The Book of Mormon as a Mirror of the East

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Abstract: This article argues that Book of Mormon proper names are related to Egyptian etymologies.
The Average Man,” wrote the great A. E. Housman, “believes that the text of ancient authors is generally sound, not because he has acquainted himself with the elements of the problem, but because he would feel uncomfortable if he did not believe it.” The Book of Mormon has enjoyed no such popular support. Indeed, the “average man” would like nothing better than to see it thoroughly exposed once and for all; it has made him feel uncomfortable for over a century. What is holding up the show?

For one thing, the Book of Mormon is immune to attack from the West. No matter how much archa-

ological evidence may pile up one way or the other, the fact remains that the Book of Mormon never claims to be telling the story of all the people who ever lived in the western hemisphere. Even within its own limited compass it is, as Professor Sidney B. Sperry has shown, for the greater part “a minority report” and does not deal with various branches of several groups that came from the Old World. Thus where research in America may conceivably bring forth a wealth of evidence to support the Book of Mormon, no findings can be taken as unequivocal evidence against it.

It is a far different story when our book presumes to invade the soil of the East, giving specific names, places, and dates. Here any impostor of the 1820’s would be on dangerous ground indeed. No better handle could be asked for unsparring and rigorous criticism than the outright commitments of the Book of Mormon on matters Egyptian. By harping on the peculiar neo-Egyptian language of the Nephites, by furnishing a list of their personal and place names, by pretending to describe political conflicts originating in the Old World, the author of the Book of Mormon plays right into the hands of modern critics. For the Near East of 600 B.C. is no longer the twilight zone of gorgeous mysteries it was World parallels, and after a few general observations let the reader decide for himself just what significance should be attributed to these parallels.

BOOK OF MORMON

Acting on the recommendation of King Mosiah, who was anxious to avoid a throne controversy, the
The tendency of Book of Mormon names to turn up in definite limited areas and in close association with each other is a strong indication that the resemblances between the Old and New World titles are not accidental.

The chief governor of Egypt was "the high priest of Amon" (or Ammon), his title being in Egyptian "neter hem tep-em"—chief servant (Hem) of the God." Hem is an element in Egyptian proper names and means the same as the extremely common Abdi element in western Asiatic names of the time (cf. the modern Arabic Abdullah, "servant of God"). It is most interesting that the brother of Ammon in the Book of Mormon actually bears the name of Hem. As for Amon (or Ammon), it is the commonest proper name in the Book of Mormon, and also the commonest and most revered name in the Egyptian Empire. Here it is time to point out that the Egyptian Empire at all times during the later period (after 930 B.C.) pretends to embrace Palestine and regard Jerusalem as a dependent. The reverence shown the name of Amon in no way indicates the slightest concession to paganism on the part of the Jews, since Ammon is no less than the Egyptian version of their own universal, one, creator-God, the Great Spirit, who is never conceived to be in animal form nor represented by any image. He first

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appears about 2140 B.C. in southern Egypt, at Thbes, where he seems to have been an importation from western Asia. Can he be the God of Abraham? It is significant that the name first rises to prominence in the years following the time of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt, and at a place where the most famous Jewish colony in Egypt was settled. This colony at Elephantine may have been very ancient, since according to Egyptian records it had been the custom of the people of Palestine and Syria from time immemorial to seek refuge in Egypt and settle in such communities. It is conceded, at any rate, that the colony is a good deal older than the Hebrew records which came from it in the fifth century B.C.; possibly it dates from the middle of the seventh century. This would make it old in the time of Lehi and furnish a possible explanation for the strange tendency of Book of Mormon names to concentrate in Upper Egypt.

A reflection of the Egyptian picture may be detected in the coast cities of Palestine, regularly under Egyptian influence, where government was also by priests and judges, who occasionally usurped the office of king. This happened both at Sidon and Tyre; in the latter city two priestly usurpers bore the name of Ma'tena or Mattena—a name which has a number of variants and strongly suggests the Book of Mormon Mathoni.25

**BOOK OF MORMON**

The experiment with government by priestly judges collapsed, largely due to a rivalry for the chief judgeship among three candidates, all sons of the great chief judge, Pahoran. Their names are Pahoran, Paanchi, and Pacumni.24

**THE OLD WORLD**

Such family rivalry for the office of high priest is characteristic of the Egyptian system, in which the office seems to have been hereditary not by law but by usage.24

The name of Pahoran reflects the eastern Pa-hura, which is "reformed" Egyptian, i.e., a true Egyptian title, but altered in such a way as to adapt it to the Hebrew-Canaanite speech.24 Pahura (also written Pahru) was in Amarna times an Egyptian governor (rabu) of Syria. The same man, or another man with the same name was placed by Pharaoh as governor of the Uba district, with his headquarters at Kumedni24 (cf. the element—Kumen in the Book of Mormon place names).24

Paanchi is simply the well-known Egyptian Paiankh (also rendered Piankhi, Paankh, etc.).24 The first important man to bear the name was none other than the son of the above-mentioned Kherhot. He did not succeed his father on the throne, being content with the all-powerful office of chief priest of Ammon, but his son, Panezem did become king.25 In the middle of the eighth century another Piankhi, a king of Nubia, conquered virtually all of Egypt, and claimed for himself the office of high priest of Ammon at Thbes as well as the title of Pharaoh.24 His successor, when the Assyrians invaded Egypt, in the days of Lehi, fled to a fortified city, as yet unlocated, which bore the name of Kkipor or Kikab,24 a name that strongly suggests the Book of Mormon city-name Gidgiddoni (cf. also Gingham-no).24

Pacumni, the name of the third son, resembles that borne by some of the last priest governors of Egypt, whose names are rendered Pamernech, Pam-nkh, Pamenchies, etc.24 The Greeks (who often furnish the key to the correct reading of Egyptian names) put the gutturals before the nasal, as in the Book of Mormon form, Pachonios.24 The most famous man of the name commanded all the forces of the south, and was also high priest of Horus. At least one other governor-general of Egypt bore the name.24

A striking coincidence is the predominance among both Egyptian and Nephite judge names of the prefix Pa-. In late Egyptian this is extremely common, and has simply the force of the definite article. For the Egyptian chief priests Panezem, Pakebis, and Panas24 we have no Book of Mormon parallel, but from the Nephite list we must not omit the name of Pachus, since, though I have not found it in the limited documents at my disposal, it is perfectly good Egyptian (meaning "he—Amon—is praised"). Both elements occurring frequently in Egyptian proper names. Another Book of Mormon judge, Cezoram, has a name that suggests that of an Egyptian governor of a Syrian city: Chi-zii-ri (Knudtzon, Am. Taf. 41, 2). It should be noted that the above Panezem upon becoming king took the name of Meriamon, which has a Book of Mormon ring, even if we don't read it Moriamon—a perfectly possible variant.

Sidon was the official port through which the Jews traded with Egypt. Since Lehi and his people were in the mercantile business, it is not surprising that Sidon is the only Palestinian city besides Jerusalem whose name figures prominently in Book of Mormon geography. Moreover, since Sidon was the common meeting ground between Hebrew and Egyptian, and since names in both languages occur in the Book of Mormon, one would expect the name of this most popular place to appear in its Egyptian as well as in its Hebrew form. The Egyptian form (Albright's list XXI, B, 4) is Dj-du-na, which is remarkably close to the Book of Mormon personal name Giddonah.

For easier comparison we get the following tentative lists by placing the Old World (OW) words with the New World (NW) or Book of Mormon (BM) words:

Amon (Ammon), (OW), the commonest name in the later Empire; originally from south Egypt: Amon, (BM), the commonest name in the Book of Mormon Amanathobi, (OW), chief of a Canaanite city under Egyptian domination. The name is "reformed" Egyptian: Aminadab, (BM), Nephite missionary in the time of the judges Chiziti, (OW), Egyptian governor of a Syrian city Cezoram, (BM), Nephite chief judge Dj-du-na, (OW). Egyptian name for Sidon

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possibly under the Egyptian auspices
Mathoni, (BM), a Nephite disciple
Sam Tawi, (OW), successor to Nehri, who took the name Sam (uniter) upon becoming king in the South
Sam, (BM), brother of Nephite
Sidon, (OW), the port through which all Jewish trade with Egypt had to pass
Sidon, (BM), the only city-name of the Holy Land, beside Jerusalem, which is a prominent Book of Mormon name

It requires no great effort of the imagination to detect a sort of parallelism between the two short listings. But aren't we using unjustified violence when we simply take the names at random and place them side by side? That is just what is most remarkable; we did pick names at random, and we had the whole Near East to draw from, with Egyptian names by no means predominating numerically in the lists before us. Yet the only Old World names that match those in our Book of Mormon episode all come from Egypt, nay, from one particular section of Egypt, in the far south, where from an indefinite date, but at least as early as the mid-seventeenth century, a Jewish colony flourished. What is more, all these names belong to the later dynasties, after the decline.

The Book of Mormon tells us that Lehi was a rich merchant, who, though he "dwelt in Jerusalem all his days," enjoyed an Egyptian education and culture, which he endeavored to transmit to his children. The book continually refers to the double culture of the people of Lehi: Hebrew to the core, but proud of their Egyptian heritage. "Egyptian civilization was one to be admired and ape," writes H. R. Hall, speaking of Lehi's own land and time. The only non-Hebraic names to enjoy prominence among the Nephites should, by the Book of Mormon's own account, be Egyptian, and such is found to be the case.

It will be noted that the names compared are never exactly alike, except in the case of the monosyllables Sam and Hem. This, strangely enough, is strong confirmation of their common origin, since names are bound to undergo some change with time and distance, whereas if the resemblance were perfect we should be forced to attribute it, however fantastic it might seem, to mere coincidence. There must be differences; and what is more, those differences should not be haphazard but display definite tendencies. This brings us to a most impressive aspect of Book of Mormon names.

Let us take for example the case of Ammon. Being so very popular a name, one would expect it to occur in compounds as well as alone, and sure enough, it is the commonest element in compound names, in the west as in Egypt. But in compound names Amnon or Amun changes form following a general rule. Gardiner in his Egyptian Grammar (page 431) states:

A very important class of personal names is that consisting names known as theophorous, i.e., compound names in which one element is the name of a deity. Now in Greek-Roman transcriptions it is the rule that when such a divine name is stated at the beginning of a compound (the italics are Gardiner's) it is less heavily vocalized than when it stands independently or at the end of a compound.

A PRAYER
By Elaine Ellsworth

Dear God, I do not ask for gold,
Or costly things, or wealth; untold:
I have no need for carriage line,
Or maids-in-waiting while I dine.

But let me have a cottage small
Where roses ramble on the wall,
Where in each room the sunshine gay
Makes patterns where the children play.

In that dear home may love abound,
And peace and happiness be found.
Where you may hear the music sweet
In pitter of the children's feet.

Oh, may I have a little song
Within my heart the whole day long:
And do each task with loving care,
Till I see beauty everywhere.

Then in the dusk when shadows fall
Oh, let me hear a welcome call!
As in the twilight, breathless ... dim ...
My heart on tiptoe waits for him.

And then I pray that I may see
The one I love come home to me.
And I will know the sweet cares
That crowns my day with happiness.

Dear God, these things my heart holds dear.
Oh, then thy heaven would seem near;
Love, truth, and beauty in each day.
It is for this I humbly pray.
THE BOOK OF MORMON AS A MIRROR OF THE EAST

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The author then goes on to show that in such cases Amom or Amun regularly becomes Amen, while in some cases the vowel may disappear entirely. One need only consider the Book of Mormon Aminidab, Aminadi, Amnihu, Amnor, etc., to see how neatly the rule applies in the West. In the name Helaman, on the other hand, the strong vocalization remains, since the "divine name" is not "stated at the beginning" of the compound. Since the Semitic "i" must always be rendered as "i" in Egyptian (which has no "i") Helaman would in "unreformed" Egyptian necessarily appear as the typically Egyptian Heramon.

To return to our question: What did Joseph Smith, translator of the Book of Mormon, know about the Old World? So much seems certain, that he knew:

(1) A number of typically Egyptian names, queer-sounding words in no way resembling Hebrew or any other language known to the world of Joseph Smith's time.

(2) He knew the sort of plot and setting in which those names would figure in the Old World and seems quite at home on the Egyptian scene.

(3) He gives a clear and correct picture of cultural relationships between Egypt and Israel, with due emphasis on its essentially commercial nature, in the remarkably convincing picture of Lehi—a typical merchant prince of the seventh century B.C. The picture of life in the ancient west which the Book of Mormon allows us to reconstruct is the more wonderful in the light of those fantastic conceptions of the gorgeous East which bedazzled the heads of even the best scholars at the time the book came forth.

The whole field of Book of Mormon names still awaits the careful study it deserves—the purpose of the present sketch being merely to indicate that such a study will prove anything but a blind alley. As a parting example of the validity of this claim we cite a principle stated by Albright (X, 12): "The loss of the ending ḫn is quite common in Palestinian place-names." In Egyptian or "reformed" Egyptian such an ending would be preserved, and so we have Book of Mormon place-names Emron, Heshlon, Jasion, Moron, Morianton, etc.

It is no small feat, as was demonstrated in the article "Original Words of the Book of Mormon," simply to have picked a lot of strange and original names out of the air. But what shall we say of the man who was able to pick the right ones?

1. Messiah 29:11.
2. Ibid., 37-41.
3. Alna 30, 21-24; the charge is specifically against Alma.
4. Alna 1, 12.
5. H. R. Hall in Cambridge Ancient History III, 258.
7. A. Moret, op. cit., II, 569.
8. H. E. Winlock, "The Eleventh Egyptian Dynasty." Inl. of Near Eastern Studies

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been APRIL things by time ing office author Haven, Hall. Wolf, HansBonnet, mere Amarna-Tafeln is Grammar, of amon etc. names oftener, For in Egyptian of Amoni-hah "Vorlaeufer with "found of names as Amandi, Amanapp, Amanhatabi, etc. with Book of Mormon Aminad, Aminadab also Amun-ri has the same relationship to Book of Mormon Ammoni-hah as the derived Amarna name Khamuni-ra has to Book of Mormon Camen-hah. For Amarna names J. A. Knudtzon, Die Er- Amarna-Tafeln (Leipzig, 1915) II, 1557. For the various vocalizations of Amon, Am, Amo, etc., Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, p. 431. Compare also Book of Mormon Helaman with Egyptian Her- amon (Egyptian always writes 'i' for Seel). 17. Moret, op. cit., II, 658, and passim, is very inconsistent on this point; Hall, Cambridge Ancient History, III, 280: Egypt (in the seventh century) "never ceased to claim the west lands as an ancient dominion," regarding Hittites and Assyrians as mere interlopers. 18. op. cit., II, 437-39, 567ff. W. Wolff, "Voraufer der Reformation Ecbatana."
Eag. Ztschr. 59 (1924), 109-119; HinsBonnet, "Zum Verstansdisses Syn kronymus,"
Eag. Ztschr. 75 (1939) 45ff. 19. Winlock, JNES II, 250; Moret, 209, 436. 20. Breasted, Ancient Records III, 27; cf. Hall, op. cit., III, 294. 21. Moret, op. cit., II, 610ff; III Nephi 19:4. 22. Helaman 1, 1ff. 23. A striking parallel to the Book of Mormon account is that given by Hall, III, 254; Moret, 590. 24. W. F. Albright, The Vocalization of Egyptian Syllabic Orthography (New Haven, Am. Or. Soc. 1934) deals with the problem of "reformed" Egyptian. The author suggests, p. 10ff, that a new orthography was devised in the "foreign office" of the Egyptian chancellery during the twentieth century specifically for dealing with Palestine and Syria, since the scribes "found it necessary to devise an orthography which would enable them to read their own records." From this time on the new idiom underwent progressive and constant deterioration until, by the seventh century B. C, among other things "an almost complete shift in the quality of Egyptian vowels" had taken place. Id., p. 135. 25. Knudtzon, Amarna-Tafeln 117, 123, 132, 1566. 26. Id. 1222. The name seems to have been both a personal proper name and the designation of an office (cf. Hem above), Knudtzon, 156ff. 27. Thus Kiskumen (III Nephi 9, 10), cf. Kumen, Kumen-ehi Albright, op. cit., p. 44, 58. 28a. See accompanying cut, which may be found in Budge, op. cit., pp 103, 108 and in W. M. F. Petrie, A History of Egypt (London, 1905) III, 202, 290, the latter giving phonetic values "Phankh" and "Panfb" respectively. Paanchi is settled as the correct reading, however, by the principle stated in Gardiner, E.g., Gram., p. 521: the "i" as here occurring is always final consonant. 28. Lists of priest-kings in the original form may be found in Aeg Ztschr. XX (1882) Taf. lii, V (7a); Budge, Mummy, p. 103. 29. Hall, CAH, III, 273. 30. The Assyrian text (Br. Mus Cyl. no. 12168) is given in L, W, King, First Steps in Assyrian, p. 78ff. 31. II Nephi 9:8. 32. The name in its various forms is discussed by W, Spiegelberg, "Der Stratege Pamenches" Aeg. Ztschr. LVII (1922) 83-92. An even closer parallel is provided by Amarna Pa-kha-am-na-ta, given with vari- ants in Knudtzon, Am. Taf, II, 1566; he was governor of Ammurru under Egypt. 33. Id. p. 89, n. 2. 34. Nos. 7 and 9 in Spiegelberg's list, n. 91. 35. Spiegelberg, op. cit., p. 91. 36. Winlock, JNES, 275, finds Egyptian commoners at Thebes with names Hesem, Hesi. 37. Harold Lundstrom, The Improvement Era, February 1948, p. 85.

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