

The Issues of Nephite Language & Strategies to Create It

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The Brass Plates of Laban: Establishing the Language Base

For our analysis, the Brass Plates of Laban raise the question: To what extent does one expect to find Hebrew in the *Book of Mormon*, and to what extent Egyptian? Nephi states that his father had lived all his days in Jerusalem, while at the same time referring to Egyptian as the language of his (Nephi's) father. It is hard to imagine that these two statements are not at odds. He claimed to be descended from Joseph. This implies that he would have hailed from the tribe of Joseph. When the tribe of Levi was made into a priestly cast and scattered among the other tribes, their territory was reallocated, along with that of Joseph, making tribes of each of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. These tribes were located in the north, in what had become the northern kingdom, after the conflict between Solomon's sons, Jeroboam and Rehoboam, which had divided the tribes into two Kingdoms, Judah in the south, and Israel in the North. When Nephi says that he went to the land of his inheritance to get the silver, gold and other precious things (left there by his father) to buy the Brass Plates, he might have gone to the north, to the land of Israel. Lehi was of the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3), perhaps from the capital city Shechem. It would appear that one or some of Lehi's forebears had moved from this land of their inheritance to Jerusalem, possibly during the time of the Assyrian conquest of the Kingdom of Israel in the north, but certainly before his birth. Nephi and his siblings too must have been reared in Jerusalem, with their father. Surely their first language must have been Hebrew.

Even so, Nephi made plates with his own hands (1 Nephi 1:17) and wrote his history in Egyptian. (1 Nephi 1:2) This must have been the Egyptian of the period of the plates, Late Egyptian or early Demotic, rather than reformed Egyptian. Nephi states (1 Nephi 3:19 "And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers." That Egyptian was an acquired language even for Lehi is clear.

For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the

help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. (Mosiah 1:4)

So he spoke Hebrew, but was taught Egyptian. Even though the first language of the people must have been Hebrew, and in spite of the sacred stamp of the Hebrew language, and its symbolic value for ethnic and religious pride, inexplicably he chose to write in Egyptian. (1 Nephi 1:2) When Alma passed the records to his son Helaman, he said (Alma 37):

2. And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them. . .

3. And these plates of brass, which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning

Each member in this line of succession taught the Egyptian language to his sons, to pass on the ability to read and continue the record. The fact that this instruction was necessary shows that Egyptian was not their spoken language, but rather a scriptural, literary, liturgical but otherwise dead language. The *Book of Mormon* claim is, therefore, that an elite among the people were bilingual, speaking Hebrew, but using Egyptian largely as a scriptural and possibly liturgical language, a bit like Latin in Italy, confined to the Vatican.

This is reflected in the statement of Mormon, when speaking of his production of the text on the gold plates, saying that he wrote in reformed Egyptian which had been “handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech,” due to a shortage of gold, apparently implying Egyptian was a more compact language. Notably he added, “if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.” This indicates that he was able to write in Hebrew better than in Egyptian. Clearly, the first language of the Nephites was Hebrew, although among them there was an elite who handed down sufficient knowledge of the Egyptian needed to read the Brass Plates in Late Egyptian or early Demotic.

The assertion that both Egyptian and Hebrew had been altered over the course of a millennium in the New World is not unusual. Language always changes. Even so, the Semitic languages display remarkable

resistance to change, largely due to their triconsonantal structure and the forms used to generate vocabulary. Even Coptic resembles ancient Egyptian to such an extent that Champollion, who knew Coptic, was able to use it to decipher the Rosetta Stone text, once he had identified enough of the phonological characters. Two of the principal factors that promote language change are the adoption of a language by a substrate population that speaks some other language, and influences from neighboring languages, especially languages with considerable cultural dominance. Egyptian and Hebrew among the Nephites would have suffered neither of these influences, since the land is claimed to have been devoid of human beings prior to Lehi's arrival. Especially Egyptian, existing in splendid isolation, and used mostly as a written scriptural language, should have remained largely intact. For example, the transformation from classical Latin to church Latin did not produce a major change in the language, and almost no change in script. Modern Hebrew is written in virtually the same script as the Great Isaiah Scroll.

Even the nature of change that had befallen Egyptian among the Nephites seems to have affected mostly the system of writing. In Mormon 9:32, Moroni says, "we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian..." Even so, there would also have been some change in the language itself, similar to the shift from classical to church Latin.

Many other records existed. In Helaman 3:15 we read "But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites." By the time of Mosiah, there is a Lamanite language and Nephite languages (Mosiah 9:1: "all the language of the Nephites"). The latter may have included the late Egyptian or early Demotic of the Brass Plates, and already a modified Egyptian in their record-keeping, as well as some regional dialects of Hebrew. Apparently early (classical) Nephite was preferred, the "language of Nephi." Steps are taken to make Nephite the linguistic coin of the realm (Mosiah 24):

4. he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon, in every land which was possessed by his people: and thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites.
6. they taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another.

Perhaps what are termed languages are more properly dialects, since Alma says "I attempt to address you in my language." (Alma 7:1)

At this point, the Lamanites “began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another, and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world” (Mosiah 24:7). This trade would require written documents.

Communications by sending epistles was very common (Moroni 8:1; Alma 54:14-15; 56:1; 57:1-3; 59:3-4; 60:1; 60:25; 61:1 & 9; 61:19; 3 Nephi 3:1; 3:10; Mormon 3:4; 6:2; Ether 15:4-5; 15:18; and Moroni 8:6). Messages were often sent, and though some may have been delivered orally, others may have been written (Alma 15:4; 43:24; 47:12; & 47:33). Decrees were issued (Alma 23:2). Proclamations were “published throughout all the land” (Alma 22:27; 23:1; 30:57; 47:1; 61:6; Helaman 9:9; 3 Nephi 3:22 Mosiah 2:1; 7:17; & 27:2). The scriptures were sent out to teach the people: “Now behold, all those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land, save it were those parts which had been commanded by Alma should not go forth.” (Alma 63:12) A case of book burning (burning of the scriptures) shows that a burnable material was used for copies of sacred writings: “they also brought forth their records which contained the Holy Scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire.” (Alma 14:8)

The Nephite/Lamanite civilization is described as being very advanced, with numerous cities, many of them fortified, kingship, coinage, advanced metallurgy, wheeled vehicles, large armies and a written tradition in two languages. Writing must have been essential to keep inventories, write contracts and conduct business. Indeed, in parts of the ancient Middle East, these mundane applications were the earliest and most common use of writing. Since the account of the Nephites and Lamanites spans a period of over 1,000 years, certainly they would have left written material, in both languages, monumental inscriptions, commemorative inscriptions, signet rings, seal stamps and bullae, texts on jars used in votive offerings, royal and business correspondence, documents (contracts, inventories, marriage and divorce writs, and scriptures), tomb inscriptions and inscribed bone boxes. Some principal cities would have had a royal archive. Apparently, metal plates were a common medium for records in the *Book of Mormon*.

Even if the Hebrew writing system was altered, the alphabet has only twenty-two characters. Its form at the end of the seventh century BCE is known to scholars from inscriptions. If a text in altered Hebrew were to be found, a specialist would readily identify the alphabet, and basic translation would be possible in probably no more than a year.

Subtle shifts in the meaning of some words, and neologisms, would provide grist for the scholars' publication mills for many years. It is even now so with Biblical Hebrew, as well as the Qumran corpus and extra-Biblical classical Hebrew inscriptions.

The unsealed plates were at least 30% in Old Egyptian (Nephi plus Lehi). Today's egyptologists are quite familiar with it. Even if reformed Egyptian were dug up, in time these texts would be readily recognized as a later form of Egyptian, although its decipherment would be more complex and take longer than reformed Hebrew. Possibly the character set would be larger, and logograms would exist alongside phonological characters. Even so, there is no reason to assume that this challenge would be greater than that faced by Champollion. Above all, minimally, archaeologists should be digging up textual material that is unidentified, i.e. neither Mayan nor Olmec, nor part of the Zapotec/Oaxacan/Aztec systems. In spite of massive archaeological exploration and excavation in the New World, no unidentified writing has been found that could be a candidate for a Nephite or Lamanite text.

Some Conclusions

1. The claim is extremely unlikely that the Hebrew scriptures had been collected as a sort of Bible, and translated into Egyptian, by the end of the seventh century BCE.
2. The *Book of Mormon* shows that Hebrew was the first language of the Nephites, and Egyptian was a written scriptural language.
3. The *Book of Mormon* states that there were many records of every kind, and correspondence.
4. If the Nephite/Lamanite civilization existed in the Americas without a substrate population and language, or neighbors using other languages, then their Hebrew and Egyptian would have persisted in ideal circumstances to resist change.
5. Such a large and advanced civilization, existing for over 1,000 years in the Americas should have left written artifacts that can be deciphered, or at the very least, there should be unidentified texts that are candidates for ancient Nephite texts. No Nephite or Lamanite written material has ever been found, or any unidentified text that could be a candidate for it.

Approaches to the Study of BoM Language Issues

Distribution of BoM Personal Names

The fact that BoM names consist of some taken from the Bible, and others that are decidedly non-Biblical, provides us with our first approach, without even dealing with the analysis of any individual non-Biblical name. As we shall see later, the first part of the *Book of Mormon* was initially written with considerable detail, and the rewrite of that important section omitted much of the detail. Thus the events that took place in the portion that dealt with the Middle East are written in a social, cultural and political vacuum, thereby reducing the chance of errors that could be checked. The authors were much more comfortable giving their imaginations greater reign once they had gotten their little band established in the New World, an more so after King Benjamin. The history and cultures there, so long ago, could never be known well enough to prove them wrong, or so they thought. This is reflected in the roster of personal names that populated their narrative.

The band of Israelites arriving from Jerusalem obviously had to have Hebrew names. This was best done by drawing heavily from the Bible. As soon as the founding generation had died, they switched to made-up names, to give an exotic expression to a world that is uncharted and unknowable, apart from what one learns in their new bible. Even so, they felt that using such names exclusively for the disciples of Jesus would be just too strange for devout readers. To give a sacred cachet to the story of Jesus in the New World, they used some of the most illustrious names in the Bible associated with their period: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonas, Timothy and Zedekiah. These are joined by the name of their founding hero and prophet, Nephi. The two Christian centuries were followed by apostasy, a reemergence of the Nephite/Lamanite division, and the annihilation of the Nephites. This period is once again dominated by made-up names.

Table 14. Distribution of Nephite/Lamanite Names

| Biblical Names Are in Bold Type. | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Israel | Enos to the Birth of Christ | The Christian Centuries (34-231 CE) | Apostasy & Annihilation (231-421) |
| Lehi , Laman, Lemuel , Nephi, Jacob , Sam , Joseph , Sariah , Ishmael , | Enos, Shem , Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, Amaleki , Mosiah, Benjamin , Mosiah, Mormon, Aaron , Abinadi, Amulon, Helorum, Helamon, Himni, Antipus, Antipas , Ammon, Helam, Helem, Hem , Limhi, Amaleki , Ammon, Noah , Zeniff, Laman, Laman, Alma, Alma, Aminadi, Amulon, Helaman, Mulek, Omner, Gideon , | Jesus Christ , Nephi, Timothy , Jonas , Mathoni, Mathonihah, Kumen, Kumenonhi, Jeremiah , Shemnon, Jonas , Zedekiah , Isaiah , | Ammaron, Aaron , Mormon, Mormon, Moroni, Gidgiddonah, Lamah, Limhah, Joneam, Camenihah, |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Zoram Laban | Amlici, Ammonihah, Zeram, Amnor, Manti, Limher, Antinephilehi, Isabel, Nephiah, Amulek, Giddonah, Ishmael, Zeezrom, Seantum, Zoram, Zoram, Lehi, Aha, Zoram, Antionah, Lehi , Lamoni, Abish, Muloki, Antiomno, Ammah , Korihor, Helaman, Nephi, Shiblom, Corianton, Gazelem, Zerahemnah, Moroni, Nehor, Amalickiah, Laman, Lehonti, Teancum, Lehi , Pahoran, Ammoran, Jacob , Paanchi, Pacumeni, Pahoran, Gid, Morianton, Cumeni, Teomner, Pachus, Moronihah, Hagoth, Coriantumr, Tubaloth, Gadianton, Kishkumen, Cezoram, Aminadab , Nephi, Lehi , Samuel , Lachoneus, Lachoneus, Giddianhi, Gidgiddoni, Zemnariha, Jacob | Nephi, Amos , Amos | Moronihah, Antionum, Amoron, Shiblom, Gilgal , Shem , Josh, Archeantus, Luram, Emron, Zenephi |
| 11 8 Biblical (70%) | 106 17 Biblical (15%) | 16 9 Biblical (56%) | 21 3 Biblical (17%) |
| Note: A few Biblical entries are not identical with Biblical names, but very close (e.g. Sariah; cf. Sarah, Sarai, Saraiah). Excluding them would not change the results. Sources: Alvin Knisley, <i>Book of Mormon Dictionary</i> , and “An Alphabetical Table of the Proper Names in the Old and New Testaments”, in <i>The Holy Bible</i> (Philadelphia: M. Carey & Son, 1821). | | | |

Book of Mormon Phonology

The distribution of words by the first letter in the Nephite narrative is equally interesting. We cannot analyze Jaredite phonology in any meaningful way, since, according to that narrative, their language escaped the Tower of Babel confusion of languages, and so we are left to assume that they spoke the language of Noah, which theological creativity can assume to have existed, and to have been the language of Adam, or some approximation to it. The linguistic heritage of Nephite/Lamanite inhabitants is said clearly to have been Hebrew, as a spoken language, and Egyptian as a scriptural/liturgical language. BoM names should reflect their phonology.

Using Knisley’s *Dictionary of All Proper Names in the Book of Mormon*, we can make the following observations regarding non-Biblical personal names in the Nephite narrative:

1. There are no personal names beginning with *b* or *d*, although these are common in both Hebrew and Egyptian.

2. The exception to this is “deseret” which the BoM defines as “honey bee” while there is no phonologically similar word in Middle Eastern languages with this meaning.
3. The letter *c* is used as in English, for both *s* (Cezoram) and *k* (Corianton).
4. The sound *ch* is found pronounced as in “choice” (Chemish) although there is no such sound in Hebrew; while the closest in Egyptian is pronounced differently (more like *ts*).
5. The letter *j* pronounced as in “justice” does not exist in Hebrew. The letter usually written as *j* is *y* in Hebrew. So Jerusalem in Hebrew is *Yerushalayim* (*yərūšālayim*) and Joseph is *Yoseph* (*yōsēp*). When words from Latin passed into French, this sound shifted to the French *j* and so Latin “*justitia*” (i.e. *iustitia*) became *justice* in French, and was so borrowed into English. Many Biblical names that should be pronounced with initial *y* came into English with initial *j*. Some north-European languages have retained the original *y* pronunciation for *j*.
6. This said, many Hebrew words beginning with *y* came into English with initial *i*, such as Israel and Ishmael. In Hebrew, these are *Yiśrā’ēl* and *Yiśmā’ēl* respectively. These are often names that are actually third person singular imperfect verbs (“May he [El, God] strive” and “May he [El, God] hear”, respectively). These names are common in Hebrew. But in the BoM, there are no names beginning with *y* at all, and none beginning with *i* that were not taken from the Bible.
7. The absence of initial *f* and *ph* personal names is consistent with Hebrew, since it has no letter *f*. Even in late Hebrew this is true in the initial position. In Egyptian, initial *f* is used in names.
8. The sound *w* existed in Egyptian, and in early Hebrew (although in late Hebrew it shifted to *v*). No BoM personal name begins with either sound.

Given the number of personal names in the Nephite narrative, it is obvious that there are inexplicable gaps in its phonological lineup, which is consistent with the artificial nature of BoM name creation.

BoM Name Generation

We will never know as much as we would like to know about the generation of the names found in the *Book of Mormon*. It is not possible to learn of all of the source elements that were used in this process, and,

above all, one cannot get into the minds of the BoM authors. This said, once again, it is hoped that a real-world comparison might throw some light on the subject. Since it is the Bible that the authors took as their model, at least to a significant extent, one beginning point is to examine its names, and in particular, the degree of multiple occurrence of the same name, but borne by different individuals. The following list has been culled from a dictionary of Biblical names.¹ It is a collection of names that are not borne by more than one person in the Old Testament (and almost always in the New Testament as well), and are sufficiently prominent as OT heroes or eponymous ancestors that one might think that they would have been among the first choices of parents seeking a name for their child.

Table 15. 118 Personal Names Borne by Only 1 Individual in the Old Testament

| |
|--|
| Abel (also in five compounds), Abigail, Abinadab, Abram/Abraham, Absalom, Adam, Ahab, Ahaz, Ahaziah, Ahijah, Asher, Baruch, Benjamin, Dan, Daniel, David, Deborah, Delilah, Dinah, Elijah/Elias, Elkanah, Ephraim, Er, Esau, Esther, Eve, Ezekiel, Ezra, Gad, Gideon, Gog, Goliath, Habakkuk, Hagar, Haggai, Ham, Hannah, Hosea, Jacob, Japhet, Jeconiah, Jehoash, Jehoiachin/Jeconiah, Jehoiakim/Eliakim, Jephthah, Jeroboam, Jerusha, Jesse, Jethro, Jezebel, Jonah, Joram/Jehoram, Josiah, Isaac, Isaiah, Israel, Issachar, Ithamar, Jubal, Judah, Judith, Kish, Laban, Lamech, Leah, Lemuel, Levi, Lot, Magog, Malachi, Manoah, Medan, Melchisedek, Menahem, Merab, Methuselah, Michal, Miriam, Moab, Mordecai, Moses, Na'am, Na'ashon/Nashon, Nahum, Naomi, Naphtali, Nehemiah, Ner, Nimrod, Noah, Nun, Onan, Ozem, Rachel, Rahab, Rebekah/Rebecca, Remaliah, Rephael, Reuben, Ruth, Salmon, Samson, Samuel, Sarah/Sarai, Saraiah, Saul, Seth, Shem/Sem, Simeon, Solomon, Terah, Tubal, Uriel, Zebulun, Zeruiah, Zillah, Zilpah, Zipporah |
|--|

It is surprising that so many prominent names do not recur in the OT books, especially given the large number of names and the near notoriety of some books for their “begats” and genealogical references. This is in spite of the fact that our reference, “The Scripture Dictionary,” contains over 3,000 entries.

Our source for BoM names is the work of Knisley,² which contains only 506 entries. Both contain entries for locations, and some important words, in addition to personal names. “The Scripture Dictionary” contains some entries that derive from outside the Biblical lands (foreign place names, deities, etc.), while Knisley’s work contains names from Biblical inclusions. All in all, they are comparable name lists.

¹ “An Alphabetical Table of the Proper Names in the Old and New

² Knisley, *Dictionary of all Proper Names in the Book of Mormon*.

First we note significant BoM name underpopulation. Although the BoM covers over 1,000 years of history, its name list is under 20% of the number in the OT.

Second, a large proportion of the BoM names are applied to two or more individuals. Unlike the OT, prominent names are especially given to this trend.

Table 16. BoM Name Recurrence

| The number of persons bearing the name is in parentheses |
|--|
| Exact Personal Names: |
| Aaron (3), Alma (2), Amaleki (2), Ammon (2), Amos (2), Cohor (3), Com (2), Coriantum (2), Coriantumr (3), Corihor (2), Helaman (3), Heth (2), Ishmael (2), Jacob (3), Jared (2), Jonas (2), Lachoneus (2), Laman (4), Lamoni (2), Lehi (4), Lib (2), Mormon (3), Moroni (2), Moronihah (2), Mosiah (2), Nephi (4), Noah (2), Pahoran (2), Shez (2), Shiblom/n (3), Zoram |
| Similar Personal Names: |
| Abinadi/Abinadom/Aminadab, Aminadi, Aha/Ahah, Amaleki/Amalickiah/Amlici, Amaron/Ammaron/Ammoron/Amoron/Moron/Moroni/Moronihah, Ammon/Ammonihah, Amos/Amoz Amulek/Amulon, Anti-Christ/Anti-Nephi-Lehi, Antiomno/Antionah/Antionum/Antum, Antipas/Antipus, Cezoram/Seezoram/Zeezrom, Com/Comnor, Corianton/Coriantor/Coriantum/Coriantumr, Corihor/Korihor, Cumen/Kumen/Kumenonhi/Kish/Kishkumen/Pacumeni, Emer/Emron, Esrom/Ezrom, Ethem/Ether, Gadiandi/Gadianton/Gadiaomnah, Gideon/Giddianhi/Giddonah/Gidgiddonah/Gidgiddoni, Gilgah/Gilgal, Helam/Helaman/Helem/Helorum, Jashon/Jershon, Jonas/Joneam, Kib/Kim/Kimnor, Lamah/Laman/Lamoni, Limah/Limher/Limhi/Limnah, Morianton/Moriantum, Mulek/Amulek/Mulok/Muloki, Nephi/Nephihah, Nimrah/Nimrod, Omer/Omner/Omni/Teomner, Riplah/Kish/Riplakish/Ripliancum, Seantum/Teancum, Shemlon/Shemnon/Shiblon/Shiblom/Shiblum, Zonock/Zenos, Zeram/Zerin, Zarahemla/Zerahemnah |
| City Names (Often from Personal Names) |
| Nephi, Zarahemla, Helam, Lehi-Nephi, Shemlon, Shilom, Aaron, Ammonihah, Bountiful, Gideon, Jerusalem (Lamanite), Lemuel, Shimnilom, Zarahemla, Antiparah, Judeah, Lehi, Moroni, Mulek, Nephihah, Onmer, Zeezrom, Gid, Gad, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Gilgal, Gimgimno, Jacob, Josh, Kishkumen, Laman, Moronihah, Onihah, Angola, Desolation, Jashon, Jordan, Shem, Teancum |

The first group in this table reflects the need for efficiency, since duplication is the easiest way to generate names. The second group is name generation by free association. A slight modification or recombination of elements already used can readily produce additional names.

Syllable Generation

The production of speech-like utterances in the practice of speaking in tongues differs from the BoM generation of names, in that the former is

an extemporaneous phenomenon. The BoM authors still did need to develop a number of syllables that they could recombine, but could do so in a more studied and deliberate manner. An example is the ending *antum* and its permutations. These include: Antum, Irreantum, Coriantum (twice), Coriantumr (thrice), Corianton, Coriantor, Gadianton, Gadianti, Morianton, Ripliancum, Seantum and Teancum. Although we cannot be certain as to the source of this element, we may not have to look further than to the first settlement of Indian converts to Christianity in New England, Nonantum, founded by John Elliot, the Apostle to the Indians, whose work was used as an example and goal in the Second Great Awakening, which exercised the minds and aspirations of so many in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

Some other examples of syllable components are worth mentioning:

Table 14. Names Ending in *hor*

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Cohor (1) | the first rebel in the Jaredite narrative |
| Cohor (2) | a rebel who killed his own father to gain power |
| Cohor (3) | one of a group who refused repentance |
| Corihor (1) | rebelled against his father, raised an army in the Land of Nehor, & imprisoned his father |
| Corihor (2) | mentioned with other impenitents |
| Korihor | an anti-Christ who opposed Alma |
| Nehor | a false teacher who murdered Gideon |
| Nehors | Order of the Nehors, a false religious system |
| Nehor | the refuge, land and apparently city of Corihor |

Free association also appears manifest in the *-hor* (whore) names. All such occurrences are names of bad men, impenitents, patricides, and an anti-Christ. In this context, we remember that Nephite theology holds that there is only one true church, and all others are collectively the work of Satan, and are the *Whore of All the Earth*, a key BoM *cri de guerre*.

Table 15. Evil vs. Good: Gad and Gid Names

| Gad Names | |
|-----------|--|
| Gad | a wicked city that was burned as divine punishment |
| Gadiandi | a wicked city that was sunk in the earth as divine punishment |
| Gadianton | the founder of the Gadianton Robbers, based on oaths and secrets inspired by Satan |
| Gadiomna | a wicked city that was sunk in the earth as divine punishment |
| Gid Names | |
| Gid | a victorious Nephite military officer |
| Gid | a Nephite city, captured by Lamanite Amalickiah, but retaken by Nephite Moroni |
| Giddianhi | a leader of the Gadianton Robbers |
| Giddonah | presiding High Priest over the Nephite church |
| Gideon | a Nephite military leader & teacher, who delivered Limhi's people of from bondage |
| Gideon | a Nephite city, threatened by woe by Samuel; not listed among the cites destroyed |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Gidgiddonah | a Nephite commander slain in the battle of Cumorah |
| Gidgiddoni | Commander in Chief of all Nephite armies in the Gadianton-Nephite war |

All Gad names are of bad men or cities, while most Gid names are good, including four Nephite heroes and one High Priest. The exception is Giddianhi. In this case, we may have a deliberate dissimulating alteration of the name Gadianton. The association of Gad with evil may have come simply from its rhyming with “bad,” or from the fact that the tribe of Gad had joined the rebellion of the Israelite tribes of the north against the Davidic kingdom, and the prophets of Judah, including Isaiah and Jeremiah. Or it may have been drawn from the city name Baal-gad, the northernmost city smitten by Joshua (Joshua 11:17). On a more popular level, it may have derived this connotation from the expression “Egad!”/“Ye Gad!” (By God!), a euphemism for taking the name of God in vain. Even worse was the original more heathen expression, “Egads!”/“Ye Gads”. In the still puritanical New England, especially in religious circles, such profanity was not taken lightly.

Another element used in name generation is the Greek prefix *-anti*, as in: Anianti, Anti-Nephi-Lehi, Antiomno, Antionah, Antionum, Antiparah, Antipas, Antipus and Archeantus. These have a double derivation. The first is *anti*, a Greek element that has become an English word. The second is Antipus, a variation of Antipas, a martyr in the Book of Revelations, and Herod Antipas. Antipas is a nickname for Antipatros, a Greek name that should not appear in the *Book of Mormon*.

Where Are the Expected Hebrew Elements?

There are recurrent elements in language. We would expect personal and location names given by a people speaking Hebrew to have at least some such elements from Hebrew.

Table 16. Name Elements in Biblical Hebrew

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| adon- | 'dn אֲדֹנָי | lord, as in Adonijah (Adoniya), Adonizedek | None |
| ab-/abi- | 'b/by אָבִי/אָב | father of | Abinadi, Abinadom—compare both with Biblical Abinadab |
| aḥi- | 'hi אָחִי | brother of, as in Aḥijah (Aḥiya), brother of Jehovah | None (Note that the sound <i>j</i> does not exist in Hebrew; but <i>y</i> became <i>j</i> in French and English got it through French.) |
| ben-/beni- | bn/bny בֶּן/בָּנִי | son of, as in Benaiah Son of Yahweh (Jehovah), Bəṇēbəraq, Sons (clan) of | None, except Biblical Benjamin |

| | | Bəraq | |
|-------------------|------------------|---|--|
| bat-/bit- | bn+t תב+נ | daughter of (the n combines with the t, a feminine ending) | None |
| yo-/yah-/yahu | y+hwy יהויה | Short versions of Yahweh (Jehovah), extremely common | Mosiah is possible, pronounced Mosyah, but it is hard to make it have meaning in Hebrew; Elijah (Elijah) is Biblical |
| el-/el | ’l אל | God (El)-as in Samuel and Elhanan | Only Elijah (Elijah), which is Biblical |
| ebed-/abd- | ’bd עבד | servant of | None |
| ezer-ezr-azar- | ’zr עזר | help, as in Azarel, Ezra, Azar, Azariah (Azar-ya) | None |
| uzz-azaz-aziz- | ’zz עזז | strength, refuge, as in Uzziah (Uzzi-ya/Uzzi-yahu) | Uzziah (Biblical) |
| malk-/melk-/milk- | mlk מלכ | king, usually as in “my king is (God)”: cf. Malkiyah, Malkiel | Melek (Biblical), Malachi (Biblical) Mulek, Muloki—no Hebrew names with God |
| mika- | my-k-’l מיכאל | Mikah is short for Michael; mi-who (is)+ka-like+el (God): Who is like God | None |
| Place Names | | | |
| bet- | byt בית | house of, clan of-, as in Bethlehem | Bethabara (Biblical) |
| en- | ’yn עין | spring of, as in Engedi, Endor | Enosh, but making this work in Hebrew requires gymnastics |
| migdal | gdl גדל | tower of, as in Migdal-El, Migdal-Gad | None |
| qirya-qiryat- | qry קרי | town of, as in Qiryatsefer (book city) | None |
| rama-/ram- | rwm רומ | an elevated town, hence defensible, as in Ramah | Ramath (cf. Biblical Ramoth-Gilead); Ramah (Biblical); Rameumpton (needs to be broken up for interpretation) |

These pairs are inseparable. *Aḥijah* (*Aḥiya*) is “Brother of Yahweh (Jehovah). His name would never be just *Aḥi* (brother), nor could you call him Jehovah. Brother of Jehovah would have had the sense of Godly, as well as one favored by Jehovah. *Aḥimelek*, brother of the King (God) has similar connotations. *Abiel* is (my) Father is God, where the close relationship of father has a function similar to *Aḥi*. When I had a beard in Egypt, some Arabs called me *Ibn liḥya*, son of a beard, i.e., bearded one. *‘Obadiah* (*‘Obadya*) is Servant of Jehovah. In some cases,

there may have been hypocorism (short forms, or nicknames). How this might have been done can be seen in Arabic, where *‘Abdallah* (servant of God) can be shortened to *‘Abduh*, His (God’s) Servant. The second element is removed only by adding *-uh*, the suffixed possessive pronoun.

The same is true of place names. Engedi, “Gedi Spring,” is never just Spring, nor just Gedi. Just as my hometown, Green River is never just Green, nor just River. Bethlehem was never just *bēt*, nor just *lehem*. Both *bēt* (house, place of, clan of) names and *‘ēn* (spring) names are common in Hebrew.

It is inconceivable that a Hebrew people, speaking Hebrew at least as their first language, would not have a good share of these elements, which are not just standard in Hebrew, but in the Semitic languages generally. The *Book of Mormon* names are mostly made up, and the common types of names expected in Hebrew are virtually nonexistent. But given the lack of relevant background of the prospective readership, this defect was not an obstacle to successful proselytism.

Investigation into Specific Names

The easiest names to analyze are those that should not be in the *Book of Mormon*, such as Timothy, Jonas, Antipas, Lachoneus, Archeantus and the Greek prefix *anti-* (all analyzed above).

Lehi, Nephi, Nephites and Lamanites

Although there are many made-up personal and place names in the *Book of Mormon*, one cannot resist speculating about certain key names. Among these are the prophet/patriarch who was commanded to leave Jerusalem, Lehi, and his able, devoted and devout son, Nephi. We can add to these the names of the two main groups, the Nephite protagonists and Lamanite antagonists.

Rick Grunder has referred us to *Walker’s Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* published in Boston in 1823,³ which lists *Lá ban*, *Lá man*, *Le hi*, and *Lem u-el* in close proximity to each other on page 361, and *Ne phi* on page 363. This leaves the issue of name selection. Note that Nephi is found in the Catholic Douay-Reims Bible, where it is a toponym in 2 Maccabees 1:36.

³ John Walker, *Walker’s Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, and Expositor of the English Language* [including Scripture Proper Nemes] (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, Samuel T. Armstrong, and Charles Ewer, 1823).

Lehi appears to be easy, since it is the name of the place where Samson slew a thousand Philistines with a new jawbone of an ass. Given the emphasis on slaughter in the *Book of Mormon*, it is easy to think that this passage would have appealed to Joseph Smith. The name could have been further recommended by the phonology and meaning of Le High, the Le High River, Valley and Pass. In 1822, Le High was made a county of Pennsylvania. Was not Lehi a “high” leader in the eyes of the Lord? To the extent that young Smith identified with Nephi, he may have associated Lehi with his own father, whom he made the new church’s first Patriarch, a position comparable to Lehi.

The BoM project was conceived, framed and carried out during part of the Second Great Revival, with one of its emphases being the conversion of the Indians. During this period, Indians who converted to Christianity and were taking their first steps in their new faith were called neophytes. This is an old theological term, meaning a new growth, a term not only applied to converts, but to those entering into a religious calling, such as a person in training to become a monk. Although used for Indian converts commonly in the Catholic missions in the Southwest, the first Methodist mission to western Canada (Alberta) used the term for Indian converts (re Rev. Robert Rundle, 1840).⁴ In Smith’s fertile imagination, “neophytes” as a term for the Christianized Indians could have readily become “Nephites” for the BoM Christians.

This could have been reinforced by Smith Jr.’s own experience, when he entered into training to be a Methodist exhorter. Like the believer in training to join a monastic order, the exhorter trainee was also a neophyte. In an 1885 source we find a reference to a Methodist “neophyte ministry,”⁵ which probably was not a neologism at that time. All of this gelled: Christianized Indians were neophytes, Christian Pre-Columbians are Nephites, the Nephites descend from Nephi, akin to Joseph Smith’s own Methodist moniker, neophyte.

The neophyte exhorters were in the first stage of possibly becoming a minister, and so were already set apart from the lay members of the church, the laymen. Similarly, Nephi found himself at odds with his older brother, Laman.

⁴ John Blue, *Alberta, Past and Present, Historical and Biographical*, Vol 1, Chapter XIV, “Church History in Alberta” (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924).

⁵ Bishop H. M. Turner, *The Genius and Theory of Methodist Polity, or the Machinery of Methodism* (Philadelphia: Publication Department, A. M. E. Church, 1885), v.

As reasonable as this can be made to sound, we must remember that we cannot really put ourselves into the minds of the BoM authors.

Gadianton, and the Gadianton Robbers

Since the Gadianton cabal is a chief antagonist to the Nephites, it is not surprising that there has been some interest in the origin of the name. The simplest hypothesis is that it is simply the result of combining elements already introduced into the BoM narrative (Gadi-anton): Gad, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Antianti, Antiomno and Antionum. Need one search further? Gad, as we have seen, is a name element associated with great evil. Conceivably the name Gadianton is composed of two syllabic elements.

Another intriguing possibility has been brought to my attention by Dale Broadhurst. Perhaps it comes from the Gades Pirates. Here we have more than just phonology. There is also a meaning component: robbers and pirates. In addition, fledgling America was somewhat seized with the recent-history event of President Jefferson's war against the Pirates of Barbary (of the Berbers). Both the Gades Pirates and the Pirates of Barbary preyed upon ships in the western Mediterranean. One difference is that the former operated out of the Iberian seaport on the north coast, Gades, while the latter operated out of North Africa, on the southern coast. The problem with this is that Gades is a name found in ancient Greek and Roman sources. By the early 19th century, Gades had long since been known by the Spanish name Cadiz. Perhaps some newspaper article regarding Jefferson's campaign had made reference to the Gades pirates? Lacking the discovery of such an article that the BoM authors could have read, it is not clear that they would have had access to base Gadianton on the Gades Pirates.

Barring the emergence of additional information, the truth may be that we may never know the genesis of this key BoM name.

The Generation of Aliases

Joseph Smith apparently came to delight in name generation, to the point that he devised various aliases for himself and some of his associates. One, Gazelem, is found in the Book of Mormon (Alma 37:23) in connection with a "stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren..." This name is used for Joseph

Smith in D&C 78:9, where he is called Gazelem, or Enoch. Twenty-four aliases were used in five sections of the 1835 D&C, 78, 82, 92, 96 and 103. These aliases were not original to the original language of the revelations, which used only the real names. Their substitution seems to have been in order to instruct members how to refer to people and places in any situation that could involve persecutors or creditors. It is no accident that all of these refer to the United Firm (United Order) that Smith had established in Kirtland, which was having difficulties with its creditors, and eventually defaulted. In addition, aliases were also used in two sections of the 1844 edition of the D&C, 104 and 105.⁶

Table 17. Names & Aliases after *Book of Mormon* Publication

| Name | Meaning with Section References to the 1835, 1864 and Current D&C |
|------------------|--|
| Gazelem | the seer stone gazer, foretold in the BoM, and used later by Joseph Smith Jr. |
| Ahashdah | Newel K. Whitney (1835, 75; D&C 78) |
| Enoch | Joseph Smith, Jr. (1835, 75; D&C 78) |
| Pelagoram | Sidney Rigdon (1835, 75; D&C 78) |
| Alam | Edward Partridge (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Mahalaleel | Sidney Gilbert (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Horah | John Whitmer (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Olihah | Oliver Cowdery (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Shalemanasseh | William W. Phelps (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Mahemson | ? Jesse Gause, or Martin Harris? (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Shederlaomach | Frederick G. Williams (1835, 93; D&C 92) |
| Zombre | John Johnson 1835, 96; D&C 96) |
| Seth | Joseph Smith (1835, 96; D&C 96) |
| Tahhanes | Tancredery (1835, 98; D&C 104) |
| Shinehah | revealed name for Kirtland, Ohio (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Lane-shine-house | printing office (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Shinelah | print ("to shinelah my words;" 1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Shine-lane | printing (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Ozondah | revealed name for the LDS store in Kirtland, Ohio (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Mahemson | Martin Harris (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Shule | Ashery (converts hardwood to lye, potash and pearl ash; 1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Talents | dollars (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Cainhannoch | New York (1835, 86; D&C 82) |
| Baurak ale | Joseph Smith (1864, 102; D&C 103) |
| Baneemy | Sidney Rigdon according to Orson Pratt, but currently "my elders;" (1864, 102; D&C 103) |
| Ahman | Possibly: the LDS deity, the Son & Redeemer (Jesus), presumably a name from the pure Adamic language |

⁶ Orson Pratt, "Explanation of Substituted Names in the Covenants," *Millennial Star*, 16 (March 18, 1854): 171–73; & Steven C. Harper, "Selected Teachings on Why Code Names Were Used in the D&C," published online on <http://www.scottwoodward.org> (accessed 21/01/2017).

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Adam-ondi-Ahman | Generally held to be the place of Adam and Ahman, i.e. Eden |
| Master Mahan | Cain “master of the great secret, that I may murder and get gain”, who “gloried in his wickedness” (also Lamech) |
| Nauvoo | name chosen for the LDS capital in Illinois |

Names with Middle Eastern Referents

Since they assumed that the knowledge of Egyptian would never be known, and some other languages of the Middle East were at least not known by their prospective audience, it would be safe to be more adventurous in the realm of linguistics. Not so. Efforts, in the *Book of Mormon* and *The Book of Abraham*, to show off a knowledge of these languages backfired royally.

Table 18. Names with “Interpreted” Semitic or Egyptian Content

| Word | Translation | Found in Middle Eastern Languages? |
|------------------|--|--|
| Mormon | more good (source: a statement attributed to Joseph Smith) | Neither component (mor & mon) means ‘more’ or ‘good’ in any Middle Eastern language. (As a powerful military man, ‘more man’ makes more sense, but who knows the authors’ thinking?) |
| Liahona | compass (to guide Lehi in the wilderness east of Canaan/Negev) | There was no compass, much less a word for one; no word with appropriate meaning can be found in any Middle Eastern language |
| Irreantum | many waters | No |
| Ripliancum | large, to exceed all | No |
| Rameumpton | the holy stand | No |
| Deseret | honey bee | No |
| Ziff | an unknown metal | No |
| Elkenah | an Egyptian god | No |
| Libnah | an Egyptian god | No |
| Mahmackrah | an Egyptian god | No |
| Korash | an Egyptian god | No |
| Rahleenos | hieroglyphics | No |
| Kolob | the first creation, nearest to the residence of God, first government, a measurement of time | No |
| Enish-go-on-dosh | one of the governing planets, the sun | No |
| Kae-e-vanrash | the grand Key, the governing power, governing 15 other fixed planets or stars | nothing in Egyptian to answer to this range of meanings (nor in astronomy) |
| Floese | the Moon, the Earth | No |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Kli-flos-is-es or Hah-ko-kau-beam | and the Sun in their annual revolutions the star represented by the numbers 22 & 23 | no for the Egyptian (#'s 22 & 23 in Facsimile 2 are not stars); as for the Hebrew, the second is Smith's rendition of hak-kökābūm (stars); Smith was studying Hebrew, but was not faring well. |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|

Not one of these made-up words corresponds phonologically to a word in any Semitic language.⁷ However, note rabbanah (powerful, great king) is not actually a made-up name (cf. NT rabbi and rabboni).

Ziff is a BoM word that has interesting phonological problems. First, even though Early (3rd-millennium) Egyptian shows evidence of the sound *z*, as a legacy from an Afro-Asiatic past, it was mostly merged with *s*, to the extent that Egyptian dictionaries do not list words under the letter *z*. This sound was lost in Middle Egyptian, and absent in Late Egyptian, that of the 1st-millennium BCE, or the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Second, the letter *f* does not exist in Hebrew. To be sure, the letter *p* shifts to *f* after a vowel in Post-Biblical Hebrew, a phenomenon that developed under Aramaic influence, i.e. during and after the captivity in Babylon, or, more probably later, after Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language. Under the influence of the Aramaic speaking rabbis of Babylon centuries after Christ, this pronunciation was preferred even for reciting Old Testament passages, probably initially for recitation in the synagogues, but made “official” for the OT in the Masoretic text. Even so, a double *p* never shifted to *f*, so there has never been a double *f* in Hebrew. Finally, even allowing for all reasonable phonological alternatives (*zff*, *zwf*, *zyf*, *sff*, *swf* & *syf* for Egyptian, and *zpp* for Hebrew, *zff* for Arabic, and *zpp* for Aramaic and Akkadian), there is no word even roughly corresponding to *ziff*, with the meaning “metal” or any specific metal. Nor is there any pre-Columbian metal that did not have a common English name in the 1820’s, thereby requiring the use of a Nephite word. *Ziff* is phonologically improbable, is unattested in Middle Eastern languages, and lacks a real-world referent.

The *Book of Mormon* also falls into linguistic pitfalls in some of its expressions. A good example is the use of the phrase “straight and narrow” Compare Matthew with 2 Nephi:

⁷ See A. Chris Eccel, *Sembase, a Database for the Semitic Languages* (<http://www.sembase.org>), prepared for a comparative dictionary of the Semitic languages; work in progress).

Enter ye in at the strait gate: ... Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life... (Matthew 7:13-14)

..enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path which leads to life... (2 Nephi 33:9)

straight is the gate, and narrow is the way (3 Nephi 14:14)

And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter... (2 Nephi 31:9)

That *straight* is not just a misspelling, but is intended to mean *not crooked*, is seen in 2 Nephi 9:41:

Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course...

Popular preachers confused *strait* with *straight*, which seems to be a confusion arising from the English language, the two words being homophones, and a confusion between “straight” in Matthew 3:3 (“make his paths straight”) and Matthew 7:13-14, above. Actually, the phrase in the New Testament uses a common Semitic form of emphasis through repetition, by using two words with the same meaning: “strait and narrow” means “truly narrow.”

The BoM has a tendency to produce words suggested by a word in English. Here are some examples:

my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols (KJ Isaiah 10:10)
my hand hath founded the kingdoms of the idols (2 Nephi 20:10)

everyone that is found shall be thrust through (Isaiah 13:15)
everyone that is proud shall be thrust through (2 Nephi 23:15)

the raiment of those who are slain (Isaiah 14:19)
the remnant of those who are slain (2 Nephi 24)

I will break the Assyrians in my land (Isaiah 14:25)
I will bring the Assyrians in my land (2 Nephi 24:25)

As we have seen, producing language-like made-up words from words in one's own language has been found to be a common phenomenon in the speech of persons claiming to be speaking in tongues.

One Nephite name appears to be a modification of a famous Hebrew OT name: Cumorah from Gomorrah? Cumorah is today almost a Mormon pilgrimage site, the Hill Cumorah being where Moroni buried the plates and then revealed them to Joseph Smith. But in the *Book of Mormon*, it is the place where the Jaredites totally annihilated each other. (Jaredite Ramah being Nephite Cumorah). Under the name Cumorah, it is the place of the last battle where the Lamanites totally annihilated the Nephites. In both cases, it is the place where a people are visited by God with total extinction due to their sins, not unlike Gomorrah. This association could well have been the basis for producing the name Cumorah. Note as well Hermounts, apparently a modification of Mount Hermon.

Another interesting possibility occurs in a passage of the *Book of Moses* (5:31 & 49), which was undertaken only months after the BoM: "And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness." In the 1820's, there was a campaign against the Freemasons. Given this context, it is impossible to ignore the possibility that Master Mahan is adapted from Master Mason.

Vernal Holley has made a gallant effort to find names in the New York region that could have been the source or inspiration for some *Book of Mormon* names⁸

Table 19. BoM Place Names and Locations in the Wider New York Area

| Name in the BoM | NY Region Place Name | Comment |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ogath | St. Agathe des Monts, Quebec | No. Founded in 1849. |
| Alma, Valley of | Alma, NY | No. Founded in 1854. |
| | Alma, WV | ? When was it founded? |
| Antum | Antrim (Hamlet in Ramapo, NY?) | ? Difficult phonology. |
| Anti-Anti | Antioch, IL | No. Named in 1843. |
| Boaz | Boaz | No. Named in 1878. |
| Comnor | Conner | Where? |
| Ephraim, Hill | St. Ephrem de Beauce, Quebec | No. Founded in 1866. |
| Helam | Hellam, PA | Possible. |
| Hill Onidah | Oneida County, Oneida Castle, | Possible. |
| | Oneida Indian Nation | |
| Jacobugath | Jacobsburg | Difficult phonology. |
| Jordan | Jordan, NY | No. Settlement began in |

⁸ Vernon Holley, *Book of Mormon Authorship*.

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Lehi | Lehigh (river, valley, pass, etc.) | 1825, incorporated in 1835. Why not Biblical Jordan? |
| Manti | Mantu? (Mantua, OH?) | Possible. |
| Moroni | Monroe, NY | Possible. |
| Morianton | Moraviantown | Difficult phonology. |
| Moron | Morin, Ontario | Difficult phonology. |
| Noah, Land of | Noah Lakes (Noah Lake, MI?) | No. Founded in 1855. |
| Omner | Omer, MI | Why not Biblical Noah? |
| Ramah | Rama | No. Founded in 1866. |
| Shilom | Shiloh, NJ | Why not Biblical Raman? |
| | | Difficult phonology. Why not Biblical Shiloh? |
| Sidom | Sodom, NY | Possible but date unknown. |
| Land of Minon | Minonian Indians | Possible. |
| Waters of Ripliancum | On the banks of Lake Superior: Ripple Bay, Ripple Creek, Ripple Reef, Ripple Lake | Possible, as well as a name suggested by <i>ripple</i> . |
| Hill Ramah | Rama Indian Reservation & Rama Township, Ontario, Canada | Rama Township, Ontario is possible, but the Chippewa moved there in 1836. Why not Biblical Ramah? |
| Angola (fortified city) | Angola, New York (Or Angola, Indiana?) | No. Evans Station was renamed Angola in 1855 due to Quakers who were giving aid to Angola, Africa. Angola, Indiana, dates to even later. Perhaps, Angola Plantation (infamous for enslaving Indians)? |
| Teancum (city) | Tecumseh (Tenecum), Canada | Possible. |
| King Gideon | Chief Tadeuskund, baptized in 1750 and christened "Gideon" | Possible, but note Biblical Gideon (place & angel). |
| Kishkumen (city) | Delaware Indian village Kishkiminetas, near Pittsburgh | Possible. It is about 30 miles northeast of Pittsburgh. Or BoM Kish + Kumen? |

Holley's list was made to support the Spalding or Spalding/Rigdon theory of BoM authorship. His names are said to be some that these men would have been familiar with. Many turn out to be names that the Smiths and Cowdery might have been familiar with. Another is Irreantum, the name given to the point in Arabia, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, where Lehi and his band constructed a boat and set sail. The narrative says it means "many waters." The BoM authors were quite familiar with both Erie the lake and the canal. The name would simply be Erie with the syllabic element -antum (treated above), or the lakes Erie- Ont(ario)> Irreantum. One drawback is that many of these names are small, little known and remote locations. It is unclear that the BoM

authors would have known them. At the time, such places did not figure on the maps of the day. Moreover, for the BoM authors, the important thing was probably to have names with a good ring to them. They may even have tended to avoid local names.

Observation

The generation of names shows considerable thought, and even some strategy, such as the use of Biblical names for Lehi's band and Christ's disciples. It is improbable that they were produced in casual composition or extemporaneous dictation.