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## Proper Names in the Book of Mormon

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# Proper Names in the Book of Mormon

In this lesson we test certain proper names in the Book of Mormon in the light of actual names from Lehi's world, unknown in the time of Joseph Smith. Not only do the names agree, but the variations follow the correct rules, and the names are found in correct statistical proportions, the Egyptian and Hebrew types being of almost equal frequency, along with a sprinkling of Hittite, Arabic, and Greek names. To reduce speculation to a minimum, the lesson is concerned only with highly distinctive and characteristic names, and to clearly stated and universally admitted rules. Even so, the reader must judge for himself. In case of doubt he is encouraged to correspond with recognized experts in the languages concerned. The combination of the names Laman and Lemuel, the absence of Baal names, the predominance of names ending in -iah—such facts as those need no trained philologist to point them out; they can be demonstrated most objectively, and they are powerful evidence in behalf of the Book of Mormon.

Forty years ago a psychologist, by analyzing the proper names in the Book of Mormon, believed he was able to prove beyond any doubt that the book originated in the world of Joseph Smith. His verdict is still accepted.<sup>1</sup> This is another illustration of the futility of testing any ancient document by the criteria of any other age than that which it claims for its origin. For, by the method employed, our psychologist could have proven with equal ease that the Book of Mormon was written in any century to which he chose to attribute it.

There is no happier hunting-ground for the half-trained scholar than the world of words. For unbridled license of speculation and airy weakness of evidence only the au-

thority on ancient geography (including Book of Mormon geography) can surpass the homemade philologist. There are no rules and no limits in a game in which the ear decides for itself whether or not a resemblance in sound is to be taken as accidental or significant. Yet there are quite enough peculiar proper names in the Book of Mormon to provide a rigorous and exacting test for the authenticity of the book, provided of course that a properly trained ear does the testing.<sup>2</sup> Since we cannot lay claim to such an ear, we shall in this lesson lean over backward to confine ourselves to a few minimum claims which it would be very hard for anyone to dispute. Let us limit ourselves to ten points.

### The Test Cases

1. There is in the Book of Mormon, within one important family, a group of names beginning with Pa-. They are peculiar names and can be matched exactly in Egyptian. Names beginning with Pa- are by far the most common type in late Egyptian history, but what ties Pahoran's family most closely to Egypt is not the names but the activities in which the bearers of those names are engaged; for they sponsor the same institutions and engineer the same intrigues as their Egyptian namesakes did centuries before — and in so doing they give us to understand they are quite aware of the resemblance!

2. There is a tendency for Egyptian and Hebrew names in the Book of Mormon to turn up in the Elephantine region of Upper Egypt. It is now believed that when Jerusalem fell in Lehi's day a large part of the refugees fled to that region.

3. The most frequent "theophoric" element by far in the Book of Mormon names is Ammon. The same is true of late Egyptian names. The most common formative element in the Book of Mormon names is the combination Mor-, Mr-; in Egyptian the same holds true.

4. Egyptian names are usually compound and are formed according to certain rules. Book of Mormon names

are mostly compound and follow the same rules of formation.

5. Mimation (ending with -m) predominated in Jaredite names, nunation (ending with -n) in Nephite and Lamanite names. This is strictly in keeping with the development of languages in the Old World, where mimation was everywhere succeeded by nunation around 2000 B.C., that is, well after the Jaredites had departed, but long before the Nephites.

6. A large proportion of Book of Mormon names end in *-iah* and *-ihah*. The same ending is peculiar to Palestinian names of Lehi's time but not so prevalent other times.

7. The names in the Book of Mormon that are neither Egyptian nor Hebrew are Arabic, Hittite (Hurrian), or Greek. This is in keeping with the purported origin of the book.

8. Lehi is a real personal name, unknown in the time of Joseph Smith. It is only met with in the desert country, where a number of exemplars have been discovered in recent years.

9. Laman and Lemuel are not only "Arabic" names, but they also form a genuine "pair of pendant names," such as ancient Semites of the desert were wont to give their two eldest sons, according to recent discoveries.

10. The absence of "Baal-" names (that is, names compounded with the theophoric Baal element) is entirely in keeping with recent discoveries regarding common names in the Palestine of Lehi's day.

### **Familiar Names in Familiar Situations**

Let us now briefly consider the evidence for each of these ten points in order.

1. Paanchi, the son of Pahoran, and pretender to the chief-judgeship, has the same name as one of the best-known kings in Egyptian history, a contemporary of Isaiah and chief actor in the drama of Egyptian history at a time

in which that history was intimately involved in the affairs of Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Yet his name, not mentioned in the Bible, remained unknown to scholars until the end of the nineteenth century.

This Egyptian Paanchi, whose name means "He (namely Ammon) is my life," was the son of one Kherihor (the vowels are guesses!), the High Priest of Ammon, who in a priestly plot set himself up as a rival of Pharaoh himself, while his son Paanchi actually claimed the throne. This was four hundred years before Lehi left Jerusalem, and it had historic repercussions of great importance; not only did it establish a new dynasty, but it inaugurated the rule of priestcraft in Egypt; from that time on, "the High-priest of Amon . . . could and constantly did reduce the king to a position of subservience."<sup>4</sup>

Now in the Book of Mormon both Paanchi and Korihor are involved in such plots and intrigues of priestcraft. The former, to gain the chief judgeship for himself, tried to achieve the assassination of his two elder brothers, who bore the good Egyptian names of Pahoran (meaning "man of Syria or Palestine" — a Horite) and Pacumeni (cf. Egyptian Pakamen), while the latter charged the judges with trying to introduce into the New World the abuses of priestcraft which the people knew had been practiced in the Old, "ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority" (Alma 30:23).

It is apparent that with their Old World names and culture, Lehi's people brought over many Old World memories and ideas with them, as was only to be expected.

### **Geographical Bull's-Eye**

2. In *The Improvement Era* for April, 1948, the author published a map showing the clustering of Book of Mormon names in the up-river country of Egypt, south of Thebes. The map bore the caption:

The tendency of Book of Mormon names to turn up in definite limited areas and in close association with each other is a strong indication that the resemblances between the Old and New World titles are not accidental.<sup>5</sup>

As a reader of the article will perceive, we were, at that time, at a loss to explain a phenomenon which we felt was "not accidental." But soon after, we came across the answer in Professor Albright's observation that when Jerusalem fell the very Jews who had persecuted Lehi "[hid] in the wilds during the siege," and when all was lost fled to Egypt. In particular they went to upper Egypt, where the Jews had a very special settlement at Elephantine, far up the Nile. Albright even suggests that the main colonization of Elephantine took place as a result of the flight from Jerusalem at that time.<sup>6</sup> Since Egypt was then the lone survivor against Nebuchadnezzar, it was only to Egypt that his enemies could flee. But since Egypt was also an objective of Nebuchadnezzar's victorious campaign, the safest place for any refugee to that land would be as far up the river as he could get. That is therefore where one would logically expect to find the Book of Mormon names, that is, the Jewish names of Lehi's days; but before he knew the explanation, this writer was puzzled by the fact, which to him seemed paradoxical, that our Book of Mormon names should congregate so very far from home.

### Mixed Nationalities

Recently there have been discovered lists of the names of prisoners that Nebuchadnezzar brought back to Babylon with him from his great expedition into Syria and Palestine.<sup>7</sup> These represent a good cross section of proper names prevailing in those lands in the days of Lehi, and among them is a respectable proportion of Egyptian names, which is what the Book of Mormon would lead us to expect. Also in the list are Philistine (cf. Book of Mormon *Minon* and *Pathros!*), Phoenician, Elamite, Median, Persian, Greek, and

Lydian names — all the sweepings of a campaign into Lehi's country. According to D. W. Thomas, this list shows that it was popular at the time to name children after Egyptian hero kings of the past.<sup>8</sup> A surprisingly large number of the non-Hebraic Nephite names are of this class. Thus the name Aha, which a Nephite general bestowed on his son, means "warrior" and was borne by the legendary first hero king of Egypt. Himni, Korihor, Paanchi, Pakumeni, Sam, Zezrom, Ham, Manti, Nephi, and Zenoch are all Egyptian hero names.<sup>9</sup> Zeniff certainly suggests the name Zainab and its variants, popular among the desert people, of which the feminine form of Zenobia was borne by the most glamorous woman of ancient times next to Cleopatra and that other desert queen, the Queen of Sheba. Recently Beeston has identified Zoram in both its Hebrew and Arabic forms.<sup>10</sup> In another old name list, the Tell Taannek list, the elements *bin*, *zik*, *ra*, and *-andi* are prominent, as in the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup>

### Rules of Name-building

3. The most common name heard in the Egypt of Lehi's day was the most common name heard among the Nephites, that of Amon or Ammon (the two spellings are equally common, and Gardiner favors Amun), the god of the empire, who unlike other Egyptian deities never took animal form, was regarded as the universal god, and seems to have been an importation into Egypt from the time of Abraham.<sup>12</sup> His name is very often used in the building of other names, and when so employed it changes its sound according to definite rules. Gardiner in his *Egyptian Grammar* states:

A very important class of personal names is that containing names known as theophorous, i.e. compound names in which one element is the name of a deity. Now in Graeco-Roman transcriptions it is the rule that when such a divine name is stated at the *beginning* of a compound

[the italics are Gardiner's], it is less heavily vocalized than when it stands independently or at the end of a compound.<sup>13</sup>

The author then goes on to show that in such cases *Amon* or *Amun* regularly becomes Amen, while in some cases the vowel may disappear entirely. One need only consider the Book of Mormon *Aminidab*, *Aminadi*, *Amnihu*, *Amnor*, etc., to see how the rule applies in the West. In the name Helaman, on the other hand, the strong vocalization remains, since the "divine name" is not "stated at the beginning" of the compound. Since the Semitic "l" must always be rendered as "r" in Egyptian (which has no "l"), Helaman would in "un-reformed" Egyptian necessarily appear as the typically Egyptian *Heramon*.

By checking the long Egyptian name lists in Lieblein and Ranke's works, the reader may satisfy himself that the element *Mr* is, next to *Nfr* alone, by far the most common.<sup>14</sup> It is very common in the Book of Mormon also. In Egyptian it means a great many things, though its most common designation in proper names is "beloved." Thus the Egyptian king Meryamon or Moriamon is "beloved of Amon."

4. Another illustration of name-formation in Nephite and Egyptian may be seen in the names *Zemna-ri-hah* (Nephite) and *Zmn-ha-re* (Egyptian), where the same elements are combined in different order. The elaborate Nephite names of Gidgiddoni and Gidgiddonah may be parallels to the Egyptian *Djed-djḥwti-iw-f* and *Died-djḥwti-iw-s*; in each case the stem is the same, sounding something like "Jid-jiddo-." To this the suffix -iw-f, and iw-s are added in Egyptian with the word *ankh*, signifying "he shall live" and "she shall live," respectively,<sup>15</sup> the two names meaning "Thoth hath said he shall live" and "Thoth hath said she will live." The suffixes in the two Nephite names are different, -iw-ni and iw-nah, but they are perfectly good Egyptian and indicate "I shall live" and "we shall live" respectively. The agreements are much too neat and accurate to be accidental.



Any student with six months' hieroglyphic may recognize the Nephite Gidianhi as the typical Egyptian name "Thoth is my life," *Djḥwty-ankh-i*.

### Mimation and Nunation

5. Jirku has shown that mimation was still current in the Semitic dialects of Palestine and Syria between 2100 and 1800 B.C., when the nominative case still ended in -m. From Egyptian and Hittite records it is now clear that the dialects of Palestine and Syria dropped this mimation in the first half of the second millennium B.C., and it is preserved in the Bible only in a few pre-Hebraic words used in very ancient incantations and spells, and in the mysterious and archaic words *Urim* and *Thummim*, which it now appears are not Hebrew plurals at all.<sup>16</sup> This is significant, since the Book of Mormon favors -m endings for Jaredite names. The Jaredites must have taken mimation with them some time before 2000 B.C., when the change to nunation occurred. Nunation itself, however, which is extremely common in the Book of Mormon proper names, is an old-fashioned thing which in Lehi's day was a sign of conservatism and most frequently found among the desert people. It turns up in old Hebrew genealogies in which "the nomenclature is largely un-Hebraic, with peculiar antique formations in -an, -on, and in some cases of particular Arabian origin."<sup>17</sup> This nunation or ending in -n has left traces in all Semitic languages, but mostly among the desert people, being retained completely in classical Arabic.

6. In *Lehi in the Desert*, we wrote: "Since the Old Testament was available to Joseph Smith, there is no point in listing Hebrew names, but their Book of Mormon *forms* are significant. The strong tendency to end in *-iah* is very striking, since the vast majority of Hebrew names found at Lachish [i.e., from records contemporary with Lehi] end the same way, indicating that *-iah* names were very fashionable in Lehi's time." Since that was written our view

has been confirmed by a study made by D. W. Thomas, who noted that a "striking" peculiarity of Hebrew names in the age of Jeremiah is "the many personal names which end in *-iahu*."<sup>18</sup> Thus Reifenberg lists from the ancient Hebrew seals of the time such names as Jekamjahu (Jekamiah), Shepatjahu son of Asjahu, Jaazanjahu, Gadjahu (cf. Book of Mormon Gadiandi, Giddianhi), Hilkjahu, Gealjahu, Al-ijahu, etc.<sup>19</sup> This *-iahu* ending (German *-jahu*) is our biblical *-iah*, *-ijah*, and by a common metatheses also becomes the extremely common Book of Mormon name ending *-ihah*.

### Non-Semitic Names

7. The Hittite names in the Book of Mormon all come to us in an Egyptianized form, which is what one would expect in Lehi's Palestine where Hittite names still survived even though Hittite language was probably not used.<sup>20</sup> Thus the Nephite Manti, while suggesting the Egyptian Manti, Monti, Menedi, etc., also recalls the Egyptian name of a Hittite city, Manda. A highly characteristic element of Hittite and Hurrian names are *Manti* and *-andi*, likewise common in the Book of Mormon. The Nephite Kumen, Kumenonhi, Kishkumen certainly remind one of the Egyptian-Hittite name of an important city, Kumani; Nephite Sean-tum is cognate with Egyptian-Hittite Sandon, Sandas; the Jaredite Akish and Kish are both found in the Old World, where they are of very great antiquity, Akish being the Egyptian-Hittite name for Cyprus.<sup>21</sup> Most interesting is the Nephite city of Gadiandi, whose name exactly parallels the Egyptian rendering of the name of a Hittite city, Cad-yanda.<sup>22</sup> It should be borne in mind that one of the great discoveries and upsets of the twentieth century has been the totally unsuspected importance and extent of the Hittite penetration of Hebrew civilization. Every year the Hittites receive new importance in the Hebrew story. The Book of Mormon has not overdone its *-andis* and *-antis*!

The occurrence of the names Timothy and Lachoneus

in the Book of Mormon is strictly in order, however odd it may seem at first glance. Since the fourteenth century B.C. at latest, Syria and Palestine had been in constant contact with the Aegean world; and since the middle of the seventh century, Greek mercenaries and merchants closely bound to Egyptian interest (the best Egyptian mercenaries were Greeks) swarmed throughout the Near East.<sup>23</sup> Lehi's people, even apart from their mercantile activities, could not have avoided considerable contact with these people in Egypt and especially in Sidon, which Greek poets even in that day were celebrating as the great world center of trade. It is interesting to note in passing that Timothy is an Ionian name, since the Greeks in Palestine were Ionians (hence the Hebrew name for Greeks: "Sons of Javanim"), and—since "Lachoneus" means "a Laconian"—that the oldest Greek traders were Laconians, who had colonies in Cyprus (Book of Mormon Akish) and of course traded with Palestine.<sup>24</sup>

### Important Names in the Book of Mormon

8. The name of Lehi occurs only as part of a place-name in the Bible.<sup>25</sup> And only within the last twenty years a potsherd was found at Elath, where Lehi's road from Jerusalem meets "the fountain of the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 1:9), bearing the name of a man, *LHI*, very clearly written on it. Since then Nelson Glueck has detected the name in many compound names found inscribed on the stones of Arabia.<sup>26</sup> On a Lihyanite monument we find the name of one *LHI-TN*, son of Pagag, whose name means "Lehi hath given." The *LHI* name is quite common in inscriptions.<sup>27</sup> *Nfy*<sup>28</sup> and *Alma*<sup>29</sup> are also attested, and Mormon may be of Hebrew, Egyptian, or Arabic origin.<sup>30</sup> While Glueck supplies the vowels to make the name Lahai, Paul Haupt in a special study renders it Lehi, and gives it the mysterious meaning of "cheek," which has never been explained.<sup>31</sup> There is a Bait Lahi, "House of Lahi," among the ancient place names

of the Gaza country occupied by the Arabs in the time of Lehi, but the meaning of the name is lost.<sup>32</sup>

9. The name of *LMN* is also found among the inscriptions. Thus in an inscription from Sinai: "Greetings Lamin, son of Abdal." (*Shlm Lminu bn Abdl*).<sup>33</sup> Recently the name Laman (written definitely with a second "a") has turned up in south Arabia and been hailed by the discoverers as "a new name."<sup>34</sup> In an inscription reading "Lamai son of Nafiah erected this monument,"<sup>35</sup> the final *Yod* is defective and suggests that the word is really Laman. In Palestine the name of Laman is attributed to an ancient Mukam or sacred place. Most of these Mukams are of unknown date, many of them prehistoric. In Israel only the tribe of Manasseh (Lehi's tribe) built them.<sup>36</sup> The name of Lemuel, as we have seen, also comes from the deserts of the south.

### Pendant Names

But the most striking thing about the names of Laman and Lemuel is the way they go together; as we saw above it has been suggested that the former is but a corruption of the latter.<sup>37</sup> Whether that is so or not, the musical pair certainly belong together and are a beautiful illustration of the old desert custom of naming the first two sons in a family with rhyming twin names, "a pair of pendant names," as Spiegel puts it, "like Eldad and Medad, Hillek and Billek, or Jannes and Jambres. The Arabs particularly seem to enjoy putting together such assonant names *Yāḡuḡ* and *Maḡūḡ* for Gog and Magog, *Hārūn* and *Kārūn* for Aaron and Korah, *Hābīl* and *Kābīl* for Abel and Cain, *Ḥillīt* and *Millīt* for the first dwellers in hell."<sup>38</sup> Spiegel is here discussing the names Heyya and Abeyya, and might well have included in his parallels the recently discovered romance of Sul and Shummul. Harut and Marut were the first two angels to fall from grace, like Laman and Lemuel, according to Arab tradition of great antiquity. These names never go in threes or fours but only in pairs, designating just the

first two sons of a family with no reference to the rest. This "Dioscuric" practice has a ritual significance which has been discussed by Rendel Harris,<sup>39</sup> but of the actual practice itself, especially among the desert people, there can be no doubt, for we read in an ancient inscription: "N. built this tomb for his sons Hatibat and Hamilat."<sup>40</sup> One could not ask for a better illustration of this little-known and, until recently, unsuspected practice than we find in the Book of Mormon where Lehi names his first two sons Laman and Lemuel.

### Baal Names

10. The compiler of these studies was once greatly puzzled over the complete absence of *Baal* names from the Book of Mormon. By what unfortunate oversight had the authors of that work failed to include a single name containing the element *Baal*, which thrives among the personal names of the Old Testament? Having discovered, as we thought, that the book was in error, we spared no criticism at the time, and indeed, had its neglect of *Baal* names not been strikingly vindicated in recent years it would be a black mark against it. Now we learn, however, that the stubborn prejudice of our text against *Baal* names is really the only correct attitude it could have taken; and this discovery, flying in the face of all our calculation and preconceptions, should in all fairness weigh at least as heavily in the book's favor as the supposed error did against it.

It happens that for some reason or other the Jews at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. would have nothing to do with *Baal* names. An examination of Elephantine names lists shows that "the change of Baal names, by substitution, is in agreement with Hosea's foretelling that they should no more be used by the Israelites, and consequently it is most interesting to find how the latest archaeological discoveries confirm the Prophet, for out of some four hundred personal names among the Elephantine papyri not one is compounded of Baal."<sup>41</sup>

Since Elephantine was settled largely by Israelites who fled from Jerusalem after its destruction, their personal names should show the same tendencies as those in the Book of Mormon. Though the translator of that book might by the exercise of superhuman cunning have been warned by Hosea 2:17 to eschew Baal names, yet the meaning of that passage is so far from obvious that Albright as late as 1942 finds it "very significant that seals and inscriptions from Judah, which . . . are very numerous in the seventh and early sixth [centuries] seem never to contain any *Baal* names."<sup>42</sup> It is significant indeed, but hardly more so that the uncanny acumen which the Book of Mormon displays on the point.

To these ten points many others might be added, but we must be careful at this stage of the game not to be too subjective in our interpretations nor to distinguish too sharply between languages. There is an increasing tendency to fuse ancient languages together as ancient cultures were fused. Thus Jirku finds in Egyptian name lists many place-names that occur both in the Old Testament and in the cuneiform sources, "and many of these are still preserved in the modern Arabic names of the tells" or ruins that mark their sites. Thus the same names turn up in Egyptian, Hebrew, Babylonian, and Arabic.<sup>43</sup> In Lehi's day the Aramaic and the Arabic spoken in the cities were almost identical, "every distinction between them in the pronunciation of certain sounds must have vanished."<sup>44</sup> Before that time Hebrew personal names had a strong national color and served as a reliable source for the study of the religious history of the people; but in the cosmopolitan age, foreign names became as popular as native ones, both with the Jews and with other people.<sup>45</sup>

Out of a hundred possible points we have confined ourselves to a mere sampling, choosing ten clear-cut and telling philological demonstrations by way of illustration. The force of such evidence inevitably increases with its bulk,

but we believe enough has been given to indicate that Eduard Meyer did not consider all the factors when he accused Joseph Smith of "letting his fancy run free" in inventing the Book of Mormon names.<sup>46</sup> The fact is that nearly all the evidence for the above points has come forth since the death of Meyer. Let us be fair to him, but let us in all fairness be fair to the Book of Mormon as well.

### Questions

1. Why must one use caution in dealing with names as evidence?
2. If the Book of Mormon had been first published in 1900 instead of 1830, how would the close resemblance of the proper names in it to those actually occurring in the Old World be hailed as absolute proof of fraud? As it is, why is that resemblance not hailed as equally convincing proof of authenticity?
3. How can one account for the clustering of Book of Mormon names in the Elephantine region of the Upper Nile? Why so far from Jerusalem?
4. How does the large variety of name-types in the Book of Mormon support its authenticity? How long have the name-lists from Lehi's time been known to scholars?
5. Why are the Book of Mormon names never exactly like their Old World counterparts?
6. How do you account for the frequency of the name of Ammon in the Book of Mormon?
7. How can one be sure that the resemblance between two names is significant?
8. Is it conceivable that pious Israelites would give non-Hebraic names to their children? Even pagan names?
9. What are the principal derivations of name-types of the Book of Mormon?
10. How can one explain the presence among the Nephites of Egyptian names? Greek? Arabic? Hittite?
11. How does one explain the absence of Baal names?