter requesting flour and wine be delivered. This letter demonstrates how the expression “and now” functioned in Hebrew letters. This letter was written to a subordinate. So the address is brief, and the letter is terse. Letters to superiors contained more niceties.

’bdk. hws’yhw. šlh. lhgd l’ dny. y’wš.

yšm’. yhw. ’t. ’dny. lšm’t. šlm. wšm’t ṭb

w’t. hpqh n’ ’t ’zn ’bdk. lspr. ’šr. šlhth. ’l ’bdk. ’mš. ky. lb ’bdk

dwh m’z. šlhk. ’l. ’bdk wky’mr. ’dny. l’. yd’t. qr’. spr. ḥyhw.

’m. nšh. ’yš. lqr’. ly. spr. lnšh. wgm. kl spr. ’šr. yb’. ’ly. ’m. qr’ty.

’th. w’wd ’tnnhw ’l. m’wmh wl’bdk. hgd. l’mr. yrd sr. hšb’.

knyhw bn ’ltn lb’. mšrymh. w’t hwdwyhw bn ḥyhw w ’nšw

šlh lqht. mzh. wspr. ṭbyhw ’bd. hmlk. hb’ ’l. šlm. bn yd’. m’t.

hnb’. l’mr. hšmr. šlh. ’bk. ’l. ’dny.

Your servant Hoshayahu sends to inform my lord Josh. May Yahu cause my lord to hear tidings of peace and tidings of good. **And now**, open the ear of your servant concerning the letter which you sent to your servant yesterday because

14. For the reading of this sign, see Stefan Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch: Die Zahl- und Sonderzeichen in der althebräischen Schrift* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 2008), 256.

15. Arad Ostrakon 1, in Shmuel Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 92–93; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al, *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 8; Sandra Landis Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 386; James M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 107.

the heart of your servant is ill since your sending it to your servant. And since my lord said: “Do you do not know how to read a document?” As the Lord lives, has a man ever tried to read me a document. And again, every letter which comes to me, do I not read it, and furthermore I certainly give it attention. And to your servant it has been reported saying: The prince of the army, Konyahu, son of Elnathan has come down to enter Egypt. And he sent Hoduyahu son of Achiyahu and his men to take from this. And the letter of Tobyahu, the servant of the king, came to Shallum son of Yada, from the prophet saying: “Beware.” Your servant sent it to my lord.<sup>16</sup>

A number of features about this letter have echoes in the Book of Mormon.<sup>17</sup> Here we are interested in the start of the letter proper, which begins with the phrase *w't*, “and now.” It is a “transition word ... employed” when “the body of the letter begins.”<sup>18</sup>

The expression, *w't(h)*, “and now,” was an important device that functioned as a new paragraph marker and was learned by ancient scribes when practicing the writing of model letters. The use of *w't(h)* is especially important in ancient Hebrew because the writing system did not have many auxiliary markers to mark semantic functions in the way we have in modern languages (e.g., commas, periods, spaces, line breaks, tabs, paragraphs, etc.).<sup>19</sup>

The phrase “and now” functions in both Epigraphic Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible the same way that it does in the Book of Mormon.

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16. Lachish 3, in Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 62–67; Dobbs-Allsopp et al, *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 309; Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, 415–16; Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 111–12.

17. Hugh Nibley notes the usage of the name *Josh*. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 395–97, 401. The expectation of good tidings is mentioned in Mosiah (12:21). The reference in Mosiah 12:21 is a quotation of Isaiah 52:7, which uses different verbiage but has similar sentiment.

18. Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 68.

19. Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe*, 111.

## Dating Implications

There is more, however, to the use of the phrase “and now” in the context of Biblical Hebrew than its use as verbal punctuation to indicate the beginning of a new section. There is a chronological dimension to the phrase as well.<sup>20</sup> “The use of *w’t* is as a transition marker so consistent in Iron Age inscriptions that one must assume it was a device scribes learned to use in writing letters.”<sup>21</sup> But there seems to have been a change in scribal practice after the Jews were carried captive into Babylon. Although there was an Aramaic equivalent that was used in the Persian period, in later Hebrew it completely disappears.<sup>22</sup> “It shows that the use of *w’t* in biblical literature was closely tied to scribal learning. When the scribal curriculum changed, the expression *w’t* disappeared with it.”<sup>23</sup>

In the time period before the Babylonian exile, scribal education in Israel and Judah was standardized across the country. “The Old Hebrew epigraphic evidence demonstrates that there was formal, standardized scribal education in ancient Israel.”<sup>24</sup> This is shown in the general consistency of the paleography,<sup>25</sup> orthography,<sup>26</sup> phraseology,<sup>27</sup> and use of hieratic numerals<sup>28</sup> found in pre-exilic inscriptions from Israel and Judah.

As an offshoot of the tradition of Biblical Hebrew, the Book of Mormon seems to have kept this pre-exilic scribal convention when the main line of Hebrew abandoned it. This may be a function of the scribal education of Book of Mormon authors. Nephi claims that he “was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1). King Benjamin taught his children “concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3). There is a conscious preservation of the writing system and, from the usage, of scribal and rhetorical conventions.

Although there are mentions of Egyptian in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4; Mormon 9:32), Egyptian does not preserve an

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20. Ronald Hendel and Jan Joosten, *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

21. Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe*, 113.

22. *Ibid.*, 113–14.

23. *Ibid.*, 113.

24. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel*, 91.

25. *Ibid.*, 91, 97–104.

26. *Ibid.*, 91, 107–109; Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe*, 29–35; Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, 49–74.

27. Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe*, 95–119.

28. Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch*; Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel*, 110.

equivalent expression. In Middle Kingdom literary texts, the particle *rf* / *rk* was used to signal a change in subject but not a major break in the text. By the time of Isaiah, it is not used to mark a major break in the narrative, even in classicizing texts.<sup>29</sup> In other texts,<sup>30</sup> it has dropped out completely. The presence of an equivalent transition particle in Hebrew that is lacking in Egyptian indicates that the Book of Mormon is more strongly influenced in this feature by Hebrew than by Egyptian.

### Joseph Smith's Usage

There are those who view Joseph Smith as author of the Book of Mormon. If that were the case, then we would expect that such a frequent usage in the Book of Mormon would reflect Joseph Smith's own usage. We will test this hypothesis by examining Joseph Smith usage. We have limited the scope to material produced by Joseph Smith in his own name from 1829 to 1832, excluding things like minutes of meetings taken by others and notes of ordinations in others' handwriting.

If we look at Joseph Smith's usage in the time period closest to the production of the Book of Mormon, we discover that he does not use the phrase "and now" in the Preface to the Book of Mormon.<sup>31</sup> He does use it once, and correctly, in a letter to Oliver Cowdery dated 22 October 1829:

give our best respects to Father & Mother and all our brothers and Sisters to Mr. [Martin] Harris and all the company concerned tell them that our prayers are put up daily for them that they may be prospered in evry, good word and work and that they may be preserved from sin here **and** and from the consequen[c]e of sin here after and now dear brother be faithful in the discharge of evry duty looking for the reward of the righteous **and now** may God of his infinite mercy keep an<d> preserve us spotless untill his coming and receive us all

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29. E.g. Piye Stele 20, in N.-C. Grimal, *Le stèle triomphale de Pi(ankh)y au Musée de Caire JE 48862 et 47086-47089* (Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1981), 41. The major break in the text is marked by the *sdm pw ir.n=f* construction, not the use of *rf* in the following sentence.

30. E.g. Papyrus Rylands 9, see Günther Vittmann, *Der demotische Papyrus Rylands 9* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 1998).

31. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, eds. Michael Hubbard MacKay et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 1:93–94.



to rest with him in eternal repose through the attonement of Christ our Lord Amen<sup>32</sup>

Joseph Smith does not use the phrase “and now” in any of the following:

- His 16 January 1830 agreement with Martin Harris<sup>33</sup>
- The Church’s Articles and Covenants from April 1830<sup>34</sup>
- The 9 June 1830 licenses for John Whitmer,<sup>35</sup> Christian Whitmer,<sup>36</sup> or Joseph Smith, Sr.<sup>37</sup>
- The 28 August 1830 letter to Newel Knight<sup>38</sup>
- The 2 December 1830 letter to the Church in Colesville<sup>39</sup>
- His 22 February 1831 letter to Martin Harris<sup>40</sup>
- His 3–4 March 1831 letter to Hyrum Smith<sup>41</sup>
- His 16 June 1831 notes on ordinations<sup>42</sup>
- His 1831 license for Edward Partridge<sup>43</sup>
- The 5 October 1831 license for William Smith<sup>44</sup>
- His 2 November 1831 testimony<sup>45</sup>
- His 6 June 1832 letter to Emma Smith<sup>46</sup>

In other words, Joseph Smith does not use the phrase “and now” in any of the documentation he produced under his own name from January 1830 to June 1832.

The next time that Joseph Smith uses the phrase is in a 31 July 1832 letter to William W. Phelps:

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32. *Ibid.*, 1:97, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-cowdery-22-october-1829/1>.

33. *Ibid.*, 1:108.

34. *Ibid.*, 1:120–26.

35. *Ibid.*, 1:144–46.

36. *Ibid.*, 1:149–50.

37. *Ibid.*, 1:147–48.

38. *Ibid.*, 1:174–77.

39. *Ibid.*, 1:215–17.

40. *Ibid.*, 1:262–64.

41. *Ibid.*, 1:270–73.

42. *Ibid.*, 1:344.

43. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, eds. Matthew C. Godfrey, et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 2:29.

44. *Ibid.*, 2:72–74.

45. *Ibid.*, 2:113–14.

46. *Ibid.*, 2:249–57.

I dispise a hypocrite or a covenant breaker, I judge them not, God shall Judge them according to there works, I am a lover even of mine enimies for an enimy seeketh to destroy openly, I can pray for those who dispitefully use and persicute me, but for all I can not hope, **and now** I conjure **you** and exhort mine accusers and the hypocrite in zion in the love of Christ yea in the name of Jesus of Nazreth to remember the covenant which they have made with God, and to me & repent of there iniquities and give satisfaction to the innocent whom they have injured<sup>47</sup>

Here Joseph Smith does use the phrase “and now” the way it is used in the Book of Mormon.

In Joseph Smith’s 1832 History, he was specifically modeling some aspects of his account on the Book of Mormon. He starts his account modeling it after the beginning of Nephi’s account in 1 Nephi 1:1: “I was born ... of goodly Parents who spared no pains to instruct<ing> me in <the> christian religion.”<sup>48</sup> Despite this imitation, he never uses the phrase “and now” at all in his account.

Joseph Smith also does not use the phrase “and now” in his 13 October 1832 letter to Emma Smith<sup>49</sup> nor his 27 November 1832 letter to William W. Phelps.<sup>50</sup>

In Joseph Smith’s Journal from 1832 to 1834, the phrase “and now” only occurs on page 89 of the Journal, after the recording of a covenant on 29 November 1834:

**And now**, O Father, as thou didst prosper our father Jacob, and bless him with protection and prosperity where ever he went from the time he made a like covenant before and with thee; and as thou didst, — even the same night, open the heavens unto him and manifest great mercy and favor, and give him promises, so wilt thou do by us his sons;<sup>51</sup>

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47. Ibid, 2:264, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-31-july-1832/3>. The full letter is at 2:261–72.

48. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, eds. Karen Lynn Davidson et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 1:11, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>.

49. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents*, 2:307–14.

50. Ibid., 2:316–21.

51. *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 1: (1832– 1839)*, eds. Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s

The phrase is used the same way here as it is in the Book of Mormon, but the frequency is not the same at all.

These quotations show that Joseph Smith could use the phrase the way that it was used in the Book of Mormon but usually did not do so when he had the chance. The phrase was not characteristic of Joseph Smith's style during the production of the Book of Mormon.

### Conclusions

Ancient languages tend to use verbal rather than typographic punctuation. The Book of Mormon manuscript follows this convention, as does the text of the Book of Mormon. An analysis of the original Book of Mormon chapter division shows that the phrase "and now" serves as verbal punctuation marking a major break in the text both between and within chapters. The Book of Mormon phrase is a literal translation of the Hebrew expression *w't(h)*, which is used both in the Hebrew Bible and in Epigraphic Hebrew to mark a transition between major sections of text. This feature dropped out of Hebrew after the Babylonian exile, indicating that the Book of Mormon language split off before the Babylonian exile and the scribal tradition that employed the expression was preserved among the Nephites. The phrase is also not characteristic of Joseph Smith's style.

The use of the verbal punctuation "(and) now" in the Book of Mormon thus shows three things. (1) It serves as a means to mark transitions between sections in the text. This helps structure the narrative using internal markers. (2) It provides evidence for the ancient origins of the Book of Mormon consistent with the Book of Mormon's internal claims. (3) It poses a problem for those who argue that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon since it is not a common feature of Joseph Smith's style at the time he translated the Book of Mormon, even when he tried to imitate the Book of Mormon.

**John Gee** is the William (Bill) Gay Research Professor in the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at Brigham Young University. He has authored more than 150 publications on topics such as ancient scripture, Aramaic, archaeology, Coptic, Egyptian, history, linguistics, Luwian, rhetoric, Sumerian, textual criticism, and published in journals such as *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*, *Bulletin*

of the Egyptological Seminar, Enchoria, Ensign, FARMS Review, Göttinger Miszellen, Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy, Journal of Academic Perspectives, Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Journal of Egyptian History, Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, Lingua Aegyptia, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur, *and Interpreter, and by such presses as American University of Cairo Press, Archaeopress, Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, E. J. Brill, Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Deseret Book, de Gruyter, Harrassowitz, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Peeters, Praeger, Religious Studies Center, and Society of Biblical Literature. He has published three books and has edited eight books and an international multilingual peer-reviewed professional journal. He served twice as a section chair for the Society of Biblical Literature.*

