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Matthew L. Bowen

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## “SWEARING BY THEIR EVERLASTING MAKER”: SOME NOTES ON PAANCHI AND GIDDIANHI

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Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *This brief article explores Paanchi and Giddianhi as names evidencing the Egyptian onomastic element –anchi/anhi/‘nh(i) and the potential literary significance of these two names in the context of Mormon’s narrative detailing the formation of the oath-bound secret combinations sworn with oath-formulae upon one’s “life” (cf. Egyptian ‘nh, “life”; “live”; “swear an oath [by one’s life]”). It also explores the implications for Mormon’s telling of Nephite history during his own time.*

From the beginning of the abridged Book of Helaman, much of Mormon’s remaining narrative history details the formation, development, and proliferation of oath-bound secret combinations among the Nephites and their eventual fatal impact on Nephite society. The common Egyptian lexeme ‘nh — which as a verb means “to live” and as a noun denotes “life”<sup>1</sup> — also denotes “to swear”<sup>2</sup> as a verb and “oath”<sup>3</sup> as a noun and constitutes a common onomastic element. Even in its primary meaning, “to live,” the use of ‘nh is attested abundantly in oaths during Lehi’s time (cf. the Late Egyptian oath-formula ‘nh n=i NN, “As NN lives for me”).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the twofold mention of the name Paanchi (Helaman 1:3, 7) in the immediate context of the first recorded swearing of an oath-bound

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1. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum, 1999), 43–44. Hereafter cited as CDME. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 192–202. Hereafter cited as Wb.

2. CDME, 44; Wb., 202–3.

3. Friedrich Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar: An Introduction*. 2nd English ed., trans. David Warburton (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2005), 326. Wb., 202–3.

4. Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, 326.

secret combination (“swearing by their everlasting Maker,” Helaman 1:11) among the Nephites emphasizes this moment as a key event in the ill-fated Nephite history. Understanding the semantic range of meaning for Egyptian *nh* to include “oath” and “swear” also helps us appreciate the irony highlighted by Mormon’s inclusion of Giddianhi’s epistolary “oath” as a failed attempt by the latter to intimidate Lachoneus and his people into surrender (see especially 3 Nephi 3:8).

Thus, both Paanchi and Giddianhi appear to share the Egyptian onomastic element *-anchi/anhi/nh(i)*, and Mormon mentions both names in connection with the rise of the secret combinations that eventually overtook the Lamanite and Nephite societies, contributing to the destruction of the latter. Mormon, amid the decay and collapse of Nephite society, had striking personal reasons for their inclusion.

### Unhallowable Oaths

When Alma gave his son Helaman charge of all the sacred Nephite records, which by this time also included Jaredite records, he gave Helaman a specific charge regarding the latter:

And now, my son, I command you that ye **retain all their oaths and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations**; yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall retain from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed. For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe. Therefore I desire that this people might not be destroyed. **Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people. And only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them.** And ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders. And ye shall also teach them that those people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders. (Alma 37:27–29; all Book of Mormon citations follow Skousen’s Yale edition;<sup>5</sup> emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine)

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5. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

The plates of Ether appear to have contained detailed descriptions of the plans, oaths, and covenants of a secret society or faction that precipitated the destruction of the Jaredite nation and kingdom. Mormon, knowing the final arc of Nephite history and thus the unhappy ending of his own people's story, includes this statement in part to alibi Alma the Younger and his successors up front from any potential accusation that the Gadianton (hereafter Gaddianton) oaths and rituals came from Mormon's predecessors' records.<sup>6</sup> He explicitly makes this point after telling the story of how these oaths came forth: "Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gaddianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gaddianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit" (Helaman 6:26). The Gaddianton oaths, so far as he knew, came directly from Satan.

Mormon and Moroni offer only general descriptions of the oaths, rituals, plans, and covenants of Gaddianton and his robbers, who "did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi" (Helaman 2:13). One of Mormon's main authorial and editorial aims,<sup>7</sup> consciously taken up and completed by his son Moroni after Mormon's death, was to show that oath-bound secret combinations destroyed not just one but two nations: an Israelite nation (the Nephites) and a gentile nation (the Jaredites).

Following the death of his father, Mormon, Moroni sketches the events and persons who gave rise to the secret oath-bound combinations among the Jaredites that helped bring about the eventual destruction

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6. Brant A. Gardner (*Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 5, Helaman – 3 Nephi* [Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007], 112) writes: "Mormon defends the recordkeepers from any possible charge of negligence that may have led to the band's proliferation. The oaths were not part of the record that Alma<sub>2</sub> delivered to Helaman<sub>1</sub>. Therefore, the Gadiantons arose directly due to Satan's influence."

7. Mormon's editorial statement in Mosiah 28:17–19 confirms that he intended to give at least an abridged account of the plates of Ether: "Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people which was destroyed from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from then until the creation of Adam. Now this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly, yea, they were filled with sorrow. Nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice. **And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account.**"

of that society. Notably, the Jaredites who formed these oath-bound combinations swore their oaths “by the God of heaven.” In other words, they swore by the *life* of the God of heaven in invoking him as a ratifying witness of their wicked acts, as though so swearing these oaths ensured their desired (unrighteous) outcome or somehow sanctified them:

And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolks and saith unto them: **Will ye swear unto me** that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you? And it came to pass that **they all swore unto him by the God of heaven and also by the heavens and also by the earth and by their heads** that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, **the same should lose his life**. And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old, who also sought power, which had been **handed down even from Cain**, who was a murderer from the beginning. And they were kept up by the power of the devil, **to administer these oaths** unto the people, to keep them in darkness, **to help such as sought power to gain power** and to murder and to plunder and to lie and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms. (Ether 8:13–16)

In order to emphasize the unholy origin and unhallowable nature of the oath-bound secret combination that has just been forged, Moroni appropriates an older wordplay on Cain [Hebrew *qayin*] in terms of a verb rendered “gain” (Semitic/Hebrew *qny/qnh*; see also Helaman 6:17, 26–27; Moses 5:16, 31, 50).<sup>8</sup> Moroni’s additional emphasis on the oath having been “sworn” by “the God of heaven” helps latter-day readers perceive the genetic link between the Jaredite secret combinations and later Nephite secret combinations that were formed with covenants and oaths similarly sworn by “their everlasting Maker” (Helaman 1:11, see below).

Later, after the attempt on Omer’s life fails when Omer and the faithful members of his household flee, Akish and his kinsfolk turn against Jared, son of Omer, their co-conspirator. Again, Moroni emphasizes the ancient origin of the unholy oaths: “And it came to pass that Akish sought the life of his father-in-law, and he applied unto **those**

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8. Matthew L. Bowen, “Getting Cain and Gain,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015):115–41.

whom he had sworn by the oath of the ancients. And they obtained the head of his father-in-law as he sat upon his throne giving audience to his people” (Ether 9:5). He uses the characterization in describing the revival of secret combinations among the Jaredites generations later: “And in the days of Com there began to be robbers in the land and they adopted the old plans and administered **oaths after the manner of the ancients** and sought again to destroy the kingdom” (Ether 10:33). The collocations “the oath of the ancients” and “oaths after the manner of the ancients” have direct reference to the oaths that had their origin with the oath between Satan and Cain.

The JST version of Genesis (part of which has been canonized as the Book of Moses) reveals that Satan adjured Cain — or caused Cain to swear — “by the living God”: “And Satan said unto Cain: **Swear** unto me by thy throat, and **if thou tell it thou shalt die**; and **swear thy brethren by their heads**, and **by the living God**, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands” (Moses 5:29). That the original Cainitic oath, the subsequent Jaredite oaths, and the much-later Nephite oaths were all sworn “by the living God” or “by the God of heaven” or “by their everlasting Maker” constitutes a fundamental key to understanding Mormon’s description of Paanchi and the “oath”-swearing activities of those who supported him as well as Mormon’s inclusion of Giddianhi’s “oaths” of intimidation.

### **Paanchi and the Beginning of Unhallowed Oaths amongst the Nephites**

The Book of Mormon attests the name *Paanchi* twice (Helaman 1:3, 7). As John Gee has noted,<sup>9</sup> *Paanchi*, as a form of the common Egyptian name  $p3 \text{ } n\dot{h}$ , most plausibly denotes “the living one” (transliterated in Greek as *Ponchēs*).<sup>10</sup> The name “the living one” could have reference to a specific deity (cf. the title, “the living God,” Moses 5:29),<sup>11</sup> but also to a person/child who lives (cf. Joseph’s Egyptian cognomen,

9. *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Paanchi”, modified on November 10, 2017, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/PAANCHI>.

10. Erich Lüddeckens, et al., *Demotisches Namenbuch*, quoted in *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Paanchi”, modified on November 10, 2017, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/PAANCHI>.

11. For Old Testament examples of the title “living God,” see also Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; 2 Kings 19:4, 16 (Isaiah 37:4, 17); Jeremiah 10:10; 23:36; Hosea 1:10; Daniel 6:20, 26; Psalm 42:2; 84:2.



Zaphnath-paaneah = “The god has said, ‘He shall live’” [*paanēah* = *p3* ‘*nh*], Genesis 41:45).<sup>12</sup> Mortality rates — not least infant mortality rates — were extremely high in the ancient world.

In addition to the above, I would here point out that the Egyptian lexeme ‘*nh*’ (vb. “live,” n. “life”) had additional derived meanings. Perhaps the most important secondary meaning of ‘*nh*’ as a verb was to “swear” and as a noun it also meant “oath.” For example, the Demotic conditional legal formula *iw=f ir p3* ‘*nh*’ meant “If he swears...”<sup>13</sup> Hence, as a sentence name, Paanchi could, at least from a phonological perspective, connote or evoke not just “the living one,” but also “he [i.e., the deity] is my (life-)oath” (*p3* “He” + ‘*nh=i*’ “my [life-]oath”) or “he [the deity] is my swearing,”<sup>14</sup> etc. In legal and cultic contexts, the deity’s “life” constituted an important part of “oaths.” Persons swearing oaths in the ancient world typically swore them by deities or somehow invoked deities. Both ancient Israelites and ancient Egyptians swore oaths by the “life” of the deity: *hay* X or *hēy* X (“by the life of X” or “as X lives”),<sup>15</sup> as well as by one’s own life. Jeremiah 44:26 provides an example of the Lord himself swearing an oath regarding human oaths sworn this way: “Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, **I have sworn** [*nišba* ‘*tī*] by my great name, saith the Lord, [if (+ implied gesture, e.g., passing the index finger across the throat)<sup>16</sup>] my name shall [anymore] be named in the mouth of

12. Robert F. Smith, quoted in *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Paanchi”. Smith mentions a possible connection between Zaphnath-paaneah and Paanchi. See also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1049–50. Hermann Ranke (*Die ägyptischen Personennamen* [Glückstadt, Augustin, 1935], 1:409–12) cites of examples of the *qd-DN-iw=f-’nh*, “DN said, he will live,” naming formula.

13. Janet H. Johnson, ed., *Chicago Demotic Dictionary*, Volume 3: [‘ayin] (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), 82–83, [https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/CDD\\_c.pdf](https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/CDD_c.pdf).

14. If *-anchi/’nh(i)* and *-anhi/’nh(i)* represent the same onomastic elements (or variations thereon), perhaps our understanding of the names Kumen and Kumenonhi is also helped. “Kumen lives” or Kumen is my oath.” Much work remains to be done on these names.

15. Bruce M. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 678–80 (§40.2.2). See also Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*, (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

16. Cf. the oath formulae *kōh ya’āseh yhw h lī wēkōh yōsīp* (“the Lord do so to me, and more also”) in Ruth 1:17, and *hay-yhw* (“as the Lord liveth”) in Ruth 3:13, which call attention to what Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley say about Amos

any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, **The Lord God liveth** [*ḥay ʾādōnāy yhw̄h*, literally, “(by) **the Lord Yhwh’s life**”<sup>17</sup>]. In instances when the Lord says, “As I live,” (*ḥay ʾānī* or *ḥay ʾānōkī*)<sup>18</sup> he is saying in essence, “I swear by my throat” (cf. Amos 6:8, “The Lord God hath sworn by himself”<sup>19</sup> = “The Lord Yahweh has sworn **by his throat** [*bēnapšō*]”). As Stephen Ricks notes, the former “witness invocation” constitutes “the most common formula” used in ancient Israelite oath-taking.<sup>20</sup>

Two “passing between the halves” scenes in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 15:17–18 and Jeremiah 34:18, illustrate the basic idea behind this type of oath. In the first, Abram and the Lord make a covenant — literally, “cut a covenant” *kārat bērit* — in which the Lord himself guarantees to perform specific promises to Abram and his posterity:

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that **passed between those pieces**. In the same day the Lord **made**

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6:8 (*nišbaʿ ʾādōnāy yhw̄h bēnapšō* = “The Lord God hath sworn by himself” — literally, “the Lord Yahweh has sworn by his throat”): the formula therein reflects the ancient rite of touching one’s throat during oath-taking (citing examples from Mari). See Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley, *Translators Handbook on the Book of Amos* (American Bible Society, March 1977 advanced MS), 45. Moreover, The *Jerusalem Bible* notes the same slit-the-throat or similar blood-oath *signum* (or sign) as evident in such places as 1 Kings 19:2 (see now note **f** at Gen 15:17 in the *New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1985). See also 1 Samuel 3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 2 Samuel 3:9; 1 Kings 2:23; 20:10; 2 Kings 6:31.

17. Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 679.

18. See, e.g., Numbers 14:21, 28; Ezekiel 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11; Isaiah 49:18 (1 Nephi 21:18); Jeremiah 22:24; 46:18; Zephaniah 2:9. Cf. Nephi’s use of the idiom (“as I live”) in his oath to Zoram in 1 Nephi 4:32. Consider also the force of Nephi’s oath as he swears on the Lord’s life, his own life, the lives of his brothers when he promises: “As the Lord liveth and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us [i.e., getting the brass plates from Laban]” (1 Nephi 3:15).

19. Another ritual gesture that accompanies the taking of an oath is the raising of the (right) hand: For example, “**I lift up my hand** to heaven, and say, **I live for ever...**” (Deuteronomy 32:40); see also Ezekiel 20:5–6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 47:14; Daniel 12:7; Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed., with corr. (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011), §112f. *nišbaʿtī*, “I swear” (Genesis 22:16) = *hārimōtī yādī*, “I raise my hand [while swearing]” (Genesis 14:22).

20. Stephen D. Ricks, “Oaths and Oath-taking in the Old Testament,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 45.

a covenant [*kārat* ... *bērīt*, cut a covenant] with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. (Genesis 15:17–18)

Since the Lord always keeps his covenant promises and performs his oaths, his oath to Abram constitutes the perfect guarantee. Unlike the Lord, however, human beings do not always perform their oaths or keep covenant stipulations. The book of Jeremiah describes the fate of some Judahites who failed to uphold their covenant obligations:

And I will give **the men that have transgressed my covenant** [*bērītī*], **which have not performed the words of the covenant** [*habbērīt*] **which they had made** [*kortû*, they had cut] before me [*lěpānāy*, i.e., in my presence], when **they cut** [*kortû*] the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, **which passed between the parts of the calf**; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and **their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth** [i.e., like a decaying carcass]. (Jeremiah 34:18–20)

In both scenes, the parties imply an imprecatory oath by their “cutting” (*kārat*) a “covenant”<sup>21</sup> (*bērīt*) and “pass[ing] [*‘ābar*, *wayya‘abrû*, *‘ōbērīm*] between the parts” of the slaughtered animal(s) that “may what has been done to this animal be done to me if I do not keep the terms of the covenant!”<sup>22</sup> This ritual action appears to be the source of the collocation

21. For an extended treatment of this idiom, see Jared T. Parker, “Cutting Covenants,” in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, The 38th Annual BYU Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, edited by D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2009), 109–28.

22. E.g., Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman (*Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1980], 280), for example, assert regarding the idiom *kārat bērīt* “make. Literally ‘cut.’ To ‘cut’ a covenant is the commonest expression in the Hebrew Bible to describe this transaction.” Like Hosea 2:18 [MT 2:20], “Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 34 suggest that cutting might have been part of a sacrificial or oath-taking ritual that went with covenant-making.” In other words, “cutting” is describing ritual action. In addition, as Robert F. Smith (personal communication) notes, “In fact, this sort of ritual continues today among the Arabs, and (during the Iraq war) local American military commanders found themselves frequently partaking of a sheep sacrifice to solemnize agreements made in certain localities in Iraq.”

“enter into a covenant” (Hebrew *‘ābar bibērīt* or *bā’ babbērīt*; see, e.g., Deuteronomy 29:12 [MT 11]).<sup>23</sup> Apart from the cutting of righteous covenants, the mode of Gaddianton covenant-“cutting” and “entry” seems to have been similar — i.e., in mockery of righteous covenants (Helaman 1:11; 2:3; 6:21–22). For its part, the Egyptian language in its various stages employed very similar oath-formulas using the verb *‘nh*, “live” and the derived meaning of *‘nh*, “swear,”<sup>24</sup> among other oath-related terms.<sup>25</sup>

In that light, we now consider Mormon’s twofold mention of the name Paanchi. Mormon associates Paanchi (“the living one” or “He [the deity] is my [life-]oath”) to the first Nephite “swearing” of the unholy and unhallowable secret-combination “oath of the ancients”:

But behold, **Paanchi** and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor was exceeding wroth. Therefore he was about to flatter away those people to rise up in rebellion against their brethren. And it came to pass as he was about to do this, behold, he was taken and was tried according to the voice of the people and **condemned unto death**, for he had raised up in rebellion and sought to destroy the liberty of the people. Now when those people which were desirous that he should be their governor saw that he was **condemned unto death**, therefore they were angry; and behold, they sent forth one Kishcumen, even to the judgment-seat of Parhoron [or, Pahoron, rather than Pahoran],<sup>26</sup> **and murdered Parhoron** as he sat upon the judgment-seat. And he was pursued by the servants of Parhoron. But behold, so speedy was the flight of Kishcumen [Kishkumen] that no man could overtake him. And he went unto those that sent him; and they all entered into a covenant — yea, **swearing** [cf. Egyptian *‘nh*; Hebrew *šb’*] **by their everlasting Maker** [cf. Moses 5:29] — that

23. In addition, see 2 Chronicles 15:12; Jeremiah 34:10; Ezekiel 16:8 in the biblical corpus. In the Book of Mormon, see Mosiah 5:5, 8; 6:1–2; 18:10, 13; 21:31–32; Alma 7:15; 43:11; 44:15, 20; 46:20, 31, 35; 53:15–18; 62:16–17; Helaman 1:11; 2:3; 6:21–22; 3 Nephi 5:4–5; 6:3, 28–29; 7:11.

24. Wb. 202–3.

25. E.g., *‘rq* (“don” a garment, “swear” [i.e., an oath], CDME, 45); *iri ‘nh* or *dđ ‘nh* (“take an oath,” Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, 326), *sdf3-tryt* (noun) “oath of allegiance,” CDME, 259).

26. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 4: Alma 21–55* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2007), 2635–37.

they would tell no man that Kishcumen [Kishkumen] had murdered Parhoron. (Helaman 1:7–11)

As noted above, Moroni described this oath as “the oath of the ancients” (Ether 9:5) or the “oaths after the manner of the ancients” (Ether 10:33). Moses 5, which preserves a fuller etiological account of the establishment of secret combinations that may be akin to what the Nephites possessed on the brass plates,<sup>27</sup> describes how Satan caused Cain to “swear” an oath “by the **living** God” (Moses 5:29).<sup>28</sup> Beyond the “swearing” of this unhallowable oath “by,” i.e., by the life of “their everlasting Maker [cf. the title *qōnê* (*qnylqnh*) from Genesis 14:19, 22],”<sup>29</sup> the narratological irony of the name Paanchi as “the living one” in the context of Paanchi’s being “condemned unto death” and his supporters’ “murder” of Pahoran should also not escape notice.

### Giddianhi and His Epistolary Oaths

The name *Giddianhi* immediately evokes the name *Gaddianton* (Gadianton in recent LDS editions). This is no coincidence. In Helaman 2:11–12, Gaddianton is spelled with the double-*d* in the Original Book of Mormon Manuscript and is allowed by the OMS spacing at Helaman 2:4. As noted by John W. Welch and Kelly Ward in 1985, the Hebrew word for “band; bandits,” is spelled with the double-*d*, *gēdūd*.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Hosea 6:9 attests the Hebrew phrase *’iš gēdūdīm* “band of robbers” (cf. NRSV Hosea 7:1 “bandits”; NRSV Job 19:12 “troops”;

27. Noel B. Reynolds, “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks. 2 vols. (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:136–73. Bowen, “Getting Cain and Gain,” 115–41.

28. In another ironic instance of adjuration (or exacting an oath), Matthew records that the high priest Caiaphas attempted to force Jesus to swear an oath “by the living God”: “And the high priest answered and said unto him, **I adjure** [*exorkizō*] thee **by the living God**, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63). The verb *exorkizō* means “to force an oath.”

29. Genesis 14:22 records Abraham’s swearing an oath *to* God as “the Maker of heaven and earth” = biblical Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:1), and Book of Abraham Elkanah (1:6–20), as hypocoristic for “El-Creator-of-Heaven-and-Earth.” See further Patrick Miller, “El, The Creator of the Earth,” *BASOR*, 239 (Summer 1980): 43–46; Kevin Barney, “On Elkanah as Canaanite El,” *JBMS*, 19/1 (2010): 22–35.

30. John W. Welch and Kelly Ward, “Thieves and Robbers,” July 1985 *FARMS Update* (reprinted in John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon:*

KJV Genesis 30:11 “troop”<sup>31</sup>). This matches the plural Neo-Babylonian term *gudūdānu*, and the Phoenician collocation *b'l 'gddm* “gang of robbers” (cf. Psalm 56:7 *yāgōddû* “they form a gang,” as emended).<sup>32</sup> Thus, it is by no means impossible that the name Gaddianton constitutes a metonymic or a symbolic epithet. Conceivably, the same might also be true of Giddianhi (note the double *-dd-*) later on, who also became chief of this powerful body of organized evil (3 Nephi 3).

Regarding the name Gaddianton, John A. Tvedtnes observes: “In form, Gadianton appears to be a Jaredite name based on the same pattern as Morianton (Ether 1:22–23) and contains the *-ian* pattern found [infix] in Jaredite names such as Coriantor (Ether 1:6–7), Coriantum (Ether 1:13–14, 27–28), Coriantumr (Ether 8:4; 12:1), Moriancumer (Ether 2:13), and Ripliancum (Ether 15:8).”<sup>33</sup> Even though this powerful criminal organization (“secret combination”) was first headed by Kishcumen, Mormon (as noted above) denied the continuity of this secret society with the Jaredite “mafia” (Helaman 6:26–30, Ether 8:9–25). Nevertheless, the similarities between the Jaredite and Nephite incarnations of Cainitic, oath-bound “secret combinations” are undeniable, proving to be existential threats in both instances (Helaman 2:11–19, 11:32, 3 Nephi 6:28–7:3, Ether 8:19–25).

Hugh Nibley proposed that Giddianhi could represent a theophoric name meaning “Thoth is my life.”<sup>34</sup> Paul Hoskisson

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*A Decade of New Research* [Provo, UT: FARMS; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992], 248–49).

31. LDS *Holy Bible* (1979), 45 n, “paronomasia on the Heb. words *gedud* ‘troop’ and *gad* ‘good fortune.’”

32. Hayim ben Yosef Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological, Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalence with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2009), 64, citing Genesis 49:19, Psalm 94:21 *yāgōddû* (“band together against”) from *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, Volume 5, “G.”* Ed. Leo Oppenheim (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956), 120a; Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981), 1:295b; Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 3 vols. (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1968), 26A I:13:13–15.

33. John A. Tvedtnes, “Reinventing the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review*, 16/2 (2004):100. See also John A. Tvedtnes, “A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names,” *SEHA Newsletter* 141 (December 1977): 1–8.

34. Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (CWHN 5; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 26; Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch; 3rd ed.; CWHN 6 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 287–88.



finds this etymology unlikely.<sup>35</sup> I concur that concur that “Thoth” constitutes an unlikely theophoric element in any Lehite name. However, perhaps we can still salvage something of Nibley’s etymology. As noted above with the name Paanchi, the element *-anchi/’nh(i)* represents a perfectly viable Egyptian and Nephite onomastic element. The element *-anhi/’nh(i)* plausibly represents a biform or alternative transliteration of the element *-anchi/’nh(i)*. If so, and if *giddi-* can be analyzed as a form of Semitic \**GD(D)*/Hebrew *gād*,<sup>36</sup> the name Giddianhi would mean something like “my fortune(-deity) lives” or “my fortune(-deity) is my (life-)oath,” an appropriate name for someone who became a freebooter, a cutthroat, and a robber. In any case, from a literary perspective and Mormon’s editorial perspective, this proposed meaning of the name — especially the *-anhi/’nh(i)*-element — accords with the content of a letter by Giddianhi that Mormon presumably selected for inclusion in his record because it represented Gaddianton methods. In this letter, Giddianhi employs “oath”-taking as a means of intimidating Lachoneus and the Nephites into the surrender of their property and persons:

And behold, ***I swear*** [cf. Egyptian *’nh*; Hebrew *šb’*] **unto you:** if ye will do this **with an oath,** [cf. Egyptian *’nh*; Hebrew *šbu’ā*] ye shall not be destroyed. But if ye will not do this, ***I swear*** unto you with an ***oath*** that on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, **but shall slay you and shall let fall the sword upon you, even until ye shall become extinct.** And behold, I am ***Giddianhi*** and am the governor of this the secret society of Gaddianton, which society and the works thereof I know to be **good** [cf. Egyptian *nfr* = “good”; Nephi/Nephites as “good”/“fair one(s)”]. And they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us. (3 Nephi 3:8–9)

Although Giddianhi’s epistolary “oath” appears to lack the invocation of a specific deity by name or by title in the text, perhaps the mere mention of his name — understood as “my fortune-deity lives”

35. *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Gidgiddoni”, modified on November 21, 2015, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/GIDGIDDONI>.

36. Cf. *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Gid”, modified on March 3, 2017, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/GID>. A more thoroughgoing study of this and other \**GD(D)* names in the Book of Mormon is forthcoming.

or “my fortune(-deity) is my (life-)oath” or the like — supplied it. On one level, Giddianhi’s “oath” implies life for Lachoneus and the Nephites if they comply with his demands and explicitly promises their death for non-compliance. On still another level, however, the mere mention of his name in the context of oath-taking and the phonemic elements of “life” and “oath” latent within the name itself, recalls the scene in Helaman 1 in which Kishcumen [Kishkumen] and Gaddianton’s band first “swore” their oaths “by their everlasting maker” (Helaman 1:11) as well as the earlier secret combination that the Jaredites “sw[o]re ... by the God of heaven” (Ether 8:14) and the original Cainitic oath “sw[orn] ... by the living God” (cf. Paanchi as “the living one”).

Giddianhi’s subsequent wordplay on Nephites and “good”<sup>37</sup> (i.e., that the Gaddianton society’s works were quintessentially “Nephite”) represents an attempt to return to the “politeness” of the earlier part of his letter,<sup>38</sup> but he has at this point fully unmasked himself. Whether Mormon intended it or not, Giddianhi’s additional declaration that the Gaddianton “society’s” works were “of ancient date” appears to further establish a genetic link between the Nephite secret combination and its Jaredite (and earlier) predecessors.<sup>39</sup> In other words, Giddianhi’s statement hints that though Alma the Younger and his successors did not publish the oaths from the Jaredite records in their possession, nevertheless the Jaredite secret combinations infected Nephite society by way of other “ancient” means.

Finally, it should also be noted that Lachoneus and Gidgiddoni — Giddianhi’s narrative counterparts in 3 Nephi 3–4 — also invoke an oath formula in preparing the righteous Nephites and Lamanites to go up against Giddianhi and the Gaddiantons. Lachoneus declared, “**As the Lord liveth**, except ye repent of all your iniquities and cry unto the Lord ye will in nowise be delivered out of the hands of those **Gaddianton robbers**” (3 Nephi 3:15). Against the people’s desire to preemptively destroy the Gaddianton robbers, Gidgiddoni further asserted: “The Lord forbid! For if we should go up against them, the Lord would deliver us into their hands. Therefore we will prepare ourselves in the center

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37. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’ — Revisited,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 330–31.

38. Book of Mormon Central, “Why Was Giddianhi So Polite?” *KnoWhy* #90, September 19, 2016. <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-was-giddianhi-so-polite>.

39. Gardner (*Second Witness*, 255) states: “The Nephites have an authority that rests on one kind of antiquity, but the Gadiantons trace their ruling authority to an even older source, the Jaredites.”



of our lands; and we will gather all our armies together. And we will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us. Therefore, **as the Lord liveth**, if we do this, he will deliver them into our hands” (3 Nephi 3:21). These righteous oaths serve as a kind of narrative and rhetorical ballast (or balance) to Giddianhi’s unrighteous oaths, previously quoted. Moreover, Mormon wishes his audience to recall all of the foregoing when he undertakes to describe his own times and the roles that oaths and the Gaddianton robbers played in the winding up scenes of Nephite society and his mortal life when the Nephites went up against the Lamanites with unhallowable, unrighteous oaths. Mormon, like Gidgiddoni his predecessor, gathered his people into “one body” (Mormon 2:7; see 3 Nephi 3:25; 4:3–4), but the results of his use of this strategy were very different.

### Conclusion: Mormon’s “Oath”

We can better understand Mormon’s onomastic interest in *Paanchi* and the “oaths” sworn by Kishcumen [Kishkumen] and his band that gave rise to the Gaddianton robbers and the epistolary “oaths” of Gaddianton when we consider the Gaddianton-like “oaths” that precipitated the end of Nephite society. Mormon witnesses the evil of these oaths firsthand:

And now because of this great thing which my people the Nephites had done, they began to boast in their own strength and began to **swear before the heavens** that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies. And **they did swear** by the heavens and also by the throne of God that they would go up to battle against their enemies and would **cut them off from the face of the land**. (Mormon 3:9–10)

The Nephites became, in their depravity, even worse than the Lamanites and the vicious Gaddianton robbers who had long sought to destroy them (see Mormon 9). At this point, Mormon declares that he “did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people because of their wickedness and abomination” (Mormon 3:11). The Lord had enough too:

**And when they had sworn by all that had been forbidden them by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** that they would go up unto their enemies to battle and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren, behold, the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying: Vengeance is mine, and I will repay. And

because this people repented not after that I had delivered them, behold, **they shall be cut off from the face of the earth.** And it came to pass that **I utterly refused** to go up against mine enemies. And I did even as the Lord had commanded me[.] (Mormon 3:14–16)

The Lord determines to bring upon the Nephites — or allow to come upon the Nephites — everything that they had “sworn” to do to their enemies: to “cut them off from the face of the earth.” Some years later we learn a significant detail regarding Mormon’s “utter refusal” to “be a commander and a leader” of the Nephites and to “go up against [his] enemies” (Mormon 3:11, 16). This “utter refusal” had taken the form of an “oath” that Mormon himself had sworn: “And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites and did **repent of the oath** which I had made, that I would no more assist them. And they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions” (Mormon 5:1).

It appears, then, that between the time when the Nephites swore their unhallowed oaths to exterminate the Lamanites (and Mormon’s own swearing an “oath” not to lead the Nephites or to go up against his enemies) and Mormon’s repenting of his “oath,” Mormon read and wrote much. Mormon read the Jaredite records and included Nephite descriptions of their contents (records Moroni later abridges). He read and selected for inclusion the records that detailed Paanchi’s rebellion and the oaths that gave rise to the Gaddianton robbers. He read and wrote the epistolary oaths of men like Giddianhi (and of course read and wrote much more!). He had also read the account of Cainitic oaths from the brass plates (see especially Helaman 6). Mormon had witnessed for himself the importance of Jesus’s charge to the Nephites and Lamanites at the temple in Bountiful: “swear not at all” (see 3 Nephi 12:33–37; cf. Matthew 5:33–37).<sup>40</sup> Perhaps this is what led him to repent of his own oath. The oath (cf. *nh*) first sworn in support of Paanchi (“the living one”) by his supporters, invoking the *life* of “their everlasting maker”

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40. In finishing his father’s record, Moroni invokes the solemn oath formula (“as the Lord lives”) a final time in Mormon 8:23: “Search the prophecies of Isaiah. Behold, I cannot write them. Yea, behold, I say unto you that those saints which have gone before me which have possessed this land shall cry — yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord; and **as the Lord liveth**, he will remember the **covenant** [Heb. *bērit*] which **he hath made** [*kārat*, *cut*] with them.” This should probably be understood as a reiteration of an earlier divine oath or promise rather than as the self-interested invocation of a personal oath.

culminated in the eventual *death* of the Nephites as a society. The “oaths” that the Nephites swore against their enemies differed little from the epistolary oaths of Giddianhi, and their fate differed little from his (compare 3 Nephi 4:14 with Mormon 4:5). The Nephites became like those Judahites who had violated the Lord’s covenant in Jeremiah 34:18–20: “their dead bodies [became] meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth” (cf. Mormon 6:15).

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