Origin of Book of Mormon Names
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I am going to be talking today about proper names in the Book of Mormon. We – a group of interested individuals have joined, who are affiliated with the Maxwell Institute to work on the approximately 330 proper names that are to be found in the Book of Mormon. This study group which includes individuals who are specialists in Hebrew Semitics, and the Mesopotamian languages and in Egyptian in order to study proper names there. The fact is we have several, among those are participating John Gee, Paul Hoskisson, Bob Smith and myself. We have three specialists in Hebrew. One, in Comparitive Semitics, two, in the Mesopotamian Languages and two in Egyptian. And in addition we also will be asking toward the end of this project for either a specialist or specialists in Mayan and in the Mesoamerican languages to participate in the project itself. By that I think we need to understand that we accepted the Mesoamerican hypothesis for the location of the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon project will be completed in either two or three years, in 2012 or 2013. In the meantime, there is a website for looking at the list and looking at discussion of proper names in The Book of Mormon that will be available through the Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, the website is mi.byu.edu. I say it will be made available, it is not at this current point in time available. It has not been made available yet here because there is still some need to deal with receiving and responding to comments that deal with proper names in the Book of Mormon. Once we get that sorted out within a matter of few weeks it will be available. I can encourage you to look on a regular basis at the Maxwell Institute website to see whether the proper names project list has been made available.

The Book of Mormon names have a variety of, among these we have proper names that are of Hebrew origin, a third of the books of the proper names that we find in the Book of Mormon are of Hebrew origin. They include such names as Laban and Jacob and Joseph, and one other that I would like to share with you that I would wish to discuss in just a moment is Sam. In addition, the Book of Mormon also contains proper names of other Semitic languages. For example, Laman and Lemuel, those, I suggest are proper names of Arabian origin. I will argue for those in just a moment.

We continue, in addition there are proper names that are of Greek or Hellenic origin, an example of those would be Timothy, as well as Lachoneus both of which show the influence of Hellenic names and naming before 600 BC, or the possibility of transoceanic contact between the old and the new world after 600 BC, either hypothesis is arguable. There are beyond that, proper names whose origins are otherwise unidentified and are in the Book of Mormon translated because they were either unknown or incomprehensible to the writers of the Book of Mormon; we have as an example that I will want to discuss in greater detail the name Irreantum, which is given as many waters.

Last of all, among the list of proper names in the Book of Mormon, are those names of Jaredites origin that may either be a Near Eastern or of Afro-Asiatic background, but are quite uncertain in their origin among the names that we have of Jaredite origin or such as Coriantumr. And it's also

possible too, that we will find proper names that are of Mesoamerican origin or have undergone Mesoamerican influence and for that I think it would require adding a specialist in Mayan or Mesoamerican languages to consider the influence on Book of Mormon names. We proceed to the list of the names. I will give you 11, and maybe I will expand it to 12, but don't worry about it. you are not going to be charged extra for it. No additional charge. Three, that we can describe as slam-dunks plus another one after that Jershon, Alma, and Sariah. They are described as slam-dunks because they are contained either literary figures or other linguistic elements of Hebrew or Semitic origin that Joseph Smith would not have been aware of at the time that the Book of Mormon was translated.

I don't believe that Joseph Smith even became aware of the Hebrew language until he came to Kirtland in the 1830s. We start looking at Jershon, but before we look at the name Jershon we ought to become acquainted with the literary figure paronomasia which is described as a form of word play that uses similar sounding words – or words from similar verbal roots, or from the same root for a literary or rhetorical effect. An example of this, we see in first Nephi, Chapter 8, Verse 2. "I have dreamed a dream or in other words I have seen a vision." Just as a matter of interest, the Semitic languages are absolutely mad about paronomasia, or if we choose to focus on a slightly different term cognitive accusative. They are absolutely wild about it. However, English attempts to shy away from it. I have dreamed a dream may need to be recast to avoid so as to avoid the cognitive accusative or, as I have seen a vision.

We continue – we find paronomasia in the word Jershon. Jershon is from the Hebrew word Yershon, which means a place of inheritance from the Hebrew root yarash, which means to inherit. So bear in mind that the Hebrew root, yarash means to inherit. Yershon includes an ending that gives a place name meaning, place of inheritance and you ought to be aware that the Hebrew Y is equivalent to the English J, thus the Hebrew word Yahweh, Lord, or Jehovah is equal to the English Jehovah. So that here Y is equal to the English J and we are not only are aware that Yershon has the meaning, place of inheritance, yarash means to inherit, but we take a look at some of the verses in the 27th chapter of Alma, versus 22, 24 and 26. Whether it is at a play on this root that means to inherit that is very significant.

The first one, this land, Jershon, or Hebrew Yershon, is the land which we'll give our brethren for an inheritance. So Yershon which means place of inheritance, is a land we'll give to our brethren for an inheritance. Great paronomasia, something that those that were sensitive to the Hebrew language would appreciate, but not something that we English speakers would care about. Anyway this is the 22nd verse 24. "This we will do on to our brethren that they may inherit", bear in mind the root yarash means to inherit, the land Jershon, Yershon.

And verse 26, we read "they went down on to the land of Jershon", Hebrew Yershon, place of inheritance, and took possession, which is from the root yarash of the land Jershon, Yershon. Parenthetically I have to note that we proceed on the assumption that the language of the Book of Mormon was Hebrew, whether or not the script was Hebrew. The language was Hebrew, where the Book of Mormon speaks of the language of the Egyptians and that the learning of the Jews. I am guessing the language that is talked about is probably script and we have plenty of examples of Semitic language documents that were written in Egyptian script in the ancient world. So we

accept the fact that the Book of Mormon was written by – in Hebrew by Hebrew speakers' people that understood the language and the literary concepts of Hebrew and appreciated them.

Verse 22 of Alma 27, here we are to get further understanding of the land of Jershon. Jershon was the land on east by the sea, a joint land Bountiful. It was given to the Anti-Nephi-Lehi. It's been also mentioned as an inheritance. We continue with that to Alma, first mentioned in Mosiah, Chapter 17, Verse 2. It is again from the Hebrew word olam; young man or youth. It's comparable to the Arabic; ghulam, trust me. The Hebrew Olam is related to the Arabic, ghulam. It means a youth a young man or a male servant. We continue there. Alma in Mosiah 17:2 is described as one of the priests of King Noah. As a descendant of Nephi, and he is described in Mosiah 17:2 as a young man. It says there was a young man. There was an individual in the group Alma, and he was a young man. Alma itself means young man and to continue with the word young man simply engages in paronomasia, which the Hebrew speakers would have appreciated who believed in the words of Abinadi. We continue with Sariah in Elephantine in an area south, about 450 miles south of the Delta in what is today Aswan. There were documents uncovered and studied that were written about by Arthur Cowley in Papyrus #22 mentioning the name Sariah. This particular list gives the name Sariah barat Hoshea bar Harman, which we could understand and understand that Sariah barat Hoshea bar Harman and translate as Sariah, the daughter of Hoshea, the son of Harman. Jeffrey Chadwick who has looked at this particular name writes about it that the extant final t of barat assures us that the person was a daughter, not a son, and, after the letters b-r are supplied, there is only room for one additional letter – the final h of Sariah.

Sariah, written either with an A or an E, is attested as a man's name, and not as a woman's name in the Bible. However, it does appear in the Elephantine papyri as a Hebrew woman's name, not as an Aramaic name but as a Hebrew name for a woman and we note the interchangeability of men's and women's name in Hebrew. We have, as an example, Abijah, given not only as an Israelite man's name but also a woman's name, the mother of Hezekiah was known as Abiah or Abijah which is both men's and the women's name. And we ought to bear in mind to not only do we find it in Hebrew but we can see it in the interchangeability of men's and women's names. In the Anglo-American tradition, we just think of these names, Avri, Dana, Jordan, Kim, Leslie, Madison, Morgan, Robin, Stacey, Tracey. That makes it probable that Sariah was both a men's name and a women's name in first millennium BC Israelite tradition.

We press on, to look as an addition to another Hebrew name that is also Hebrew Israelite in origin, the name Sam. This particular name, Sam, is attached on a bronze ring-mounted seal, so you have a ring, on this ring you have a seal, if you want to sign your name, if you can't read, or if you are too lazy, you just get it and you go stamp the seal down and you can sign your name that way. It was on a ring mounted seal, dating to the seventh century BC, right around the time of Lehi's departure. This particular form could be pronounced either the Shem or as a lateralized S that could be pronounced like the Welsh ll slu sound, but was later pronounced as an S sound.

But we ought to bear this in mind too; there are dialect variations in the pronunciation of this particular word, Sham. The Ephraimites who lived – who were a Joseph tribe that lived to the east of the Jordan River, were, according to the 12th chapter of Judges unable to pronounce the word with a sheen, they had to pronounce it with a scene. They couldn't pronounce the

shibboleth, the pronounced it sibboleth instead, suggesting that there were dialect variations and that among those dialect variations, there may be a difference in the pronunciation of the sheen as opposed to the scene sound.

We go on to proper names that were Semitic in origin, but not Hebrew. The first one is Laman, a proper name, mentioned in Lihyanite inscription. Lihyanite was a language spoken and written anciently in the northwest Arabian Peninsula around the middle of the first millennium BC, so it's not inconceivable that it could have been a name that was known to Lehi or one of Lehi's family as a result of which the oldest son was given that name.

We continue on with the name Lemuel. Lemuel is cited in proverbs 31:1 as a King of Massa, where we read the words of King Lemuel, the prophets say that his mother taught him. In the interest of time we will press on Massa actually is a – Lemuel is a name that has a very venerable tradition in North Western Arabian Peninsula and was pronounced as Lemuel. We want to press on from there.

Lemuel, note last of all, Lemuel is a good Arabian name, as Laman was also a venerable Arabian name in the early to mid first millennium BC. The tribe of Massa where the name Lemuel was given, may also be connected with Masanoi of the Arabian desert, so it's a desert name in the northwest part of the Arabian Peninsula, probably pronounced, well known, I am guessing, to Lehi or his family. We continue with proper names that are of Arabian origin. With that we have Kanaphy from the Egyptian Nefer or Neufer, which means handsome or beautiful, and came in the late Egyptian period to be pronounced as Nephi. Nefer, Neufer became Nephi or Neuphi. And too, the name elements npy, though a little strange to us, seems to be a Semitic, not just Semitic but a Canaanite transcription of the Egyptian Nefer. Why? The middle P in Tunisian, or Hebrew, or any of the other Canaanite languages, would have been pronounced as an F sound. A "pa" becomes a "fa", a "ba" becomes a "va", a "ka" becomes a "ha" sound. That's intervocalic spirantization that I have taught you.

One of the secrets of Hebrew, I should probably give you credit for a class. Anyway, we continue. Thus, NPY, that we transliterate would be pronounced as Nephi. There was no problem in that at all. John Gee unfortunately is not with us today, I don't think, right. So when they confidently conclude whether it's from Nefer meaning, handsome or beautiful or Nepu, that means captain. The name Nephi is an attested Egyptian name. And we continue from that to Anti-Nephi- Lehi, which is Lamanite personal name origin Tilak for the individual, the Brother of Lamoni, as well as the people that were named after this Brother of Lamoni. The name Anti is not Indo-European in origin, rather it comes from an Egyptian root. Nty, pronounced either Nati or Enti take care your pick, meaning that one, he of, or those of, or partisans of, thus Anti-Nephi-Lehi probably means a partisan of Nephi and Lehi, and I am guessing that the Anti-Nephi-Lehi is probably would have meant partisans of Nephi and Lehi.

We continue from there to proper names of unknown and unidentified origin, which required that the translator provide a translation of the meaning of the word, because it was unknown to Book of Mormon writers and speakers. My colleague, Paul Hoskisson has noted that the reason why 3% of the names given in the Book of Mormon are included with their meanings is that the Nephites, whose native spoken language was Hebrew, and whose written language, or script,

was Egyptian. I am guessing it may be Egyptian script Hebrew language would have been unable to understand the words – the meanings of these words. We – he continues, the only rational reason for Nephi to include both the transliteration and the translation is that he did not expect his audience to immediately grasp the meaning of Irreantum, because it was not readily recognizable Nephi word. If somebody tells you Irreantum, you say, what, I don't really quite understand what that word means. So we look at it quite likely, the word Irreantum that is given to us as many waters, it's quite likely South Arabian or South Semitic in origin. We have a root, RWY, with the basic meaning of watering, related to the Hebrew raba, which means to overflow with water and to another word, Arway, to the word pronounced either Arway or Irway. In addition to that, you have the suffix end that gives you the sense of a place name, Arawayan. And in addition to that, Arawayan, which is a place name, a place of flowing and then we have the roots, Tum, which means whole or complete or abundance, so Arwayantum/Irwayantum has this meaning. A place of abundance or rich waters thus many waters, Arwayantum.

We continue with another word, Nahom is a place where Ishmael was buried. In fact, we read in first Nephi 16:34 that this particular place, they didn't call Nahom. It was a place that was called Nahom probably meaning, that they got the name from other people. I am guessing that it is a place name of venerable age in the Arabian Peninsula, and was sufficiently venerable age that they adopted the name. A German explorer, who went to Yemen in the 18th century, saw a particular place that he – whose name he put on the map as Nehhm, N-E-H-H-M. This was not the first time. The first time was about 20 years before, but this in the 1770s was another example of a place name Nehm or Nehhm given to a particular location in Yemen, just a little northwest of Sana'a, which is the present day capital of Yemen. And beyond that there are three altar inscriptions containing the letters, NHM as a tribal name dating from the 7th to the 6th century BC, roughly the time when Lehi's family would have been traveling through that area. And this particular picture shows the area that is now known as Naham or Nahom, that contains some of these altars on which its inscriptions were written. Not necessarily those dating from 7th or 6th century, but at least showing the altars with the inscriptions.

NHM appears also as a place name, and as a tribal name in southwestern Arabia in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period. The Arab antiquarian Hamdani writes about these in a couple of his books as being very ancient. And in addition, the Arabist and antiquarian Robert Wilson notes, there is minimal movement among tribes over time. The region now known as Nahom may well have had that or a similar name in antiquity thus Nahom probably that was named in the Book of Mormon was probably a place name that had went back to antiquity, and was borrowed by Lehi and his family.

In addition to that, there is another association. The Hebrew word Naham means to groan. The south Arabian word doesn't have a meaning like this but you can see when the daughters of Ishmael cried out because of the death of their father, we can see the association of Nahom with this Hebrew word Naham which means to groan. We go on to proper names of Hellenic or Greek origin. This is, here we get to see what we learned before coming into play about Lachonus, who was the Chief Judge of the Nephites, a prophet and a just man, who prepared the Nephites for war against the robbers. This particular name Lachonus, L-A-C-H-O-N-U-S is the masculine form of hypothetical Greek word Lachonios, which means a Spartan or a Lachonian, we have some other forms that are attested like Lachonium and Lachonia. Lachonian, the neuter,

Lachonian, the feminine. But in addition to that, the fact that you have a CH, suggests that you have either a K or a C stop that has undergone in the venerable fashion of Hebrew and the Canaanite dialect of the Semitic languages intervocalic spirantization. So here we've been able to use spirantization to get purpose, a K in between vowels as spirantization becomes ka becomes ha sound thus we have the CH, probably suggesting spirantization.

So the issue has to do with origins, is not inconceivable, this particular name may have been brought by Lehi and his family early on and just kept within the family until the name was given and written down in the late 1st century BC or alternatively it may be a name that was brought to Book of Mormon lands from the old world by Greek speakers to the new world and was borrowed as a result of that kind of contact. Thus, Lachonus is a word that has undergone a venerable linguistic transformation that it's beautiful otherwise very well attested in the ancient world.

May I note again the websites, mi.byu.edu that you may wish to visit, now and again, to find out whether the list of names that it's been used in – has been entered into the website is currently available. So you would be able to get used to getting access to it. Let's note this too, a quotation by Austin Fourier about C.S. Lewis that may become a kind of theme for the apologetic undertaking. Fourier wrote about C.S. Lewis," Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved, may not be embraced, but what no one shows the ability to defend, it is quickly abandoned. The rational argument does not create belief but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish."

In conclusion, not only is the Book of Mormon, an ancient document that is proof of those that desire to know of its truth, but also in the finest tradition of C.S. Lewis and Austin Fourier as defenders of Christianity, the Book of Mormon is historically and linguistically arguable and sensible. Thank you.

The first question: How well does the official pronunciation guide at the back of the Book of Mormon stack up? My colleagues, Bob Smith and Paul Hoskisson have done better work. I can say that even though it's probably reflective of the tradition of Latter-day Saint pronunciation. It is certainly good historically representative – representation. We go on with this comment on Rameumptom that is another name that I would love to have shared with you. It is another word which has a translation which means high place. It is a dead ringer meaning- a high place. The word Ram in Hebrew means high and the others are probably simply suffixal material on all of it. That's one. Then I would like to see it get put on the website so that it could be explained, so stay tuned for that and not too very long time.

Again, the question of relationship between Hebrew and reformed Egyptian. Actually, I can honestly say that there is any particular correlation between, what we find in late Egyptian or Demotic and reformed Egyptian. In fact, reformed Egyptian seems to be the script that was written at a late period of time in Book of Mormon history when their text was being written and not necessarily – no necessary connection between that and what we find in Egyptian – in demotic Egyptian.

So we have one more. Some of these, you may want to – there is a question about the vocalization. The question has to do with Jershon, the accent of the first syllabus as opposed to Yershon with the accent on the last syllable. In Hebrew, the accent tends to be on the last syllable and when I pronounce it in English fashion I tend it to pronounce an extra loud so you'll excuse me for that, but recognize that Hebrew has a tradition of pronouncing the word of last syllable.

Some of these others, this is one. So thank you very much and if you wish to visit with me about it later you are welcome to do so, but Rameumptom I can promise, will be made available on the website as soon as the website is up, which I hope is very sooner. Thanks very much.