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Abstract The claim that a personal letter in the Book of Mormon mimics a form indicative of modern rather than ancient composition is critiqued. The majority of letters in the Book of Mormon follow the ancient Hittite-Syrian, Neo-Assyrian, Amarna, and Hebrew epistolary format in which the correspondent of superior rank is always listed first. Other clues to ancient composition are noted.

EPISTOLARY FORM IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Robert F. Smith

Some years ago, Mark D. Thomas made several hasty claims about Hellenistic letters and about the letter of Mormon to his son Moroni found in Moroni 8:2–30. Thomas overstated the degree of flexibility apparent in most Hellenistic letters (ca. 300 BC–AD 300) and even misrepresented their normal pattern.¹ Having made the claim that there are but “three types of letters in the Book of Mormon: 1) war epistles; 2) narrative letters; 3) doctrinal letters,” Thomas stated that only Moroni 8 fits into the latter category and that “it follows the pattern of the Greco-Roman letter of antiquity (a widely used Hellenistic form).”² Perhaps this means that Thomas does not regard Moroni 10 as a kind of catholic, doctrinal epistle (among others in the Book of

1. Mark Thomas, “Listening to the Voice from the Dust: Moroni 8 as Rhetoric,” *Sunstone*, January–February 1979, 22–23 (the *Sunstone* typesetter obviously misplaced items 1 and 2 in Thomas’s chart). See particularly William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 12–14, which shows the pattern to have been quite rigid. Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 788ff., discusses the general epistolary format of Jewish letters (1–2 Maccabees, Dead Sea documents), New Testament letters, Greco-Roman letters, and private and business letters in Egypt during this period.

2. Thomas, “Moroni 8 as Rhetoric,” 22 and n. 4 (wherein the name of Norman Perrin is misspelled), pointing out that the Hellenistic form “was not . . . in use until well after Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem.” Though he attempts here and elsewhere to dodge the issue, this is merely part of Thomas’s much larger effort to demonstrate that Moroni 8 (and the remainder of the Book of Mormon) is early-19th-century rhetoric and can only be interpreted in that “original modern” mimetic light (p. 24 and n. 5).

Mormon), nor Ether 5 as a letter to Joseph Smith Jr.³ However, if we leave the latter two problematic instances aside (and any of a related type), we do have at least eight letters extant in the Book of Mormon, with mere mention of about ten others. Five of the extant letters are purportedly from the mid-first century BC, one from the early first century AD, and two others from the mid-fourth century AD. We can list these eight as follows:

1. Moroni I to Ammoron, ca. August 67 BC⁴ (Alma 54:5–14)
2. Ammoron to Moroni I, ca. August 67 BC (Alma 54:16–24)
3. Helaman I to Moroni I, ca. August 66 BC (Alma 56:2–58:41)
4. Moroni I to Pahoran I, ca. 66–65 BC (Alma 60:1–36)
5. Pahoran I to Moroni I, ca. 66–65 BC (Alma 61:2–21)
6. Giddianhi to Lachoneus I, ca. 12–13 AD (3 Nephi 3:2–10)
7. Mormon II to Moroni II, mid-fourth century AD (Moroni 8:2–30)
8. Mormon II to Moroni II, ca. 366 AD (Moroni 9:1–26)

The first six of these letters stem from a particular cultural era of less than a century, are written by high officials during wartime, and seem to follow a standard format. That any letter might be expected to have an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion is, of course, not to the point. Only a further breakdown of a letter can provide meaningful comparative data.⁵ Let us then make a close examination.

The most noticeable thing about the first six Book of Mormon letters—despite the possible absence of the formal address due to the

3. The late J. N. Washburn listed and analyzed the letters in his book *The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 108–11. See also Robert K. Thomas, “A Literary Analysis of the Book of Mormon” (BA thesis, Reed College, 1947), 80–82 (while he was BYU Academic Vice-President, the late Dr. Thomas urged me to do this analysis of Book of Mormon letters).

4. I here follow the precision dating employed throughout FARMS’s *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1986–87), and fully explained at 3:1321–30 (appendixes 7 and 8).

5. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 27, specifically argues that *any* communication must have such divisions and that only by further subdividing these features can any sort of analysis be made. Had Mark Thomas tried the more detailed analysis offered by Doty, he might have reached more accurate conclusions (see especially Doty’s chart of Pauline letters on p. 43).

narrative context in which they are embedded—is that they never violate the ancient Hittite-Syrian, Neo-Assyrian, Amarna, and Hebrew format in which the superior correspondent is always listed first.⁶ This is not a feature of letter writing in either the Hellenistic letters⁷ cited by Thomas or in letters contemporary with Joseph Smith, even though the rule continued to apply in Jewish letters down to the time of Bar Kokhba in the second century AD.⁸ Moreover, even though Brent Knutson’s thorough 1970 analysis demonstrated that no assured pre-exilic biblical letter can be shown to unambiguously follow this part of the form (no doubt due to the narrative context into which the letters were placed),⁹ preexilic nonbiblical Hebrew examples from Lachish

6. The few letters of King Rib-Addi of Byblos to the Pharaoh (Amarna letters 74–76, 78–79, 81, 83, 89, 91–92) listed by F. Brent Knutson in “Literary Parallels between the Texts of *Le Palais Royal d’Ugarit IV* and the Hebrew Bible” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1970), 184 n. 2, are not really an exception since Rib-Addi no doubt pretended to be an equal of the Pharaoh. The format allowed a sender to be listed first if he were equal in rank to the recipient. Shifts of person are also important in ancient Hittite and Aramaic treaties (Moshe Greenberg, “The Design and Themes of Ezekiel’s Program of Restoration,” *Interpretation* 38/2 [1984]: 186–87). Otherwise, Lachish Letter 3 is the only Hebrew letter not following this standard format, but only because it was written by a nearly illiterate soldier (William Schniedewind, “Sociolinguistic Reflections on the Letter of a ‘Literate’ Soldier,” *Zeitschrift für Althebräistik* 13 [2000]: 157–67). The non-Semitic Sumerian form was always “To . . . from” regardless of rank, as can be seen in Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 331–35. The same is true of most Mesopotamian and Hellenistic letters. See Howard M. Teeple, *The Historical Approach to the Bible* (Evanston, IL: Religion and Ethics Institute, 1982), 188, citing G. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London, 1910), and *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh, 1901), 24.

7. Compare Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 41 and *passim*; and Robert Ussher, “Letter Writing,” in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger (New York: Scribner’s, 1988), 3:1576.

8. Knutson, “Literary Parallels,” 182–83, 185–86, and n. 1 on 183 and 186, includes Ezra 4:11 and 7:12, Daniel 3:31, 1 Maccabees 15:2, 2 Maccabees 11:27 (etc.), Jewish letters found in Egypt (citing Godfrey R. Driver, ed. *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965]), and some Elephantine letters (citing James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], 491–92); compare also Revelation 2–3 versus the Hellenistic pattern in Revelation 1:4–6 (*Biblical Archaeology Review* 19/3 [May–June 1993]: 33).

9. Compare Genesis 32:4–5; Numbers 20:14; Judges 11:14–15; 1 Samuel 25:6–7; 2 Samuel 11:14–15; 12:27–28; 1 Kings 5:16–17; 20:2–3, 9; 21:9–10; 2 Kings 5:6–7; 10:2–3,

and Tel Arad do show adherence to this requirement.¹⁰ More examples have since been discovered,¹¹ which merely serve to verify the strength of this traditional form throughout the Hittite Empire and beyond. The upshot is, of course, that Joseph Smith had no way of knowing about this ancient epistolary form.

In the Book of Mormon letters, of course, some changes in epistolary form took place in the more than five hundred years since Lehi left Jerusalem, but certain essentials remained. Rather than have the superior-inferior sequence always at the formal opening, five of the first six letters simply have the superior at the beginning and list the inferior at

6; 19:10–13 (= Isa 37:10–13); 2 Chronicles 2:11–15; 21:12–15; 30:1; 32:9–10; Jeremiah 2:5–9; 29:1–23, 24–32; Nehemiah 6:6–7; Esther 1:22; 3:13; 9:21. See the analyses of Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 70, 104–7; Meindert Dijkstra, “Prophecy by Letter (Jeremiah Xxix 24–32),” *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983): 319–22; William L. Holladay, “God Writes a Rude Letter (Jeremiah 29:1–23),” *Biblical Archaeologist* 46/3 (1983): 145–46; and Dennis Pardee, “Letters (Hebrew),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:282–85.

10. See Knutson, “Literary Parallels,” 178–94, for the full analysis; also available in Loren R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible II* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1975), 6:5–14. Knutson cites Yohanan Aharoni, “Hebrew Ostraca from Tel Arad,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 16 (1966): 5–6, for the Tel Arad letter. He also cites Lachish letters 2 and 6 in Harry Torczyner (Tur-Sinai), *Lachish I (Tell Ed Duweir): The Lachish Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). See also Dennis Pardee, “Letters from Tel Arad,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 10 (1978): 289–336. Compare Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Some Notes on Aramaic Epistolography,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 201–25, including the contemporary nonbiblical Aramaic example from ‘Adon “to the Lord of Kings, the Pharaoh” (addressed in demotic Egyptian on outside), ca. 604 bc (Saqqara Letter, Cairo Museum 86984); John Bright, “A New Letter in Aramaic, Written to a Pharaoh of Egypt,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 12 (1949): 46–52; Bezalel Porten, “The Identity of King Adon,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 44 (1981): 36–52; and H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973), 2:312–15 (no. 266).

11. Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, with J. David Whitehead and Paul E. Dion (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), reviewed by Brent Knutson in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 459–60; Dennis Pardee, “An Overview of Ancient Hebrew Epistolography,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 321–46; Yohanan Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981); and Debra A. Chase, “A Note on an Inscription from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 246 (Spring 1982): 63–67; compare the Mešad Ḥašavyahu Inscription in Joseph Naveh, “A Hebrew Letter from the Seventh Century B.C.,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 10 (1960): 129–39.

the close (regardless of sender-recipient order).¹² Thus King Ammoron is listed at the outset of both the letter *from* General Moroni (1) as well as the letter he writes in answer *to* General Moroni (2), although he goes out of his way to show his superiority again at the close of his own letter.¹³ As commanding general of the Nephite armies, Moroni receives the deference of his elder brother, Helaman, at both the opening and close of Helaman's long narrative war epistle (3). Governor Pahoran is listed at the outset of letters *to* and *from* him (4 and 5), though his letter to General Moroni follows the full traditional opening that Knutson describes ("I, Pahoran . . . unto Moroni"),¹⁴ mentioning the addressee again at the close (5). Finally, Chief Judge/Governor Lachoneus receives a correct but unfriendly letter from the robber baron Giddianhi, which follows the same deferential protocol by listing Lachoneus at the outset and himself at the close (6).

Naturally, some of the war epistles delete any sort of nice greeting or blessing—even substituting invective or threats. None of this seems to be the case for the much later letters sent from Mormon to his son, Moroni (7 and 8). Whether this is due to removal of the formal address for insertion into the plates, to changes in form during the intervening centuries, or to the very personal nature of these letters is not known. Mormon's first letter to his son does not even list his own name, but opens with that of his son (7). The second letter merely addresses Moroni as "My beloved son" (8). Neither letter closes with a name. Were we to include Moroni's epistle to the Lamanites and all the ends of the earth (Moroni 10:1, 24), we might conclude that this letter at least conforms

12. The sender-recipient sequence is rigidly adhered to in the Hellenistic letter form, and even in the more flexible New Testament usage, regardless of rank (compare Acts 23:26). See Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 29–30, 70–71.

13. The repetition of the superior-inferior address at beginning and end can be found in several Amarna letters (nos. 286 and 287, with variations in nos. 288–90) and in Jewish letters at Elephantine (Passover Papyrus), as published in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 483–91, and *The Ancient Near East, Volume 1: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 1:269–74, 278. Compare the Bar Kokhba Letters from Wadi Murabba'at with Simeon ben Kosebah (Bar Kokhba) placed at the beginning and end.

14. Alma 61:2, "I, Pahoran, who am the chief governor of this land, do send these words unto Moroni," resembles the Neo-Assyrian letters from the king that begin with "The word of the king . . . to B" and the like.

to something like a New Testament catholic (i.e., universal) epistle,¹⁵ though it equally well conforms to much older biblical forms in which a prophet of God delivers a strong message of repentance.¹⁶

Opening greetings may be distinguished in at least three of these letters (3, 6, and 7),¹⁷ depending on the criteria applied (does letter 5 speak of “joy” in ironic fashion?), although similar salutation formulae were as common during Old Testament times as during the later intertestamental¹⁸ and New Testament periods. The Hellenistic greeting was often immediately followed by a remembrance and/or wish for good health, but this was often combined with the following thanksgiving/blessing formula in Pauline letters.¹⁹ “The thanksgiving or blessing form is used by Paul in all his letters except Galatians,”²⁰ yet this form seems to be present in only letter 7 of the Book of Mormon.

Closing greetings appear to be present in only letters 5 and 7 (compare Greek *Erroso* and Latin *Vale*, “Farewell”), while a doxology and benediction seem present at the close of letters 3, 5, and 8 (perhaps *mercy* and *grace* in the latter might be construed as part of closing greetings).²¹ This appears to be far more than the Pauline “flexibility” claimed by Thomas as his excuse for the noncompliance of letter 7.²²

These Book of Mormon letters frequently use certain transition words to indicate the beginning and various divisions of the body of the letter, as do the ancient Near Eastern examples studied by Knutson. The primary transition words are *And now*, although *Now*,

15. Compare Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 18, 70.

16. Among others noted above, see Holladay, “God Writes a Rude Letter,” 145–46; see also Daniel 3:31.

17. Thomas admits, however, that “the typical form of greeting is missing in Moroni 8” (“Moroni 8 as Rhetoric,” 23).

18. Knutson, “Literary Parallels,” 178–83, showing that even the letters in Maccabees follow Hittite practice. Compare the Bar Kokhba letters with *Shalom* “Peace!” (*charis, ave*), which Paul also used as part of his ancient Jewish heritage. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 22, 29–30.

19. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 14, 30–31.

20. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 31; and Thomas, “Moroni 8 as Rhetoric,” 23.

21. Compare letter 4, “I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country” (Alma 60:36).

22. Thomas, “Moroni 8 as Rhetoric,” 23.

Also, and the like are also used.²³ All of the letters we list from the Book of Mormon (except letter 6) contain *And now*, including Moroni 10:34. This specifically Hebrew and Aramaic characteristic is commonly used to signal the beginning of the body of the letter (as in 2 Kings 5:6; 10:2; and TAD A3.10).²⁴

Letter 8 (Moroni 9) is also an example of the epistolary genre that can be directly compared with the same basic material from the same event presented as past narrative only.²⁵ The points of correspondence are highlighted in the following chart. Although the substance communicated is the same in both genres, note that the narrative account contains no hint of the epistle that appears later in the Book of Mormon.

Mormon 4 (narrative)	Moroni 9 (epistle)
v. 9 many Nephites and Lamanites slain	v. 2 many Nephites slain
v. 10 “the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done, but persisted in their wickedness continually”	v. 3 the Nephites “do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually”
v. 11 “every heart was hardened, so that [the Nephites and the Lamanites] delighted in the shedding of blood continually”	v. 4 the Nephites “harden their hearts” (cf. vv. 6, 10) v. 5 the Nephites “thirst after blood and revenge continually” (cf. v. 23)

23. Knutson, “Literary Parallels,” 186–94. These are the literal (and KJV) translations of the typical Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek (LXX) terms. Another method sometimes used by cuneiform scribes was the simple drawing of a line between the introduction and body.

24. Pardee, “Letters (Hebrew),” 284–85, citing especially his own review comments in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44/2 (1985): 148. Aramaic examples are discussed in Paul E. Dion, “Letters (Aramaic),” in Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:287–89, citing Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 1:48–49 (Aramaic letter A3.10).

25. Following V. Garth Norman, “Book-of-Mormon Geography Study on the Narrow Neck of Land Region,” unpublished Book of Mormon Working Paper No. 1 (1966, 1972, 1974), 88–89. It is, by the way, not uncommon biblically to find parallel accounts of the same event in separate literary genres—e.g., prose and poetic accounts in Exodus 13:17–14:30 and 15:1–21, as well as in Judges 4 and 5.

v. 14 the Lamanites “did take many prisoners both women and children”	v. 7 “the Lamanites have many prisoners . . . men, women, and children” v. 9 “many of the daughters of the Lamanites have [the Nephites] taken prisoners”
v. 14 the Lamanites “did offer [many prisoners] up as sacrifices unto their idol gods” (cf. vv. 15, 21) v. 15 “exceedingly great anger”	v. 8 “the husbands and fathers . . . [the Lamanites] have slain” v. 10 the Nephites “did murder [the daughters of the Lamanites] in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death” vv. 3, 4 anger
v. 12 “there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi”	v. 11 “without civilization” (cf. v. 20) v. 13 “delight . . . in so much abomination” v. 15 “their sins, and wickedness, and abominations” vv. 17–19 brutality, depravity, perversion
v. 21 “the Nephites were . . . slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols” v. 12 “there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Israel”	v. 19 “the suffering of our women and our children” v. 20 “horrible scene . . . wickedness . . . doth exceed that of the Lamanites”

Since both the Book of Mormon and the brass (bronze) plates of Laban were written in Egyptian, it might be worthwhile for future researchers to also compare ancient Egyptian epistolography to Book of Mormon letters.²⁶ Moreover, it is the conclusion of Anson F. Rainey (Tel Aviv University) and John S. Thompson (Brigham Young

26. See, for example, ‘Abd el-Mohsen Bakir, *Egyptian Epistolography from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Dynasty* (Cairo: Institut Français d’archéologie orientale, 1970); see especially his résumé on pp. 86–93; compare Edward F. Wente, trans., *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, ed. Edmund S. Meltzer (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). The letter from Apy the Steward of Memphis to King Amenhotep IV, for example, shows the superior-inferior order in the verso address. See the translation by William J. Murnane,

University) that professional, Egyptian-speaking Hebrew scribes wrote the hieratic found at Tel Arad VII, at Kadesh-Barnea, and at Lachish (all contemporary with Lehi).²⁷ Antonio Loprieno of the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Basel added recently that, beginning in the tenth century BC, the Egyptian hieratic used by Israelite scribes followed its own developmental path.²⁸ The same professional Israelite scribes probably were responsible for the Hebrew letters found at Tel Arad.

Since Israelites (and Canaanites) had had close political, commercial, and cultural ties with Egypt during much of the previous thousand years or so, and since this included Hebrew settlements in Egypt, it should not seem odd that the brass plates of Laban were engraved in Egyptian or that Nephi and his successors kept their records in Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2; Enos 1:1; Mosiah 1:2–6; Mormon 9:32–34).²⁹

trans., *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, ed. Edmund S. Meltzer (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 50–51.

27. Anson F. Rainey, “The Saga of Eliashib,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13/2 (March/April 1987): 37, 39; John S. Thompson, “Lehi and Egypt,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Roph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 267, citing Orly Goldwasser, “An Egyptian Scribe from Lachish and the Hieratic Tradition of the Hebrew Kingdoms,” *Tel Aviv (Journal of the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology)* 18 (1991): 248.

28. Antonio Loprieno, Q&A response during UCLA Extension Symposium entitled “Egypt and the Biblical World,” 6 March 2004. During his symposium presentation, “Impact of Egyptian Scribes and Culture on the Bible,” William Schniedewind noted that four of the Arad ostraca using both Hebrew and Egyptian hieratic date to the tenth century BC. This was the stratum destroyed by Pharaoh Shishaq I (compare the Karnak reliefs with 1 Kings 14:25 and 2 Chronicles 12:2). Moreover, the Egyptian loanword *šīšā’* שִׁשָּׂא, which is glossed with Hebrew *sōfērīm* סֹפְרִים “scribes” in 1 Kings 4:3, clearly comes from Egyptian *sš* “scribe” or *sš š’t* “secretary, scribe-of-king’s-letter” (compare 1 Chronicles 18:16 שֹׁשֶׁבַע = שׁוֹשֶׁבַע, which reflects the Solomonic administration, and perhaps even Davidic practice (2 Samuel 20:25 שִׁיא LXX σοῦσα, Targum *šiš*).

29. Genesis 12:10; Exodus 12:40–42; Deuteronomy 26:5–8; 1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24; 10:28–11:1, 40; 14:25–26; 2 Kings 25:26; 2 Chronicles 12:2–9; 35:20–24; Isaiah 30:1–7; 31:1; Nahum 3:8–9; and Jeremiah 24:8 all show close Hebrew-Egyptian relations. John Bright argues that Hebrew *Sinim* in Isaiah 49:12 = Syene, Aswan, Egypt, and that Jewish military contingents possibly aided Pharaoh Psammetichus II in his Nubian campaign; see John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 346–47 nn. 11 and 13, citing Moshe Greenberg, “The Hebrew oath particle *hay/hē*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957): 34–39; E. C. B. MacLaurin, “Date of the Foundation of the Jewish Colony at Elephantine,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27

After all, foreigners had been learning Egyptian since at least the time of the Twelfth Dynasty.³⁰ The Eighteenth Dynasty text of the Maxims of Any (10:5–6) is very clear:

One teaches Nubians to speak Egyptian, and Khorians
[people of Syro-Palestine], and all foreigners likewise.³¹

So strong were the long-term Jewish ties with Egypt that Jeremiah had to inveigh against those ties in the harshest and most uncompromising of terms. Yet Jeremiah himself ended his days in forced exile in Egypt (Jeremiah 43–44), as had King Jehoahaz-Shallum of Judah decades earlier (2 Kings 23:34).

(1968): 89–96; Alberto R. Green, “Israelite Influence at Shishak’s Court?” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 233 (Winter 1979): 59–62. For extensive Jewish use of Egyptian hieratic and glyptic art, see Yohanan Aharoni, “A Royal Israelite Seal and the Royal Jar Handle Stamps,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 201 (February 1971): 35, figs. 1–2; Morton Smith, “The Case of the Gilded Staircase,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10/5 (September–October 1984): 54 (illustration); David Ussishkin, “Answers at Lachish,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 5/6 (November–December 1979): 38–39; William W. Hallo, “As the Seal upon Thy Heart’: Glyptic Roles in the Biblical World,” *Bible Review* 1/1 (February 1985): 22; Stefan Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch: Die Zahl- und Sonderzeichen in der alathebräischen Schrift* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008); John A. Tvedtnes, “Linguistic Implications of the Tel-Arad Ostraca,” *Society for Early Historic Archaeology* (BYU newsletter) 127 (October 1971): 1–5; Tvedtnes, “The Language of My Father,” *New Era*, May 1971, 19. In the former article, Tvedtnes notes the use of Egyptian words written in both hieratic and in Hebrew, along with Hebrew words written in Hebrew, all on the same seventh-century-BC ostrakon (citing Shmuel Yeivin, “An Ostrakon from Tel Arad Exhibiting a Combination of Two Scripts,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 55 [1969]: 98–102).

30. Prince ʾAbi-shemu of Byblos (Syria), and his son Yp-shemu-ʾabi after him, had close relations with Pharaohs Amenemhet III and IV, visited ʾIt-Towey (then capital of Egypt), and even spoke Egyptian well. Pierre Montet, *Lives of the Pharaohs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 62, 67; and Edith Porada, “Notes on the Sarcophagus of Ahiiram,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973): 355–72.

31. Text and translation of the parallel lines in Papyrus Boulaq IV (Twenty-first or Twenty-second Dynasty) and Berlin Tablet 8934 appear in Emile Suys, *La sagesse d’Ani: Texte, traduction et commentaire* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1935), xx, 101; compare Adolf Erman, *Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, trans. A. M. Blackman from 1923 German ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 241; and Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Volume II: *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 144.

Egypt and Canaan, Egypt and Israel—why is the connection so important for the Book of Mormon? It should be clear from Mormon 9:32–34 that a type of reformed or shorthand Egyptian was inscribed on the final redaction of the Book of Mormon plates. To repeat the recent observation of Antonio Loprieno, hieratic (shorthand) Egyptian was used by professional Israelite scribes beginning in the tenth century BC and continued to develop separately from the Egyptian tradition.³² Even though the Bible never directly states that archaeological fact, the Book of Mormon claims dovetail remarkably well with the implications to be drawn from hieratic ostraca created by Israelite scribes. As Frank Moore Cross has said of a similar context:

A Canaanite scribe who was bilingual or trilingual, who could write in more than one writing system, evidently was freer to let his imagination range, to contemplate the possibility of other, simpler alternates to the writing systems he knew.³³

32. Loprieno, response in “Egypt and the Biblical World” Q&A.

33. Frank Moore Cross, “Frank Moore Cross—An Interview, Part III: How the Alphabet Democratized Civilization,” *Bible Review* 8/6 (December 1992): 21.