

*Summary:* Maintain in Ether 1:41 the preposition *of* before “the seed of the earth”; the use of the partitive preposition *of* with the verb *gather* is expected when referring to the gathering of seed (thus “gather . . . of the seed of the earth of every kind”).

■ Ether 1:41

*go to and gather together thy flocks both male and female of every kind  
and also of the seed of the earth of every kind  
and thy [ family 1PS | families ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQR ]  
and also Jared thy brother and his family  
and also thy friends and their families  
and the friends of Jared and their families*

The printer’s manuscript has the singular *family* whenever the reference is to an individual (the brother of Jared and his family as well as Jared and his family), but the plural *families* occurs when the text refers to the brother of Jared’s friends and to Jared’s friends. In other words, each individual has one family. Unfortunately, the 1830 compositor accidentally set *families* when referring to the family of the brother of Jared, probably because his eye caught the plural *families* in the next line of the printer’s manuscript. There is definitely no intent in the original text to assign more than one family to the brother of Jared; the singular reading of the original text should be restored here, even though the plural reading has caused some controversy. For instance, Orson Pratt, the editor for the 1879 LDS edition, added a footnote here: “From this verse it is seen that the brother of Jared had a plurality of families.” Walter W. Smith, writing in the RLDS publication *The Saints’ Herald* 56/40 (6 October 1909), draws attention on page 943 to Pratt’s footnote, then concludes with this remark (based on the fact that the 1908 RLDS edition restored the correct singular): “But another error has been corrected, and with it another defense of polygamy is gone.” Richard P. Howard, formerly the RLDS Church Historian, provides a more neutral evaluation of the RLDS perspective on page 41 of his *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development*, second edition (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1995):

The acquisition of the P MS [the printer’s manuscript] in 1903 made possible the clarification of a text which in the Reorganization’s historic warfare against polygamy was considered in 1906 to be very important to the cause. Today we would treat such a matter in keeping with its current relative importance, but in the early 1900s few considerations were much more significant.

Here the year 1906 refers to the RLDS committee’s revision of the RLDS text for the third RLDS edition, published in 1908.

Ultimately, this contentious issue in LDS and RLDS church history should play no role in determining the text of the Book of Mormon. Here in Ether 1:41, the critical text will restore the singular *family*, the reading of the earliest textual source (the printer’s manuscript).

*Summary:* Restore the original singular *family* in reference to the brother of Jared in Ether 1:41; the plural reading “thy families” is a typo that was introduced by the 1830 compositor.

Ether 15:30

and it came to pass that  
 when Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword  
 —that he rested a little—  
 [& >jg NULL 1 | ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] he smote off the head of Shiz

For further discussion of Gilbert's deletion of the Hebraistic *and*, see under Helaman 16:10.

*Summary:* Restore in Ether 14:1 the Hebraistic *and* that originally separated the subordinate *if*-clause from its following main clause; such usage was fairly common in the original Book of Mormon text.

#### ■ Ether 14:2

*and every man kept the hilt of his sword [thereof 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPS | RT]  
 in his right hand*

As explained under Alma 46:12, here we have an example of *thereof* that does not appear to have a referent. We would expect *thereof* to modify *hilt* rather than *sword* (as in 1 Nephi 4:9: “and I beheld his **sword** and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof and the **hilt thereof** was of pure gold”). The 1920 LDS edition removed the *thereof* here in Ether 14:2, but the critical text will restore it since it is the earliest reading and appears to be intended.

Don-Brugger (personal communication) suggests the possibility that *thereof* here in Ether 14:2 could be an error for *therefore*. However, as discussed earlier under 3 Nephi 8:9, the word *therefore* is always found at the beginning of the clause in the Book of Mormon (we exclude here quotations from the King James Bible). Thus it seems very unlikely that the *thereof* in Ether 14:2 is an error for *therefore*.

*Summary:* Restore the original *thereof* in Ether 14:2 (“every man kept the hilt of his sword **thereof** in his right hand”) even though there is no apparent referent for the *thereof* in this sentence.

#### ■ Ether 14:2

*and every man kept the hilt of his sword thereof in his right hand  
 in the defense of his property and his own life  
 and [they >js NULL 1 | they A | BCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] of his wives  
 and [ 1ABCEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST | his D] children*

The earliest extant text here reads “and his own life and they of his wives and children”. On the surface, the meaning seems to be ‘and his own life and **the lives** of his wives and children’; that is, the pronoun *they* seems to be a pluralization of the preceding *life*. Such usage is obviously strange, and thus Joseph Smith deleted the *they* in his editing for the 1837 edition. The *they* here is a subject form, but in this passage *his own life* and *they* are objects of the preposition *of* in the preceding phrase “in the defense of”. Elsewhere in the text, *they* in object position has typically been edited to either *those* or *them* (see under PRONOMINAL DETERMINERS in volume 3). This kind of editing elsewhere suggests another possibility for emending the standard text, namely, editing *they* to *those* (“and his own life and **those** of his wives and children”), although even this seems odd because it juxtaposes the singular *life* with the plural *those*.

It should also be noted here that the 1841 British edition accidentally inserted the repeated *his* between the conjuncts *wives* and *children*, but the subsequent LDS edition (in 1849) restored the shorter phraseology. Usually the determiner is repeated for conjuncts involving *wives* and *children* (30 times in the earliest text). However, four cases did not have the repeated determiner in the earliest text, including this one. For discussion of this variation, see under Mosiah 23:28.

The most difficult problem here in Ether 14:2 is the plural *wives*. Everywhere else in the Book of Mormon, when the plural *wives* occurs in a neutral context (there are 43 instances), the text can be readily interpreted as assuming that a man has only one wife, as in Mosiah 19:11: “the king commanded them that all the men should leave their wives and their children”. For one of these cases, one could initially misread the passage as implying that a man could have a plurality of wives:

Ether 15:15

and it came to pass that  
when **they** were all gathered together  
—**every one** to the army which **he** would—  
with **their wives** and **their children** . . .

Here the intervening phrase “every one to the army which he would” seems to clash with the following *their*, but of course the *their* refers to the earlier *they*, not the singular *he* (or *every one*) that occurs in the intervening phrase. Moreover, when the text clearly refers to a man having plural wives, the word *wives* is always conjoined with *concubines* and is identified as being illicit (seven times, in Jacob 1–2, Mosiah 11, and Ether 10). Ultimately, the example here in Ether 14:2 is the only explicit case where one could interpret a man as having a plurality of wives without being condemned for it.

Some have argued that there is evidence in the book of Ether that the Jaredites had a plurality of wives—and without the condemnation of the practice that is typically found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. The most notorious example is the mistake that entered Ether 1:41, where the earliest text refers to the brother of Jared and his family but the 1830 typesetter accidentally replaced *family* with *families*, giving “go to and gather together thy flocks . . . and also of the seed of the earth of every kind and thy **families**”. The correct reading, as explained under Ether 1:41, is the singular, “and thy **family**”. Orson Pratt, in a footnote to the 1879 edition, cross-references Ether 1:41 to Ether 6:20, where the large number of offspring for the brother of Jared supposedly supports a plurality of wives: “now the number of the sons and the daughters of the brother of Jared were twenty and two souls”. (The same cross-reference to Ether 6:20 was continued in the 1920 and 1981 LDS editions.) And one could also refer to Orihah’s 31 children as implying more than one wife (Ether 7:2). This evidence suggesting plurality of wives in the book of Ether is summarized on page 327 of Daniel H. Ludlow’s *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1976).

It actually turns out that the book of Ether explicitly refers to plural marriage only once—and in that one case the reference is negative:

Ether 10:5

Riplakish did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord  
for he did have many wives and concubines  
and did lay that upon men’s shoulders which was grievous to be borne

In contrast to Riplakish, we have Coriantum who had only one wife at a time (which is clearly what was expected among the Jaredites since no special attention is brought to bear on that issue):

Ether 9:23–24

and it came to pass that Coriantum did walk in the steps of his father  
and did build many mighty cities  
and did administer that which was good unto his people in all his days  
and it came to pass that he had no children even until he was exceeding old  
and it came to pass that his wife died / being an hundred and two years old  
and it came to pass that Coriantum took to wife  
in his old age a young maid and begat sons and daughters  
wherefore he lived until he was an hundred and forty and two years old

Coriantum's 142 years corresponds with the longevity of the later postdiluvian biblical patriarchs, so that as we approach the time of Abraham the years eventually correspond with Coriantum's: Peleg, 239 years; Reu, 239 years; Serug, 230 years; Nahor, 148 years; Terah, 205 years; Abraham, 175 years; Isaac, 180 years; and Jacob 147 years. It would appear that in general the Jaredite patriarchs lived longer than we do today, so the large number of children may be due to longer periods of fertility. As a result, they could have had many more children than we are used to having but without necessarily resorting to a plurality of wives. And there's always another possibility: like Coriantum, with the death of his first wife, one could always marry a younger woman, thus increasing the prospects of having a large number of offspring. Consequently, the large number of children listed for the brother of Jared and for Orihah does not necessarily mean that they had a plurality of wives, at least at the same time. In fact, the case of Coriantum suggests that there was not even any consideration of taking an additional wife while the first one was alive, while on the other hand Riplakish is specifically referred to as one who violated what was "right in the sight of the Lord", namely, one wife for one man. This expectation of having one wife applies, I would argue, to the brother of Jared and to Orihah. In other words, there are other possible explanations for the large number of children mentioned in the book of Ether.

Another passage in the Book of Mormon that some have argued refers to a plurality of wives is found in Alma 10:11, where Amulek's reference to *women* could be interpreted as meaning 'wives':

Alma 10:11

for behold he hath blessed mine house  
he hath blessed me and my women and my children  
and my father and my kinsfolks  
yea even all my kindred hath he blessed

For instance, John Tvedtnes has bluntly concluded that the use of *women* here means that "Amulek . . . was a polygamist". He argues that his interpretation is supported by the use in Hebrew of the word *'iššā* for either 'woman' or 'wife'. In support of this interpretation in the Book of Mormon text, Tvedtnes notes the use of the word *women* to mean 'wives' in 1 Nephi 17:20: "and our women have toiled being big with child and they have borne children in the wilderness". (For Tvedtnes's argument, see page 59 of his article "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey", *Brigham Young University Studies* 11/1 (1970): 50–60.) Even so, the

English text in Alma 10:11 does not use the word *wives*, and one could argue that Amulek's extended patriarchal family could have included unmarried sisters as well as Amulek's mother, who could all be considered along with Amulek's wife as "my women" rather than as part of the final catchall phrase, "my kinsfolks". The point here is that there is no explicit reference in Alma 10:11 to a plurality of wives. Whenever there is such an explicit reference to the plurality of wives in the Book of Mormon, it is always negative—except for here in Ether 14:2.

In all other cases that use a singular noun or pronoun to refer to a man in association with his family, the text uses the singular *wife*:

Mosiah 2:5

and it came to pass that  
when they came up to the temple  
they pitched their tents round about  
**every man** according to **his** family  
consisting of **his wife** and his sons and his daughters

Alma 54:11

therefore I will close my epistle  
by telling you that I will not exchange prisoners  
save it be on conditions that ye will deliver up  
**a man and his wife** and his children for one prisoner

3 Nephi 19:1

and now it came to pass that  
when Jesus had ascended into heaven  
the multitude did disperse  
and **every man** did take **his wife** and his children  
and did return to his own home

These examples argue that the plural "his wives and children" in Ether 14:2 is an error for "his wife and children":

Ether 14:2 (possible emendation)

and every man kept the hilt of his sword thereof  
in his right hand in the defense of his property  
and his own life and they of his **wife** and children

A second possibility for Ether 14:2 would be to eliminate the difficulty of the original *they* as well as the problem with the plural *wives*; in this case *they* could be emended to *the lives*:

Ether 14:2 (another possible emendation)

and every man kept the hilt of his sword thereof  
in his right hand in the defense of his property  
and his own life and **the lives** of his **wife** and children

Actually, this second emendation suggests the possibility that the first emendation is correct—namely, Joseph Smith actually dictated "and his own life and they of his wife and children" but Oliver Cowdery thought of the word *lives* because of the preceding *life*, which accidentally led him to write *wives* instead of *wife*. One should also note that in the earliest text, the plural *wives*

is surrounded by plurals, the pronoun *they* and the noun *children*, thus facilitating the proposed change of original *wife* to *wives*.

Given usage throughout the text, there appears to be a primitive error in Ether 14:2. It seems reasonable to at least assume that the original text read *wife* in the singular rather than in the plural. Since the *they* of the earliest reading will work, despite its grammatical difficulty, the critical text will retain the *they* but emend *wives* to *wife* (thus “in the defense of his property and his own life and they of his **wife** and children”).

**Summary:** Emend Ether 14:2 to read “in the defense of his property and his own life and they of his **wife** and children”; in accord with the earliest text, the *his* should not be repeated before *children*; an additional emendation, not adopted here, would be to replace *they* with *the lives* (“in the defense of his property and his own life and **the lives** of his wife and children”).

#### ■ Ether 14:4

*the brother of [Jared > Shared 1 | Shared ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]  
did give battle unto him in the wilderness of Akish*

Here Oliver Cowdery accidentally wrote “the brother of Jared” initially in  $\mathcal{D}$ . Virtually immediately he caught his error, crossed out the entire *Jared*, and supralinearly wrote *Shared* (there is no difference in the level of ink flow for the supralinear *Shared*). Oliver was obviously used to writing “the brother of Jared”, which occurs 44 times earlier in the book of Ether, including six times nearby in Ether 12. Here in Ether 14:4 we have the second instance of “the brother of Shared”. The first occurs in the previous verse; there Oliver wrote down the name correctly, but here in verse 4 the higher frequency of “the brother of Jared” led him to make this momentary error. In all, there are four instances of “the brother of Shared”, all here in Ether 14. Of course, *Shared* is correct here in verse 4.

**Summary:** Maintain the four instances of “the brother of Shared” in Ether 14, including the one in verse 4 that Oliver Cowdery initially wrote as “the brother of Jared”.

#### ■ Ether 14:5

*and it came to pass that Coriantumr did lay siege to the wilderness*

One wonders if there isn’t something wrong here with the expression “to lay siege to the wilderness”. We usually expect sieges to be laid against cities, towns, and encampments, but not against the wilderness. Perhaps the preposition *to* should be emended to *in*, thus “Coriantumr did lay siege in the wilderness”. Don Brugger points out that there are examples on <www.google.com> of “laying siege to forests and mountains” (also “besieging forests and mountains”). But we note that in all these cases the area surrounded by the besiegers has to be sufficiently small, otherwise no siege is effectively possible. And actually this is what we apparently have here in Ether 14:5, where the larger passage definitely implies some kind of investiture, a surrounding of the enemy, especially since the rest of the verse indicates how the brother of Shared escaped Coriantumr’s siege of the wilderness: