Textual Evidences for the Book of Mormon

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In the past forty years Book of Mormon scholars have produced much textual evidence for a vorlage' of ancient Near Eastern descent for the received text of the Book of Mormon. Yet most of this material has provided only *necessary* and not *sufficient* evidence for this vorlage. In order for material in the Book of Mormon to be *sufficient* evidence for an ancient Near Eastern vorlage, as I am using *sufficient* here, it must be demonstrated that the textual material is ancient Near Eastern and that it was not available to Joseph Smith.

Likewise, I maintain, if the material were available to the Prophet, if only in theory, and if it were found in the Book of Mormon, then it would become *necessary* evidence. By this definition we must expect to find at least some of this material in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, if some of it were not present we would have to question an ancient Near Eastern vorlage for the received text. That is why this material is *necessary* evidence.

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These definitions are not intended to suggest that all sufficient evidence is superior to necessary evidence. Both sufficient and necessary evidences are highly subjective in quantity and quality. In fact, many pieces of necessary evidence are more compelling than material deemed sufficient. For instance, because chiasms abound in the King James Bible, chiasms in the Book of Mormon provide necessary evidence, by the definition used above. Yet, the complicated chiasm of Alma 36 can leave little doubt that a vorlage of ancient Near Eastern descent lies behind the English translation.[2] The first example of sufficient evidence I provide below is far less compelling than this chiasm.

The difference between sufficient and necessary evidence however, should remain in focus. Therefore, we must ask the question, what was available to the Prophet Joseph Smith? Practically no epigraphic or other literary evidence from Egypt was even potentially available. The first great epigraphic discoveries in Mesopotamia began in the latter part of the 1840s and did not reach Europe until more than twenty years after the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon, though the first primitive attempts at deciphering cuneiform were being made about the time Joseph first saw and then later translated the gold plates.[3] The Levant did not yield its major epigraphic material until this century.[4]

What authentic ancient Near Eastern epigraphic and/or literary material was potentially available to Joseph Smith? With possibly few exceptions, the only authentic ancient Near Eastern epigraphic material in any form potentially available to the Prophet was the King James Bible with its ancient Near Eastern vorlage. Therefore, any ancient Near Eastern material evident in the Bible becomes, by definition, necessary evidence. Material not in the bible, not potentially available otherwise, and not demonstrably part of the cultural milieu of Joseph Smith would be sufficient evidence.

It cannot be overemphasized here that when looking for such sufficient evidence, we must exercise extreme caution and consider all possibilities. It must also be emphasized again that the particulars of sufficient evidence are highly subjective. The following rather involved and lengthy example demonstrates this need for rigor.

Alma 5:9 reads in part, "their souls did expand." The context would call for a meaning such as "they became happy," to parallel the phrase in the same verse, "they did sing redeeming

love" to celebrate their freedom from the "bands of death" and the "chains of hell." Nowhere in the King James Bible does *soul* occur in conjunction with the word *expand*; neither does it occur with the verbs *enlarge* and *swell*, each of which accompany *soul* once in the Book of Mormon (Alma 32:28 and 34 respectively).[5] This phrase appears to be unusual. Why should a soul expand? If this phrase is unique in English to the Book of Mormon, could the phrase reflect an ancient Near Eastern vorlage rather than have its origin in English?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) under *soul* gives no evidence of the phrase "their souls did expand" occurring in English; neither are there usages of *enlarge* and *swell* with soul.[6] This and other evidence appears to indicate that the phrase "expand the soul" does not have its origin in English.[7] If it could be demonstrated that this phrase has an ancient Near Eastern Semitic analog that was not available to Joseph Smith, it might qualify as sufficient evidence of an ancient Near Eastern vorlage for the Book of Mormon.

Ugaritic, a language closely related to Hebrew and spoken down to about six hundred years before Lehi left Jerusalem, bears on the subject.[8] A passage in the Anath epic[9] reads, *tġdd.kbdh.bṣḥq. ymlu / lbh.bšmht.kbd.ʿnt / tšyt.* H. Ginsberg translates, "her liver *swells* with laughter, / Her heart fills up with joy, / Anath's liver *exults*."[10] (The italics are Ginsberg's and indicate his uncertainty in translating the Ugaritic words *ġdd* and *šyt.*) All three syntagms, "liver swells with laughter," "heart fills with joy," and "liver exults" are of the same type as the Book of Mormon phrase "soul expands," and all four phrases denote happiness.[11]

To establish that "soul expands" of the Book of Mormon and "liver swells" of Ugaritic not only connote but also denote the same thing, it remains to be demonstrated that "soul" is a possible translation of "liver."

In Akkadian, an East Semitic language related to Hebrew and Ugaritic, both *libbu* and *kabattu* (the Akkadian cognates for *lb* and *kbd* respectively in the Ugaritic passage quoted above) can be "the seat of feelings, emotions, thought."[12] When *libbu* and *kabattu* are used with the verb *napāšu* ("to enlarge" or "make wide" in the G-stem and "to let breathe again" in the D-stem)[13] they denote secondarily "mind, *soul*, heart"[14] (italics added). Thus here in Akkadian "the soul (that is, liver) expands with feeling" would seem to be at home.

Psalm 16:9 reads, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth." The Hebrew text, *lākhen śamaḥ libbī wayyāgel kabōdī*, translates more literally, "therefore my heart is happy and my liver rejoices." Here, just as with their Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates, *leb* and *kabōd* are the seats of rejoicing. But the Hebrew text does not require the English rendering "soul expanding" with joy. It is Genesis 49:6 that forms the link with soul, *biqᶜhālām 'al teḥad kevodī*, "do not unite, my honor, with their assembly." The Hebrew word in this latter passage, translated in the King James Bible as "honor," is none other than *kābōd*, the same word behind the King James Bible *glory* in Psalm 16:9 and the cognate of the Ugaritic and Akkadian words used with the verb "to enlarge" or "to swell." It usually means "weight," "honor," "glory," etc., but can also mean "soul."[15] It is not translated as "soul" in Genesis 49:6, even though the context would seem to require it, because the more common word for "soul" in Hebrew, *nepheś*, is the parallel to *kābōd* in this verse,[16] and good English style militates against repetition of the same word (just as does Hebrew).

In other words, one translation of the Semitic word for "liver," etc., is "soul." And therefore, even though the Hebrew Old Testament does not reflect it, in Semitic languages related to Hebrew (closely, Ugaritic; and more distantly, Akkadian) "the liver expands (with feeling)" can be translated "the soul expands (with feeling)."

In returning to the Book of Mormon, the phrase "their souls did expand" has an ancient Semitic vorlage and does not appear in any readily available English material. Because it would seem the Prophet could not have been familiar with the phrase (and this is partially confirmed by a glance at the 1828 Webster's dictionary where "the heart *expands* with joy" in English, but not the soul"[17]), it would be sufficient evidence for an ancient Near Eastern vorlage of the Book of Mormon.

Yet even with this confirmation by a dictionary contemporaneous with the translation of the Book of Mormon, doubt is sown. While the "soul" does not appear to "expand" in English, if the phrase "the heart expands" is an authentic English phrase, it is possible that in some obscure passage, not readily accessible, an English "soul" might also expand. Because English belongs to the Germanic language group and also is strongly influenced by the Romance languages, if either or both of these phrases should appear in one Germanic or Romance language, then we must

conclude that potentially it is a pre-1830 English phrase and our data base is insufficient to document its appearance in English. This in turn would force us to admit that "their souls did expand" might not be sufficient evidence of an ancient Near Eastern vorlage.

A search of readily available German phrases revealed that "expand the soul" with joy does occur in German. For example, see Geibel (3, 35) "So schlägst du frech die hoffnung nieder, die kaum die seele mir geschwellt?" and from Hölderlin (1,176), "Bis, erwacht vom ängstigen Traum, die Seele dem Menschen aufgeht, jugendlich froh."[18] Therefore, though the phrase "expand the soul" does not occur in any readily available pre-1830 English text, and though it is an authentic ancient Near Eastern Semitic phrase, because it is attested in German, we must conclude that the phrase "their souls did expand" is at best necessary evidence for an authentic Near Eastern Semitic Book of Mormon vorlage, but *not* sufficient evidence.

This, however, has not been an exercise in futility. It demonstrates the need for caution, rigor, and the test of time. Therefore, allow me to present three examples (given previously in another context)[19] that as far as I am now aware have no analog in English or in any Indo-European language with which I am familiar, and therefore, were not available to the Prophet. I ask for assistance if it is possible to prove otherwise.

I have chosen a variety of examples that illustrate different approaches, (1) from the style, (2) from the onomasticon, and (3) from the context of the Book of Mormon. The examples also represent different levels of persuasion, that is uncompelling, quite convincing, and most interesting.

The first seemingly sufficient piece of evidence concerns style, the use of words and phrases beyond grammatical and logical considerations. First, by way of example, let me explain what is being considered. Those proficient in a language other than their native tongue know that other languages express ideas and concepts differently and that other languages allow constructions that are anathema in their native tongue. For instance, it is not correct to use a double negative in contemporary English. One should not say, at least in formal writing and speech, "I don't know nothing." However, there is no universal absolute prohibiting the use of a double negative. Not only do many languages allow it, but some even encourage it. It is simply a matter of proscription, that is, bad style, that contemporary

English does not allow a double negative. Are there, then, examples in the Book of Mormon of poor English style that could be explained by an ancient Near Eastern vorlage?

For stylistic reasons English syntax frowns on constructions using a cognate accusative, that is, when the predicate is a substantive cognate of the verb. For example, it is not good English to say, "He built a building." Good English style requires rather, "He constructed a building," or, less likely, "He built a construction." We even go to the extreme in English to avoid a cognate accusative. We say, "I present you with this gift," rather than say, "I present you with this present."[20]

Hebrew and other Semitic languages not only allow the use of a cognate accusative but even encourage it. For instance, Numbers 30:2 reads, "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath [literally, swear a swearing] to bind his soul with a bond. . . ."[21]

There are numerous examples of cognate accusatives in the Book of Mormon.[22] The particular example given here is not found in the King James Bible,[23] though it could easily have been used in ancient Hebrew.[24] In 2 Nephi 5:15 and Mosiah 9:8; 11:13; 23:5, for instance, the phrase "to build buildings" occurs in finite or infinitive phrases. The *OED* does not attest a single instance of *building* used as the direct object of "to build."[25] Therefore, in using the phrase "to build a building," the Book of Mormon adheres to a Hebrew and Semitic practice that is not common in English.

Second, the Book of Mormon onomasticon, that is, a list of proper names, provides another possible instance of sufficient evidence. The name *Alma* has provided much grist for anti–Book of Mormon critics.[26] First of all, unlike many other names in the Book of Mormon, it is attested neither in the Bible nor in any other ancient Near Eastern Semitic source. It could have several Hebrew etymologies, none of which is satisfactory.[27] Is it then possible that the Book of Mormon onomasticon does not reflect an ancient Near Eastern vorlage? Are some of the names in it simply unsophisticated borrowings from Spanish names for girls, as has been claimed?

It was not until 1971, 141 years after the publication of the Book of Mormon, that the name *Alma* turned up in an English translation of documents from Palestine. In that year Yigael Yadin described in the English version of his book *Bar-Kokhba* the discovery, careful excavation, and preliminary evaluation of

objects found in caves west of the Dead Sea, particularly in the Nahal Hever area, from the period of the Bar-Kokhba revolt against the Romans about A.D. 130. Among the documents dealing with land transactions at nearby En-gedi the name *Alma* appears, written *aleph, lamed, mem, aleph*.[28] Here, discovered in the Judean desert in 1961, is the confirmation that the Book of Mormon name *Alma*, at which critics of that sacred book have scoffed since its publication in 1830, is an authentic entry in the ancient Near Eastern Hebrew/Aramaic onomasticon.[29]

Finally, in an unusual passage in the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 2:9, Lehi noted that the river which he named after his son Laman "emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea." Does a river empty into a fountain? Is it not the other way around? That the passage is problematical is indicated by the attempt to explain *fountain* in a footnote in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. The problem fades, however, when ancient Near Eastern lexical and cosmological considerations are taken into account. In the ancient Near East there were two great bodies of water, the saltwater oceans and the subterranean sweet waters, both of which were thought by the ancients "to be the source of rivers and streams."[30] These "fountains of the great deep" (a phrase used by the translators of the King James Bible in Genesis 7:11), as U. Cassuto explained in commenting on the Hebrew word *thwm*, refer "undoubtedly to the subterranean waters, which are the source of the springs that flow upon the ground."[31] The Hebrews shared this Canaanite concept of the subterranean waters being the source of springs.[32]

These subterranean and oceanic waters then are actually the source of all rivers, streams, and springs. The ancient Semites did not conceive of this, however, as we currently do, namely, through the chain of evaporation, cloud formation, condensation, and precipitation. (No doubt they also had some understanding of this process, but they did not limit their perceptions to this one process.) It was S. N. Kramer who, when first pointing out the remarkable and unusual ancient Near East perception that the source of rivers is the oceanic waters, said:

> The Sumerian "mouth" of the rivers, while it coincides geographically with the actual mouth of the rivers as we understand it today, is nevertheless not to be understood in terms of our modern usage, as the place where the rivers "empty" their waters (*into* the Persian Gulf) but rather as the place where they "drink" the waters (*from* the Persian Gulf). In the light of this conception, the

"mouth" of the Tigris and Euphrates may well be designated as their source, but not the real source, i.e., in the mountains of Armenia, but the source as conceived by the Sumerians.[33]

That is to say, the source of the rivers was the oceanic waters, not in an ultimate sense as we conceive it, but in a more immediate sense, in that the rivers drew directly either from the seas as springs, or from the oceans through their mouths, depending on whether the Canaanite concept or S. N. Kramer's Sumero-Akkadian example applies.

Returning now to 1 Nephi 2:9, it is the statement that the river flows into the fountain that is disturbing. As was just explained, in the ancient Near East the fountain of a river was conceived of as being the oceanic waters, the river actually drawing from the ocean or fountain in a sense that is not clear to our occidental and empirical understanding. Our Book of Mormon is in authentic ancient Near Eastern tradition on this point; and the Prophet Joseph Smith could not have known about it. This then seems to become sufficient evidence.

With these examples of extra-King James Bible and hopefully non-Germanic and non-Romance material in the Book of Mormon, I hope to have illustrated with original remarks what this more focused approach entails. It requires a knowledge of ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures and a thorough grounding in Germanic and Romance languages. I am the first to admit that I am deficient in both these areas and, therefore, appeal for other scholars to become involved. If these three examples can be demonstrated to exist in material potentially available to the Prophet Joseph Smith, I would welcome this information. But as it now stands, I must for the moment classify these examples as sufficient evidence.

The rewards warrant the effort. However, in calling for this more focused approach to Book of Mormon textual evidences, I have already admitted that it is not new. Yet, the idea of consciously pursuing this approach is new and should become more visible and more appealing to Book of Mormon scholars. If this book is an authentic document composed by peoples from the ancient Near East, as I testify that it is, then we must expect many more of these types of extra-King James Bible Semitisms (and Egyptianisms) than the three I have illustrated. Let us make an effort in this direction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Vorlage* is a technical term from German that refers to a text before the current one (though not necessarily the original or *Urtext*) from which the present text is descended. In this case, the vorlage of the present Book of Mormon would be the text on the gold plates and/or the texts used to compile the gold plates.

2. John W. Welch first pointed out the existence of chiasms in the Book of Mormon in his master's thesis, "A Study Relating Chiasmus in the *Book of Mormon* to Chiasmus in the *Old Testament*, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek and Latin Authors," Brigham Young University, 1970, including Alma 36 on pages 128–31. For a complete discussion of chiasmus see John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity, Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), where John W. Welch's definitive treatment of Book of Mormon chiasms appears on pp. 198–210.

3. In general see C. H. Gordon, *Forgotten Scripts: Their Ongoing Discovery and Decipherment* (New York: Penguin, 1971). For a broader look at ancient writing see I. J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 61; and *Writing in Ancient Western Asia* (London: British Museum, n.d.), pp. 14–15, and slides 8 and 9. (This latter work is a pamphlet accompanying a set of forty-two slides.)

4. Next to the Hebrew material from Israelite sources, Ugaritic texts form the largest body of ancient Near Eastern epighraphic material from the Levant. Ugarit was first excavated in 1929, and the announcement of the decipherment of the script followed in 1931. (See Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, Analecta Orientalia 38 [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965], p. 1; and the preceding footnote.) The category of Levantine epigraphic material also includes, loosely, other Northwest Semitic languages. That this latter material was not available to Joseph Smith in 1828–29 becomes evident with a cursory glance at H. Donner and W. Rollig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, Band II: Kommentar, 2. durchgesehene und erweiterte Auflage (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1968), where first publications of nearly all the texts came after 1850. There are of course many Aramaic texts preserved from earlier periods (for example, the post-Babylonian exile) that must be excluded when looking for sufficient evidence, even though these materials were most likely not available to the Prophet in any form.

5. *Enlarge* also occurs with *soul* in the D&C 121:42, but the context does not necessarily call for a meaning of happiness as does Alma 5:9.

6. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 13 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), under the respective words.

7. This does not mean that *enlarge the soul* was not a known English phrase. To prove that it is not would require an exhaustive search of all extant English texts predating 1830. This is of course an impossible task, so we must look for indications that the phrase does not appear in English prior to 1830. The absence of the phrase in the *OED* is good evidence that it is not English, and this is born out by its absence in the concordance to John Milton's poetry and

the concordance to William Shakespeare's dramatic works (respectively, John Bradshaw, *A Concordance to the Poetical Works of John Milton* [Hamden, Connecticut: Archen Books, 1965], p. 331; and John Bartlett, *A Complete Concordance or Verbal Index to Words, Phrases, and Passages in the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare* [London: Macmillan, 1953], pp. 1428–31).

8. As mentioned above, Ugarit was first discovered in 1929 and the first Ugaritic texts were published in the 1930s. Therefore, they would have been of little help to Joseph Smith in writing the Book of Mormon in 1828–1829.

9. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, Teil 1, Hrsg. Manfried Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976), 1.3.2.25–27 (also known as *V AB* in some text numbering systems); further references to this work will be by *KTU* plus text number.

10. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 136. See also U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), pp. 119–20. More recent translations add nothing to the discussion here.

11. As C. H. Gordon said, the heart and the liver are the "seat of laughter . . . or weeping." *Ugaritic Textbook*, §19.1348 and 19.1187.) A further passage in the Ugaritic material makes this clear. *KTU* 1.12.1.12–3 *yṣhq.bm / lb. wygmd.bm kbd* "he laughed in the heart and chuckled in the liver." The parallel phrase in Alma 5:9, "they did sing redeeming love," and the context leave no doubt that "their souls did expand" means they were happy.

12. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (hereafter *CAD*), eds. I. J. Gelb, B. Landsberger, and A. L. Oppenheim (Chicago and Gluckstadt: Oriental Institute, beginning in 1956), vol. K, p. 13b–14a. The entire quote reads, "Were it not for the late synonym list CT 18 9 K. 4233 + .., there would be no reason to assume that *kabattu* denotes anything else than the inside of a (human) body, and consequently, like its synonym *libbu*, the seat of feelings, emotions, thoughts." See, however, *CAD* L, *libbu* 3, on pp. 169a–172b.

13. For *napāšu* see W. von Sodon, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (hereafter *AHw*) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981), p. 736b. Compare *CAD* N, pp. 289b–90a.

14. For *libbu* and *kabattu* see *AHw* 589a and 416a respectively. The *CAD*, vol. K, and the *AHw* disagree about the primary meaning of *kabattu*. The former makes the point on pp. 13b–14a that it probably does not denote "liver," while the latter renders the main meaning as *"Leber."*

15. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), pp. 420–21, especially the note under II *kābed* p. 420a, where *kābed* is suggested for the reading *kābōd*.

16. Indeed, *kābōd* paralleled by *nepheš* proves that *liver* can interchange with *soul* in Hebrew.

17. See *Noah Webster's First Edition of An American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile edition (Anaheim, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967), two original volumes in one, "expand, *v.I* . . . 3. To enlarge; as, the heart *expands* with joy." I must thank John Welch of the BYU Law School for pointing this out to me.

18. These two examples are rendered as they appear in Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 9. Band: Schiefeln-Seele (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1899), columns. 2867–68.

19. "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Language of the Book of Mormon," in *A Symposium on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), pp. 40–42.

20. In some instances we also use cognate accusatives in English, but the instances known to me are limited either to biblical phrases, "I fought a good fight," or to phrases where English cannot avoid it because of the lack of a suitable synonym; for example, "sing a song."

21. Such syntactical constructions in Semitic languages are by the nature of these languages practically impossible to avoid. For instance in Exodus 39:30, the Hebrew was *wyktb . . . mktb* "and wrote . . . a writing" (King James translation). In addition, Hebrew and Ugaritic make extensive use of consonant rhyme, which would naturally tend to frequent usage of cognate accusatives, and not vowel rhyme.

22. As far as I can determine, the first person to point out the presence of cognate accusatives in the Book of Mormon was Thomas W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era*, 17, 7 (May 1914), pp. 626–27, though he labeled it "Verbs with Cognate Nouns," and did not give the example I use in the following material. E. Craig Bramwell, "Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi," master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960, pp. 24–26, does mention the cognate accusative and lists on page 26 the example I use.

23. Several Book of Mormon cognate accusatives are also found in the Bible. For instance, "to dream a dream" is found in a finite phrase in 1 Nephi 3:2 and 8:2 and in Genesis 37:5 and 41:11.

24. The verb I use as an example, *bnh/y*, means in Hebrew to make, build, create. In the sense of make or create it is used in Genesis 2:22. This same verb with the same meaning appears in Ugaritic and is actually used there with a cognate accusative, albeit in the syntactical construction participle plus object, *bny bnwt* "the creator of the creatures," found in KTU 1.4.2.11 and other passages.

25. *OED*, vol. B, p. 291.

26. The following is *not* original with me. I give full and well-earned recognition to Dr. H. Nibley of Brigham Young University, who first pointed out the fact that at last the name Alma has been found in an ancient Near Eastern setting. The following is quoted from his article, "[Review of] Yadin, Zigael (sic), *Bar-Kochba*(sic)," *BYU Studies*, 14 (Autumn, 1973), p. 121: "But strangely enough, the name in the Book of Mormon that has brought the most derision on that book, and caused the greatest embarrassment to the Latter-day Saints, especially among those holders of the priesthood who have borne it among the children of men, is the simple and unpretentious Alma. Roman priests have found in this obviously Latin and obviously feminine name (who does not know that Alma Mater means fostering mother?) gratifying evidence of the ignorance and naivete of the youthful Joseph Smith—how could he have been simple enough to let such a thing get by? At least his more sophisticated followers should have known better! It is therefore gratifying to announce that

at the extreme end of the 'Cave of Letters' on the north side of the Nahal Hever, between three and four o'clock of the afternoon of 15 March 1961, Professor Yadin put his hand into a crevice in the floor of the cave and lifted out a goat-skin bag containing a woman's materials for mending her family's clothes on their sad and enforced vacation; and stuffed away under the stuff, at the very bottom of the bag, was a bundle of papyrus rolls wrapped in cloth. These were the Bar-Kochba Letters, and among them was a deed to some land near En-Gedi (the nearest town to the cave) owned by four men, one of whom signed himself, or rather dictated his name since he was illiterate, as 'Alma the son of Judah.' The deed is reproduced in color on p. 177 of the book, and there at the end of the fourth line from the top, as large as life is A-l-m-a ben Yehudah, which Prof. Yadin sensibly renders 'Alma' with no reservations."

27. Proposed etymologies include the stems *ġlm* "young man, servant"; *ʿlm* "eternity"; perhaps *ʾlmn* "widowhood"; and derivations from Latin *alma* from which we get the Spanish feminine first name Alma. Of these possibilities, only the former makes some sense. Given this etymology, Alma would be a hypocoristicon, but the final vowel would remain unexplained, unless it were read as a mater lectionis for a possessive pronoun.

28. The normalization "Alma" of the Hebrew letters is not mine but Yadin's.

29. Since the publication of the Book of Mormon, other West Semitic names ending with aleph have turned up, indicating that the terminal aleph in Alma is not unique to this name. For such names from a language contemporaneous with Lehi's departure from Jerusalem, see K. P. Jackson, "Ammonite Personal Names in the Context of the West Semitic Onomasticon," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Friedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 507–21, particularly p. 518 for names ending in aleph.

30. T. H. Gaster, "Ugaritic Mythology," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7 (1948) 185. The close connection between the bodies of water becomes clear from the Ugaritic parallel word pairs *mbk nhrm* "springs of the rivers" and *apq thmtm* "streams of the deep." For the passages see R. Whitaker, *A Concordance of Ugaritic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1972), pp. 410–11. For this word pair as "a place where the two rivers join the two oceans," see M. Drower, "Canaanite Religion in Literature," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 2, part 2: *History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380–1000 B.C.*, 3rd ed., eds. I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Sollberger (Cambridge: University Press, 1975), p. 154.

31. *Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Vol. II: From Noah to Abraham*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1974), p. 84. Note also Psalm 18:16–17; 2 Samuel 22:16–17; Job 6:15; and Proverbs 8:24, 27–28.

32. See the preceding note and also the succinctly discussed and conveniently illustrated article by L. Jacobs, "Jewish Cosmology," in *Ancient Cosmologies*, Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe, eds. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 69–70.

33. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 96 (1944) 28, note 41. See his extended remarks beginning on page 27, note 41. For general

comments on *sea*, see also W. G. Lambert, "The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon," *Ancient Cosmologies*, pp. 55–60.