



James C. Peterson

# Perfection Is Elusive

Some of you have a collector version of the September 2014 issue of *PSCF*.

Authors strive to offer publication-ready copy to the journal, yet there are always arguments that need more explanation, missing information, infelicities ... that require attention. They are noted and revised in substantial number by the peer reviewers and the editor. The examination by fresh eyes always spots points in need of address. The goal is to present text that conveys compelling arguments in a way that is transparent to those important ideas under discussion. Errors should not be allowed to detract from the content. Yet sometimes it is just before or during final typesetting that our sharp-eyed managing and manuscript editors make a last-minute catch of an error or infelicity. Those are corrected as well and then editors and authors have another go with the galleys to sign off before final printing. With all this meticulous scrutiny, despite the breadth and depth of content over hundreds of double-column pages a year, the journal is published remarkably error free. That is something one does not notice when it is done well.

But perfection is elusive. To make the journal easier to read on mobile devices, a new software package was adopted last summer for typesetting. The transition was challenging but accomplished with aplomb. Yet a surreptitious complication slipped in. At the last stage before printing, the new program for typesetting inexplicably reversed the sequence of the lettering in some Hebrew words on page 132 of the September issue. So no, it was not a witty play on the article's discussion of sequence, nor a literary allusion to Leonardo da Vinci who wrote his personal notes in mirror image, nor even a tribute to those of our members who happen to be dyslexic. It was a mistake.

While I do read Hebrew, I did not notice the switch in the galleys. Focused on page structure and content at that point in the process, I knew how the words should read and scanned them as they should be, rather than as they were. How embarrassing. One of the jobs of proofreading galleys is to notice when something in the print is awry. The author had turned in a fine manuscript with the Hebrew of course in good order, and such remained in place until the last point in the process. No one else noticed the change during proofing of the galleys. But, of course, once the issue was sent out, the emails starting streaming in from those of our readers who know their Hebrew. I turned to the page and, to my horror, saw that they were quite right. The error was immediately corrected, but not before quite a few of you received your now collector editions. Granted, the reverse lettering of a few Hebrew words on one page will not add as much value as the upside down Jenny biplane on the US postage stamp that now fetches more than one million dollars per instance.

I take some consolation that so many of you read through the journal immediately upon receiving it, and that a striking number of you are attuned not only to the sciences, but also to the scriptures such that you noticed a few words in Hebrew with their spelling reversed. Such an erudite audience keeps the people who make this journal, sharp and grounded.

Again sorry for the error. No doubt some other mistake will happen in a future issue. It will hopefully be distant and hard to find. Note this is not said as a challenge to an *errata* treasure hunt! But you can be sure that when another error somehow slips in some day, it will not be a word of Hebrew with its letters in reverse order.

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