



Type: Journal Article

---

## An Ishmael Buried Near Nahom

Author(s): Neal Rappleye

Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,  
Volume 48 (2021), pp. 33-48

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

---

**Abstract:** Latter-day Saint scholars generally agree that “the place called... Nahom,” where Ishmael was buried (1 Nephi 16:34) is identified as the Nihm tribal region in Yemen. Significantly, a funerary stela with the name  $y s^1m^{\text{ʿ}}l$  — the South Arabian equivalent of Ishmael — was found near the Nihm region and dated to ca. 6th century bc. Although it cannot be determined with certainty that this is the Ishmael from the Book of Mormon, circumstantial evidence suggests that such is a possibility worth considering.

# INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT  
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 48 · 2021 · Pages 33 - 48

## An Ishmael Buried Near Nahom

Neal Rappleye

Offprint Series

© 2021 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, The Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication of the Interpreter Foundation, a non-profit organization located at [InterpreterFoundation.org](http://InterpreterFoundation.org). You can find other articles published in our journal at [Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org](http://Journal.InterpreterFoundation.org). You may subscribe to this journal at [InterpreterFoundation.org/annual-print-subscription](http://InterpreterFoundation.org/annual-print-subscription).

## AN ISHMAEL BURIED NEAR NAHOM

---

Neal Rappleye

**Abstract:** *Latter-day Saint scholars generally agree that “the place called... Nahom,” where Ishmael was buried (1 Nephi 16:34) is identified as the Nihm tribal region in Yemen. Significantly, a funerary stela with the name  $ys^l m^{\prime} l$  — the South Arabian equivalent of Ishmael — was found near the Nihm region and dated to ca. 6th century BC. Although it cannot be determined with certainty that this is the Ishmael from the Book of Mormon, circumstantial evidence suggests that such is a possibility worth considering.*

In recent decades, Latter-day Saint scholars have come to identify Nahom — the burial place of Ishmael, Nephi’s father-in-law (1 Nephi 16:34) — with the Nihm tribal region in Yemen.<sup>1</sup> The exact borders of the Nihm tribal area have fluctuated over time, but it has been located near the Wadi Jawf since the early Islamic era.<sup>2</sup> Several inscriptions referring to individuals as *nhmyn* (“Nihmite”) confirm the tribe existed at least by the seventh century BC,<sup>3</sup> and based on these texts scholars generally believe the Nihm tribe were in a region near the Jawf in antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

It is noteworthy, therefore, that in 2008 a corpus of over 400 crudely carved funerary stelae recovered from the Wadi Jawf were published by the Sana’a National Museum.<sup>5</sup> These stelae have anthropomorphic facial features carved above an inscription of the name of the deceased. This is a pan-Arabian style of funerary stela, with this particular corpus featuring some distinctive regional variations unique to the Wadi Jawf.<sup>6</sup> Among these is a 30 cm (ca. 1 ft.) x 12.5 cm (ca. 5 in.) x 7.5 cm (ca. 3 in.) limestone stela with a roughly incised face outline (eyes, a nose, mouth, and jaw-line), below which is inscribed the name  $ys^l m^{\prime} l$  in Epigraphic South Arabian, translated as “Yasma’īl” (see Figure 1).<sup>7</sup> The stela is paleographically dated to 6th–5th centuries BC, but Mounir Arbach and his co-authors consider it stylistically among “a few coarse examples”

of the *incised face elements* stela type “known for the 7th–6th centuries BC.”<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 1.** Funerary stela YM 27966 bearing the name YS<sup>ʾ</sup>M<sup>ʿ</sup>L, equivalent to the Hebrew name “Ishmael,” dated to ca. 6th century BC.<sup>9</sup>

The name *Yasma<sup>ʿ</sup>il* is the South Arabian form of the name *Ishmael*, even though the two names may look somewhat different in translation.<sup>10</sup> The inscribed *ys<sup>ʾ</sup>m<sup>ʿ</sup>l* is exactly how the Hebrew name *yšm<sup>ʿ</sup>l* (ישמעאל) — typically rendered as “Ishmael” in English — would be spelled in Epigraphic South Arabian.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the two names have the exact same etymology, meaning “God has heard/hearkened,” or “may God hear,”<sup>12</sup> and in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, the Old South Arabian *ys<sup>ʾ</sup>m<sup>ʿ</sup>l* is listed as an equivalent to the Hebrew name *yšm<sup>ʿ</sup>l* (Ishmael).<sup>13</sup> Thus, this stela indicates that a man named the equivalent of *Ishmael* was buried in or near the Wadi Jawf around the 6th century BC, about the same time period Ishmael was buried at Nahom, according to the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 16:34).



**Figure 2.** The name “Ishmael” (Yasma<sup>ʿ</sup>il) in Old South Arabian script.

### Connection to the Nihm?

Unfortunately, this funerary stela and the rest of this particular corpus were looted from their original context and recovered on the antiquities market, so they lack clear provenance. The authenticity of these stelae is not doubted,<sup>14</sup> but this means it is impossible to know exactly where they came from and if that location had any connection to the Nihm tribe. However, a separate collection of 40 funerary stelae of the same style were recovered *in situ* at the ancient site of Yathill (modern-day Barāqish), one of the ancient city-states of the Jawf.<sup>15</sup> Barāqish is associated with the modern-day Nihm tribe,<sup>16</sup> so it is possible some of the looted stelae also came from areas connected to the Nihm.



**Figure 3.** Map of the Wadi Jawf.

Interestingly, some of the looted stelae are believed to come from Haram, another one of the Jawf city-states.<sup>17</sup> Stelae of a similar style were previously recovered at Haram, and taken as evidence that people from

“Arab” tribes north of the Jawf were present at Haram from the very earliest period of South Arabian history.<sup>18</sup> Three identical inscriptions from this location, all dated to the 7th century BC, mention a man named ‘Ammī’anas, who is called the *kbr nh[m]tn*, meaning the “chief” or “tribal leader” (*kbr*) of a group called NHMTN.<sup>19</sup> Christian Robin translates *nhmtn* here as “the stone polishers” (*des tailleurs de pierre*),<sup>20</sup> while G. Lankester Harding considered NHMTN in these inscriptions to be a proper name, most likely the name of a “tribe or people.”<sup>21</sup> Another 7th century BC inscription (from an unknown location) identifies a man named Halak’amar and his father ‘Ilīdhara’ both as *kbr nhmt*; in this inscription, NHMT is understood as a reference to a tribe and Herrmann von Wissmann identified it as the Nihm.<sup>22</sup> If the NHMTN are the same group as the NHMT, these inscriptions may thus suggest a link between Haram and Nihm in Lehi’s day.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, Haram was only about 4 miles west of Ma’in (ancient Qarnaw), where a branch of the ancient Frankincense Trail cut across the desert eastward (cf. 1 Nephi 17:1).<sup>24</sup>

### A Foreigner or Caravan Traveler?

The background and origin of the population associated with funerary stelae of this style is currently uncertain, with at least two competing hypotheses. Based on the archaeological context of the corpus from Yathill (Barāqish), Sabina Antonini and Alessio Agostini argue that they come from an “outsider” group, who “were connected in some way with the town of Barāqish, but that they were not in effect members of the community.” Most likely, “they were caravaners engaged in commerce throughout the western side of the Peninsula,”<sup>25</sup> or potentially “foreigners who certainly had some sort of contact with the inhabitants of Barāqish” and had “developed relationships with the sedentary inhabitants of the city but did not ‘officially’ belong there.”<sup>26</sup>

Mounir Arbach, Jérémie Schietteccette, and Ibrâhîm al-Hâdî, on the other hand, argue that the looted stelae from the Jawf were a product of the lower strata of local populations, based on the generally crude and inexpert nature of the carvings and inscriptions.<sup>27</sup> These two points of view are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Arbach et al. allow for the possibility that “a small number” represent the “deceased of a different cultural origins,” specifically, “caravan traders, nomads, Mineans established in Northern Arabia, [and] Central or Northern Arabian populations.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Ishmael or Yasma’îl of this stela was either a local individual of lower social status or a foreigner from the north

traveling along the major trade route, perhaps with some connection to the populations in and around the Wadi Jawf.

### The Name Ishmael/Yasma<sup>ʿ</sup>il

One of the ways the origins of these stelae are assessed is through onomastics (the names on the stelae).<sup>29</sup> An analysis of the onomastics found on the stelae from Barāqish indicated there were several links to Northwest Semitic and North Arabian names, strengthening the hypothesis that these individuals were involved in the caravan trade.<sup>30</sup> Hugh Nibley believed that the Ishmael of the Book of Mormon had Arabian links, based on his name,<sup>31</sup> but today the evidence is actually pointing in the opposite direction. The name *Ishmael* is of Northwest Semitic origins, and well attested in Hebrew tradition, both in the Old Testament — which mentions five other *Ishmaels* besides the son of Abraham and Hagar — and in the epigraphic sources from the 8th to 6th centuries BC.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Ishmael “was a very popular name in the 7th and 6th centuries [BC]” in Judah.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, in South Arabia, Ishmael (*ys<sup>ʿ</sup>m<sup>ʿ</sup>l*) was uncommon at this time. Out of 28 attestations of the name in the Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions (CSAI), only four are dated to the Early Sabaic Period (ca. pre-4th century BC).<sup>34</sup> Thus, rather than pointing to Arabian origins, the name Ishmael is an appropriate Hebrew name, and potentially indicates that the *Yasma<sup>ʿ</sup>il* buried in the Yemeni Jawf was a foreigner from the north, where his Semitic name originated and was more common.

### Lehi’s Family and South Arabian Writing and Burial Customs

Since this stela is in a thoroughly Arabian style and the inscription is in Epigraphic South Arabian, some may wonder if Israelites from Jerusalem, such as Lehi and his family, would be likely to adopt such foreign practices in their burial customs. Iron age burial practices in Judah and Israel largely mirror those of their neighbors in Palestine,<sup>35</sup> and later Jews of the Second Temple Period also frequently incorporate the burial traditions of their surrounding culture.<sup>36</sup> So, it is not unreasonable to suppose that while traveling through Arabia, likely along the major caravan route,<sup>37</sup> Lehi and his family may have adopted burial practices common to local populations or fellow caravan travelers.

The fact that the inscription is in Epigraphic South Arabian, however, does raise the question of whether Lehi’s family had learned the local language and script. When making arrangements for Ishmael’s burial, it is plausible that Lehi’s family hired a local stone carver (perhaps

from the Nihm tribe) to make the stela and inscribe it with Ishmael's name; in light of the clear (albeit crude) execution of local style and script, this is perhaps the more likely hypothesis. Nonetheless, there are some indications that Lehi's family may have learned South Arabian languages. Certainly, learning the name "Nahom" and arranging with the local population for the proper burial of Ishmael would have required at least learning the *spoken* language. Furthermore, some scholars have proposed a South Arabian etymology for the name *Irreantum*, suggesting that Lehi's family had become conversant in the local languages.<sup>38</sup>

More specifically suggesting knowledge of Epigraphic South Arabian *script* is an unpublished study of the Book of Mormon "Caractors" document indicating that some of the symbols bear resemblance to North and South Arabian characters.<sup>39</sup> S. Kent Brown also argued that Lehi's family may have spent time in servitude in South Arabia.<sup>40</sup> If that is true, then the skilled labor of Nephi and Lehi (and perhaps others in the party), who could both write and work in metals (and write *on* metals),<sup>41</sup> likely would have been one of their best assets as servants to tribal overlords, requiring them to learn the language.<sup>42</sup>

### **Could this be Ishmael from the Book of Mormon?**

Ultimately, there is not enough evidence to make a positive identification with the Yasma'il of this funerary stela and the Ishmael of the Book of Mormon. The most that can be said is that there was *an* Ishmael, buried near the Nihm tribal region, around the 6th century BC. The lack of further identifying information in the inscription (such as a patronym) or the Book of Mormon text, and the inability to determine with certainty if the stela in question was found within or merely near the Nihm tribal region, makes a more definitive association impossible.

Still, the possibility is tantalizing. The Yasma'il of this funerary stela was buried somewhere within or near the Wadi Jawf, ca. 6th century BC, possibly at a site (Haram) which some inscriptions suggest had a connection with the Nihm in Lehi's day. The name Yasma'il and the style of stela are suggestive of (but not definitive evidence for) a foreigner from the north, associated with the caravan trade. Ishmael was buried at Nahom — identified as the Nihm tribal area, near the Wadi Jawf — in the early 6th century BC, and had arrived in the area from the north, most likely traveling along the major caravan route. Thus, the general profiles of the two Ishmaels fit, at least in broad strokes. At the very least, it seems reasonable to suggest that *if* the Ishmael of the Book of Mormon was buried with some sort of identifying marker, it probably would

have looked something like the Yasma'il stela — a crudely carved stela typical of foreigners traveling through the area, who lacked substantial time or resources to afford a more extravagantly carved and engraved burial stone.

Although a firmer conclusion eludes us, the very fact that *an* Ishmael was buried in close proximity to the Nihm tribal region around the very time the Book of Mormon indicates that a man named Ishmael was buried at Nahom is rather remarkable. Such a fact certainly does not weaken the case for the Book of Mormon's historicity.

**Neal Rappleye** is a research project manager for *Book of Mormon Central*. He is involved in on-going research on many facets of the Book of Mormon's historical context, including: ancient Jerusalem (especially around the 7th century BC), ancient Arabia, the ancient Near East more broadly, pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, and the 19th century witnesses to the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon plates. He's published with BYU Studies, The Interpreter Foundation, *Book of Mormon Central*, Greg Kofford Books, and Covenant Communications.

### Endnotes

- 1 See, e.g., S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 81–83; Terrance L. Szink, "Nahom," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 580 (cf. map on p. 514); Stephen D. Ricks, "On Lehi's Trail: Nahom, Ishmael's Burial Place," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 1 (2011): 66–68; Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 105–108; Warren P. Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2015), 59–93. See, further, the discussions of Nahom in the articles by Warren P. Aston, George Potter and Richard Wellington, S. Kent Brown, David LaFevre, and Jeffrey R. Chadwick in Dana Pike, ed., *Lehi and Sariah's Wilderness Trek: Illuminating the Real-World Setting* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship,

2006), a special issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (vol. 15, no. 2), demonstrating broad agreement among several scholars on the correlation of Nahom with the Nihm area. The connection has even made it into publications by major academic presses, such as Princeton, Oxford, Brill, and others. See John M. Lundquist, “Biblical Seafaring and the Book of Mormon,” in Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 173; Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120–21, 147; Terryl L. Givens, *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117–18; John A. Tvedntes, “Names of People: Book of Mormon,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey Khan (Boston, MA: E. J. Brill, 2013), 2:787; Grant Hardy, “The Book of Mormon,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, eds. Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 143.

- 2 See Christian Robin, “Nihm: Nubdha fī `l-jughrāfiyya al-ta`rikiyya wafqan li-mu`ṭiyāt al-Hamdānī,” in *Al-Hamdani: A Great Yemeni Scholar, Studies on the Occasion of His Millennial Anniversary*, ed. Yusuf Mohammad Abdallah (Sana`a, Yemen: Sana`a University, 1986), 83–98; Christian Robin, “Le Pénétration des Arabes Nomades au Yémen,” *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 61, no. 1 (1991): 85.
- 3 For the original Latter-day Saint reports on these inscriptions, see S. Kent Brown, “New Light: ‘The Place that was Called Nahom,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 66–68; “Book of Mormon Linked to Site in Yemen,” *Ensign*, February 2001, 79; Warren P. Aston, “Newly Found Altars from Nahom,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 56–61. Updates and additional inscriptions are reported in Warren P. Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 78–98.
- 4 See Hermann von Wissmann, *Zur Geschichte und Landeskunde von Alt-Südarabien*, Sammlung Eduard Glaser III (Vienna: Der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1964), 96–97, 307–308; Jacques Ryckmans, Walter W. Müller, and Yusuf M. Abdallah, *Textes du Yémen Antique Inscrits Sur Bois* (Leuven: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1994), 46–50; pl.

- 3A–B; Peter Stein, *Die altsüdarabischen Minuskelinschriften auf Holzstäbchen aus der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München*, 2 vols. (Tübingen and Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2010), 1:22n43; 23, fig. 1; Christian Robin and Burkhard Vogt, ed., *Yémen: au pays de la reine de Saba* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 144; Wilfried Seipel, ed., *Jemen: Kunst und Archäologie im Land der Königin von Saba* (Wien: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1998), 325; Alessandro de Maigret, ed., *Yemen: Nel paese della Regina di Saba* (Rome: Palazzo Respoli Fondazione Memmo, 2000), 344–45; St. John Simpson, ed., *Queen of Sheba: Treasures from Ancient Yemen* (London: The British Museum, 2002), 166.
- 5 See Mounir Arbach, Jérémie Schiettecatte, and Ibrâhîm al-Hâdî, *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley: San‘â’ National Museum, Part III* (San‘â’: Social Fund for Development and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008).
  - 6 On the pan-Arabian context for these stelae, see Jérémie Schiettecatte, “The Arabian Iron Age Funerary Stelae and the Issue of Cross-Cultural Contacts,” in *Death and Burial in Arabia and Beyond: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Lloyd Weeks (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 191–203. On the regional variation distinctive to the Jawf, see Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 5–6.
  - 7 Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 72, no. 105.
  - 8 *Ibid.*, 10. For the dating to the 6th–5th centuries BC, see p. 72, no. 105.
  - 9 Image from Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 72, no. 105. Used by permission of Mounir Arbach. Drawing based on the image by Jasmin Gimenez Rappleye.
  - 10 The more technical, academic translation of the Hebrew is *Yišma‘ēl*, which makes the similarities with the South Arabian *Yasma‘īl* somewhat more apparent. *Yasma‘īl* can also be Westernized to the more “Ishmael”-like spelling *Isma‘il*, as it is in Christian Robin and Yves Calvet, *Arabie Heureuse, Arabie Déserte: Les Antiquités Arabiques du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1997), 318.
  - 11 In South Arabian, the *sat* (transliterated as *s<sup>l</sup>*) is the standard equivalent to the *shin* (transliterated as *š*) in northwest Semitic

languages, such as Hebrew. See Leonid E. Kogan and Andrey V. Korotayev, “Sayhadic (Epigraphic South Arabian),” in *The Semitic Languages*, ed. Robert Hetzron (New York: Routledge, 1997), 222–23; Norbert Nebes and Peter Stein, “Ancient South Arabian,” in *The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia*, ed. Roger D. Woodard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 148–49; Peter Stein, “Ancient South Arabian,” in *The Semitic Languages and Dialects: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger (Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 1048; Rebecca Hasselbach, “Old South Arabian,” in *Languages from the World of the Bible*, ed. Holger Gzella (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2012), 169, table 1.

- 12 For the Hebrew  $yšm^{\prime}l$ , see Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 1035; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, study ed., trans. M.E.J. Richardson, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), 1:447; David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 8 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2011), 4:333–34. For South Arabian  $ys^{\prime}m^{\prime}l$ , see Robin and Calvet, *Arabie Heureuse, Arabie Déserte*, 318; Christian Julian Robin, “La Chronologie et ses Problèmes,” in *Yémen: au pays de la reine de Saba*, ed. Christian Robin and Burkhard Vogt (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 63. For the component parts in South Arabian,  $s^{\prime}m^{\prime}$ , “hear, hearken to, obey” +  $^{\prime}l$ , “God,” see A.F.L. Beeston, M.A. Ghul, W.W. Müller, J. Ryckmans, *Sabaic Dictionary (English-French-Arabic)* (Sana‘a: University of Sana‘a, 1982), 5, 127; Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaen Dialect* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Semitic Museum, 1982), 15, 338; Stephen D. Ricks, *Lexicon of Inscriptional Qatabanian* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 10, 160.
- 13 Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1:447. Koehler and Baumgartner do not include the superscript *l* used to distinguish the *sat* ( $s^{\prime}$ ) from the *shin* ( $s^2$ ) and the *samekh* ( $s^3$ ) in transliteration of South Arabian sibilants, but there is no question that the same name is intended, as neither  $ys^2m^{\prime}l$  nor  $ys^3m^{\prime}l$  is attested in South Arabian inscriptions.
- 14 Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 7.

- 15 Alessandro de Maigret, “The Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Barāqish (Republic of Yemen),” *Newsletter Archaeologia* 0 (2009): 59–60, 89–90, fig. 57–59; Sabina Antonini and Alessio Agostini, “Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Yemen: A Minaean Necropolis at Barāqish (Wadi Jawf) and Qatabanian Necropolis of Ḥayd bin ‘Aqīl (Wadi Bayḥān),” in *Death and Burial in Arabia and Beyond*, 215–24.
- 16 See Robin, “Nihm,” 95. Christian Robin, “Tribus et territoires d’Arabie, d’après les inscriptions antiques et les généalogies d’époque islamique,” *Semitica et Classica* 13 (2020): 237 explains that the sharīf of Barāqish “fall under” (*relèvent*) the Nihm, but are not necessarily an official part of the tribe, but are rather “allies” (*alliés*) under the Nihm’s protection.
- 17 Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 3.
- 18 Christian Robin, *Inabba’, Haram, Al-Kāfir, Kamna et al-Ḥarāshif*, 2 vols. (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1992), 1:39–40, referring to Haram 41, 44, 45, and 48. A 7th century BC dedicatory text from Haram includes *ʾitr d-Rgmt*, “Athtar dhu-Ragmat,” the god of Najran, among its list of deities, thus further illustrating Haram’s early ties to the tribes north of the Jawf. See YM 28823 in the CSAI database and in Mounir Arbach and Rémy Audouin, *Collection of Epigraphic and Archaeological Artifacts from al-Jawf Sites: Ṣan‘ā’ National Museum* (Ṣan‘ā’: UNESCO-SFD and Ṣan‘ā’ National Museum, 2007), 44–45.
- 19 See Haram 16, Haram 17, and Haram 19 in Robin, *Inabba’, Haram, Al-Kāfir, Kamna*, 1:85–89. The dating of these inscriptions is based on the reference to Watar’il, king of Haram from ca. 665–650 BC, per K. A. Kitchen, *Documenting Ancient Arabia*, 2 vols. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994–2000), 2:120, 741. See also Robin, *Inabba’, Haram, Al-Kāfir, Kamna*, 1:24–26; Mounir Arbach and Irene Rossi, “Haram: cité antique du Jawf (Yémen). Quelques bribes de dix siècles d’histoire et nouveaux textes amīrites,” *Semitica et Classica* 13 (2020): 25–26, 30.
- 20 See Robin’s translation in the reference in n.19. See also the translation for Haram 16, Haram 17, and Haram 19 in the CSAI Database, <http://dasi.cnr.it/>.

- 21 G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, 1971), 940, listing NH[MT]N from C 510 (= Haram 16) as a “doubtful” name (due to the need to restore a portion of it). On p. 1, category C3, Harding used *kbr* as a contextual indication for identifying names of a “tribe or people.” More recently, Hani Hayajneh, “Eine Sammlung von Fragmentarischen Altsüdatabischen Inschriften aus dem Jemen,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 15, no. 1 (2004): 147n113 argued that in a similar expression (*kbr nhmn*), *nhmn* should be interpreted as a tribal name (instead of a reference to stone masonry) because it was preceded by *kbr*, referring (Hayajneh argued) to a tribal leader.
- 22 See CIH 673 in the CSAI Database, <http://dasi.cnr.it/>, for identification of *nhmt* as a tribal name in this text (as of August 26, 2021). For the dating of this text to the 7th century BC, see Kitchen, *Documenting Ancient Arabia*, 2:139. For von Wissmann’s identification of the NHMT with the Nihm tribe and region, see von Wissmann, *Zur Geschichte*, 307–308. Earlier scholars specifically linked the NHMTN on the Haram inscriptions with the *nhmyn* of other texts. See Mayer Lambert, “Les Inscriptions Yéménites du Musée de Bombay,” *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 20 (1923): 80–81.
- 23 Since other inscriptions at Haram use *kbr* to refer to the leaders of colonies or trading posts from Haram living within the territory of another tribe (e.g., *kbr ḥḍrmwt* in Haram 12; see Robin, *Inabba’, Haram, Al-Kāfir, Kamna*, 1:52; Arbach and Rossi, “Haram,” 24n45), it is possible Haram had a trading outpost within the Nihm’s territory, as suggested to me by a scholar of ancient South Arabian studies (personal communication, May 15, 2019).
- 24 See Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Frankincense Trade* (New York: Longman, 1981), 167; Michael Jenner, *Yemen Rediscovered* (Essex: Longman, 1983), 16.
- 25 Antonini and Agostini, “A Minaean Necropolis at Barāqish,” 221. See also Maigret, “Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission,” 60.
- 26 Antonini and Agostini, “A Minaean Necropolis at Barāqish,” 222–23. Giovanni Garbini, “Su alcuni tipi di stele e statuette sudarabiche con iscrizine,” *Annali* 37 (1977): 375–81 (see esp. 378)

similarly concluded that other stelae of a similar type came to Yemen via a North Arabian culture group.

- 27 Schiettecatte, “Arabian Iron Age Funerary Stelae,” 191–203; Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 14–15.
- 28 Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 15.
- 29 See *Ibid.*, 13–15.
- 30 See Alessio Agnostini, “Funerary Stelae from Barāqish: Study of the Onomastics,” in Sabina Antonini and Alessio Agostini, *A Minaena Necropolis at Barāqish (Jawf, Republic of Yemen): Preliminary Report of the 2005–2006 Archaeological Campaigns* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2010), 49–70, esp. 69–70. This does not necessarily mean that the individuals themselves were foreigners, however. Names are often transmitted through cultural exchange, so South Arabian traders naturally could have learned Northwest Semitic and North Arabian names during their travels, and used them when naming their children.
- 31 This is stated most clearly in Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988–1990*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 3:27–28. See also Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 40; Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 72–73; Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 545.
- 32 All six Ishmaels in the Bible are: (1) the son of Abraham via Hagar (Genesis 16–17; 21; 25); (2) the son of Azel of Benjamin, ca. 7th century BC (1 Chronicles 8:38; 9:44); (3) father of Zebadiah, the 9th century BC governor of Judah under Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 19:11); (4) the son Jehohanan, who joined the revolt against Queen Athaliah ca. 835 BC (2 Chronicles 23:1); (5) the son of Nethaniah, member of the royal family and traitor of Judah (Jeremiah 40–41; 2 Kings 25:23–25); (6) one of the sons of Pashur, who had taken foreign wives in the post-Exilic period (Ezra 10:22). See James E. Brenneman, “Ishmael,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 653. For Ishmael in Hebrew epigraphy, Clines, *Dictionary of*

*Classical Hebrew*, 4:334, lists 19 Hebrew seals attesting to the name Ishmael, most of which date to the 7th–6th century BC. I have identified 60 attestations of Ishmael in Hebrew epigraphic sources from the 8th–6th century BC. See Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 64–66, 69, 74; Gabriel Barkay, “A Bulla of Ishmael, the King’s Son,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 290/291 (1993): 109–14; Nahman Avigad, rev. Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 108, 111–14, 123, 200, 206–209, 212, 235, 238; Robert Deutsch and Michael Heltzer, *New Epigraphic Evidence from the Biblical Period* (Tel Aviv and Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 1995), 83–84; Robert Deutsch and Michael Heltzer, *West Semitic Epigraphic News of the 1st Millennium BCE* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 1999), 64–66; Robert Deutsch, *Messages from the Past: Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Isaiah through the Destruction of the First Temple* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999), 28, 29, 35, 36, 40, 41, 46, 124–25, 151–52, 171–72; Robert Deutsch and André Lemaire, *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2000), 61; Robert Deutsch, “A Hoard of Fifty Hebrew Clay Bullae from the Time of Hezekiah,” in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History, and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv and Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003), 77–79; Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae: The Joseph Chaim Kaufman Collection* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003), 56–57, 74–75, 215–20, 362–63; Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Epigraphy: The Joseph Chaim Kaufman Collection — Seals, Bullae, Handles* (Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 2011), 42–43, 89–90, 115–16, 122–24, 143–44, 159–62, 184, 252.

- 33 Ernest Axel Knauf, “Ishmael,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:513. See also David Rolph Seely, review of *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Semester 3*, by Hugh Nibley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 193–94. In Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah*, 116, *Yišma‘ēl* is tied for the most frequently attested name in a collection of 255 bullae from the late 7th to early 6th century BC. On the Northwest Semitic origins of the name,

- see Ebbe Egede Knudsen, “Amorite Names and Old Testament Onomastics,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 13, no. 2 (1999): 202–24, esp. 218.
- 34 In addition to the *Yasmaʿīl* stela under discussion (YM 27699), see as-Sawdāʾ 18, CIH 545, and Maʿīn 109, CSAI Database, <http://dasi.cnr.it/>. Of these, CIH 545 and Maʿīn 109 date to the 7th century BC; see Kitchen, *Documenting Ancient Arabia*, 2:124 (CIH 545); Mounir Arbach, “La Decouverte du Temple Intra-Muros de Nakrah a Maʿīn, L’antique Qarna,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 22, no. 2 (2011): 201–14 (Maʿīn 109). Specific dating for as-Sawdāʾ 18 is not available, but it is dated to the Early Sabaic Period (ca. pre-4th century BC). There are five additional *ysʿmʿl* inscriptions in the Jawf funerary stelae collection, but they all date to a later time period, ca. 4th–2nd centuries BC. See Arbach et al., *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*, 52 (no. 45), 105 (no. 204), 114 (no. 231), 152 (no. 344), 157 (no. 358).
- 35 See Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).
- 36 See Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005). See also Pieter W. van der Horst, “Jewish Funerary Inscriptions — Most Are in Greek,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 5 (September/October 1992): 46–57.
- 37 See Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *In Search of Lehi’s Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 27–44; George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New, Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon is a True History* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 53–71.
- 38 See Paul Y. Hoskisson, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, “What’s in a Name? Irreantum,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 90–93, 114–15.
- 39 See “Similarities between the Anthon Transcript and Old South Arabian (Arabic),” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002): 83, 88; Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 88.
- 40 See S. Kent Brown, “A Case for Lehi’s Bondage in Arabia,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no. 2 (1997): 205–17; S. Kent Brown, *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center,

1998), 55–59; Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 90–92. Note, however, the critique in Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 97–98.

- 41 Their ability to write needs no defense — the very existence of their records attests to that. On Lehi and Nephi’s skills in metal working, see John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Springville, UT: Horizon, 2003), 78–97; Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Lehi’s House at Jerusalem and the Land of his Inheritance,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 113–17; Neal Rappleye, “Lehi the Smelter,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 223–25. Many South Arabian inscriptions are engraved in bronze, indicating the value of Nephi’s skill in writing on metallic surfaces.
- 42 See Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 64.