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Title Response to Paul Hoskisson’s “Lehi and Sariah”

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Abstract In this article Pike responds to Hoskisson’s conclusions about the etymology of the names *Lehi* and *Sariah*. He agrees with Hoskisson that Sariah is a theophoric name, which was common in ancient Israel and means “My prince is Jehovah.” However he suggests that the name should be grammatically distinguished from the masculine biblical personal name *Seraiah*. Although he offers an additional possibility for the meaning of the name *Lehi*, he agrees with Hoskisson’s suggestion that the name means “cheek.” The remainder of the article discusses the challenge of doing onomastic analysis on ancient non-English names when only an English form is available and further mentions the frequency of giving newborns in ancient Israel names of a religious nature.



Response to
Paul Hoskisson's
"Lehi &
Sariah"

DANA M. PIKE

Sariah

As indicated by Paul Hoskisson, there can be little, if any, doubt that the name Sariah is a Hebrew compound theophoric name: *śar* + *yah*, "Jehovah is prince," or *śariy* + *yah*, "my prince is Jehovah." A theophoric personal name is one in which one of the elements is a divine name or title (such as in the name just cited). This type of personal name was very common in ancient Israel and in the ancient Near East in general (e.g., Elijah, Isaiah, Nebuchadrezzar). Note, however, that Hoskisson states that the name Sariah "would be related to the masculine biblical personal name Seraiah, 'Jehovah is prince.'" Several people mentioned in the Bible bear the name Seraiah, *śērā* + *yah(u)* (see 2 Kings 25:18; Jeremiah 51:59), but it is usually interpreted as consisting of a verbal form of *śrh* plus the divine name: "Jehovah prevails/rules."¹ Thus the first elements in the names Sariah and Seraiah derive from related linguistic roots but should be grammatically distinguished. Of course, these observations are based upon the preserved vocalizations—Sariah as found in the Book of Mormon, and Seraiah in the Masoretic Text (the traditional, vocalized text of the Hebrew Bible). While it is possible that the name *śryh(w)* found on Israelite stamp seals could be vocalized *śariyyah*, Sariah, it is usually vocalized Seraiah, following the pronunciation of the biblically attested form because it is thought that one of these seals belonged to Seraiah, the brother of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe (see Jeremiah 51:59–64).²

Lehi

Professor Hoskisson has done a good job of reviewing what are the most likely explanations of the name Lehi. And he rightly observes that we cannot, at present, be certain about which option is the correct one. This is not because we don't know the languages of the ancient Near East, but because close onomastic parallels from ancient Israel are lacking. In our efforts to find similar forms

elsewhere we must always weigh the differences in time, place, and linguistic relationship (e.g., is a name from the same time as Lehi but from a more distant relative of the Hebrew language "better" evidence than a name more chronologically removed but more proximate to the language family tree?). One example Hoskisson did not mention is the Phoenician name *ślmlhy* found at Elath.³ The element *ślm* is understood to be a divine name or appellative, and the element *lhy* is generally connected with the Arabic element to which Hoskisson made reference in discussing his second option (see his comments on Qatabanean). Thus it makes sense to regard the name Lehi as a shortened version of such a form, but again, as Hoskisson notes, if we accept the *vocalization* of the name Lehi as presented in the Book of Mormon, then the element preserved in the Phoenician name and later in Arabic—if we can assume consistent pronunciation—is more challenging phonetically. At present, I tend to favor the first option identified by Hoskisson, the Hebrew word *lhy*, as the most likely explanation of the meaning of the name Lehi. This word is employed



several times in the Bible with the sense of “cheek” (e.g., 1 Kings 22:24; Psalm 3:8; Lamentations 1:2).

General Comments

First, discussing the names Sariah and Lehi provides an opportunity to comment on the challenge of doing onomastic analysis on ancient non-English names when only an English form is available. This is one of the great challenges in working with the names in the Book of Mormon. For example, the Hebrew letters *he* (h) and *het* (ḥ) are both usually rendered in English by the letter *h*. In the case of the name Lehi we are confident that the middle letter in the original form was *het*, not *he*, because the combination *l-h-y* does not occur in Hebrew, but the combination *l-ḥ-y* does. Unfortunately, we are not always able to be so certain regarding several letters. We are thus dependent on the vocalizations that have come to us from Joseph Smith and his scribes, primarily Oliver Cowdery. Can we be certain that these vocalizations reflect ancient pronunciation? Do we know enough about the translation process from reliable, informed sources to be confident about this matter? I am not sure that we know enough to eliminate all questions.⁴

Second, I have some concern about the way Hoskisson closes his comments on the meaning of the name Sariah and all three of the suggested meanings for the name Lehi. To label the meaning of these names as “suitable” or “appropriate” or “fitting” for the prophet and his wife is fine as a casual comment from hindsight. But I hope that readers do not think that our assumed appropriateness of a name has any bearing on analyzing the meaning of a name. This should never be a determining factor. Unless we are notified in the text that a person’s name was changed as an adult (e.g., Jacob to Israel) or a name was divinely indicated for a newborn child (e.g., Hosea’s children), then we must assume that the parents chose a name for the child that seemed suitable to them. Many, if not most, of the names given to newborns in ancient Israel were of a religious nature; such names were often chosen for

the sentiment they contained, such as the parents’ expression of gratitude for their infant, devotion to Jehovah, and so on. This means that many names would qualify as being “appropriate” for prophets, their wives, and righteous Israelites in general. But the vast majority of ancient Israelite children were not given a name that their parents *knew* would be appropriate to some *particular* function or office their child would fill as an adult. I don’t think Hoskisson was implying that this was the case, but I don’t want anyone to misunderstand his remarks.

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 *Psalmsody* (#212) is "See, the conqu'ring hero" from George Frideric Handel's *Judas Maccabees* (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 Jeanne 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 gentilic 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 זָן, לֵחַי, יָד, יָנ, and פִּתּוּ.
- 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 qatabänischen Inschriften* (New York: Olms, 1998), 226, sub LHʿY, "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-lī-lī*, 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/El'; Lury (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 זָן (*zaqen*) would need to include an initial ה (*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, F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 976, s.v., לֵחַי; *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Brill, 1994–), 3:1356, s.v., לֵחַי.
- 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 לֵחַי, but it seemed to me unnecessary. A clear-cut example of the name used for a female would be more helpful.
- 3 רַשָּׁאֵל is interpreted as אֱלֹהֵי רַשָּׁאֵל, "god has