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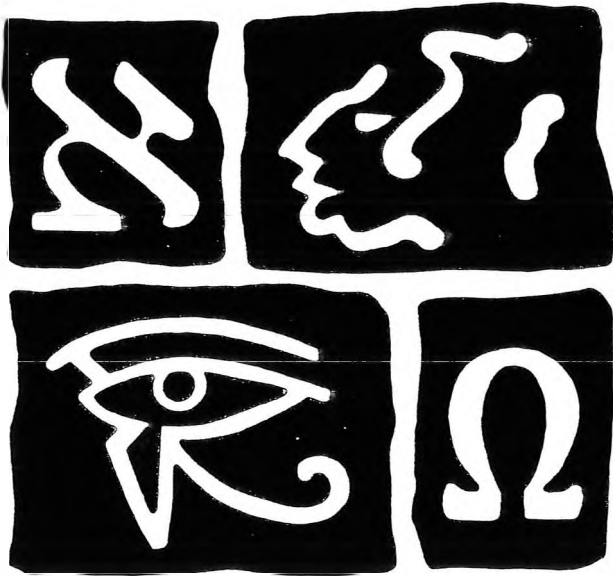
## Possible Linguistic Roots of Certain Book of Mormon Proper Names

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**Possible Linguistic Roots  
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Mormon Proper Names**

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**Preliminary  
Report**

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PRELIMINARY REPORT: POSSIBLE LINGUISTIC ROOTS OF  
BOOK OF MORMON PROPER NAMES (OTHER  
THAN BIBLICAL AND JAREDITE NAMES)

Professor Joann Carlton, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California has submitted to me the following analyses of possible linguistic roots of the first ten non-Biblical proper names, alphabetically, in the Book of Mormon outside of the Book of Ether. She has ranked each proposed analysis ranked from [1] to [5], with the lowest indicating that the analysis is tentative and only marginally likely and with the higher ratings indicating increasing degrees of certitude. To her linguistic analysis, I have added contextual and biographical comments on the individual's who bore these names. This project is continuing. This report has benefitted from several helpful comments by Paul Y. Hoskisson. This report is only preliminary and further analyses of these names and the others in the Book of Mormon will be submitted in due course.

1. ABINADI (person).

Combining the roots abi, "My (divine) father" and nadi yields the meaning, "My (divine) father is present." [4] Stamm lists the name A-na-pa-ni-<sup>d</sup>Sin-na-di, meaning "It is present (deposited) before Sin (DN)." Stamm's suggestion, however, may require some qualification, since na-di probably comes from n.'d. and not n.d.'. See AHW p. 705a for personal names with n.'d. Compare also the Biblical Hebrew, Abinadab, "My (divine) father is noble."

If we follow Gelb's analysis of <sup>d</sup>dagan-nadi in his Computer Assisted Analysis of Amorite, p.161, Abinadi can also be rendered as "my (divine) Father is praised." [3]

A less likely rendition of Abinadi is "My (divine) father is given." [2] This would derive from the Biblical Hebrew root nedeḥ, "gift"; or the Arabic nadi, "gift."

If the first analysis is correct, a striking connection exists between the meaning of Abinadi's name, "My (divine) father is present," and the most significant and controversial aspect of his message, namely that God himself, whom Abinadi calls Father, shall come down and be present among men. (Mos. 15:1-4, 17:8).

Abinadi was a Nephite, born either into Zeniff's ultra-conservative colony or to parents who went with Zeniff during Abinadi's childhood. The use of strong Hebrew roots in this name is consistent with that group's observance of traditional Hebrew attitudes and rights of inheritance.

## 2. ABINADOM (person).

Only one possibility seems plausible: "My (divine) father is a wanderer." [4] The -om suffix is attached to roots in Biblical Hebrew to form proper names. This occurs in the case of Gershom, formed from the root grš, "to banish." In the present case, the root from Biblical Hebrew could be nud, "to wander," or "to show grief." Similarly, in Babylonian, the root means "to flee." For example, Nod is a place where Cain "wandered."

Abinadom was the son of Chemish (Omni 10), and thus was a sixth generation direct descendant of Lehi, through Jacob. Hebrew elements

would still have been dominant in the names of his culture, in all likelihood. The feeling of being sad wanderers was strongly felt among the Nephites and Jacobites. Indeed, Jacob's parting comments characterize this as a main aspect of the continuing self-image of these people:

" . . . [O]ur lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days." (Jacob 7:26).

Wandering, fleeing from Jerusalem, and feeling grief are all attitudes reflected in the name Abinadom.

Although only two verses can be attributed to Abinadom himself, one of them glumly reports the "much war and contention" between the Nephites and the Lamanties, reminiscent of Jacob's last lament. Furthermore, the theme of wandering and fleeing is immediately perpetuated in the record of Amaleki, the son of Abinadom, who tells little more than the story of how Mosiah follows God's instructions in fleeing and departing into the wilderness. (Omni 12).

### 3. ABISH (person).

This is quite possibly a nickname or hypocoriston derived from a name like Abishag, Abishai, Abishua, or Abishur [5]. Another approach toward such a name, coming from Akkadian, is Abūsa-lā-īdu, "Her father she did not know."

Abish was a "Lamanitish woman," almost certainly an Ishmaelite, serving in the household of King Lamoni in the land of Ishmael (Alma 17:19-21). The name, in this case, could therefore be a shortened form of Abishmael, "My (ancestral) father was Ishmael."

A further possibility, which avoids breaking up roots in any name shortening process is to derive the name Abish from the Hebrew roots Abi-is, "A man is my Father." [4] This follows the patterns of names such as Es-ba'al, "A man is Baal," or the Ugaritic gbis, "GB is a/the man."

4. AHA (person).

This name appears once, in Alma 16:5, as the name of the younger of the two sons of Zoram, chief captain over the Nephite armies, who probably was a Zoramite. The name could derive from the Hebrew ah, "brother" [3], or could be a shortened form of some other name originally beginning with an initial "brother" element, such as Ahab, "Father's brother." On the other hand, it is possible that the name is not a proper name at all, in which case Alma 16:5 could simply read "His name was Zoram, and he had two sons, Lehi and his brother."

Nibley has suggested that a connection lies between this Aha and Aha, the traditional name of the first pharaoh of Egypt and meaning, in Egyptian, "Warrior." Lehi in the Desert, p. 27. This would be a remarkably appropriate name to be used by a Zoramite, whose tribe was the most militant among the tribal units in the Book of Mormon, particularly when used by the captain of the army in naming his son. [4].

There may also be some connection here between the name Aha and the Jaredite name Ahah, perhaps evidencing the great fascination which the Nephites and Zoramites had with the Jaredites, whose culture they had encountered through the Mulekites.

5. ALMA (person).

There are several possible analyses here, but there is little basis upon which to assert a definite position.

(a) The name could mean "covering or concealed" [3], deriving from the Biblical Hebrew ʿlm, "to conceal" or "to cover," from which derive Biblical personal names such as alemet and ya lam, and also the place names of almon and sab lmn. Alma the Elder, of course, "concealed" himself (Mos. 17:4) and "hid" from King Noah (Mos. 18:5). Perhaps some connection was consciously recognized in antiquity between those words in those accounts and the name Alma.

(b) Also possible is the meaning "eternity" [3], deriving from the Aramaic alma, "eternity," or the Biblical Hebrew olam, also meaning "eternity." A strong element in both Alma the Elder's and Younger's preaching was the promise of "eternal" life. (Mos. 18:9, 27:29; Alma 37:44, 42:16). Especially potent, under this analysis, would be the double meaning in Alma's description of his spiritual agony as "eternal" torment, i.e. Alma's own as well as his eternal God's.

(c) Less likely is the meaning "silent, dumb" [2], from the Biblical Hebrew lm, "to bind," which in the passive means "to be dumb." If such a meaning ever attached to the name Alma, it would provide a significant double entendre, inasmuch as Alma was struck "dumb" when visited by the angel leading up to his conversion. (Mos. 27:19). Thus some play on words may have occurred to the Nephites in reporting that Alma had been struck "dumb" and in praying that God would "open the mouth of Alma," or the mouth of the dumb. (Mosiah 27:22).

(d) Finally, there may be some meaning of "widowed" in this name [1], from the Biblical Hebrew alman, "widowed." Nothing is ever said



of Alma the Elder's wife. Perhaps he was widowed and took up this name or was known this way in his community. This would at least be consistent with him being able to flee quickly to take up hiding near the Waters of Mormon, when King Noah sought his life. It might also help explain Alma the Younger's restless youth if he had lost his mother at an early age.

The name Alma occurs in the Bar Kochba letters, edited by Yadin.

5A. ALMA (place).

When used as a place name, Alma would most plausibly be connected with the meaning of "concealed" or "covered" [4], discussed above. Note there that, in Biblical Hebrew as well as the Book of Mormon, the root lm is used in both personal names and place names. The Valley of Alma could well have been a concealed or hidden valley, for Alma and his group of converts hide there from their pursuers (Mos. 24: 20-21), but the valley was expressly named after Alma, as the leader of this camp. (Mos. 24:20). The valley is located a short distance north of the city of Helam, between the cities of Nephi and Zarahemla, (Mos. 24:20,25).

6. AMALEKI (person).

Amaleki is a variant of the Biblical Hebrew amaleqi, or "an Amalekite." [5]. The final -i is the gentilic ending, making the word mean "One of the Amalekites." This name was used by the Nephites before they met the Mulekites, (Omni 12), so there is no necessary connection with the Hebrew root mlk, "to rule," later frequently associated with the Mulekites. The name, however, is in fact used by a Mulekite (Mos. 7:6), as the name of one of the "brothers" of Ammon, who is identified as a descendant of

Zarahemla (Mos. 7:3). Perhaps some linguistic development had added on an "a" to the beginning of the mlk root in the Mulekite language, which the text tells had changed (Omni 17). Any connection with the Biblical Hebrew root mlq, "to nip off," is unlikely in view of the close similarity with the Hebrew amaleqi.

The Amalekites were an Arab tribe which fought with Israel, and thus they are not viewed favorably in the Bible. This makes it unclear why a descendant of Jacob, the son of Lehi, would bear this name. Two possibilities are, first, that Lehi's desert experience had brought him and his group into sympathy or contact with this group, assuming they were not totally destroyed several centuries earlier, or second, that Amaleki became an acceptable name among the tribe of Ephraim, from which Ishmael descended, inasmuch as the Amalekites appear to have settled, possibly peacefully, as far north as the land of Ephraim where a mountain was named after them.

7. AMALICKIAH (person).

Amalickiah is a difficult name to analyze. The most obvious meaning, but wholly unacceptable for a Zoramite political leader and warlord, is "A feminine Amalekite." Compare, for example, Mo abiyah, "Moabitess", a designation applied to Ruth. The -iah suffix may be a theophoric suffix indicating Jehovah. In a traditional Hebrew setting, "Yahweh is an Amalekite" would hardly be suitable, but if the name Amaleki had become acceptable in Nephite or Jacobite circles, as it apparently had as evidenced by Omni 12, a combination in this fashion is not implausible [3]. Other analyses lead to no particularly good sense. The ck in

this name is puzzling, but would seem to stand simply for a Hebrew k. If the root mlk stands behind the first element in this name (see Amaleki above), an ironic meaning emerges, "Yahweh is king" or "Yahweh rules" [3], for the name was borne by a man who contrived to make not God, but himself, king.

8. AMARON (person).

Amaron offers several alternatives but no clear choice.

(a) Assuming that the suffix -on is an affirmative ending alternating with -om (cf. Gershom-Gershon), the name could mean "eloquent," deriving from the Biblical Hebrew mr, "to speak" [3]. Similar Biblical Hebrew personal names might be omar and imri.

(b) Equally, the name could mean "worshipper" [3], from the Biblical Hebrew omri or Arabic mr, "to worship" or "to live." Here also an affirmative suffix -on is assumed.

(c) Less likely is "People of the ark" [1], combining the Biblical Hebrew am, "people," and aron, "ark," but this appears to be an unlikely personal name.

(d) Also possible is "life" or "lively" [1], from the Arabic mr, "to live."

(e) Finally, consider "word of wealth, vigor" [1], deriving from the Biblical Hebrew mr, "to speak," used as a noun, but nouns would have different vowel patterns.

For comparison, on is a city in Egypt (Gen. 41:45). am, "kinsman" is a common theophoric element (e.g., Hammurapi), but aron suggests no appropriate second element. Amaron also resembles aharon, Aaron, the

meaning of which is unknown. The emori are the Biblical Amorites, and there may be a connection there.

Amaron's father, Omni, describes himself as a "wicked man." (Omni 2). His interests, which consisted mostly of fighting to preserve his people while disregarding the statutes and commandments of the Lord, give little clue as to any meaning he might have intended in naming his son. Amaron himself was more worshipful than his father, attributing his life and preservation to his righteousness. According to his short account, the Lord destroyed the wicked Nephites but spared the righteous. (Omni 7). Perhaps there is some connection between "worshipping," "living," and the name Amaron.

9. AMINADAB (person).

Aminadab translates easily into "My (divine) kinsman is noble" [5]. A parallel from Biblical Hebrew is Abinadab, "My father is noble."

Nibley suggests some connection with the Egyptian name Amanathabi, name of an Egyptian chief of a Canaanite city under Egyptian domination [1]. Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, p. 27. Amminadab occurs in the Bible.

Aminadab was a Nephite who had dissented from the Nephites (Hel. 5:35). He was present in the prison in the land of Nephi when he beheld the faces of Nephi and Lehi shining as the faces of angels through a cloud. (Hel. 5:36). Although his Nephite kinsmen had been among the most noble, he himself has apostacized from them. Perhaps some memory of his heritage, carried with him in his name, made him more receptive to understanding this manifestation. Perhaps Mormon preserved this name in the record for the very purpose of reinforcing Mormon's conviction of the nobility of the Nephite cause as witnessed by this influential miracle.

10. AMINADI (person).

Aminadi is rendered "My (divine) kinsman is present" [5], or "My (divine) kinsman is given" [2], following the analysis of the name of Abinadi above. Either way, Amminadi is possibly a more accurate spelling.

Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, the son of Lehi (Alma 10:2). He would have been born and named between Sixth and Second Centuries B.C. He was remembered by his posterity for having interpreted some otherwise unknown writing on the wall of a temple (Alma 10:2).