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# Place of Crushing: The Literary Function of Heshlon in Ether 13:25-31

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# Place of Crushing: The Literary Function of Heshlon in Ether 13:25-31

**Matthew L. Bowen and Pedro Olavarria**

**Abstract**: *The name* Heshlon*, attested once (in Ether 13:28), as a toponym in the Book of Mormon most plausibly denotes "place of crushing." The meaning of* Heshlon *thus becomes very significant in the context of Ether 13:25–31, which describes the crushing or enfeebling of Coriantumr's armies and royal power. This meaning is also significant in the wider context of Moroni's narrative of the Jaredites' destruction. Fittingly, the name* Heshlon *itself serves as a literary turning point in a chiastic structure which describes the fateful reversal of Coriantumr's individual fortunes and the worsening of the Jaredites' collective fortunes. Perhaps Moroni, who witnessed the gradual crushing and destruction of the Nephites, mentioned this name in his abridgement of the Book of Ether on account of the high irony of its meaning in view of the Jaredite war of attrition which served as precursor to the destruction of the Nephites.*

## Toponymy and Toponymic Wordplay

The observation that the Book of Mormon repeatedly correlates the name Jershon and the land given as a place of "inheritance" (cf. Heb. **yrš*)[1] to the people of Ammon (see Alma 27:22–26; 35:14; 43:22, 25), has laid a foundation not only for more thoroughgoing studies of onomastic wordplay in the Book of Mormon,[2] but also for a wider study of toponymy

1 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.

2 On this subject see, e.g., recently Matthew L. Bowen, "The Faithfulness of Ammon," *Religious Educator* 15/2 (2014): 65–89; Matthew L. Bowen, "'And There Wrestled a Man with Him' (Genesis 32:24): Enos's Adaptations of the Onomastic Wordplay of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 151–160; Matthew L. Bowen, "Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 21/2 (2012): 2–13. For a study of wordplay on a

in the Book of Mormon.[3] In a number of instances, Joseph Smith's English language translation renders toponyms wholly (e.g., Bountiful, Desolation)[4] or partly in English (e.g., Desolation of Nehors),[5] perhaps so that the narrative function of the toponyms and events pertaining to them are clearer to the audience. The translated toponyms Bountiful[6] and Desolation serve important literary functions: in the former instance, sharpening the contrast between the Arabian Desert through which the Lehites had traveled and the land of "abundance"[7] to which they were providentially led and, in the latter instance, the contrast between the permanently devastated land northward[8] where the Jaredites met their demise and where history began to repeat itself among the Nephites[9] and all of the rest of the land that is repeatedly characterized as "choice above all other lands."[10] Desolation and Bountiful particularly provide contrast to each other in later Nephite toponymy (see Alma 63:5; 3 Nephi 3:23).

Other names like Jershon, however, are transliterated but untranslated. And yet, using our knowledge of the languages that the Book of Mormon writers said they used,[11] we are able to propose reasonable suppositions about their etymology and literary function in the context in

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Book of Mormon personal name turned toponym, see David E. Bokovoy and Pedro A. Olavarria, "Zarahemla: Revisiting the Seed of Compassion," *Insights* 30/5 (2010): 2–3.

3 Toponymy (Greek *topos* "place" + *onoma* "name") is the study of the giving place names (toponyms) and their significance.

4 On the naming of Bountiful on the Arabian peninsula (Old World Bountiful) see 1 Nephi 17:5–6; On the naming of Desolation, see Alma 22:30–32 (cf. Alma 46:17; 50:34; 63:5; Ether 7:6), Note how ominously Desolation functions in Mormon's narrative in Mormon 3:5, 7; 4:1–19. We submit that Heshlon functions similarly in Ether 13:28–29.

5 See Alma 16:11.

6 I.e., "Bountiful" and "Desolation" are translations of proper names in the underlying text of the Book of Mormon that do not appear in an untranslated, transliterated form in the Book of Mormon.

7 The naming of Old World Bountiful is explained twice in 1 Nephi 17:5–6 in terms of the land's "**much** fruit": "we did come to the land which was called Bountiful, because of its **much** fruit and also wild honey (v.5); "and we called the place Bountiful, because of its **much** fruit" (v.6). Nephi further notes that they sailed from this land with **much** fruits … and honey in **abundance**" (1 Nephi 18:6).

8 Cf. Omni 1:22; Mosiah 8:8; 21:26; Alma 22:30; Ether 11:6.

9 Mormon 6:15.

10 The land of promise is so described in 1 Nephi 2:20; 13:30; 2 Nephi 1:5; Ether 1:38, 42; 2:7, 10, 15; 9:20; 10:28; 13:2.

11 I.e., Hebrew and Egyptian: see especially 1 Nephi 1:2; Mormon 9:32–33.

which they occur. Thousands of newly converted Lamanites had recently entered into a covenant with the Lord and needed not merely a place of refuge from their unconverted brethren who threatened them, but a land — or a place — of inheritance, a *Jershon*,[12] such as had historically accompanied covenant-making by the patriarchs and ancient Israel including the Nephites themselves. The name itself functions in the Lamanite conversion narrative (and later)[13] as a sign that the Nephites themselves recognized and approved of the covenant that Ammon's converts had made, even though they apparently felt that they would be unable to fully assimilate them into the population of Zarahemla (see Alma 27:21–24).

In this brief article, we suggest a similar literary phenomenon involving the name Heshlon in Ether 13:28–29. Moroni mentions the plains of Heshlon as the scene of a great reversal — both a victory and defeat for Coriantumr that epitomized not only the fluctuating and worsening fortunes of Coriantumr personally, but of those of the Jaredites collectively, all of whom had rejected the prophet Ether's call to repentance. The Nephites of Mosiah$_2$'s time, for whom flight from the land of Nephi and the decimation of the people of Limhi were fresh memories, probably would have appreciated the significance of military events at a place that connoted "(place of) crushing." Moroni himself in later years would not have failed to appreciate the ironic parallels between battles that he witnessed during his own lifetime — fleeting victories over the Lamanites, followed by the increasingly devastating defeats at the hands of the Lamanites[14] that led to the destruction of the Nephites as a nation (see especially Moroni's comments in Mormon 8:6-7). Like Mormon's ominous use of the toponym translated "Desolation" in Mormon 3:5, 7; 4:1–19, the untranslated toponym "Heshlon," serves as a kind of literary cenotaph for what eventually happened to both the Jaredites and Nephites due to their failure to heed prophetic warnings: they were crushed and ultimately destroyed.

12 Jershon is also attested as a toponym in the story of Abraham in the Book of Abraham (see Abraham 2:16–18, and the accompanying footnote).

13 See Alma 27:22–26; 35:14; 43:22, 25.

14 The story of crushing of the Nephite nation is largely the narrative of Mormon 1–7.

## "Heshlon" as an Israelite/Nephite Toponym

Like Gilgal,[15] Heshlon is a toponym of Semitic origin which the Nephites either newly applied to their geographic environs or adapted as an alteration or updating of existing Jaredite toponymy.[16] Both names occur together within the same verses and within the same context. Hugh Nibley classed Heshlon with the names Emron, Jashon, Moron, etc. on the basis of the archaic Semitic – *ôn* termination.[17] According to grammatical rules preserved in Hebrew, the – *ôn* termination on both personal and place names was "a particular nominal or adjectival form serving as an appellative"[18] that "describ[ed] some feature [or] aspect of the [site]"[19] named.

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15 Cf. the Ugaritic personal name (*bn*) *glgl*. See Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Analecta Orientalia 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), glossary #577, text 2068:13.

16 Like many biblical names, Gilgal is an older, apparently Semitic toponym that was later adopted and adapted into Hebrew. Compare Judges 5:9, where Gilgal is etiologized in terms of the Hebrew verb **gll*, to "roll away." John A. Tvedtnes ("A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* No. 141 [December 1977]) suggests that toponyms in the Book of Ether, except for a few (e.g., except names accompanied by formulae such as "which was called," "which they called") were Nephite in origin. Robert F. Smith, however, suggests that "Nephite scribes may have altered such toponyms to suit their updated understanding of cognate name-formation. The Arabs did this with many former Hebrew toponyms in Palestine as they moved in and took over" (personal communication, December 2014). Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) provides numerous examples of this phenomenon.

17 Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (ed. John W. Welch; Collected Works of Hugh W. Nibley [hereafter CWHN] 5; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 38; Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (ed. John W. Welch; 3rd ed.; CWHN 6; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 81. On the archaic Northwest Semitic nominalizing termination *-on*, see Arthur E. Cowley and Emil Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), § 85s-v; Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namensgebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928; reprint Hildesheim, 1966), 56; William F. Albright, *The Vocalization of the Egyptian Syllabic Orthography* (American Oriental Society 5; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934; reprint Millwood, N.Y., 1974), 10:12, cited by Hugh W. Nibley, "The Book of Mormon as a Mirror of the East," *Improvement Era*, 51 (April 1948): 249 = Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert* (CWHN 5), 131.

18 Anson F. Rainey, "The Toponymics of Eretz-Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 231 (Oct., 1978): 5.

19 Ibid., 4. On Hebrew – *ôn* names in the Book of Mormon, see Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "Notes and Communications: The Hebrew Origin of Some

John Tvedtnes, who has suggested that the – *ôn* suffix in these names denotes "place of X,"[20] suggests that "Heshlon" is formed from the Hebrew verb **ḥāšal* as attested in Deuteronomy 25:18,[21] where it is stated that the Amalekites attacked "the crushed" or "the feeble" (KJV), i.e., "the stragglers" (*hanneḥĕšālîm*),[22] at the rear of Israel's hosts. Here **ḥāšal* is used is in a military context.

In addition to the attestation of **ḥāšal* in Deuteronomy, the Aramaic cognate *ḥāšēl* is attested in Daniel 2:40: "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces (and subdueth) [*wĕḥāšēl*] all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." The KJV translates *ḥāšēl* as "subdue," but its use as a synonym of **dqq* ("break in pieces" or "crush in small pieces"[23]) indicates that a better translation would be "(and crushes)."[24] The context here is also a military one.

Marcus Jastrow suggests that postbiblical Hebrew *ḥāšal* means "to scrape off, polish; to reduce" and that in the durative (Piel) stem, it means to "crush" or "batter."[25] In support of this he cites Koheleth Rabbah 1:6,[26] a midrashic text which describes how the Lord "breaks," "crushes," or "weakens" (*mĕḥaššĕlô*, i.e., blunts) the force (or strength) of the wind by means of the mountains.[27] This extra-biblical attestation of

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Book of Mormon Place Names," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 258.

20 See John A. Tvedtnes, I Have a Question, *Ensign* (October 1986): 65. "Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?" See additionally Tvedtnes, "What's in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 41; 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: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:129; Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Book of Mormon Names," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:187.

21 John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon," paper presented at the Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, August 2001. Reprinted by FAIR (2002): 4 (http://www.fairlds.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/tvedtnes-HebrewNames.pdf).

22 Cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 362. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.

23 See *HALOT*, 1855.

24 *HALOT* (p. 1881–1882) defines *ḥāšēl* as to "crush."

25 Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1996), 511.

26 The Koheleth Rabbah, or Ecclesiastes Rabbah, is a rabbinic midrash of (i.e., commentary on) the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes.

27 Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 511.

*ḥāšal* has possible relevance for Moroni's description of what happens to Coriantumr at Heshlon, whose armies' strength was crushed, enfeebled, or blunted to such a degree that Coriantumr thereafter had no power to "constrain" the Jaredites from shedding blood *en masse* (Ether 13:31, critical text; see further below).[28]

Intriguingly, the Sifre Devarim (or Sifre Deuteronomy), a rabbinic exegetical commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy — commenting specifically on the *hanneḥĕšālîm* mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:18 — interprets this word as a reference to "the children of men who have withdrawn themselves from the ways of the Existence [i.e., the Lord] and have been crushed away from underneath the [protective] wings of the Cloud."[29] The Jaredite nation, like the Nephite nation, was crushed and destroyed precisely because they had withdrawn themselves from the Spirit of the Lord, and the Lord had thus withdrawn his Spirit from them (cf. Mosiah 2:36; Helaman 4:24; 6:35; 13:8; Mormon 2:26; Ether 11:13).

Jastrow glosses the Targumic Aramaic term *ḥăšal* or *ḥăšîl* as "to furbish, forge, or hammer" something. A *ḥāšlāʾ* was a "furbisher" or "smith" with the secondary sense, "to plan"[30] (cf. modern English, "forge a plan" or "hammer out a plan").[31] Here too the root **ḥšl* suggests the action or product of the action of striking or dealing a blow.

Just as importantly, Hebrew **ḥāšal* and Aramaic *ḥāšēl* are both cognate with the Akkadian verb *ḫašālu*, which means "to crush, to shatter"[32] As a military term, it means to "crush" in the sense of "destroy"[33]

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28 Following Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 788; see also Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Six: 3 Nephi 19 – Moroni 10, Addenda* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2009), 3822, 3858; Royal Skousen, *Analysis of the Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 490–91.

29 See Sifre Devarim 296 (or Sifre Deuteronomy 296) "*ʾlʾ bny ʾdm šnmškw mdrky mqwm wnḥšlw mṭḥt knpy hʿnn*" = "… but [they are] the children of men who have withdrawn themselves from the ways of the Existence [i.e., the Lord] and have been crushed away from under the (protective) wings of the Cloud." Cf. also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 511.

30 Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 511.

31 Ibid.

32 *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago, Volume 6: Ḫ [ḥet*], ed. A. Leo Oppenheimer, Erica Reiner, et al (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956), 137.

33 Jeremy Black, Andrew George, Nicholas Postgate, eds., *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (SANTAG 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 110.

— e.g., Ishtar "crushes the unsubmissive."[34] It can be used statively of a person who "is crushed."[35] We can say, then, with some assurance that Hebrew *ḥāšal* meant to "crush" with the idea of making feeble (enfeeble) and that its usage was, at least sometimes, a military one.

Thus, Heshlon (with the toponymic – *ôn* suffix) would mean "place of crushing," i.e., "place of (a) crushing" and would make sense as a Semitic, Hebrew, and even a Nephite name. Although its sole attestation in the Book of Mormon is in the story of Coriantumr and the destruction of the Jaredites, it appears with the name Gilgal, which as noted above, is a Semitic name. Moroni, relying on Mosiah$_2$'s earlier translation (see especially Mosiah 28:11–19) or his own memory of that record,[36] frequently uses Israelite/Nephite toponymy rather than Jaredite (e.g., Gilgal, Ramah),[37] or at least updates Jaredite toponymy.

## Beating and Crushing: The Repetition of "Beat" and "Heshlon"

By the time Ether came to Coriantumr and uttered his prophetic ultimatum (i.e., repent and be spared or otherwise be destroyed, Ether 13:20–21), Coriantumr and his sons had already "fought much and bled much" (13:19). Immediately thereafter, the name "Heshlon" (a *hapax legomenon*)[38] occurs within the greatest concentration of the word *beat*, i.e. "defeat" in a military sense, anywhere in the scriptures.

The word *beat* (i.e., "attack and destroy," cf. Heb. *nākâ* in the causative stem)[39] occurs as a military term twenty times in the Book of Mormon,

34 Hayim ben Yosef Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological, Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalence with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2009), 122.

35 Ibid.

36 Daniel B. Sharp and Matthew L. Bowen are working on the possibility that Moroni composed his Book of Ether in part or in whole from memory (study forthcoming).

37 *Ramah* denotes "height" in Hebrew; Cf. also Akkadian *ramû* "to lay, cast down; to set up" = Hebrew *rāmâ* "to throw, cast, shoot" (Exodus 15:1, 21; Jeremiah 4:29; Psalm 78:9). See Tawil, *Akkadian Lexical Companion*, 366 (citing *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago, Volume 14: R,* ed. Erica Reiner and Martha T. Roth[ Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1999], 133a).

38 Greek *hapax legomenon* ("said once") denotes a word or grammatical construction that is attested only once in a given context (i.e., in a language or work).

39 In the KJV, the verb *beat* is used in the military same sense only once, 2 Kings 13:25: "Three times did Joash **beat him** [*hikkāhû*] [i.e., Ben-Hadad], and recovered the cities of Israel." In that passage, a hiphil form of the verb *nākâ* (literally, "smite" = "attack, attack and destroy [a company]" is used; see Francis Brown, S. R. Driver,

first in Mosiah 21:8.[40] Mormon uses *beat* as a military technical term nine times (eight times in his personal record, Mormon 1–8, and once in Mosiah 21:8); Moroni uses *beat* eight times in Ether compared to only one by other Book of Mormon writer — Helaman[1] once (Alma 57:22). Tellingly, Mormon and Moroni together account for nineteen out of twenty uses of *beat* as a military technical term. This is unsurprising considering the relentless "beatings" — military victories and defeats — that they witnessed, these culminating in the final crushing and "extinction"[41] of their people.

It must be significant that the verb *beat* occurs in its largest cluster here: five times in Ether 13:23–30 (13:23–24, 28–30). We suggest that the name Heshlon — "place of crushing" — has been juxtaposed with a verb translated "beat" in a fivefold repetition as, perhaps, a synonymic play involving Heshlon and its root meaning, "(place of) crushing" in order to emphasize just how disastrous this series of battles was for the Jaredite nation: Coriantumr and his opponents "beat" and "crushed" each other so severely that Coriantumr's royal power became fragile and his opponents became too feeble to overthrow him. Thus the Jaredite bloodshed thereafter became unstoppable (Ether 13:31). The nation was doomed at Heshlon and Gilgal, as a close reading of the structure of Ether 13:25–31 also suggests.

## Heshlon within the Chiastic Structure of Ether 13:25–31

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and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1907; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996], 645–46). The hiphil form of the verb *nākâ* is extremely common in the Hebrew Bible, however, and it is used often in the military sense of to "attack and destroy." It is plausible, if not probable, that it remained the Nephite term "beat" in the sense of to "defeat" militarily.

40 Mormon recounts that king Limhi's people lobbied him (Mosiah 21:6) to go up to battle against the Lamanites who were harshly oppressing them and that they did so with disastrous results: "And it came to pass that the Lamanites did **beat** them, and drove them back, and slew many of them" (21:8). This was the first such of three disastrous assaults on the Lamanites (21:10–11). Mormon could appreciate the pathos (21:9–10) of Limhi and his people's predicament.

41 "Extinct" in fulfillment of Alma 45:11, 14: "Yea, and then shall they see wars and pestilences, yea, famines and bloodshed, even until the people of Nephi shall become extinct … But whosoever remaineth, and is not destroyed in that great and dreadful day, shall be numbered among the Lamanites, and shall become like unto them, all, save it be a few who shall be called the disciples of the Lord; and them shall the Lamanites pursue even until they shall become extinct. And now, because of iniquity, this prophecy shall be fulfilled."

Although the structure of any text can be variously arranged and diagrammed,[42] Ether 13:25–31 exhibits a remarkable degree of chiasticity. Heshlon can be viewed as the turning point of this chiasm:

**A** a Now there began to war **upon all the face of the land**
b. **Every man**
c. with his band
d. fighting for that which he desired
c′ And there were robbers,
b′ and in fine, **all** manner of wickedness
a′ **upon all the face of the land**.
**B** a And it came to pass that Coriantumr was exceedingly angry with Shared,
b and he went against him with his armies to **battle**
a′ and they did *meet* in great anger
b′and they did *meet* in **the valley of Gilgal** and the **battle**
a″ became exceedingly sore
b″ And it came to pass that Shared **fought** against him for **the space of three days**.
**C** And it came to pass that **Coriantumr beat him**,
**D** and did pursue him until he came to **the plains X of Heshlon**.
**D′** And it came to pass that Shared gave him battle again upon **the plains**;
**C′** and behold, he **did beat Coriantumr**,
**B′** and drove him back again to the **valley of Gilgal**
b″ And Coriantumr gave Shared **battle** again in the **valley of Gilgal**
a‴ in which he beat Shared and slew him
a‴ and Shared wounded Coriantumr in his thigh
b‴ That he did not go to **battle** again **for the space of** two years
**A′** b″ In the which time **all the people**
a′ **upon the face of the land**
d′ were a[43] shedding blood
b‴ and there was **none** to constrain[44] them.

42 For example, Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2007), 546, proposes a polysyndetic arrangement based on the repetition of *and*.

43. Following Royal Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 788; see also Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6:3822, 3858; ibid., 1:490 – 91.

44. See note 28.

*A-A′*

The chiastic structure of Ether 13:25–31 is bracketed with the phrases *upon all the face of the land* and *upon the face of the land*. The phrases *Every man* and *all manner of iniquity* correspond to the phrases *all the people* and *there was none to restrain them* and are linked by the synonyms and antonyms *every*, *all*, and *none*. Ether 13:25–26 evidences a small self-contained chiasm, the center phrase of which, *fighting for that which he desired*, emphasizes the nature of the pandemic conflict during Ether's and Coriantumr's time. There is elemental progression at the end of the chiasm (A′) as "every man" becomes "all the people," "fighting for that which he desired" worsens to "were a shedding blood" and a ubiquitous national amorality ("**every** man", "**all** manner of iniquity") is amplified by the fact that now "there was **none** to constrain them" — not Coriantumr's authority and still less the Spirit of God.

*B-B′*

These elements emphasize two different "battle[s]" that were fought in "the valley of Gilgal." These elements also describe a time factor attached to both battles — i.e., that Shared "fought" Coriantumr "for the space of three days" and that after the second battle, which culminated in Shared's death and a near-mortal wound for Coriantumr, the latter "did not go to battle again for the space of three years." The great anger described in B bears awful fruit in the death of Shared and in Coriantumr's massive blood loss in B′. The "space of three days" mentioned in B becomes a "space of two years" in B′.

*C-C′*

Coriantumr's defeat of ("beat[ing]") Shared in C is matched by the unexpected defeat of ("did beat") Coriantumr by Shared in C′. Narrative progression in the chiasm is marked not only by the opposite outcome of the second battle, but by Shared's driving Coriantumr back to the "the valley of Gilgal," which is mentioned twice in epistrophe (repeated endings to clauses) in C′.

*D-D′*

The *D-D′* elements set up "the plains" as the scene of the battle that will dramatically change and worsen the fortunes of Coriantumr and the Jaredite nation as a whole. A "pursuit" becomes a "battle" upon the plains. And Coriantumr's presumed rout becomes something wholly different from what he imagined.

*Chiastic Center (X): Heshlon*

The name Heshlon in the text (Ether 13:28) marks a reversal of the text's structural flow. Appropriately, the battle on the plains of Heshlon

marks a dramatic reversal of Coriantumr's expectations and fortunes. What Coriantumr had hoped would be a final victory over Shared, his archenemy, instead turned into be the crushing or breaking of the strength of his own forces on the plains of Heshlon. Although Coriantumr subsequently again *beats* Shared and his forces again in the valley of Gilgal, Coriantumr is badly wounded and his forces so defeated that he cannot enforce any authority over his kingdom: "all the people upon the face of the land were a shedding blood, and there was none to constrain [i.e., force] them" (Ether 13:31, printer's manuscript). This description reminds us of Moroni's earlier words following the extinction of the Nephites: "the whole face of this land is **one continual round** of murder and bloodshed; and no one knoweth the end of the war" (Mormon 8:8). Perhaps incidentally, but ironically, the name Gilgal, which is repeated three times in Ether 13:27–30 in connection with the name Heshlon, connotes a "circle" or "round," perhaps a "cycle."

Coriantumr and his supporters who had not only rejected Ether's prophecies, but also sought to kill him, begin to reap the consequences of these actions. The mention of "Heshlon" ("place of crushing [defeat]") serves in Ether 13:28 as a didactic inference that the judgments of God as pronounced by a prophet are inescapable. From this point forward, the narrative drives inexorably forward toward the final Jaredite destruction.

Coriantumr cannot and does not escape Ether's prophecy. Although Coriantumr eventually prevails over Shared (13:30), Coriantumr himself is wounded and cannot "constrain" Jaredites on either side of the conflict from their willful shedding of blood (13:31). New archenemies arise in Shared's stead (Lib, Shiz) and deal further defeats to his armies as often as he is able to do the same to them. Before long, the Jaredites on both sides are crushed to extinction in a war of attrition. Unlike Shez, when the Jaredites had previously nearly warred themselves into annihilation, Coriantumr will not be able to "build up again a broken people" (Ether 10:1). The curse is set (Ether 14:1) and the entire nation will be completely destroyed.

## Moroni's Late Literary Use of "Heshlon"

Moroni's late use of the name "Heshlon" in his abridgment of the Jaredite record may owe a literary debt to Mosiah$_2$'s earlier translation of that record, even if Moroni wrote his own account from memory.[45] Moreover, it is possible that the idea of "place of crushing" originally referred to

45 See note 34.

some feature of the topography of that place. It is additionally possible that this toponym was applied to those plains by earlier record-keepers in connection with previous battles. However, one can only speculate on these points.

Nevertheless, naming a place after what occurred there was not uncommon in ancient Israel or among the Nephites (e.g., Judges 15:15–17; Alma 22:30). The open plains (including the plains of Heshlon) are sites of battles in at least four instances in the Book of Mormon.[46] Moreover, one cannot rule out the possibility that a Jaredite name that denoted something like "place of destruction"[47] was rendered "Heshlon" by Mosiah$_2$ and then left transliterated but untranslated by Joseph Smith. The name Heshlon may even constitute an adaptation or updating of a similar Jaredite name.[48] And yet the key point is that the Hebrew root **ḥšl* denotes "crushing" and the affixation of the appellative *– ôn* termination, together with the expected vowel changes to the root, easily produce Heshlon and the meaning, "place of crushing."

In that case, the name Heshlon would have been especially evocative for Nephites, both to Moroni who witnessed the crushing of his nation, but perhaps also to earlier generations of Nephites, including those who lived under the reign of King Mosiah$_2$ some of whom had experienced wars with the Lamanites under King Benjamin, and others of whom had been king Noah's and King Limhi's subjects and had been nearly destroyed in ill-conceived wars. It is certainly clear that Mosiah$_2$'s initial translation of the Jaredite record was a major motivating factor in his and the people's decision to bring monarchy to an end. For them, the names

46 Battles on the open "plains" are mentioned not only here in Ether 13:28–29, but also in Alma 52:20; 62:19 and Ether 14:16.

47 In the Book of Ether, these names come to us through five layers of transmission: written Jaredite histories (Ether's historical sources), Ether's redaction and use of his sources in his own record, Mosiah$_2$'s translation of Ether's record, Moroni's recitation (in whole or in part) of Mosiah$_2$'s translation of his and his father Mormon's abridgment of the Nephite record, and (finally) Joseph's translation of Moroni's account.

48 If the Jaredites were of originally of Semitic/northern Mesopotamian origin (see Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, rev. ed., CWHN 5, 245), then the name Heshlon could conceivably be an adaptation or updating of a similar Jaredite (cf. again Akkadian *ḫašālu* = "crush"), although this far from certain in view of the wider Jaredite onomasticon. Nevertheless, based on evidence from the Hebrew Bible, Ether 1–2 and elsewhere, William Hamblin, "Jaredite Civilization," in Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 435, writes: "it is generally assumed that Jared and his brother originally lived in Mesopotamia."

Heshlon and Desolation (i.e., Hormah,[49] or whatever word was used to represent "desolation" in their language) would have been unambiguous portents of what monarchic evil and covenant disobedience could bring upon them. We likewise can and should consider the portents evident in these names.

## Conclusion

We have made a plausible, if not a compelling case that Heshlon is of Semitic origin, was a toponym whose meaning would have been significant to the Nephites, and would have meant "place of crushing." These observations are significant when we consider Moroni's abridgment of the Jaredite record and its concluding scenes which describe the fulfillment of Ether's prophecies regarding the total destruction of the Jaredite nation. Heshlon, the "place of crushing," sits appropriately at the chiastic center of a block of text which describes the reversal of Coriantumr's fortunes to the great weakening of his power, which eventuated in additional bloodshed and loss of life. If these observations are not amiss, Heshlon represents yet another instance in the Book of Mormon in which *nomen est omen*: the name is the sign.

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49 On Hormah as the Hebrew toponym that possibly represented Desolation in the Book of Mormon, see Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (ed. John W. Welch; 2nd ed.; CWHN 7; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 171. This is another good example of a toponym that derives (at least etiologically) from events that occurred at the place named (cf. Numbers 21:3; Judges 1:17).