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ABSTRACT: *Three times in his narrative Mormon recounts the Lord's oracle (revelation) to Mosiah II regarding his sons undertaking a mission among the Lamanites (Mosiah 28:7, Alma 17:35, and Alma 19:23). In all three instances, the Lord's promises of deliverance revolve around the meaning of the name* Mosiah *("Yahweh is Deliverer" or "Yahweh is Savior"), emphasizing that the Lord (Hebrew* yhwh*) himself would act in his covenant role as môšîaʿ in delivering Mosiah's sons, and sparing Ammon in particular. In two of the iterations of the oracle, Mosiah 28:7 and Alma 19:23, we find additional wordplay on the name* Ammon *("faithful") in terms of "many shall believe" (Hebrew* yaʾămînû*) in the first instance and* ʾĕmûnâ *("faith," "faithfulness") in the latter. In Alma 19:23 the Lord also employs an additional wordplay on his own name, Yahweh (Jehovah), to emphasize his ability to bring to pass his promises to Mosiah regarding Ammon.*

Ammon and his brothers' decision to undertake an evangelizing mission among the Lamanites represents one of the axial moments in Lamanite-Nephite history as Mormon recounts it. The events of Alma 17–28 dramatically reshaped Lamanite-Nephite polity and interrelations for the remainder of that history. Thus, of similar seminal importance was the revelation or oracle that King Mosiah II received in which the Lord not only affirmed that Ammon and his brothers' proposed mission would result in a large number of Lamanite conversions but also promised that he himself would "deliver" them from

the Lamanites (Mosiah 28:7). Mormon invokes or refers to this oracle on three distinct occasions: first, near the time of Ammon and his brothers' conversion (recounted in Mosiah 27:8–37); second, at the time Ammon first faces martial combat among the Lamanites early in his mission (see Alma 17:27–39); and third, when Ammon lay prone on the floor in an ecstatic vision next to Lamoni and his wife (see Alma 19:14–36):

Mosiah 28:6–7	Alma 17:35	Alma 19:23
And it came to pass that[1] king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among *the Lamanites* to preach the word. And *the Lord said unto Mosiah*: Let them go up, for *many shall believe* on *their words*. And they shall have eternal life; and *I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites*.	Therefore *they did not fear Ammon*, for they supposed that one of their men could slay him according to their pleasure, for *they knew not that the Lord had promised Mosiah that he would deliver his sons out of their hands, neither did they know anything concerning the Lord*; therefore they delighted in the destruction of their brethren, and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king.	Now we see that *Ammon* could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto *Mosiah* his father: *I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith* [ʾĕmûnātekā]. Therefore *Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord*.

Each reiteration of the oracle emphasizes different aspects of the initial oracle and even modifies specific elements. In this brief study, I examine the three iterations of the oracle to Mosiah, discussing the salient commonalities and differences between them and their significance. It emerges that the language of the oracle revolves around the meaning (or perceived meaning) of the name *Mosiah* in all three instances and the name *Ammon* in the first and the third. In all three, the Lord emphasizes that he will act in his covenant role as *môšîaʿ* ("deliverer," "savior") in "deliver[ing]" Mosiah's sons out danger among the Lamanites, and "spar[ing]" Ammon in particular. In Mosiah 28:7, additional wordplay on *Ammon* ("faithful") links his name with the foreseen success of the Lamanite mission ("many shall believe [have faith] on their words"), a mission largely accomplished through Ammon's "faithfulness" (cf. Alma 18:2, 10, 35). Alma 19:23 also predicates the fulfillment of the

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1. All Book of Mormon citations follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), emphasis added.

Lord's promises regarding Mosiah's sons on the latter's own "faith" and faithfulness.

"Many Shall Believe"/"I Will Deliver Thy Sons" (Mosiah 28:7)

Following his account of the conversion of Alma and the sons of Mosiah (Mosiah 27:8–37), Mormon describes the desire of the sons of Mosiah to undertake a mission to "impart the word of God to their brethren the Lamanites, that perhaps they might bring them to the knowledge of the Lord their God" (Mosiah 28:1). He additionally describes their persistent requests for their father Mosiah's permission to undertake this mission: "And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi" (Mosiah 28:5). Their father eventually accedes to these pleas and asks the Lord to reveal his will on the matter: "And it came to pass that king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among *the Lamanites* to preach the word. And *the Lord said unto Mosiah*: Let them go up, *for many shall believe on their words*; and they shall have eternal life. And *I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites*" (Mosiah 28:6–7).

The Lord's oracle in response to Mosiah's inquiry revolves around both of the names *Ammon* and *Mosiah*. Although, Mormon mentions the name Mosiah in verse 7, the Lord mentions neither name — at least directly — in the oracle. The meanings of both names constitute keys to the promises the Lord makes to Mosiah regarding Ammon and his sons and the success of their mission.

The Etymology and Meaning of the Name *Ammon*

Of the realistic etymological possibilities for the Book of Mormon name Ammon,[2] only two hold much promise. The Semitic gentilic name ʿammôn (with an initial ʿayin [ʿ]) putatively denotes something like "little uncle" or "little kinsman," which has reference to the nation of Ammon that bordered ancient Israel. This name has not, as far as I am aware, ever attested of an individual, at least not in the biblical corpus. In any case, this name and the related name *Ben-ammi* ("son of my kinsman") acquire distinctly pejorative connotations in Genesis 19 (see especially Genesis 19:38).

The second and more promising possibility is that Ammon constitutes a variation of the royal Hebrew biblical name *Amon* (ʾāmôn),

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2. Paul Y. Hoskisson, *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Ammon," https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/AMMON.

which denotes "faithful"[3] (cf. also Amnon [ʾamnôn], "faithful").[4] As such, Ammon would derive from the Hebrew verbal root ʾmn, which had the basic meaning "to be firm, trustworthy, safe"[5] and thus in its passive stem "to prove to be firm, reliable, faithful."[6] (Hugh Nibley's suggestion[7] that the name Ammon reflects the Egyptian theonym ỉmn [*Amun, Amen, Amon,* or *Ammon*] can probably be regarded as conjuncting with this suggestion, since, as Robert F. Smith notes, Egyptian Ammon "comes from the root *mn* or *ỉmn*, 'establish, make firm; be firm, remain; eternal.' … *ỉmn* also means 'right, west, westward.'"[8] Both of these Egyptian verbs are cognate with the Hebrew roots ʾmn and ymn. The Hebrew spelling of the Egyptian name *Amon* [ʾāmôn] is, moreover, identical to the spelling of the Hebrew name *Amon* [ʾāmôn], "faithful.")[9] The causative form of the Hebrew verb ʾmn means "to regard something as trustworthy, to believe in."[10] In other words, it is the exclusive verb in Hebrew for expressing the idea "to believe" or "to have faith."

We can detect a deliberate, allusive wordplay on the name Ammon in the Lord's response to Mosiah's inquiry regarding Ammon and his brothers' mission: "Let them go up, for *many shall believe* [Hebrew *yaʾămînû*] *on their words*; and they shall have eternal life." The wordplay on Ammon in terms of "[they] shall believe" — Hebrew *yaʾămînû* — powerfully hints at Ammon and his faith and faithfulness as a key instrument in the Lamanites (those who had dwindled in "unbelief") "believing" — that is, acquiring covenant "faith" and "faithfulness" (i.e., Hebrew ʾĕmûnâ). Ammon will embody the faith and "faithfulness" (Alma 18:2, 10) that will also come to define his Lamanite converts (Alma 23:6; 27:26–27).

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3. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Veragsbuchhandlung, 1966), 228; see also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 62. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.

4. Noth, *Personennamen*, 32, 228; see also *HALOT*, 65.

5. *HALOT*, 63.

6. Ibid.

7. Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 25; Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 286–87.

8. Robert F. Smith's comments are included in Hoskisson, s.v. "Ammon."

9. See, e.g., Jeremiah 46:25; Nahum 3:8.

10. *HALOT*, 64.

The Etymology and Meaning of Mosiah

The oracle of Mosiah 28:7 also obliquely mentions Mosiah, Ammon's father, by wordplay. The Lord expressed the promise, "*and I will deliver* [Hebrew *wĕhiṣṣaltî* or *wĕhôšaʿtî*][11] thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites." In Hebrew, the Lord's promise, "and I will deliver" would most likely find expression in either of two conceptually related Hebrew verbs *nṣl* (*hiṣṣîl*) or *yšʿ* (*hôšîaʿ*; less likely a form of *mlṭ/plṭ*, but see below). The verbs *nṣl* and *yšʿ* are sometimes paired or used in close conjunction with each other (see, e.g., Jeremiah 15:20–21; 42:11; Psalms 7:1 [Masoretic Text 2, hereafter MT]; Psalm 31:2 [MT 3]; 33:16; 59:2 [MT 3]; 71:2; 1 Chronicles 11:14; 16:35; see also Isaiah 19:20). Jeremiah 15:20–21 provides a particularly salient example of this phenomenon, highlighting Yahweh's role as the divine *môšîaʿ* mentioned earlier by Jeremiah[12]: "And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee *to save thee* [*lĕhôšîʿăkā*] *and to deliver thee* [*ûlĕhaṣṣîlekā*], saith the Lord. And *I will deliver thee* [*wĕhiṣṣaltîkā*] *out of the hand* of the wicked, and *I will redeem* [*ûpĕditîkā*] *thee out of the hand* of the terrible." Regarding the picture of divine deliverance created by Jeremiah's use of these verbs together in Jeremiah 15:20–21, J.A. Thompson observes:

> The promise of deliverance is expressed in three significant OT verbs of deliverance, namely *hôšîaʿ*, 'save,' *hiṣṣîl*, 'deliver,' and *pāḏâ*, 'redeem' or 'rescue.' They are found in such significant passages such as the Exodus story, although they have a more general application. The total picture of deliverance is many-sided and each verb provides a different emphasis. Thus *hôšîaʿ*, 'save,' and its related nouns lay stress on the bringing out of those under restraint into a broad place. The verb *hiṣṣîl*, 'deliver,' pictures the activity of one who snatches his prey from the grasp of a powerful possessor. By extension of the physical idea Israel thought of deliverance from death, the grave, sins, trouble, fear, etc. The verb *pāḏâ* was normally used in reference to liberation from the possession of by the giving up of a ransom. It is used of the Exodus, although by a metaphorical

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11. See, e.g., Ezekiel 34:22; 36:29; 37:23.
12. Jeremiah 14:18.

use, it came to refer to acts of deliverance in daily life, including the rescue of Israel from sins and fear of the grave.[13]

The relatedness of the idioms *hiṣṣîl miyyad* X, "deliver out of the hand[s] of X," and *hôšîaʿ miyyad* X, "deliver/save out of the hand[s] of X" is further evident in such passages as Genesis 37:21 where Reuben rescues Joseph from being killed by his brothers: "And Reuben heard it, *and he delivered him* [*wayyaṣṣilēhû*] out of their hands [*miyyādām*]; and said, Let us not kill him." The Deuteronomistic editor of the Book of Judges describes the raising up of "judges" who "delivered" or "saved" Israel: "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, *which delivered them* [*wayyôšîʿûm*] *out of the hand* [*miyyad*] of those that spoiled them" (Judges 2:16); "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, *and delivered them* [*wĕhôšîʿām*] *out of the hand* [*miyyad*] of their enemies all the days of the judge" (Judges 2:18). Some of the heroic figures described in the book of Judges are described with the term *môšîaʿ* performing the action of *yšʿ*, to "save" or "deliver" (Judges 3:9, 15; cf. Judges 3:31).

These examples are important in the context of the oracle of Mosiah 28:7, since the name *Mosiah* is best explained as a derivation from the substantivized Hebrew participle מושיע (*môšîaʿ*, "deliverer, savior,"[14] literally "one who saves") and the theophoric element יהו (*yhw*, i.e., Yahweh or Jehovah), perhaps written defectively like משעיהו (*môšîʿyāhû*), "Yahweh is Savior" or "The Lord is Savior."[15] King Benjamin, on the occasion of his son Mosiah's accession to the throne, invoked the title *môšîaʿ* both as a reference to Jesus Christ and as wordplay on the name of his son Mosiah, whom he had named for his father: "And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of *a Savior* [Hebrew *môšîaʿ*] shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 3:20). Matthew 1:21 offers a similar, Semitic-based explanation for the naming of Jesus that works in both Greek and Semitic: "and thou shalt call his name *JESUS* [Greek *Iēsoun*, Aramaic/Hebrew *yēšûaʿ*]: *for he shall save* [Greek *sōsei*, Hebrew *yôšîaʿ*] his people from their sins." In the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh himself is designated as *môšîaʿ* in 1 Samuel 10:19; Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jeremiah 14:18; Psalm 7:11; 17:7; 18:42 (2 Samuel 22:3); and Hosea 13:4.

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13. J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 398–99.

14. *HALOT*, 562.

15. See, e.g., John W. Welch, "What Was a 'Mosiah'"? in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 105–007.

By promising "I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites," the Lord — Yahweh — effectively promised Mosiah that he would perform the role of *môšîaʿ* for his sons, as he had in times past (see, e.g., Mosiah 28:4). As Ammon himself stated it, the Lord "in his great mercy *hath brought us over* that everlasting gulf of death and misery, *even to the salvation* [Hebrew *yĕsûat*] of our souls" (Alma 26:20). Thus the Lord himself was speaking to the promise or hope embodied in Mosiah's own name: "Yahweh is Savior" or "Yahweh is Deliverer."

One of the most important biblical texts — and one of numerous Isaianic texts — that designates Yahweh as *môšîaʿ* held special meaning for the Nephites. It occurs twice on Nephi's small plates, including once in Jacob's foundational covenant speech:

Isaiah 49:24–26 (KJV)	1 Nephi 21:24–26	2 Nephi 6:16–18
Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: *for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save* [ʾôšîaʿ] *thy children* [or, sons]. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that *I the Lord* [*yhwh*] *am thy Saviour* [*môšîʿēk*] and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.	*For* shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord: even the captive of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered. *For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save* [ʾôšîaʿ] *thy children.* And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh. They shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine. And all flesh shall know that I the Lord [*yhwh*] am thy Savior [*môšîʿēk*] and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.	*For* shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered, *for the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord: I will contend with them that contendeth with thee.* And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh. And they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine. And all flesh shall know *that I the Lord* [*yhwh*] *am thy Savior* [*môšîʿēk*] and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Jacob's speech makes it clear that the Lord's acting in his capacity as Divine Warrior and *môšîaʿ* ("deliverer," "savior";[16] cf. the less common

16. *HALOT*, 562.

maṣṣîl, "deliverer," "life-saver"[17]) to "deliver" the captives and "save" Israel's sons was a function of his covenant with Israel: "the mighty God shall deliver his covenant people." The latter phrase, not found in the Masoretic text of Isaiah 49 or elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, describes Yahweh with the title "the Mighty God" (*ʾēl gibbôr*) found in Isaiah 9:6 and 10:21 (2 Nephi 19:6; 20:21).[18] The adjective *gibbôr* ("manly, vigorous")[19] was often used substantively — i.e., as a virtual noun — to describe men as "warriors" and "hero[es]."[20] The epithet *ʾēl gibbôr* designated Yahweh as a warrior God.

"The Lord Had Promised Mosiah That He Would Deliver His Sons"

Mormon endeavors to show that the Lamanites initially regarded Ammon as a manifestation of the Divine Warrior — i.e., as "the Great Spirit" (Alma 18:2–5, 11, 18–19; 19:25–27). Mormon's portrait of Ammon favorably compares and contrasts Ammon with the biblical portrait of David.[21] Like David versus Goliath, Ammon stands forth as a divinely empowered warrior: "And those men again stood to scatter their flocks; but Ammon said unto his brethren: Encircle the flocks round about that they flee not; and *I go and contend* with these men who do scatter our flocks. Therefore, they did as Ammon commanded them, and he went forth and *stood to contend* with those who stood by the waters of Sebus; and they were in number not a few" (Alma 17:33–34).

Mormon frames what follows in terms of covenant language: "Therefore *they did not fear Ammon*, for they supposed that one of their men could slay him according to their pleasure, for *they knew not that the Lord* [*yhwh*] *had promised* <u>Mosiah</u> [*mōšîʿyāhû*] *that* <u>he would deliver</u> *his sons out of their hands, neither did they know anything concerning the Lord* [*yhwh*]; therefore they delighted in the destruction of their brethren, and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king" (Alma 17:35). Here Mormon revisits the wordplay on *Mosiah* ("Yahweh is Deliverer," "Yahweh is Savior") in terms of the Lord's earlier promise

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17. *HALOT*, 717.

18. See also the Jeremiah's variation in Jeremiah 32:18: *hāʾēl haggādôl haggibbôr* = "the Great, the Mighty God" (KJV) or "O great and mighty God" (NRSV).

19. *HALOT*, 172.

20. Ibid.

21. Matthew L. Bowen, "Faithfulness of Ammon," *Religious Educator* 15, no. 2 (2014): 64–89.

to "deliver" Mosiah's sons "out of the hands of the Lamanites." The Lord's acting in the role of *môšîaʿ*, and performing the action of *hiṣṣîl* or *hôšîaʿ*, was a function of his ancient covenant with Israel and perhaps also a personal covenant with Mosiah himself.

Mormon describes the Lord's oracle as a "promise" which, within the same reality as reflected in Jacob 4:13, Ether 3:12, Hebrews 6:16–18, etc. (i.e., God is a "God of truth" who does not and *cannot* lie), amounted to an oath or an immutable promise. Moreover, a verb translated "know" occurs twice in this verse. In Hebrew, the verb *yādaʿ* ("know") had important covenant implications.[22] Mormon emphasizes the Lamanites' lack of covenant knowledge. They had no knowledge that Yahweh makes promises of divine deliverance and salvation and that he keeps such. Some Lamanites evidently held the concept that "it was the Great Spirit that had always attended the Nephites, who had ever delivered them out of their hands" (Alma 19:17), but did not know this deity as Yahweh. Moreover, they did not know the covenant roots of that concept as captured in Nephi's great thesis statement, "I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20).

The aftermath of Ammon's confrontation with the Lamanite plunderers emphasizes the surpassing "faithfulness" (*ʾĕmûnâ*) that qualified Ammon for being made "mighty … unto the power of deliverance." The covenant dimension of Ammon's "faithfulness" works on two levels. First, Ammon's willingness to contend with the Lamanite plunderers reflected his personal faith in the Lord (Yahweh), faith that gave him courage to act in the face of very real danger. Second, Ammon demonstrated "faithfulness" to Lamoni, whose "servant" he became: "And when they had all testified to the things which they had seen and he had learned of *the faithfulness* [*ʾĕmûnat*] *of Ammon* in preserving his flocks and also of his great power in contending against those who sought to slay him, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Surely, this is more than a man. Behold, is not this the Great Spirit who doth send such great punishments upon this people because of their murders?" (Alma 18:2). The collocation "the faithfulness of Ammon" constitutes a sublime paronomasia (wordplay) in Hebrew: *ʾĕmûnat ʾammôn/ ʾāmôn* [or *ʾĕmûnat ʾammôn*]. Beyond that, Mormon's statement that Ammon's "faithfulness" consisted in "preserving [the king's] flocks" and "contending against" those who sought to plunder

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22. See, e.g., RoseAnn Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 48–61, 128–29.

them has important implications for the Lord's own faithfulness. Just as Ammon had, as warrior, preserved Lamoni's flocks, the Lord would preserve Ammon and his brothers.

The wordplay on Ammon resumes in a dramatic way only verses later: "Now when king Lamoni heard that Ammon was preparing his horses and his chariots he was more astonished, because of *the faithfulness* [ʾĕmûnat] *of Ammon*, saying: *Surely there has not been any servant among all my servants* that has been *so faithful* [neʾĕmān] as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them" (Alma 18:10). Lamoni's statement echoes words attributed to Ahimelech to Saul regarding David in the biblical story of David's accession to kingship in Israel: "And who is *so faithful* [neʾĕmān] *among all thy servants* as David" (1 Samuel 22:14).[23]

The verb *believe* (perhaps Hebrew ʾmn) is repeated about seventeen times, the passive form "faithful" (neʾĕmān) once, "faith"/"faithfulness" (Hebrew ʾĕmûnâ) six times, and "true," "trust," and "unbelief" once each in Alma 18–19. Mormon uses this extensive paronomasia to link Ammon and his faithfulness to the Lamanites' transition from a rudimentary level of faith ("we do not believe that a man has such great power" [Alma 18:3] and "Notwithstanding they believed in a Great Spirit, they supposed that whatsoever they did was right" [Alma 18:5]) to faith in the Nephite traditions concerning Christ ("I will believe all thy words" [Alma 18:23]; "I will believe all these things which thou hast spoken" [Alma 18:33]; and "the king believed all his words" [Alma 18:40]).

As a result of Ammon's "faithful" efforts and Lamoni's choice to "believe" Ammon's words, "the dark veil of unbelief was … cast away from [Lamoni's] mind" (Alma 19:6). Lamoni himself has a vision in which he sees Jesus Christ and learns that "he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name" (Alma 19:13). An additional wordplay on Lamoni (a name likely formed as a *nisba* or *nisbe*[24] of "Laman," thus "of Laman" or "Lamanite")[25] and "unbelief" emphasizes Lamoni's turn from "unbelief" (cf. Hebrew lōʾ-ʾēmun, Deuteronomy 32:20) as the broader turning point for Lamoni's people, and later many more Lamanites, from "unbelief."

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23. See Bowen, "Faithfulness of Ammon," 66, 73-74, 83.

24. As a grammatical term, *nisba* or *nisbe* refers to an adjective formed from a noun (or proper name).

25. John Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon" (paper, Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 2001), https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/tvedtnes-HebrewNames.pdf.

Thus, Lamoni himself becomes a messenger of faith: "as many [of the Lamanites] as heard his words believed, and were converted unto the Lord" (Alma 19:31). The Lamanites in Lamoni's court, in their turn, become the instruments of conversion for many more Lamanites: "And it came to pass that *there was many that did believe* [cf. Hebrew *heʾĕmînû*] in their words. And as many as *did believe* were baptized. And they became a righteous people; and they did establish a church among them. And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites. Thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them. And we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and *believe* [cf. *yaʾămînû*] on his name" (Alma 19:35–36).

Ammon thus accomplished his desire to "lead them *to believe* [cf. **lĕhaʾămîn*] in my words" (Alma 17:29). The converted Lamanites would become "the people of Ammon," a people "*firm in the faith* of Christ, even unto the end" (Alma 27:26–27; see also especially Alma 23:5–6). More importantly, however, the Lord's oracle to Mosiah as recorded in Mosiah 28:17, "*many shall believe* [*yaʾămînû*] *on their words*; and they shall have eternal life" would soon stand fulfilled.

"I Will Spare Him and It Shall Be unto Him According to Thy Faith"

The final iteration of the Mosiah 28:7 oracle occurs as a part of Mormon's narration of the ecstatic theophanies that occurred in Lamoni's palace. As a participant in these theophanies, along with Lamoni, his wife, and other Lamanite courtesans, and lying prone on the floor of the palace, Ammon was then at his most vulnerable. Mormon then reports the mortal danger that approached Ammon: "Now, one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceedingly angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead" (Alma 19:22).

Mormon then draws a conclusion from the immediate death of the Lamanite who attempted to kill Ammon, recalling the Lord's oracle to Mosiah II with its covenant promise: "Now we see that <u>Ammon</u> could not be slain, for *the Lord had said unto <u>Mosiah</u> his father: <u>I will spare him</u>, and it shall be unto him according to <u>thy faith</u>* [*ʾĕmûnātekā*]. *Therefore <u>Mosiah</u> <u>trusted</u> him unto the Lord*" (Alma 19:23).

Here Mormon rephrases the promise "and I will deliver thy sons" from the initial oracle as "I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith." The apparent change of verb — or translation of a verb — rendered

"deliver" (Hebrew *hiṣṣîl* or *hôšîaʿ*) to "spare" is notable: "And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners. And *the Lord saw fit* in his infinite mercy *to spare them*; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever" (Mosiah 28:4). Perhaps it is also worth noting that Alma and Ammon both describe their being "spared" in terms of the verb "snatch" (Mosiah 27:28-29; Alma 26:17, possibly forms of Hebrew *nṣl*).[26] In any case, the phrase "I will spare him" in Alma 19:23 still revolves around the meaning of the name *Mosiah*: "Yahweh is Savior" or "Yahweh is Deliverer." The language of this third rendition of the oracle focuses almost exclusively on Ammon himself and the Lord's specific promises regarding him.

Just as noteworthy, however, is the clear wordplay on Ammon's name that follows the Lord's initial promise: "and it shall be unto him according to *thy faith* [*ʾĕmûnātekā*]." The term for "faith" or (better) "faithfulness" in Hebrew is *ʾĕmûnâ*, a term very close to the name Ammon in sound and perhaps also in etymology from the root *ʾmn*, as noted above. In either case, an intentional paronomastic association seems clear. The promise "it shall be unto [Ammon] according to thy faith" also recalls another promise from the original oracle: "Let them go up, for *many shall believe on their words*" (Mosiah 28:7). In that initial rendition, the onomastic wordplay on Ammon and "many shall believe" (Hebrew *yaʾămînû*) hinted at — and emphasized — Ammon's leadership role[27] in accomplishing the mission on which the Lord was sending Mosiah's sons. This third rendition reflects a similar onomastic wordplay on Ammon in terms of *ʾmn*, this time in terms of the cognate noun *ʾĕmûnâ*, "faith," "faithfulness." In this rendition, the Lord conditions the outcome of Ammon's mission and his protection on his father Mosiah's faithfulness (which evidently excelled).

We should also note yet another onomastic wordplay in the third rendition of Mosiah's oracle. The phrase "*and it shall be unto him* [*wĕhāyâ-lô*]" — a hebraistic expression consisting of the verb *hāyâ*, "to be, become" or "to exist," and the preposition *l*, "to," with the masculine singular suffix –*ô*. Jeremiah's declaration, "his life *shall be unto him*

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26. Cf. Mosiah 27:29, footnote d, in *The Book of Mormon* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980).

27. See especially Alma 17:18: "Now Ammon being the chief among them, or rather he did administer unto them, and he departed from them, after having blessed them according to their several stations, having imparted the word of God unto them, or administered unto them before his departure; and thus they took their several journeys throughout the land."

[wĕhāyĕtâ-lô] for a prey" (Jeremiah 21:9) and Hosea's statement, "altars *shall be unto him* [hāyû-lô, or 'have been unto him'] to sin" (Hosea 8:11) are but two examples. The phrase "it shall be unto him" (wĕhāyâ + lô or its equivalent) functions in the oracle as an onomastic play on Yhwh ("the Lord" or Yahweh), a name which meant — or was understood to mean — something like "He creates the (divine) hosts"[28] or "He who causes to happen"[29] — i.e., "He causes to be" or "He brings to pass."[30]

Thus the wordplay in the rendition of the Mosiah's oracle Alma 19:23 recalls the onomastic wordplay on Yhwh in Exodus 3:14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM [ʾehyeh ʾăšer ʾehyeh]: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM [ʾehyeh] hath sent me unto you."[31] The force of the wordplay on Yhwh in Mosiah's oracle is that the Lord — Yahweh — will bring to pass or cause to "be" exactly what he promised, as he always does.

Conclusion and the Legacy of Mosiah II's Parental Faith in the Lord

Mormon presents an oracle or revelation to Mosiah II regarding his sons undertaking a mission among the Lamanites in three separate iterations: Mosiah 28:7; Alma 17:35; and Alma 19:23. The oracle in each one of its iterations revolves around the meaning of the name *Mosiah* ("The Lord is Deliverer" or "The Lord is Savior"). Two of the iterations also revolve around the name *Ammon* and its meaning (or perceived meaning) in terms of "faithful."

Mormon demonstrates that this prophetic revelation comes to complete fulfillment and that "he had also *verified* his word unto [Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah] in every particular" (Alma 25:17) as the Lord himself acted in the covenant role of *môšîaʿ* ("Deliverer," "Savior") for Mosiah's sons, delivering them out of the hands of the Lamanites so they could preach the doctrine of Christ and the doctrines of salvation among the Lamanites. As a result of the Lord's help and Ammon's personal "faith" and "faithfulness" (see, e.g., Alma 18:2, 10, 19) many Lamanites "heard" and "believed" (Alma 19:31, 35) and became a people of surpassing faithfulness (see Alma 23:5–6), "the people of *Ammon* … *firm in the faith* of Christ, even unto the end."

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28. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973), 65.

29. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992), 104.

30. See Matthew L. Bowen, "'Creator of the First Day': The Glossing of Lord of Sabaoth in D&C 95:7," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 56.

31. Cf. Hosea 1:9.

In closing, surely worth noting is the legacy of Mosiah II's parental "faith" in addition to the "faithfulness" (ʾĕmûnâ [ʾĕmûnat]) of Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah in their missionary labors. As those who had been "saved" and "delivered" because of parental faith, Ammon and his brothers' faith eventually bore generational fruit in the faithfulness of the converted Lamanites' sons. Helaman records: "But behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately. Yea, they were *firm* before the Lamanites. … And as the remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, these two thousand and sixty were *firm* and undaunted. Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness. Yea, and even *according to their faith* [ʾĕmûnātām] it was done unto them. And I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them" (Alma 57:19–21). These faithful sons lived up to the faithfulness of their mothers and fathers (see Alma 23:5–6; 27:26–27). The ʾĕmûnâ of these young men stemmed from that of their mothers.[32]

They were "spared" because of that "faith" and so became a reciprocal means of sparing the Nephites: "And now their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should *be spared*, while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God *because of their exceeding faith* [cf. Hebrew ʾĕmûnātām] in that which they had been taught to believe, that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power" (Alma 57:26). The faith of the Ammonites and their sons mirrored that of Mosiah and his sons (Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni). Those parents trusted essentially the same promise(s) that Mosiah trusted: "I will *spare* him, and *it shall be unto him according to thy faith*" (Alma 19:23); "I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites" (Mosiah 28:7).

The Lord had abundantly fulfilled his promise to Mosiah II regarding his sons' missionary efforts: "many shall believe on their words" (Mosiah 28:7). The legacy of Mosiah's faith and the faithfulness manifest in Ammon and his brothers' missionary labors could be summed up no more succinctly and appropriately than Helaman's conclusion to his letter to Moroni regarding the Ammonites' sons: "*their faith* [ʾĕmûnātām] is

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32. Matthew L. Bowen, "Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors" (presentation, FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, August 2019), https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2019/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words.

strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come" (Alma 58:40) — i.e., faith in the Savior [*môšîaʿ*] of all, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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