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Title Lehi and Sariah

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Abstract Hoskisson begins the onomastic discussion with the names *Lehi* and *Sariah*. These are two Book of Mormon names that are close in time and space to ancient Jerusalem. Hoskisson suggests etymologies for these two names. He introduces his explanation of their names with a discussion of ancient names in general. He suggests that Sariah's name is composed of common Hebrew and Semitic elements and probably means "Jehovah is my prince." Lehi's name has a few possible meanings, evidence that it is not yet possible to come to a firm conclusion about some names. Ambiguity reminds scholars that the study of onomastica does not always yield clear results, that conclusions cannot be dogmatic, that previous suggestions should always be reevaluated, and that new suggestions are welcome.

Lehi and Sariah

PAUL Y. HOSKISSON

The theory of temporal propinquity would predict that the closer Book of Mormon names are in time to the known world of ancient Jerusalem, the easier it should be to provide Semitic meanings for the names. There are no names closer in time or space to ancient Jerusalem than Lehi and Sariah. Therefore, it is with delight on my part that I can suggest etymologies for the names of the two personalities in the Book of Mormon who stood closest to the cultural legacy of the ancient Near East, Sariah and Lehi.

Before I launch into an explanation of their names, however, allow me to say a few words about ancient names in general.

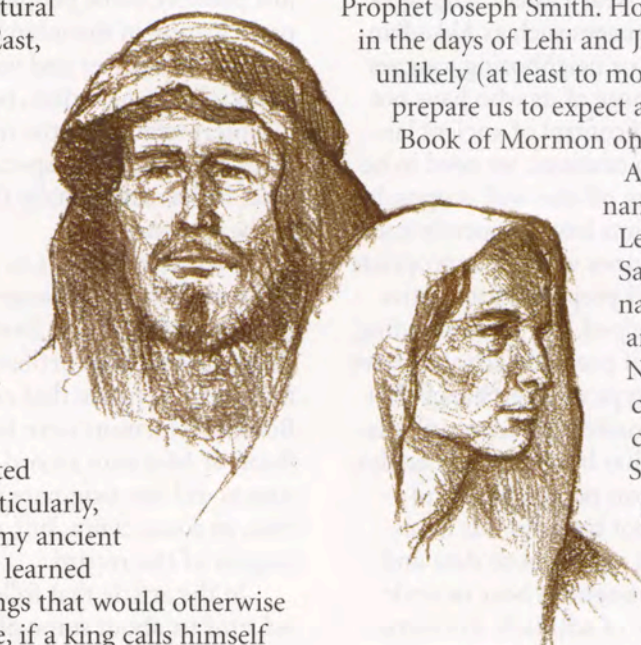
Some people find excitement hanging from the underside of what amounts to a large, air-borne kite. Others enjoy quilting.

Personally, I become animated about names, and more particularly, the meanings of names. In my ancient Near Eastern studies, I have learned that names reveal many things that would otherwise remain hidden. For example, if a king calls himself "Rightful King," which is what Sargon, the Akkadian king's name means, it no doubt means at the very least that his legitimacy as king had been challenged. Or, it could mean in the worst-case scenario that he was not the rightful king at all but a usurper who buttressed his claim to legitimacy by taking the name, "Rightful King."

Of course, very few names reveal otherwise unrevealed facts. But it happens often enough that discovering what a name means is an exciting adventure, whether or not the etymology reveals anything more than just a meaning. For example, the name of the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar means, "Nabu [a god] protect the heir," which as it turns out is rather mundane. However, the King James Version

of the Bible preserves an alternate spelling (present in the Hebrew text) of his name, Nebuchadnezzar, which means "Nabu protect the mule." This meaning can only be a dysphemism (the opposite of a euphemism) coined by his enemies and speaks volumes about his popularity or lack of it.

At other times the meaning of a name may only set the stage for other eventualities. For example, the Hebrew masculine name Shaphan means "rabbit" or "cony." He was a scribe in Jeremiah's day. If however Shaphan were attested in the Book of Mormon and only in the Book of Mormon, detractors of the Restoration would cry foul, shouting, "Who, besides John Updike, would ever think of naming a man rabbit?" and heap derogatory remarks upon the Prophet Joseph Smith. However, the fact that a man in the days of Lehi and Jeremiah bore a name so unlikely (at least to most modern ears) should prepare us to expect a few unlikely names in the Book of Mormon onomasticon.



And now let us turn to the names at hand, Sariah and Lehi. Though the name Sariah is not attested as the name of a female, (as far as I am aware), in an ancient Near Eastern source, it is composed nevertheless of common Hebrew (and Semitic) elements and probably means "Jehovah is my prince." It thus would be related to the masculine biblical personal name Seraiah, "Jehovah is prince,"

attested in the Bible and

inscriptions from near the time of Lehi. The first element of her name, *sar*, stemming from the common Semitic root *šrr* (the reduplicated *r* is not represented in most Semitic scripts), is exemplified in Hebrew by *Sar(ah)*, (שרה), and in Akkadian by *šarru*, meaning respectively "prince(ss)" and "king." We should not be offended that Lehi's wife bears a masculine element in her name. In fact, it is fairly common for women in the Hebrew Bible to have a name with a masculine theophoric (derived from deity) element. See for example the final syllables in the names Jezebel, Abigail, Athaliah (which is a perfect semantic parallel to Seraiah), and so forth. At the

same time, it is not surprising to note that the ending of Sariah's name (-iah) seems identical to the common Hebrew theophoric element consisting of the shortened form for Jehovah. Because it declares both allegiance to and honor of Jehovah, "Jehovah is my prince" would be an appropriate name for the wife of a prophet of God.

Years ago it was suggested that Lehi's name was to be derived from the Hebrew word for "cheek," "cheekbone," or "jawbone," *lhy*, לחי, attested as a geographic name in Judges 15. For years I resisted this interpretation for two reasons. First, I could not figure out what such a name would mean. And second, personal names containing parts of the body are rare in all the ancient Semitic languages. In fact, in the Hebrew Bible there is only one likely example of a name with an element taken from a body part: Elihoenai (and variants), which means approximately "To Jehovah mine eyes (are lifted)."¹ Even in this example, the body parts, eyes, are being used metaphorically. What metaphorical meaning could be given to "cheekbone" or "jawbone"?

That Lehi could mean "cheekbone" or "jawbone" seemed so unlikely that I felt the need to look about for other possible interpretations and, of course, in this kind of activity you can always find whatever you are looking for. But it should not have bothered me, given the example of Shaphan cited above. That is why I was delighted when I recently became aware of an example of "cheekbone" or "side" in a Neo-Babylonian personal name. Neo-Babylonian is one of the major dialects of the East Semitic (or Akkadian) languages, all of which are related to the West Semitic languages, including Hebrew. In addition, Neo-Babylonian is roughly contemporary with the time of Lehi. For example, using the Akkadian form of "cheekbone," *lētu*, the Neo-Babylonian feminine personal name *Le-et-ka-i-di-i* would mean approximately "(O God,) incline thine head,"² that is, "(O God,) please pay attention." If a similar construction lies behind Lehi's name, Lehi would be a shortened form of a name that would mean something like, "(Incline thy) cheek, (O Jehovah)." This would make a very suitable personal name for one of God's prophets.

During the years when I was looking for etymologies other than "cheekbone" for Lehi, I became aware of other possibilities for his name. As Hugh Nibley pointed out years ago,³ numerous ancient South Arabian examples provide what looks like a

dead ringer for Lehi. For example, the Qatabanian personal name *lhy* is exactly what would be expected if Lehi were written in a West Semitic script. In addition, the meaning of the name in Qatabanian, "May he live, (O God X),"⁴ applies equally well to Lehi. The expression *lhy*, then, would be composed of the elements *lu*, "may," and *hay*, "he live(s)." Such a name would only be fitting and proper for a person who was called to leave Jerusalem in order to save his life and the lives of his family. The only problem with this interpretation is that it would be difficult phonetically to derive Lehi from *lu* + *hay*.

Another possibility, one which works better phonetically, is to derive the name from the same two Hebrew elements: *le*, ל, a preposition which can mean "to," "belonging to," or "of," and the word for life, *hy*, חי. Thus in Genesis 16:14 the name of the well, Beer-lahai-roi, בַּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי, can mean "Well of the living One who seeth me."⁵ The middle word is composed of the preposition *le*, ל, plus the word for life, *hy*, חי (but not in the usual plural form familiar to all beginning Hebrew students). If the name Lehi is related to this construction, then it would be a shortened name meaning "Of the Living One,"⁶ which seems appropriate for a prophet of God whom Jehovah commanded to flee the land Jerusalem because the inhabitants "sought his life" but whom God had made "mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20).

As has become evident from the above three possibilities for Lehi's name, it is not yet possible to come to a firm conclusion about some names. It is simply a matter of course when dealing with onomastica that some amount of ambiguity may be unavoidable. The very process of casting about in the ancient Semitic world for cognates and parallel constructions does not always lead to an obvious conclusion. Therefore, we must constantly keep in mind that ambiguity is not necessarily undesirable. It reminds us that the study of onomastica does not always yield clear and unambiguous results, that our conclusions cannot be dogmatic in the least, that previous suggestions should always be reevaluated, and that new suggestions are always welcome. If we were to demand absolute certainty and nothing less for each name, we would with few exceptions be frustrated, discouraged, and in the end disappointed. The fact that there are at least three possible etymologies for Lehi should rather be encouraging.

constitute verse 2 and the first half of verse 3.

- 23 William W. Phelps, "An angel came down from the mansions of glory," in Smith, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns*, #16.
- 24 See, for example, "The Indian Hunter" ("Oh, why does the white man follow my path, / Like the hound on the tiger's track?") by the English poet Eliza Cook (1818–1889), one of three Cook poems anthologized in Hazel Felleman, comp., *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* (New York: Doubleday, 1936), 625; or "Metacom" by John Greenleaf Whittier: "My father loved the white men, when / They were but children, shelterless, . . . / Nor was it given him to know / That children whom he cherished then / Would rise at length, like armed men, / To work his people's overthrow." *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1894), 489. Eliza R. Snow was also fond of this tradition. One of her first published poems (in 1830, five years before she became a Latter-day Saint) was "The Red Man of the West": "The Great Spirit, 'tis said, to our forefathers gave / All the lands 'twixt the eastern and western big wave," *Ohio Star*, 31 March 1830. Much later she lengthened and "Mormonized" this poem, retitling it "The Lamanite." It was published in the *Deseret News*, 20 September 1865. The expanded version promises that "The scales will fall which now becloud their eyes, / And they, in faultless purity arise."
- 25 Grant Underwood, "Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17/3 (1984): 59.
- 26 Parley P. Pratt, "When earth in bondage had long lain," in Young, Pratt, and Taylor, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns . . . in Europe*, (1840), #258.
- 27 Parley P. Pratt, "The solid rocks were rent in twain," in *ibid.*, #259.
- 28 Parley P. Pratt, "O who that has search'd in the records of old," in *ibid.*, #260.
- 29 Author unknown, "Ye wond'ring nations, now give ear," in *ibid.*, #250.
- 30 When the plight of the Indians was treated in popular poetry, it was common for an Indian persona to speak a first-person lament; all three hymns printed with this article use this device.
- 31 Felix Bartholdy Mendelssohn, "Consolation," in *Songs without Words* (Boston: O. Ditson, 1906), #9.
- 32 The tune paired with this text in the *Psalms* (#212) is "See, the conqu'ring hero" from George Frideric Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* (New York: Vanguard, 1974)—high expectations indeed from a congregation!
- 33 Louisa L. Greene Richards, "The Savior at Jerusalem" in *Deseret Sunday School Songs*, #131.
- 34 J. Marinus Jensen, "A Voice Hath Spoken from the Dust," in *Hymns of the Church* (1950), #291.
- 35 This hymn is not listed under the Book of Mormon heading in the topical index! The text is aesthetically satisfying because of the inclusive, ecumenical use it makes of the Book of Mormon, but apparently its connection with its source is therefore more abstract.

- 36 Although the Book of Mormon presence in our modern hymnbook is rather modest, other kinds of music make rich use of Book of Mormon materials. The importance of Book of Mormon songs for the Primary organization has already been mentioned; although the Book of Mormon heading in *Children's Songs* lists only twelve songs, many of these are immensely popular, and they play a crucial role in familiarizing young Latter-day Saints with the Book of Mormon. A great deal could be written about the significant role of the Book of Mormon in the works of serious Latter-day Saint composers, including Leroy Robertson's *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Leroy Robertson, 1953) and Crawford Gates's score for the Hill Cumorah Pageant, *Music from the Hill Cumorah Pageant: America's Witness for Christ*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, VVOT 4188 (© 1988). Other examples are numerous. K. Newell Dayley has provided a musical setting for 3 Nephi 13–14, "I Come unto My Own," Ralph G. Rodgers Jr. (lyrics), *III Nephi* (Oratorio), Promised Valley Playhouse, LP 14457 (© 1978). In addition, popular vocal music written for the Mormon market has used the Book of Mormon with great success; as fairly free-form works, without the strict requirements of meter and rhyme found in a hymn stanza, these songs often use unparaphrased text. An example familiar to many English-speaking LDS people is "Oh, That I Were an Angel" (Alma 29:1; music by Wanda West Palmer).
- 37 Alfred Tennyson (lyrics), Crawford Gates (music), "Ring Out, Wild Bells," in *Hymns*, (1985), #215.
- 38 *Deseret Sunday School Song Book* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1899).
- 39 Noel B. Reynolds, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century," *BYU Studies* 38/2 (1999): 7.
- 40 Conversation with the author, 30 November 1999.

Seeking Agreement on the Meaning of Book of Mormon Names

- 1 Several researchers have worked on onomastic studies over recent decades. Hugh Nibley started the genre with several chapters in *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952). Robert F. Smith privately distributed several papers that are still unpublished. John A. Tvedtnes did the same; in addition see his "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," *Society for Early Historic Archaeology Newsletter and Proceedings* 141 (December 1977): 1–8. Joann Carlton, a Semiticist in southern California, with John W. Welch produced a 1981 FARMS Paper, "Possible Linguistic Roots of Certain Book of Mormon Names." A particularly useful introduction to the field is Paul Y. Hoskisson's "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for the Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist

and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:126–35.

Lehi and Sariah Paul Y. Hoskisson

- 1 See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 3rd ed., rev. Walter Baumgartner, Johann Jakob Stamm, and Benedikt Hartmann (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 53. See for example the "Name List" in Appendix 3 of Jeanene D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 334ff.; for this reference I wish to thank my colleague Dana M. Pike of Religious Education at BYU. The biblical personal name Ozni and its gentile Oznite (see Numbers 26:16) and Azaniah (see Nehemiah 10:9), though related to the word for "ear," are probably denominative verbal forms. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon*, 27. For a listing of other possible body parts used in names, see Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, Appendix 3, sub *zn, lhy, yd, yn, and pth*.
- 2 *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, L:150. I would like to thank Jonathan Gimmel for finding this rather obscure example.
- 3 Paul Haupt, a German-American scholar working around the turn of the last century, was one of the first to derive the personal name *lhy* from "cheek" or "jawbone." Hugh Nibley downplayed this interpretation, preferring Nelson Glueck's reading "Lahai," thus suggesting the biblical place name Lahai-roi in Genesis 24:62 and 25:11. See Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 239.
- 4 Hani Hayajneh, *Die Personennamen in den qatabanischen Inschriften* (New York: Olms, 1998), 226, sub *LHY*, "Er möge leben, (O Gott NN)." Under the same entry, Hayajneh does not exclude the meaning "Beauty (of God)." Note the semantic parallel in Akkadian, *lu-ba-lu-lu*, in I. J. Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957), 156–57.
- 5 Translation from the Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1950 edition.
- 6 See the similar construction in Ran Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography* (Leuven: Peeters, 1988), 61; "Lā'el (W)' Of God/EI'; Lnry (PE) 'Of Nry (my light')."

The Names Lehi and Sariah—Language and Meaning
Jeffrey R. Chadwick

- 1 Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1997), seals #8, #174, #175, #511, #1072. The name also appears in Lachish Letter #1.
- 2 *Ibid.*, seal #145 and p. 496.
- 3 If "Ahazyahu the Elder" were implied, the

word *ḥz* (*zaqen*) would need to include an initial *ḥ* (*h*) representing the direct object *ha* and would need to appear in a position following the name Ahazyahu, as an adjectival title.

- 4 Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Lehi and Sariah," in this issue.
- 5 See Genesis 17:17–19 (Isaac); Genesis 30:8 (Naphtali); 1 Samuel 4:21–22 (Ichabod).
- 6 Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri," *JBMS* 2/2 (1993): 196–200.
- 7 Arthur E. Cowley, ed. and trans., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 67.
- 8 *Ibid.*, xv; Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 320.
- 9 See 2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Kings 25:18; 23:25; 1 Chronicles 4:13–14; 4:35; 6:14; Ezra 2:2; 7:1; Nehemiah 10:2; 11:11; 12:1, 12; Jeremiah 40:8; 51:59, 61; 52:24.
- 10 Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 47.

Response to Paul Hoskisson's "Lehi and Sariah"
Dana M. Pike

- 1 See, for example, E. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 976, s.v., *ḥz*; *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Brill, 1994–), 3:1356, s.v., *ḥz*.
- 2 E.g., Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 163, #390.
- 3 Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1972), 180, 338, 418.
- 4 See Mary Jane Woodger, "How the English Pronunciation of Book of Mormon Names Came About," in this issue.

Lehi and Sariah Comments
John A. Tvedtnes

- 1 Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri," *JBMS* 2/2 (1993): 196–200; reprinted in John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 6–10.
- 2 See John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," in this issue.
- 3 *Ibid.*

Response to the Comments
Paul Y. Hoskisson

- 1 Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri," *JBMS* 2/2 (1993): 196–200.
- 2 In the original article I could have added more examples of the masculine name *ḥz*, but it seemed to me unnecessary. A clear-cut example of the name used for a female would be more helpful.
- 3 *ḥz* is interpreted as *ḥz*, "god has