Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name

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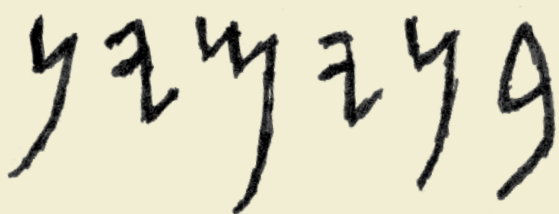
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Abstract Royal sonship is a key theme of Mosiah 1-6, including King Benjamin's seminal address at the temple in Zarahemla (Mosiah 2-5) on the occasion of his son Mosiah's enthronement. Benjamin, however, caps this covenant sermon, not with an assertion of his son's royal status and privileges, but with a radical declaration of his people's royal rebirth (or adoption) as "the children of Christ, his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7) and their potential enthronement at God's "right hand" (5:9). Similar to rhetorical wordplay involving proper names found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other ancient texts, Benjamin's juxtaposition of "sons"/"daughters" and the "right hand" constitutes a deliberate wordplay on his own name, traditionally taken to mean "son of the right hand." The name of Christ, rather than Benjamin's own name, is given to all his people as a new name— a "throne" name. However, he warns them against refusing to take upon them this throne name and thus being found "on the left hand of God" (5:10), a warning that also constitutes an allusion to his name. Benjamin's ultimate hope is for his people's royal, divine sonship/daughterhood to be eternally "sealed."

BECOMING SONS AND DAUGHTERS AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND:

King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name

MATTHEW L. BOWEN

The name *Benjamin* as it might have been written in the Paleo-Hebrew script. Michael P. Lyon.

The theme of sons is prevalent in the early chapters of the book of Mosiah. These chapters contain King Benjamin's final fatherly exhortation to his sons (Mosiah 1:1-8); special counsel directed to his eldest son and heir, Mosiah (Mosiah 1:9-17); and an epic sermon directed to his people at the temple in Zarahemla (Mosiah 2–5) in which Benjamin foretells the mortal advent and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God (Mosiah 3:8; 4:2).[1] The emphasis on sonship in these early chapters of Mosiah apparently culminates in several instances of wordplay on Benjamin's name.

The name *Benjamin* is traditionally thought to mean "son of the right hand,"[2] but the idea of "right hand" is now usually taken to mean "south," thus giving "son of the south" (Hebrew *bēn*, "son" + *yāmîn*, "right hand" > "south"). Many scholars of the last century,[3] skeptical of the historicity of the Genesis narratives, have regarded the name as an eponym of the southern location of the Israelite tribe (vis-à-vis Ephraim) and have attempted to identify the Benjaminites as a remnant of the Yamina ("southerners"),[4] pastoralist nomads known from the Middle Bronze Age Mari letters. Others, however, have rightly noted that the time span between the Middle Bronze Age and the Israelite settlement of Canaan (centuries later) is too wide.[5]

Whatever the precise scholarly etymology of the name *Benjamin*, the elements "son" and "right hand" (ambiguously understood as the "right hand" of power or the directional "right hand" > "south") can be heard in this name. In other words, the homophony between *Benjamin* and the words *bēn* and *yāmîn* make these associations potentially meaningful for King Benjamin and his historical audience, as well as for the implied literary audience to which Mormon's abridgment of King Benjamin's sermon is directed. As I hope to show, the Israelite association of *Benjamin* with "son" and the "right hand" of power helps us to appreciate not only the early emphasis on children in the book of Mosiah and in King Benjamin's sermon, but also King Benjamin's descriptions of divine rebirth, enthronement at the right hand of God, and the sealing of sons and daughters to him, all of which mark the capstone of his marvelous sermon.

Scholars have already suggested the link between the right hand in Mosiah 5:9-12 and the meaning of Benjamin.[6] In this article, I will suggest that all of King Benjamin's references in Mosiah 5:6-12 to children, sons, daughters, right hand, and the

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FROM THE EDITOR:

All languages allow authors (and also their redactors) to have a little fun with their material. Sometimes the fun is much more serious. In the Hebrew Bible, it is quite common to see the text playing off the name of a person. Thus, in 1 Samuel 25, the author/redactor puts the following words in the mouth of Abigail, "Let not my lord [the future King David], I pray thee, regard this man of Belial [meaning her husband, Nabal; but Belial means something like "good for nothing"], even Nabal [which can mean "stupid" in Hebrew]: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him."

In this article Matthew Bowen finds evidence that the author of the Book of Mormon passages he discusses played off the meaning or the sounds of the names and words that are used. Naturally, without the original plate text, we cannot be sure that such plays on words were intended. We will let you, the reader, be the judge.

antonymic left hand involve a conscious wordplay on the name *Benjamin* as part of a final rhetorical flourish in his masterful discourse.

Some Methodological Considerations

Amaleki writes that the language of the people of Zarahemla (the Mulekites, originally Hebrew-speaking Judahites) "had become corrupted" (Omni 1:17) vis-à-vis the language of the people of Mosiah (the Nephites, also Hebrew-speaking Israelites by origin; Omni 1:18). If the language of Mosiah remained relatively uncorrupted[7] in his time—perhaps because his people had the scriptures with them and continued to use them—it must have remained discernibly Hebrew. In Mormon 9:33, Moroni indicated that the Nephites were still writing a form of Hebrew during his lifetime, which might indicate that the Nephites' spoken language still retained characteristically Hebrew elements many centuries after the time that Mosiah, father of King Benjamin, and Zarahemla united their peoples.

> If . . . wordplay on names occurs "in literary texts of all types and times," we should expect to find it in the Book of Mormon. In fact, we can posit plausible wordplay on names in the Book of Mormon in a number of instances.

The first six chapters of Mosiah—apart from the portions directed personally to Benjamin's sons—imply two main audiences: the historical audience who were the recipients of King Benjamin's direct speech (Mosiah 2:9–3:27; 4:4–30; 5:7–15) and the literary audience who received King Benjamin's sermon in written form, even down to our time. Wordplay in Benjamin's sermon itself would have been potentially meaningful to the historical audience. However, the literary audience, with a knowledge of the languages the Nephites said they used (see 1 Nephi 1:1; Mormon 9:32–33), might be able to pick up on wordplay both in the sermon and in Mormon's editorial comments. While we cannot know for certain what script was used on the plates, we can make reasonable suppositions about the language employed by the writers,

much as biblical textual critics make educated reconstructions of the Hebrew Vorlage of the extant Old Testament textual witnesses in Greek, Syriac, Latin, and other languages.

Wordplay Involving Names in the Bible and the Book of Mormon

Many Latter-day Saints have at least slight familiarity with wordplay on names in biblical literature from etiological puns in well-known scriptures: the naming of Eve—"Adam called his wife's name **Eve** [*Ḥawwâ*]; because she was the mother of all **living** [*ḥāy*]" (Genesis 3:20); the naming of Jesus—"thou shalt call his name **Jesus** [*Iesoun* (*Iesous*) = *yēšûa*¶[8]: for **he shall save** [*sōsei* = *yôšîa¶[9] his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21); and the surnaming of Peter—"thou art **Peter** [*petros*], and upon this **rock** [*petra*] I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).

In the Hebrew Bible, wordplay sometimes occurs at moments of high irony and in direct speech. There is wordplay in David's poignant repeated question regarding the son who has rebelled against him: "Is the young man Absalom [*lĕʾabšālôm*] safe [(*ha*)*šālôm*]?" (literally, "Does the young man Absalom have peace?"; 2 Samuel 18:29, 32). The name *Absalom* means "father is peace" or "father of peace."[10] Other such examples could be cited.

If, as Semiticist Michael O'Connor suggests, wordplay on names occurs "in literary texts of all types and times,"[11] we should expect to find it in the Book of Mormon. In fact, we can posit plausible wordplay on names in the Book of Mormon in a number of instances. Robert F. Smith first raised the issue of onomastic wordplay in the Book of Mormon when he noticed the juxtaposition of Jershon with the terms *inherit* and *inheritance* (*possess* and *possession*), which suggests forms of the Hebrew root *yrš* ("to inherit") in the underlying text.[12] This wordplay occurs as a theme over several chapters (see Alma 27:22–26; 35:14; 43:22, 25).

I have previously proposed some additional possibilities, of which I will cite only a few here. The name *Nephi*, which John Gee has suggested derives from Egyptian *nfr*, was possibly pronounced *neh-fee*, *nay-fee*, or *nou-fee*,[13] thus meaning "good, goodly."[14] If so, this would suggest conscious wordplay (or a play on meaning) involving the name in Nephi's autobiographical introduction: "I, **Nephi**, having been born of **goodly** parents, therefore I was taught

somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).[15] Enos's later autobiographical introduction imitates Nephi's language: "I, **Enos**, knowing my father that he was a just **man**—for he taught me in his language" (Enos 1:1).[16] The name *Enos* is identical to the Hebrew noun *ʾĕnôš* ("man"), a poetic synonym for the Hebrew words *ʾîš* and *ʾādām*. The biographical notice that introduces Alma the Elder—whose name means (God's) "young man," "youth," or "lad"[17]—into the Book of Mormon narrative also seemingly plays on the meaning of his name: "But there was one among them whose name was **Alma** [*ʿalmāʾ*], he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a **young man** [*ʿelem*]"[18] (Mosiah 17:2).[19]

The introductory verses of King Benjamin's address in Mosiah 1:1-9 describe how Benjamin taught his sons using phraseology "patterned after"[20] Nephi's earlier description of his father, Lehi, educating him (1 Nephi 1:1-3), as well as Enos's description of his father, Jacob, educating him (Enos 1:1). This language appears to initiate an ongoing play on words (albeit incomplete) involving "son"/"sons" and the first element in the name *Benjamin*.[21] The juxtaposition of *Benjamin* and *sons*, then, imitates the earlier autobiographical wordplay of Nephi and Enos: "And it came to pass that he [*Binyāmîn*] had three **sons** [*bānîm*]. . . . And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men[22] of understanding" (Mosiah 1:1-2).[23] Mormon, who mentions the name *Benjamin* fifteen times in Mosiah 1-6, and who was familiar with Nephi's and Enos's accounts from the small plates (see Words of Mormon 1:3-11), may have intended this wordplay for his later audience.[24]

The Biblical Name *Benjamin*

As the name of a patriarch and as the name of the tribe from which Israel's first earthly king came, Benjamin was a name of tremendous significance and is attested amply as a personal name.[25] Its first mention appears in the account of Rachel's giving birth to her youngest son: "And it came to pass, as [Rachel's] soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name **Ben-oni**: but his father called him **Benjamin**" (Genesis 35:18). *Ben-oni* can be ambiguously understood as meaning "son of my vigor" or "son of my sorrow," the former being more philologically likely.[26] However, Robert Alter suggests, "given the freedom with which biblical characters play

with names and their meanings, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that Rachel is . . . invoking both meanings, though the former is more likely: in her death agony, she envisages the continuation of 'vigor' after her in the son she has born."[27] The tribe of Benjamin, he further notes, "will become famous for its martial prowess."[28] Thus *Ben-oni* ("son of my vigor") and *Benjamin* ("son of the right hand," i.e., the "hand of power") could be understood as being nearly synonymous,[29] but also antonymous ("son of my sorrow" versus "son of the right hand"). In either case, the name *Benjamin* is here understood as a positive name in the sense of "son of the right hand [of power]."

Rashi, a medieval rabbinic commentator, believed that the name reflected the fact that Benjamin was the only one of Jacob's sons born in Canaan,[30] in the land "south" or "right" of Aram (as one faces east)[31] where Jacob had long sojourned. The medieval *Book of Jasher* even creates an etiology for the name *Benjamin* based on this idea.[32] The alternative suggestion that Benjamin means "son of days" or "son of old age"[33] (*bin-yāmîm*), might reflect a partly Aramaizing midrash (Hebrew *yāmîm*, "days" = Aramaic *yômîn*).[34]

Other clear biblical inferences that *Benjamin* was associated with the "right hand" as a physical characteristic in ancient Israel (perhaps via folk etymology), and was not just narrowly associated with the directional "south," include Judges 3:15-21; 20:16; and 1 Chronicles 12:2. In the first two passages the "lefthanded" (KJV) "sons of Benjamin" (*běnê binyāmîn*) were literally "bound as to his right hand" (*ʾiṭṭēr yad-yěmînô*).[35] All three play ironically on the idea of Benjaminites as "sons of the right hand."[36]

The Rhetorical Effect of Benjamin's Emphasis on *Name*

Like the word *son(s)/children* ("son" and "child" are the same in Hebrew) in Mosiah 1-6, the word *name* is repeated as a key term in King Benjamin's sermon. Jacob indicates that from the beginning of the Nephite monarchy, the anointing and coronation of a new king served also as the occasion of the giving of the name *Nephi* as a new name or a throne name (Jacob 1:9-11). Although this practice seemingly evolved with time,[37] the coronation of the Nephite king may still have involved the giving of a new name, thus providing the ritual background for King

Benjamin's rhetoric: Benjamin, true to his promise to Mosiah, his heir (1:11-12), gives all his people, including Mosiah, a new name.

The word *name* becomes an increasingly important term in Benjamin's sermon. In the first part of the sermon (Mosiah 2), he does not use the term at all; in Mosiah 3-4 it occurs six times (Mosiah 3:9, 17 [2x], 21; 4:11, 20). In the climactic final portion of his speech (Mosiah 5), however, he uses *name* twelve times (Mosiah 5:7-12 [11x], 14). But would King Benjamin's people be thinking of his name during his sermon to them and make any wordplay connections on his name? A likely effect of King Benjamin's emphasis on the word *name* and his giving the people a name on the occasion of his son's coronation and enthronement would be for the audience to

King Benjamin Confers the Kingdom on Mosiah, by Robert Barrett. © 1998 IRI.

think not only of the new name but of their own names and the names *Benjamin* and *Mosiah*.[38]

Becoming Sons and Daughters at the Right Hand of God

The concept of sons and daughters at the right hand in an honorific sense—that is, at the right hand of power—features prominently in the climactic final portion (Mosiah 5:6-15) of King Benjamin's sermon:

And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired. . . . And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the **children** [Hebrew *běnê*] of Christ, **his sons** [*bānâw*], **and his daughters** [*ûběnôtâw*]; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; . . . therefore, ye are born of him and have become **his sons** [*bānâw*] **and his daughters** [*ûběnôtâw*]. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the **right hand** [*yāmîn*] of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for behold, he shall be called by the name of Christ (Mosiah 5:6-9).

When King Benjamin stated that his people would be "called the **children of Christ**, **his sons, and his daughters**; for behold, **this day he hath** spiritually **begotten you**" (Mosiah 5:7), he is evidently quoting[39] the royal rebirth formula (sometimes called an adoption formula) of Psalm 2:7: "**Thou** art **my Son** [*běnî ʾattâ*]; **this day have I begotten thee**."[40] Some scholars have proposed that a legal formula stands behind the phrase *běnî ʾattâ* in Psalm 2:7,[41] pointing to similar language in Mesopotamian legal contracts.[42] While one should not discount the term *begotten* as a metaphoric allusion to adoption, it points to the image of birth or rebirth more than to adoption per se.[43]

Earlier in Psalm 2:2, the royal addressee is called the Lord's "anointed" (*měšîḥô*, his "messiah" or "Christ"; LXX *christos*). The newly enthroned Judahite king took upon himself the name-title "anointed" (*māšîaḥ*). King Benjamin probably likened this psalm to his people so that they too might take upon themselves or "bear" this name (see Mosiah 26:18).

When Benjamin added, "And [ye] **have become his sons** and **his daughters**" (Mosiah 5:7), he was invoking the covenant language of Deuteronomy 14:1–2:

> Ye are **children** [*bānîm*] of the Lord. . . . Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee **to be** [*lihĕyôt*, "become"] a peculiar[44] people unto himself [*lô*, "his"], above all the nations that are upon the earth.

The covenant rebirth language (or adoption formula)[45] in this Deuteronomic text reflects the royal rebirth formula of the present canonical text of 2 Samuel 7:14,[46] where the Lord says of David's son Solomon, "I will **be** [*ʾehyeh*, "become"] his father, and he shall **be** [*yihyeh-lî*, "become"] **my son** [*lĕbēn*]." The key terms cited from these passages are children (*bānîm*), including both sons and daughters,[47] and the verb *hayâ*, a verb that, as G. S. Ogden observes, "indicates *transition* from one sphere of existence to another" and with the formulaic preposition *lĕ* "conveys the idea of 'becoming.'"[48] Seock-Tae Sohn suggests that *hayâ* used in the covenant rebirth or adoption context "is both connecting and transitional in describing the concept of covenant."[49] This is what John later describes as Christ giving "power [authority] to become[50] **the sons**[51] of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12–13; cf. Mosiah 5:7). Benjamin's use of the covenant rebirth language in his speech is most striking because it merges the royal (2 Samuel 7:14) and democratized (Deuteronomy 14:1–2) forms.[52] In other words, he makes of his own son's divine rebirth and coronation the occasion of the divine rebirth and coronation of the people. They are all sons and daughters who are ascending to the throne.

King Benjamin then adds another promise: "Whosoever doeth this shall be found **at the right hand** of God" (Mosiah 5:9). The phrase "at the right hand [of God]" in the Hebrew Bible occurs in Psalms 16:11 and 110:1 as a reference to the place of divine favor.[53] The coronation/enthronement context of King Benjamin's speech suggests that he is specifically alluding to Psalm 110:1: "The Lord [Yahweh] said unto my Lord, Sit thou **at my right hand** [*lîmînî* (**lĕ* + *yĕmînî*)], until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The Israelite king sat (was enthroned) at

Yahweh's right hand. Divine birth (or rebirth) is also mentioned in Psalm 110:3, further suggesting that Benjamin has Psalm 110 in mind.

Benjamin joins Psalm 110:1 to his previous allusions to Psalm 2:7 and Deuteronomy 14:1–2 (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14) not on the basis of the first element, *bēn* ("son"), but instead on the second element in his name, *yāmîn* ("right hand"), in a clever wordplay: the royal covenant entailed not merely *becoming* a son or daughter, but also enthronement at the "right hand"—becoming a "Benjamin."

Conceivably, the elements of King Benjamin's name guided the selection and ordering of the particular texts that he cites. Although a covenant speech might be expected to contain covenant filiation language similar to Deuteronomy 14:1–2 and a coronation

> Benjamin . . . teach[es] the people about the truly royal and divine Son and how this Son's atonement made it possible for all of them . . . to become his sons and daughters.

ceremony might be expected to allude to texts like Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and even Psalm 110, it is the application of royal coronation/enthronement texts to the people themselves—making them all potentially kings and queens, sons and daughters at the right hand—that makes Benjamin's speech so revolutionary. In Israelite thought, Benjamin was already a royal son who was already at the right hand of God, as Mosiah soon would be. Benjamin demurely deemphasizes this idea, teaching the people about the truly royal and divine Son and how this Son's atonement made it possible for all of them, through covenant obedience, to become his sons and daughters and to be enthroned with this Son at God's right hand. Benjamin's people did not likely miss the point of their king's jarring application of these royal texts to them or the unifying principle behind the texts' quotation: "son(s)" (and "daughters") and the allusion to God's "right hand" (Psalm 110:1)—the elements of their king's name. Reflecting on the themes of Mosiah 1–6, we as Mormon's implied literary audience can also appreciate them.

Again, the occasion for Benjamin's speech was his own son's enthronement as Benjamin himself makes clear when he states, "The Lord God . . . hath

commanded me that I should declare unto you **this day** [cf. Psalm 2:7], that **my son** Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you" (Mosiah 2:30). However, from the outset, King Benjamin had made an unprecedented effort to put himself on equal grounds with his people (see Mosiah 2:26), as stipulated by Deuteronomy 17:20.[54] By democratizing the language of the royal covenant and enthronement texts on the occasion of his own son's adoption and enthronement, including the juxtaposition of texts whose most significant words (*son*, *right hand*) are the elements of his own name,[55] King Benjamin taught his people a powerful typological lesson on the necessity of their rebirth into Christ's family so that they might, as heirs with him, receive every blessing in the covenant of the Father. They do not receive Benjamin's name, but that of the true "Son of the right hand," Christ.

A Sinister Fate: King Benjamin's Final Warning about the Left Hand of God

King Benjamin concludes his sermon with two additional possible plays on the meaning of his name, this time in the spirit of warning. Words associated with the left hand[56] are as negative as words associated with the right hand are positive:

> And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the **left hand** of God. And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the **left hand** of God. (Mosiah 5:10–12)

Failure to retain the name of Christ (cf. "anointed," Psalm 2:2) written on the heart[57] by having it "blotted out . . . through transgression"—like the effacement or obliteration of a throne name from a stela or the removal or blotting out[58] of a name from a written legal contract or treaty/covenant—would result in a person being "found at the left hand of God": a dethronement and a disinheritance. One who is not willing to bear the name of Christ can be neither a son nor a daughter of Christ. Unlike the (still unattested) affirmative Akkadian adoption formula (**atta mārī*),[59] divorce and renunciation formulas are attested[60] in Babylonian legal documents.[61] King Benjamin seems

to be referring to something similar here; an unwillingness to "retain [Christ's] name written always in your hearts" is an effective repudiation of Christ's parenthood. In contrast, a willingness to retain his name written in the heart is essential to keeping this relationship intact.

Benjamin taught his people that the covenant rebirth or adoption that typified Christ the Son and his enthronement at the right hand of God was available only through the atonement of that divine Son. His words thus give profound meaning to the concept of "tak[ing] upon [oneself] the name of Christ," the throne name par excellence.[62]

Sealing the Sons and Daughters as the Lord's

Benjamin, not content to describe divine sonship and daughterhood and enthronement in terms of the Lord's parenthood for time only, describes a sealing that will maintain the Lord's ownership/parenthood claims in eternity. Previous to his sermon, King Benjamin informed Mosiah, his heir and the king-to-be, of his sacred purpose in giving his people a name. Here too his knowledge and use of Deuteronomy is evident:

> I shall give **this people** a name, that thereby **they may be** [become] **distinguished**[63] [compare the concepts of "holy" and "set apart" or "special" and "peculiar"] **above all the people which the Lord God** hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because **they have been** a diligent **people** in keeping the commandments of **the Lord**. And I give unto them a name that never shall be blotted out, except it be through transgression. (Mosiah 1:11–12)

Here King Benjamin appears to be quoting or paraphrasing Deuteronomy 7:6: "For thou art an holy

Cylinder seal, ca. 700–400 BC, discovered at Tlatilco, just west of Mexico City. John L. Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1998), 162.

Two-sided bronze seal set in ring, "Belonging to ʾAḥyʾab son of *Šmnm*," 7th century BC. Robert Deutsch and André Lamaire, *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2000), 35. Used by permission.

people unto **the Lord thy God**: **the Lord thy God** hath chosen thee **to be a special people** unto himself, **above all people that** are upon the face of the earth."[64] Benjamin changes the final clause of the formula, "that are upon the face of the **earth**" to "which the Lord God hath brought out of the **land** of Jerusalem" because his people were no longer on the earth or land of Israel. The "people which had been led out of the land of Jerusalem," of course, would be the Lehites and Mulekites, but the distinguished or special people would be a smaller number of faithful Nephites and Mulekites (the people of Zarahemla) vis-à-vis the Lamanites and unfaithful Nephite dissenters (cf. Alma 47:35).

Here, in the context of the Hebrew noun *sĕgullâ*[65] (= King James English "peculiar," "special possession"),[66] we consider Benjamin's concluding words:

> Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, **may seal you his**, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen. (Mosiah 5:15)

Commenting on this passage, Gee describes the earthly cultural practice of sealing that stands behind King Benjamin's theological metaphor: "To seal a document or an object, a person would wrap string or twine around it, place a daub of mud on the knot, and press the seal into the mud. Affixing this sort of seal marked the object as the possession of the person in whose name it was sealed."[67] Thus, something that is sealed is something encircled about[68] and marked as a personal possession or acquisition. Thus Nibley's suggestion that a "peculiar people" signifies a "sealed people"[69] is right on target.

Gee also notes that such seals contained "a formulaic inscription reading 'belonging to.'"[70] In Hebrew, the preposition *lĕ* constituted such a possession formula. This is akin to the covenant possession formula that we have seen used repeatedly in Deuteronomy (*lĕ* + ⟨pronominal suffix⟩ [e.g., *lô*]) and evidently by King Benjamin in describing the royal adoption of sons and daughters.

The Hebrew verb *to seal* (*ḥātam*; cf. Egyptian *ḥtm*)[71] is plausibly the word that King Benjamin uses

The phrases *born of God* or *born again* became a common means of expressing the theological concept of a changed nature, along with a "mighty change" of heart.

in Mosiah 5:15. Jeremiah 22:24 employs the image of the Lord wearing a seal ring or "signet [*ḥôtām*] upon my right hand [*yad yāmînî*]." With this symbol of royal (divine) authority, the king (Lord) or his regent could seal his name upon that which was his (i.e., "seal X his" or "seal X to him"). For his own part, King Benjamin fulfilled the responsibility that the Lord

himself laid upon the priests of Israel in Numbers 6:27: "**And they shall put my name upon the children** of Israel; and I will bless them." Just as the Israelite high priests bore an engraved seal (as from a signet, or seal ring) of the Lord's name and ownership on their foreheads,[72] King Benjamin's people now bore a new name as the seal of an eternal relationship: they are Christ's, just as Christ is God's (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:23), having become sons and daughters "to him"; in other words, having become "his."

Conclusion

It is no coincidence that after King Benjamin's teaching on becoming begotten sons and daughters of Christ at the right hand of God (being "born of him," Mosiah 5:7), the phrases *born of God* (Mosiah 27:25, 28; Alma 5:14; 22:15; 36:5, 23-24, 26; 38:6) or *born again* (Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14) became a common means of expressing the theological concept of a changed nature, along with a "mighty change" of heart,[73] among the Nephites. Alma the Younger will later equate divine rebirth (being born of God) and the accompanying mighty change of heart with receiving the Lord's "image in [one's] countenance" (Alma 5:14), another sealing image.

King Benjamin and Alma, like Paul years later, wanted their converts to "bear the image of the heavenly" (see 1 Corinthians 15:49)—that is, the name or the "image and superscription" of "Christ" (cf. Matthew 22:20; Mark 12:16; Luke 20:24)—just as Christ bore the express image of the Father (cf. Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9).

Benjamin's ultimate hope for his people and his own sons (cf. Mosiah 1:2-7) was that they would, like himself, choose to "become men [and women] of understanding" (Mosiah 1:2)—the "children of Christ, his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7)—who would one day be found in the place of honor reserved for the paradigmatic Son of the right hand, the Savior Jesus Christ (see Acts 2:33; Moroni 7:27; D&C 20:24; 76:19-24; and Luke 3:7 JST). ∎

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NOTES

1. Terms translated as "son," "sons," "daughters," and "children" occur at least 43 times altogether in Mosiah 1-6. The name *Benjamin* itself is mentioned 15 times in Mosiah 1-6.

2. Older lexica use this gloss. See Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1906; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 122.

3. See, for example, Georges Dossin, "Benjaminites dans les textes de Mari," in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* (Paris: Geuthner, 1939), 2:981-96; James Muilenburg, "The Birth of Benjamin," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75/3 (1956): 194-201; Klaus-Dietrich Schunk, *Benjamin: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Geschichte eines Israelitischen Stammes* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), passim; André Finet,

"Iawi-Ilâ, Roi de Talḫayûm," *Syria* 41 (1964): 117-42; Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: Greenwich House, 1983), 218; Niels P. Lemche, "The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. (New York: Scribner, 1995), 2:1203. Other scholars, for example, William F. Albright, in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 79, have used the supposed Benjamin–*Binū Yamīna* connection in their attempts to locate historical memories within the patriarchal narratives.

4. See Wolfgang Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari: A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (Winona Lake,

IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 35. The Sumerogram DUMU.MEŠ (formerly read as *binū*, *banū*, or *mārū*) is now usually read determinatively rather than as a part of the gentilic name (thus *Yamīna* referring to [*inhabitants of*] *Yamīna* rather than *Binū Yamīna*). Thus the older reading, *Binū Yamīna* or *Banū Yamīna*, which has been the primary basis of, if not the sole support for, the spurious connection posited between the Benjaminites of Israel and the Yamina, appears to be an unsure basis for this connection.

5. See, for example, L. Daniel Hawk, "Benjamin, Benjaminites," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 1:429.

6. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., appendix to *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 604-5.

7. For the purposes of my thesis, I assume, as Omni 1:17-18 indicates, that the spoken language of the Nephites remained relatively uncorrupted near the time of King Benjamin's sermon and that their language was still primarily Hebrew, both during Benjamin's time and much later during Mormon's time, as Moroni indicates (Mormon 9:33).

8. Some people read rather *yēšûʿâ*.

9. Jesus plays on his own name in John 4:22: "Salvation [*yēšûʿâ*] is of the Jews." The wordplay on *Jesus* in Matthew 1:21 works in both Greek and Hebrew.

10. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 191, notes that "the ironic point" of this wordplay on *Absalom* and *šālôm* here is that "the entire story witnesses to the absence of peace between father [David] and son [Absalom]." Absalom is not "safe," but David is.

11. Michael P. O'Connor, "The Human Characters' Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age West Semitic and the Name Daniel in Particular," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives,* ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 271.

12. Robert F. Smith, unpublished manuscript. See also Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 255-59.

13. John Gee, "A Note on the Name *Nephi*," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189-91. See also John Gee, "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name *Nephi*," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2009), 1-5.

14. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1996), 131-32. See also Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 2:252-63. Hereafter cited as *Wb*.

15. On the possibility of an autobiographical wordplay on Nephi's name, see Matthew L. Bowen, "Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi's Name," *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2.

16. Compare Matthew L. Bowen, "Wordplay on the Name 'Enos,'" *Insights* 26/3 (2006): 2. Enos's self-introduction (Enos 1:1) is apparently modeled on Nephi's, including the latter's use of nameplay.

17. On the name *Alma* as a Semitic personal name, see Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 76; Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," What's in a Name, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 72-73; Terrence L. Szink, "New Light: Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 70. See also Terrence L. Szink, "The Personal Name 'Alma' at Ebla," *Religious Educator* 1/1 (2000): 53-56.

18. The form *ʿelem* (or *ʿālem* in its pausal form) lacks the theophoric hypocoristic aleph (ʾ), *-a*.

19. On the wordplay on the names *Alma* and *Noah* evident in the story of Alma's conversion, see Matthew L. Bowen, "'And He Was a Young Man': The Literary Preservation of Alma's Autobiographical Wordplay," *Insights* 30/4 (2010): 2-3.

20. John A. Tvedtnes, "A Note on Benjamin and Lehi," *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 3.

21. The wordplay here would be on the first phonic element in Benjamin. O'Connor, "Human Characters' Names in the Ugaritic Poems," 271, notes that wordplay on names can be "incomplete, as puns, casual rhymes, and verbal echoes often are, in literary texts of all types and times."

22. The construct form of Hebrew *ʾănāšîm* (*ʾanšê*) serves as a plural for both *ʾîš* and *ʾĕnôš* and may here represent an allusion to and further play on *Enos* in Enos 1:1.

23. If there is an allusion here to Hebrew *bînâ* ("understanding"), the wordplay (paronomasia) is even richer.

24. It is also possible that Mormon preserves a wordplay on *Benjamin* and *bānîm* from Benjamin's own autobiographical writings because Benjamin was also familiar with Nephi's—and presumably Enos's— writings on the small plates (see Mosiah 1:2-7, 16-17).

25. After the patriarch, the name *Benjamin* was borne by his great-grandson (1 Chronicles 7:10), by an Israelite of Ezra's time (Ezra 10:32), and by one of the men who assisted in the repair of the wall of Jerusalem during the Persian period (Nehemiah 3:23), who was also apparently one of the "princes of Judah" present for the dedication of the wall (Nehemiah 12:34). It is clear from these examples that Benjamin is not merely a geographic eponym.

26. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2004), 197.

27. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 197.

28. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 197.

29. Regarding additional arguments for synonymy, see Stefanie Schäfer-Bossert, "Den Männern die Macht und der Frau die Trauer?: Ein kritischer Blick auf die Deutung von *ôn*—oder: Wie nennt Rahel ihren Sohn?" in *Feministische Hermeneutik und Erstes Testament: Analysen und Interpretationen*, ed. Hedwig Jahnow (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 106-25.

30. Rashi on Genesis 35:18.

31. The word *yāmîn* as "south" presupposes an east-oriented compass. (This is the concept behind *orientation*, from Latin *orientis*, "east," "sunrise"). "Right" is south when one faces the rising sun.

32. *Book of Jasher* 36:12: "And Jacob called the name of his **son** that was born to him, which Rachel bare unto him, **Benjamin**, for he was born to him **in the land on the right hand**" (emphasis mine). Translated text as it appears in *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City: Parry, 1887), 100.

33. Altar, *Five Books of Moses*, 198.

34. In contrast, J. Shaanan, "And His Father Called Him Benjamin (or Benjamim)?," *Beit Mikra* 24 (1978): 106, argues that the Samaritan Pentateuch's reading (Benjamim) is the original reading and that the Aramaic influence runs in the other direction.

35. Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 39-41. Halpern suggests that this phrase has reference to men who had their right hands bound in order to "inculcate" ambidexterity for warfare (versus being "lame" of the right hand, Judges 3:15 Geneva Bible; cf. *amphoterodexios* in 3:15; 20:16 LXX). As Halpern also notes, "In no other text [apart from Judges 3:15-21; 20:16; and 1 Chronicles 12:2] does handedness figure" (p. 41).

36. The wordplay in the Judges narratives is somewhat ambivalent. The narrative depicts Ehud, the ambidextrous Benjaminite deliverer or savior (*môšîa*ʿ), as heroic and dangerously crafty (Judges 3:15–29). The evaluation of the tribe of Benjamin in Judges 17–21 (especially 17–19) is highly negative (though it depicts the Benjaminites as adept at warfare).

37. After the king known as third Nephi (Jacob 1:11), we have no specific mention of the use of *Nephi* as a throne name, although the practice may well have continued for some time.

38. On this occasion, King Benjamin, playing on the name *Mosiah*, foretold that "the knowledge of **a Savior** [*môšîa*ʿ] shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 3:20); his people would have thought of the name *Mosiah* borne by Benjamin's father and by the king-to-be, a name that includes, or was identical with, the Hebrew term *môšîa*ʿ. See John W. Welch, "What Was a 'Mosiah'?," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 105–7. Welch was the first to suggest a connection between *Mosiah* and *môšîa*ʿ and posited that the name contained the theophoric element *-iah*, thus *môšî*ʿ*yah(w)*. Less likely, the ה (*h*) on the end represents a hypocoristic abbreviation for a divine name. Although uncertainty about the final *h* persists, *Mosiah* clearly *sounds* like *môšîa*ʿ, thus providing a basis for a pun on *Mosiah*, pointing to the Lord as Israel's "Savior." I am suggesting that something similar occurred when Benjamin's people heard the elements in the name *Benjamin* at the end of his sermon, although I realize that definitive proof in either case is unattainable.

39. Given the similarity of the language between Psalm 2:7 and Mosiah 5:7, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion: "Thou art my Son" = "Ye shall be called the children of Christ"; "this day" = "this day"; "have I begotten thee" = "he hath spiritually begotten you."

40. This is often assumed to be a Davidic adoption formula on the basis of Acts 4:25–26.

41. See, for example, Hermann Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911), 13–14.

42. Shalom M. Paul, "Adoption Formulae: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses," *Maarav* 2/2 (1979–80): 173–85; Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Adoption," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971), 2:298–301.

43. See J. J. M. Roberts, "Whose Child Is This? Reflections on the Speaking Voice in Isaiah 9:5," *Harvard Theological Review* 90/2 (1997): 116–17.

44. The King James translators adopted the reading "populum peculiarem" from the Latin Vulgate. Our English word *peculiar* originally denoted "property" and derives from Latin *pecus* ("cattle"). Note that animal ownership is one of the metaphors King Benjamin uses here at the end of his sermon (see Mosiah 5:14).

45. Jennifer Clark Lane, "The Redemption of Abraham," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 171, has written about how King Benjamin's covenant "functions as an adoption." She insightfully connects the adoption here to Abraham's adoption by God in Genesis 17:7 (in 17:5 Abram receives a "new name," i.e., Abraham) and to God's later adoption of Israel in Exodus 6:7.

46. Even if this text was part of a pro-Davidic tradition incorporated into a later "Deuteronomistic History" compiled during the exile, as Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, trans. David J. A. Clines, Jane Doull, et al. (1981; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004) and subsequently many other scholars have suggested, a form of this text could have been among the many writings on the brass plates that Lehi brought with him from Jerusalem.

47. King Benjamin's use of the phrase *his sons and his daughters* is thus emphatically gender inclusive.

48. G. S. Ogden, "Time, and the Verb היה in O.T. Prose," *Vetus Testamentum* 21/4 (1971): 451.

49. Seock-Tai Sohn, "'I Will Be Your God and You Will Be My People': The Origin and Background of the Covenant Formula," in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine*, ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns: 1999), 364.

50. Greek *genesthai* = Hebrew *lihĕyôt*; the verb *gi(g)nomai* (*gi[g]nomai*) is used in a majority of instances in the LXX to render the Hebrew verb היה into Greek. See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 256–67. Deuteronomy 4:19 LXX also uses the form *genesthai*, and it may be that John specifically alludes to this text.

51. The apostle Paul makes repeated reference (though not here) to a *huiothesia* (literally "son-placing" > "son-making"). This term is usually translated "adoption"/"adoption of sons," or better, "adoption of children" (e.g., KJV; see Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). The term should be understood as including both sons and daughters.

52. On the occasion of a royal coronation, Benjamin's surprising democratization of the occasion and his citation of Deuteronomistic language elsewhere (see below) suggests that he specifically had some form of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Deuteronomy 14:1–2 in mind. On King Benjamin's democratizing rhetoric, see John W. Welch, "Democratizing Forces in King Benjamin's Speech," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–26.

53. Both Psalm 16:11 and Psalm 110:1 can be interpreted eschatologically (i.e., pertaining to events at the last day—in this case, after the final judgment).

54. Deuteronomy 17:14–20 is sometimes called the Deuteronomic Law of Kingship, and King Benjamin seems to have made a concerted effort to keep it.

55. Whether *yāmîn* means "right hand" or "south" is irrelevant if the sound of *Benjamin* evokes the sounds of "right hand."

56. See, for example, Latin *sinister*, "left hand," which becomes English "sinister."

57. On the heart as a tablet for (legal) writing, see Jeremiah 17:1; 31:33; Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; 2 Nephi 8:7; Mosiah 13:11; cf. Ezekiel 11:19–20 and 2 Corinthians 3:2–3. Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 11:19–20 notably contain the royal covenant (adoption) language.

58. Deuteronomy 9:14; 29:20; Psalm 109:13; 2 Kings 14:27; cf. Exodus 32:32–33; Psalm 69:28.

59. Roberts, "'Whose Child Is This?,'" 118–26.

60. See Samuel Greengus, "The Old Babylonian Marriage Contract," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89/3 (1969): 505–32.

61. See, for example, *ul mutī atta* ("you are not my husband"), *ul aššatī atti* ("you are not my wife"), *ul mārī atta* ("you are not my son"), *ul mārtī atti* ("you are not my daughter"), *ul abī atta* ("you are not my father"), and *ul ummī atti* ("you are not my mother"). Sohn, "'I Will Be Your God,'" 364, suggests that similar legal formulas stand behind the rejection (or renunciation) formulas of Hosea 1:9; 2:4 (Heb. 2:2). The affirmative proclamation formulas in Hosea 2:1 (Hebrews 1:10) and 2:23 are then modifications of the negative rejection formulas.

62. The experience of Benjamin's people at the temple in Zarahemla is similar to the promise voiced in Isaiah 56:5: "Even unto them **will I give** in mine house [i.e., temple] and within my walls a place [*yād*, "hand"] and **a name** better than **of sons and of daughters**: I will give them **an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off**." Christ's name, which cannot be blotted out or cut off, except through transgression, is the everlasting name that Benjamin gives his people.

63. It is not exactly clear what word would represent "distinguished" in Hebrew, but the related concepts of "holy" and "set apart" or "special" and "peculiar" are found in Deuteronomy 7:6, from which Benjamin appears to be quoting.

64. The expression *ʿam sĕgullâ* occurs two other times in Deuteronomy: "For thou art an holy people unto [belonging to] the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee **to be** [become, *lihĕyôt*] a **peculiar people** [*lĕʿam sĕgullâ*] unto himself [belonging to him, *lô*], **above all the nations** that are upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2) and "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be [become, *lihĕyôt*] **his peculiar people** [*lô lĕʿam sĕgullâ*], as he hath promised thee, and **that thou shouldest keep all his commandments**" (Deuteronomy 26:18). It also occurs in Exodus 19:5: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, **then ye shall be** [become, *wihĕyîtem*] a **peculiar treasure** [*sĕgullâ*] unto me [*lî*] **above all people**: for all the earth is mine [*lî*]." In the Lord's much later words to Malachi the term *sĕgullâ* is given special eschatological significance: "And **they shall be mine** [*wĕhāyû lî*], saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up **my jewels** [*sĕgullâ*]; and I will spare them, as a man spareth **his own son** [*bĕnô*] that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17; cf. the phraseology of D&C 101:3: "I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels").

65. Hebrew *sĕgullâ* is cognate with the Ugaritic noun *sglt* ("treasure, private property"); see Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartin, eds. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 754, and E. Lipinski, "*sᵉgullâ*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 10:144–48.

66. The LXX translators, in rendering *sĕgullâ* into Greek, used two words: the adjective *periousios* and the more descriptive noun *peripoiēsis*; the former describes something "pert[aining] to being of very special status, chosen, especial," i.e., "distinguished"; the latter literally suggests "making" (*poieō* > *poiēsis*) something "around" (*peri-*), thus "to put round or upon" or to encompass with a circle (encircle) and thus to "procure," "acquire, obtain." See Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 802–3; H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 630.

67. John Gee, "Book of Mormon Word Usage: 'Seal You His,'" *Insights* 22/1 (2002): 4.

68. Compare the "encircling about" described in 2 Nephi 1:15; 4:33; Alma 34:16; Helaman 5:23–24, 43–44; 3 Nephi 17:24; and 19:14 versus the "encircling about" described in Alma 5:7, 9; 14:6; 26:15; 36:18; and Helaman 13:37. Just as one can be "encircled about" by the Lord and sealed "his," one can also be encircled about by the devil and sealed "his" (Alma 34:35; cf. Gee, "Seal You His," 4). This subject of theophanic versus demonic encircling will have to be treated more fully elsewhere.

69. Hugh W. Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 559. Nibley frequently connected Hebrew *sĕgullâ* to Latin *sigillum* ("seal") but was never clear about the precise etymological relationship between the two terms.

70. Gee, "Seal You His," 4.

71. See *Wb* 3:350–53.

72. Exodus 28:36–38; 39:30; see Truman G. Madsen, "'Putting on the Names': A Jewish-Christian Legacy," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:458–81.

73. Importantly, the association of a "change of heart" accompanying the divine "rebirth" also begins here. The Nephites respond to King Benjamin's teaching with the following declaration: "And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, **because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually**" (Mosiah 5:2). King Benjamin responds, "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; **for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters**" (Mosiah 5:7). Alma the Younger uses the same language in attempting to describe the earlier generations of Nephites undergoing this changed nature (Alma 5:7–14); cf. also Alma 19:33 and Helaman 15:7.