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Chapter LXVII

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Abstract: Nephite Proper Names—Bible Names—Sariah—Nephi—Sam—Melek—Jershon—Isabel—Aha, etc.—Prefixes and Suffixes

CHAPTER LXVII.

NEPHITE PROPER NAMES—BIBLE NAMES—SARIAH—NEPHI—
SAM—MELEK—GERSHON—ISABEL—AHA, ETC.,—PRE-
FIXES AND SUFFIXES.

THE number of Bible proper names found in the Book of Mormon has been now and again urged as an argument against its divine origin. If those making these objections were to calmly consider the matter, we believe they would quickly acknowledge that it would be very inconsistent to expect the opposite. Nearly all devout races are in the habit of naming their children after the holy men—patriarchs, martyrs and sages—whose lives they reverence, and whose virtues they desire to see reproduced in their offspring. It is so with ourselves; nearly all our most familiar names are English forms of Bible names. For example: John, James, Jacob, Joseph and Thomas among men, and Mary, Anna, Elizabeth and Sarah among women. So it was with the Nephites. The Hebrew was the language of their sacred literature; while their fondest recollections, their holiest pride ran back to the days of Joseph and Joshua, Samuel and Isaiah, and, like other races, they named their children after the ancient worthies they revered most. Hence, we find the following Bible names borne by the descendants of Lehi* and Sariah: Aaron, Aminadab, Ammon, Ammah, Amos, Benjamin, Enos, Gideon, Gilgal, Helam, Helem, Isaiah, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Jeremiah, Jonas, Laban, Lemuel,

* The name Lehi, itself, is to be found in *Judges* xv., 9.

Noah, Sannel, Shem, Timothy and Zedekiah. A few others are evidently slightly altered Hebrew names, as Chemish from Chemosh, Sherem from Shaaraim, and Zenos from Zenas. Indeed, there may be no actual difference; the apparent change may arise from the English translators inserting a wrong vowel sound in words where, according to the ancient custom, the consonants only were written.

We will now consider a few proper names found in the Book of Mormon, but not in the Bible; for, notwithstanding the changes made by the Nephites in their language, the derivation and signification of many of these names are evident, when considered in connection with the languages of the races with whom the ancient Hebrews were brought most closely in contact.

Sariah is obviously Hebrew. It is a name of extreme beauty and force. Its roots are in Sara, a princess, and Jah or Iah, Jehovah, thus meaning a princess of Jehovah; a most fitting name for the mother of a multitude of nations.

Nephi is another very remarkable name. Its roots are Egyptian; its meaning, good, excellent, benevolent. From very ancient times the Egyptians believed that all who died had to have their acts upon earth scrutinized by a council of inquisitors, before they could be proclaimed fit to enter the eternal abodes of bliss and stand in the presence of the god Osiris, the chief lord of the land of the departed. One of the names given to this god, expressive of his attributes, was Nephi or Dnephi (the D being silent, as in Dniestre, Dnieper, etc.), or the good, and the chief city dedicated to him was called N-ph, translated into the Hebrew as Noph, in which form it appears in Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Its

modern English name is Memphis. In the Coptic, the language of the modern Egyptians, the word has the form of Menfi or Mnefi. Plutarch, the ancient historian, says that Dnephi was a benevolent person, and an epithet for Osiris, and was also applicable to Memphis, the sepulchre of that god. The word Neph frequently appears in Egyptian proper names before the Christian era, as Amoneph, Ammeph, Me-Nephta. From these facts we conclude that Neph was a common name in the Egyptian tongue; and, as far as the founder of the Nephite nation was concerned, most applicable to his character, which was pre-eminently good and benevolent.

The English word, Nephites, that is the people or family of Neph, occurs twice in its Hebrew form in the Old Testament; once in *Ezra* (ii., 50) as Nephisim, and again in *Nehemiah* (vii. 52), as Nephishesim, which show that the name was common among the Hebrews of the age of the captivity.

Sam is a name which some shallow-pated opponents of the Book of Mormon have been disposed to ridicule. But it is pure Egyptian. It was the distinctive name of one of the highest orders of their priesthood. The great *Rameses* himself belonged to the order of Sam. The fact that Lehi gave to two of his sons such peculiarly Egyptian names shows how great an influence the literature of that country must have had on his life.

Melek is the name given to a region of country situated west of the river Sidon. No reason is given why it was so called, but its meaning is evident. It was the king's land. The ancient Phœnician word for king is spelled letter for letter the same as in the

Book of Mormon (Melek), and the Hebrew word is almost identical.

Gershon, the name applied to the land given by the Nephites to the exiled Ammonites, means the land of the expelled, or of the strangers. We think it altogether probable that this significant name was given to it at the time it was set off for the habitation of these expatriated Christian Lamanites, as it defines their condition as exiles, and their relation to the Nephites as strangers. The name is not mentioned before this event, and would possibly be the only local name by which it was known to the compiler of the Book of Mormon. Before the date of this exodus, it was, we think, considered a portion of the land of Zarahemla.

Isabel is either a form of Jezebel, the chaste, a name given in derision to the character who bore it, or it has its derivation like Isaiah, which means the delight of Jehovah, and thus signifies the delight of Bel, that is to say, of her lord, husband or possessor. It may have been assumed to suggest the supposed joys of her society. It is a remarkable fact that the land wherein she dwelt is styled the land of Siron, that is, the land of the deserters, or apostates. It was situated at the extreme edge of the Nephite possessions, and on the borders of the Lamanites, beyond the land of Antionum, in which dwelt the Zoramite apostates. The experience of the Saints in this age teaches them how apt apostates are to draw off to remote corners, where they fancy the reproofs of the priesthood are the least likely to be heard. In such a place, far from the Nephite capital, outside the reach of the rigors of the law of Moses, the enticing Isabel could carry on her vile vocation with the greatest safety and impunity.

Aha, we suggest means laughter. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, called her son Isaac—laughter. The sound of the word also resembles a laugh, and again it is the name for laughter in the language of the modern Sioux, as Minne-aha—laughing water.

Without being able to express a positive opinion, but simply as a suggestion, we insert the supposed meaning of the following words:

Nephihah,	Jehovah's consolation.
Ammon,	A worker of Jehovah.
Shazer (or Shazeh),	Gladness.
Nahom,	Comfort.
Zarahemla,	From a rising of light, or whom he (God) will fill up.
Laman,	White (another form of Laban).
Manti,	Relating to prophets or oracles.

Many others could be inserted, but might possibly prove irksome.

Before closing this branch of inquiry we will draw attention to the ancient Nephite prefixes and suffixes. These matters may not be of great interest to the general reader, but to the students of the Book of Mormon they may prove an incentive to further interesting research.

Among the most numerous prefixes found in Book of Mormon proper names, are Am, Anti, Gid and Hel, of which the first is by far the most frequent. We find Am in Ammon, Amaron, Amnaron, Ammoron, Amoron, Amulon, Amnor, Ammonihah, Amalickiah, Amnah, Amlici, Aminadli, etc.; Anti in Antionah, Antionno, Antipus, Antionum and Anti-Nephi-Lehi. It was also used as a suffix, as Ani-Anti. The prefix Gid we find in Giddianhi, Gidgiddoni, Giddonah and

Gidgidonah: and Hel in Helem, Helam, Helaman and Helorum.

Not to make this portion of our investigations tedious, we will only give two or three examples of the suffixes that appear to have been most in use.

ah, as Zerahemnah, Giddouah, Cumorah.

am, as Zoram, Lauram, Seezoram.

iah, as Amalickiah, Mosiah.

ihah, as Nephiah, Moronihah, Cumenihah.

om, as Sidom, Shiblom, Jarom.

on, as Mormon, Emron, Corianton.

or, as Amnor, Korihor, Nehor.

en, as Kumen, Kishkumen.

um, as Teancum, Helorum, Moriantum.

us, as Antipus, Archaentus, Lachoneus.

oni, Moroni, Lamoni, Mathoni.

di, Aminadi, Abinadi.

hi, as Nephi, Zenephi, Limhi.

ti, Lehonti, Manti.

doni,* as Gidgiddoni, Middoni.

* We suggest that this is a form of the Hebrew word Adonai—Lord.

