HEBREW NAMES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

by John A. Tvedtnes

*[**Editor's note:** This paper was presented by John Tvedtnes at the Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, August 2001.]*

In the spring of 1830, Joseph Smith, a young American farmer in the state of New York, published a volume entitled the *Book of Mormon*. The book purports to be an abridgment of the history of a small group of people who left Jerusalem about 600 B.C.E. and, led by a prophet named Lehi, came to the Americas. The abridgment was essentially prepared about a thousand years later by a prophet named Mormon. Smith claimed that he had translated the text from metallic plates with divine assistance.

While more than twenty thousand people—mostly Americans and British—came to accept the book during Joseph Smith's lifetime, most people considered it to be the work of a charlatan.[1] Today, more than eleven million people profess a belief in the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture alongside the Bible, and that number increases annually by approximately 300,000. Since 1830, more than one hundred million copies of the book have been published in over a hundred languages, with more than five million copies currently being distributed each year.

SCHOLARLY STUDIES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Scholarly study of the Book of Mormon began around the turn of the century when Thomas W. Brookbank introduced the concept of Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon.[2] Over the years a few scholars, including myself, have looked into that topic and found it a rather fruitful field.[3] In 1969–1970, John W. Welch wrote his seminal work on chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, demonstrating that chiastic structures pervade the text.[4] In 1981, Professor Welch edited his *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, with contributions from several scholars such as Yehudah Radday, and including Welch's own "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon."[5] In

the preface to the work, David Noel Freedman wrote, "The editor is to be commended for his catholicity and courage and for his own original contributions in several domains including a unique treatment of the Book of Mormon."[6] Taking his cue from Welch, Donald W. Parry, a member of the Dead Sea Scrolls translation team and contributor to the Oxford series *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*,[7] published *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns* in 1992,[8] just a few years after he published an article on "Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon."[9]

In 1979, Welch organized the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). Although the organization is perhaps best known for producing the Dead Sea Scrolls CD-ROM distributed through Brill,[10] one of its primary activities is the publication of scholarly books and papers on the Book of Mormon, including the semiannual *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. Because of the organization's broad interest in ancient texts in general, it was recently reorganized as the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts at Brigham Young University.

Scholarly work on the Book of Mormon has not been restricted to the Institute. In his recent book on postrationalism, Douglas Robinson of the University of Mississippi includes Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon among his case studies.[11] Even more significant is the forthcoming publication by Oxford University of Terryl L. Givens' book, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion*.

HEBRAIC STUDIES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon has generally gone unnoticed among Jewish scholars, with some notable exceptions. In two of his last books, the late Raphael Patai included favorable comments on the Book of Mormon,[12] and his last book included an appendix recounting the voyage of

the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi to the New World.[13] During the 1970s I met with David Flusser on a number of occasions, during which meetings he acknowledged the Book of Mormon as an authentic ancient text.[14]

Prior to coming to Israel in 1971 I received a letter from a friend, Robert F. Smith, who was then attending the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Smith told me of an English lecture on the history of the Hebrew language in which Haim Rabin had cited a passage from the Book of Mormon to illustrate the use of the Hebrew conjunction *vav* and told the assembled students that the Book of Mormon reflected Hebrew better than the English Bible. I was initially skeptical, but when I came to the Hebrew University and took several courses from Professor Rabin, I found him very open to the idea that the Book of Mormon was translated from an ancient Hebrew text. In a Hebrew etymology course, I cited passages from the Book of Mormon to make my case in several papers and was delighted to receive high marks and favorable comments.[15]

LANGUAGE AND SCHOLARSHIP

Before proceeding with an examination of Hebrew names in the Book of Mormon, I should lay some groundwork regarding the language of the book. Nephi, who wrote the first portion of the book in the sixth century B.C.E., wrote, "I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians."[16] Most researchers read this as meaning that Nephi used Egyptian characters to transliterate Hebrew words. This is also suggested by the last contributor to the book, Moroni, son of Mormon, who wrote:

> We have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.[17]

In 1966, William Foxwell Albright addressed a letter to a Book of Mormon critic in which he explained that he was a Protestant and hence not a believer in the Book of Mormon, but then observed, "It is all the more surprising that there are two Egyptian names, Paanch [Paanchi] and Pahor(an) which appear in the Book of Mormon in close connection with a reference to the original language being 'Reformed Egyptian.'" Puzzled at the existence of such names in an obscure book published by Joseph Smith in 1830, Albright vaguely suggested that the young Mormon leader was some kind of "religious genius."[18] Since that time, scholars have noted the intermingling of Hebrew and Egyptian script on ostraca[19] from both Arad and Ein-Qudeirah and various documents from Egypt are known to contain Semitic texts written in Egyptian characters.[20]

My first foray into Book of Mormon names was my 1977 article, "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," in which I examined the more than 160 names found only in the Book of Mormon.[21] Assuming that Joseph Smith transliterated Book of Mormon names with some regularity, it was readily demonstrable that the names of the Nephites, descendants of Lehi, followed the phonlogical patterning of Hebrew. None of the names included consonants that do not exist in Hebrew, and while the stops (plosives) like *t* or *p* could be found at the beginning of names, when they appeared medially or finally after vowels, they were spelled *th* and *ph*, respectively.

More important, of course, is the question of whether those names have valid etymologies in Hebrew. Many of them do, though a few are Egyptian in origin, which accords well with what we know about ancient Israelite names, especially from the large number of seals and bullae[22] now available. A number of researchers have looked at the issue of Hebrew etymologies for Book of Mormon names, notably Robert F. Smith, John W. Welch,[23] Paul Y. Hoskisson,[24] Stephen D. Ricks, John Gee,[25] and myself (all of Brigham Young University), Jo Ann Hackett of Harvard, and Gordon C. Thomasson of Broome Community College.[26]

Most of these scholars are participating in a comprehensive study of the Book of Mormon onomasticon to be published by Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. In 1995 two amateur Hebrew students, Joseph and Norrene Salonimer, wrote a book on the subject, *I Know Thee By Name* (privately published). Though some of their suggestions have merit, I found the book generally wanting in my review thereof.[27]

BOOK OF MORMON NAMES

Having laid the foundation, let's turn to the names themselves, beginning with a look at some *nisbe* (gentillic[28]) forms, of which the Book of Mormon, like the Bible, has just a few.[29] We have Moroni ("Moronite," Alma 43:16, etc.), from the place-name Moron (Ether 7:5–6, etc.); Lamoni ("Lamanite," Alma 17:21, etc.), from Laman, son of Lehi (1 Nephi 2:5, etc.); and Muloki ("Mulekite," Alma 20:2; 21:11), from an ancestral Mulek (Mosiah 25:2, etc.),

said to be a son of the Jewish king Zedekiah who escaped death at the hands of the Babylonians (Helaman 6:10; 8:21).[30] It has been proposed that Mulek is the man known from Jeremiah 38:6 as Malkiyahu ben ha-Mellekh.[31] Other names that may be gentillic are Limhi (Mosiah 7:9, etc.), perhaps from the personal name Lamah (Mormon 6:14), Amlici (Alma 2:1, etc.), and Himni (Mosiah 27:34, etc.).

Some Book of Mormon personal names include the Hebrew elements for "father" or "people" (or, following Arabic, paternal uncle or clan). These include Abinadom (Omni 1:12) and Abinadi (Mosiah 11:20, etc.), perhaps "father of my wandering," Aminadi (Alma 10:2–3), perhaps "people of my wandering." One Book of Mormon scribe categorized his people as "wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem,"[32] while another called them "wanderers in a strange land."[33]

Some Book of Mormon place-names also have good Hebrew etymologies. The city Zarahemla (Omni 1:12, etc.), for example seems to be Hebrew זרע־חמלה, "seed of compassion." The hill named Cumorah (Mormon 6:2, etc.) is probably Hebrew כמורה (*kemôrah) "priesthood," an abstract noun based on the word כומר (kômer), "priest."[34] Prior to their departure for the New World, Lehi's group suffered the loss of one of its members, Ishmael, who, from the geographical description, seems to have died in the Arabian Peninsula at a site called Nahom.[35] It evidently corresponds to Hebrew נחום, from the root meaning "to comfort," or from the root נחם, "to moan." Both would be suitable names for a burial place, and it is noteworthy that the text says "the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly."[36] Significantly, a place-name Nehhem has been noted in northern Yemen,[37] where two altar inscriptions from approximately 600 B.C.E. (the time of Lehi) also mention the name.[38]

The land of Jershon, like other Book of Mormon names, follows the practice of the King James version of the Bible in transliterating Hebrew *yod* as *j*. It evidently derives from the root *yrš*, meaning "to inherit," with the suffix *-ôn* that denotes place-names. Significantly, the name appears in the context of inheritance, in Alma 27:22 ("and this land *Jershon* is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an *inheritance"*), Alma 27:24 ("that they may *inherit* the land *Jershon"*), and Alma 35:14 ("they have lands for their *inheritance* in the land of *Jershon"*).[39]

Other Book of Mormon place names with the *-ôn* suffix include Moron (Ether 7:5, etc.; perhaps "place of myrrh" or "place of bitterness"), Minon (Alma 2:24), and Heshlon (Ether 13:28). The latter may be from the root חשל, which appears only in Deuteronomy 25:18, in connection with Israelite soldiers attacked from behind by the Amalekites. In the Book of Mormon passage, we read of one army pursuing another to the plains of Heshlon.

But there are also personal names with the *-ôn* suffix, formed on analogy with such biblical names as שמעון (Simeon), אמנון (Amnon), and גדעון (Gideon). These include Amulon (Mosiah 23:32, etc.), Amaron (Omni 1:3–4), Ammaron (4 Nephi 1:56–57, 59), Ammoron (Alma 52:3, etc.), and Emron (Moroni 9:2), several of which seem to derive from a root אמר, "to speak."

It is one thing to propose valid Hebrew etymologies for these names. More significant is the fact that some non-biblical Book of Mormon names are now attested in ancient Jewish texts. For example, the name of the prophet Alma, long attacked by critics as feminine in form in both Spanish and Hebrew (if written עלמה), is now known from one of the Bar Kochba documents, where we read of one אלמא בן יהודה.[40] It is also known from the medieval place-name עלמא in Eretz Israel.[41] Alma is also attested as a masculine personal name at Ebla.[42] The final *aleph*[43] suggests that the name may be hypocoristic.[44]

The name of Lehi, the first prophet of the Book of Mormon, is known as a biblical place-name (Judges 15:9, 14, 19). The name of his wife, Sariah, closely resembles biblical Sarah, but is more closely related to the biblical name שריה, generally vocalized as Seraiah, a masculine name (e.g., 2 Samuel 8:17). A document from Elephantine mentions one שריה ברת הושע,[45] clearly the name of a woman. Based on the Book of Mormon spelling, we recommend that the name be vocalized as Saryah.[46]

Recently, John Gee, Matthew P. Roper, and I have looked at additional Book of Mormon names that are unknown from the Bible but are attested in ancient Hebrew inscriptions.[47] Significantly, most of them are known from seals and bullae dating to the approximate time when Lehi is said to have left Jerusalem.

The first of these names to come to our attention was אחא, represented as Aha in the Book of Mormon (Alma 16:5), being a hypocoristic form of אחיה(ו) (1 Kings 11:29–30, etc.). Known from several Hebrew inscriptions,[48] it is but one of a number of attested hypocoristic Hebrew names with a suffixed *aleph*.[49] One of these is אבשא, on a pre-exilic seal housed in the Hecht Museum in Haifa.[50] It seems to be the same as the Semitic name *'bš'* known from the famous wall relief in the tomb of Khnum-hotep III at Beni Hasan, Egypt, and dating to the nineteenth century B.C. We suggest that the Hebrew name corresponds to the Book of Mormon name Abish (Alma 19:16).

Another hypocoristic form is ירם, known from several Hebrew inscriptions, including a seventh-century B.C.E. seal found in Egypt, a jug inscription from Tel esh-Shariᶜah, and an ostracon and bulla in the Moussaieff collection. Evidently the shortened form of ירמיהו, it can be compared to the Book of Mormon name Jarom (Jarom 1:1, 14).

One of the Book of Mormon scribes was named Chemish (Omni 1:8–10). His name is apparently related to that of the Ammonite god Chemosh, which appears as the theophoric[51] element in a number of ancient inscriptions. But the form כמש is also known as the name of a man or woman on a seal in the Israel Museum,[52] though unattested as a personal name in the Bible. The vocalization of the Book of Mormon names corresponds both with that in Jeremiah 48:7 (though the King James Bible that Joseph Smith read has Chemosh) and in the Ebla tablets (cf. also Carchemish).

CONCLUSION

And on it goes. There are many more things that one could say about Book of Mormon names, but what I have presented here will give you an idea of the direction being taken. The next step will be the completion of the rather extensive onomastic study currently being prepared at Brigham Young University and in which I am pleased to play a role.

FURTHER READING

By Study and Also by Faith, Volume 2, edited by John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1990.

Goff, Alan. "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom," *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before,* edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1991.

Tvedtnes, John A. "What's in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 8/2, 1996.

NOTES

1. An excellent source of information on this topic is Terryl L. Givens' book *Viper on the Hearth* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1997).

2. Thomas W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 13 (December 1909–April 1910) and 17 (July–October 1914, December 1914).

3. Sidney B. Sperry, "The Book of Mormon as Translation English," *Improvement Era* (March 1935), and "Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* (October 1954); E. Craig Bramwell, "Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi," unpublished M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University (1960); M. Deloy Pack, "Possible Lexical Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon (Words of Mormon–Moroni)," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University (1973); Angela M. Crowell, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," *Zarahemla Record* 17–18 (Summer and Fall 1982); Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences for the Book of Mormon," *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation,* edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988); John W. Welch, David Fox, Roger Keller, Paul Hoskisson, Deloy Pack, Robert Smith, and Bruce Warren "Words and Phrases," in ibid., 282–285; John L. Sorenson, Angela Crowell, and Allen J. Christensen, "Parallelism, Merismus, and Difrasismo," in ibid., 80–82; Gail Call, "Antenantiosis in the Book of Mormon," in ibid., 96–97; Larry Childs, "Epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon," in ibid., 165–166; Donald W. Parry, "Antithetical Parallelism in the Book of Mormon," in Welch, ibid.; Parry, "Climactic Forms in the Book of Mormon," in ibid., 290–292; John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994); Kevin L. Barney, "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994); Royal Skousen, "Hebraic Elements in the Language of the Book of Mormon," FARMS Update 115, *Insights* (December 1997), republished as "Hebraic Conditionals in the Book of Mormon," in John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999); Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (Spring and Fall 1994); Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 15–81. My own works on the subject include: "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey," *BYU Studies* 11/1 (Autumn 1970); "The Language of my Father," *The New Era,* May 1971; "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," FARMS Study TV–81 (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1983); "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," *Isaiah and the Prophets,* edited by Monte S. Nyman (Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, in cooperation with Bookcraft, 1984); I Have a Question: "Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?" *The Ensign*, October 1986, revised version published in *A Sure Foundation: Answers to Difficult Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988); "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon,* edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1991); "Variantes de Isaias en el Libro de Mormon," *El Libro de Mormon Ante la Critica,* edited by Josue Sanchez (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1992); "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," *Witness* 77 (Summer 1992); "Vineyard or Olive Orchard?" *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5,* edited by Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1994); "Faith and Truth," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (Fall 1994); "A Visionary Man," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (Fall 1997), republished in

Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, edited by John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999); "The Remnant of Joseph," FARMS Update 137, *Insights* August 2000; "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*; Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999).

4. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 10/1 (Autumn 1969); "A Study Relating Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon to Chiasmus in the Old Testament, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek and Latin Authors," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University (1970). See also his "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in Sorenson and Thorne, *Rediscovering*; "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (Fall 1995); "Chiasmus in Helaman 6:7–13," in Welch, *Reexploring*.

5. John W. Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981; reprinted by Research Press, 1998).

6. Ibid., 8.

7. Parry is co-editor with Frank Moore Cross Jr. of one of the Samuel scrolls from Qumran (4QSama) and co-editor with Elisha Qimron of Brill's *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1Qisa)*.

8. Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).

9. Donald W. Parry, "Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* 19 (October 1989): 58–61.

10. FARMS also sponsored two symposia on the Dead Sea Scrolls and prepared the proceedings thereof, which were published by Brill.

11. Douglas Robinson, *Who Translates: Translator Subjectivities Beyond Reason* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 2001).

12. Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists* (Princeton University, 1994), 573 (note 19) and *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton University Press, 1998), xii–xiii, 21. For details, see my "Jewish Seafaring and the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/2 (1998).

13. Patai, *Jewish Seafaring*, 171–175, John M. Lundquist's appendix, "Biblical Seafaring and the Book of Mormon."

14. Professor Flusser also acknowledged Joseph Smith as a prophet, but only insofar as his translation of the Book of Mormon was concerned. He stopped short of accepting Smith's other writings.

15. I later expanded one of my papers, which was published as "Burial as a Return to the Womb in Ancient Near Eastern Belief," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Archaeology* 152 (March 1983).

16. 1 Nephi 1:2.

17. Mormon 9:32–33.

18. William F. Albright to Grant S. Heward, Baltimore, Maryland, 25 July 1966. I am grateful to Boyd Peterson, who collected correspondence from the files of Albright, Klaus Baer, and others, for bringing this to my attention.

19. An *ostracon* (the singular version of *ostraca*) denotes a pottery shard with writing. Ostraca were the scratch paper of ancient times.

20. I discussed the importance of the Arad finds in my article "Linguistic Implications of the Tel Arad Ostraca," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 127 (October 1971), which also discusses earlier publications on the influence of Egyptian writing on the Hebrew language. For more recent studies, see John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, "Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (Fall 1996), republished in Welch and Thorne, *Pressing Forward*; and John Gee and John A. Tvedtnes, "Ancient Manuscripts Fit Book of Mormon Pattern," *Insights*, February 1999.

21. In *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 141 (December 1977).

22. A *bulla* (the singular form of *bullae*) denotes a seal impression made in wax or clay. While not many seals have survived since biblical times, even more bullae have been found.

23. John W. Welch, "What Was a 'Mosiah'?" in Welch, *Reexploring*.

24. See especially Paul Y. Hoskisson, "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," *By Study and Also by Faith,* Volume 2, edited by John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1990).

25. John Gee, "A Note on the Name *Nephi*," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (Fall 1992); "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name *Nephi*," in Welch and Thorne, *Pressing Forward*.

26. Gordon C. Thomasson, "What's in a Name? Book of Mormon Language, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3 (Spring 1994).

27. John A. Tvedtnes, "What's in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 8/2 (1996).

28. *Gentillic* denotes an adjective deriving from a proper name (of either a person or a geographical location). Hence, "Israelite" is the gentillic of "Israel," while "American" is the gentillic of "America."

29. For example, in the Bible, we have Shulamit, from the place-name Shulam (Song of Songs 6:13); Shelomit (Leviticus 24:11; 1 Chronicles 3:19; 23:9, 18), Jehudi (Yehudi, Jeremiah 36:14, 21, 23), and Shelomi (Numbers 34:27).

30. Compare also the name of a land, Melek, in Alma 8:3.

31. Robert F. Smith and Benjamin Urrutia, "New Information About Mulek, Son of the King," in Welch, *Reexploring*, 142–144. The name Malkiyahu is known from two ostraca from Arad. David Seely has objected that the vocalic change from Malkiyahu to Mulek is untenable for a hypocoristic form, but I have countered by noting the correspondence between the hypocoristic form of Baruch ben Neriah in the Bible and the name Berekhiyahu ben Neryahu, known from a seal from the Hecht collection now in the Israel Museum. See Seely's review of Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993), 311–312 and my

comments in "What's in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 39, n. 7.

32. Jacob 7:26.

33. Alma 13:23.

34. Some have privately objected that this explanation is unlikely because the term *kômer* is always used in the Old Testament in reference to false priests (2 Kings 23:5; Hosea 10:5; Zephaniah 1:4), while the word *kôh'n* is used to denote Israelite priests. But this objection fails to note that both terms are used together in the Zephaniah passage. It seems more likely that the term *kômer* was simply used to denote a priest who was not of the tribe of Levi, while *kôhen* in all cases refers to a Levitic priest.

35. 1 Nephi 16:34.

36. 1 Nephi 16:35. See Alan Goff, "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom," *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before,* edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1991).

37. See Ross T. Christensen, "The Place Called Nahom," *Ensign* (August 1978), 73; Warren P. and Michaela J. Aston, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, "Lehi's Trail and Nahom Revisted," in John W. Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1992).

38. S. Kent Brown, "'The Place That Was Called Nahom:' New Light from Ancient Yemen," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999).

39. Zarahemla, Cumorah, and Jershon are discussed in 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 (Fall 1997), republished in Welch and Thorne, *Pressing Forward.*

40. Yigael Yadin, "Expedition D–The Cave of the Letters," *Israeli Exploration Journal* 12 (1962): 250, 253; *Bar Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971), 176–7, 253. Hugh Nibley first noted the tie between the Bar Kochba document and Alma of the Book of Mormon in his review of Yadin's book in *BYU Studies* 14 (Autumn 1973); see also his *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret and FARMS, 1989), 282, 310. For the latest study, see David K. Geilman, "5/6Hev 44 Bar Kokhba," in M. Gerald Bradford, *Ancient Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 39 and Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 72–73.

41. Several medieval rabbis visited the town of Alma, which they indicated was still inhabited by Jews, though the country was under Arab domination. The site is mentioned in the writings of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited in 1163 C.E.; Rabbi Samuel ben Samson, who visited in 1210 in company with Rabbi Jonathan the priest; Rabbi Jacob, who spent the years 1238–1244 in Eretz Israel; Isaac Chelo, who visited in 1334; and Rabbi Judah, who visited in 1522. From archaeological evidence, the town was occupied during biblical and talmudic times and several prominent rabbis of the first cen-

tury C.E. are buried there. Excavations on the site have uncovered a synagogue of the third century, rock-hewn tombs, and various brief Hebrew inscriptions carved in stone. The ancient site is comprised within the modern Israeli moshav Almah, in the far north of Israel, north of the city of Safed, and near the Lebanese border. While the name of the modern moshav is spelled עלמה, like the Hebrew word for "young woman," the name of the ancient town has a different spelling, עלמא. The aleph/ayin interchange was already known in Hebrew.

42. Terrence L. Szink, "Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 81 (1999): 70.

43. *Aleph* is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In Greek it is translated as *alpha*.

44. *Hypocoristic* names are shortened forms, usually omitting the divine name. For example, "Mike" would be hypocoristic for "Michael," leaving off the divine element *El*.

45. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (Fall 1993): 196–200, reprinted in Welch and Thorne, *Pressing Forward*, 6–10.

46. For a discussion, see the section "Seeking Agreement on the Meaning of Book of Mormon Names," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000), which includes Paul Y. Hoskisson's "Lehi and Sariah" with comments by Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Dana M. Pike, and John A. Tvedtnes, and a response to the comments by Hoskisson. Pike, one of my former students, is on the international translation team for the Dead Sea Scrolls.

47. See John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew P. Roper, "Further Evidence for Book of Mormon Names," FARMS Update 131, *Insights*, December 1999; and John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew P. Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000).

48. The name appears on several Hebrew ostraca (Samaria Ostracon 51, Ostracon 1543/1 from Khirbet el-Meshash, Arad ostraca 49, 67, and 74), on four jar stamps (two from Tel el-Judeideh and two from Khirbet Rabud), and on a Hebrew bulla found in Jerusalem. It is also known from earlier Canaanite arrowheads.

49. For examples, see Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," 50. See also Kent P. Jackson, "Ammonite Personal Names in the Context of the West Semitic Onomasticon," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday,* edited by C.L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983).

50. Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 66–67.

51. *Theophoric* is an adjective denoting a divine name ("God" or "Lord") used as part of a personal name.

52. Avigad and Sass, *West Semitic Stamp Seals*, 380.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Tvedtnes is associate director of research at the BYU Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. He earned a BA in anthropology, a graduate certificate in Middle East area studies, an MA in linguistics, and an MA in Hebrew at the University of Utah and did postgraduate work at the University of California (Berkeley) and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He taught for seventeen years at the University of Utah and the Salt Lake and Jerusalem centers of Brigham Young University. He has published eight books and more than 200 articles and is associate editor of the Ancient Texts and Mormon Studies series. While many of his writings have appeared in books, magazines, and journals for a Latter-day Saint audience, some of his works have been published by the University of Utah, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Pontifical Biblical Institute, and the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. He is a convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has served in numerous positions, including a full-time mission in France and Switzerland and stake and district missions in Utah and Israel.

ABOUT FAIR

The Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR) is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing well-documented answers to criticisms of LDS doctrine, belief and practice. Seeking to assist the lay member and scholar alike to respond to intentional and well-meaning attacks on individual faith, FAIR helps publish articles and books that defend the LDS church, operates a Web site that receives thousands of visitors each day, and sponsors research projects and conferences that provide the LDS scholarly community an outlet for getting information into the hands of the average member. With a 501-C3 tax exempt status from the IRS, FAIR is funded by the generosity of its members and contributors, now grown to more than 1,000.

To learn more about FAIR, visit our Web site:

http://www.fairlds.org

You can also write to us at:

FAIR
PO Box 491677
Redding, CA 96049