Tvedtnes adds to the onomastic discussion of the names of Lehi and Sariah in this article. He suggests that scholars should not be dissuaded by the fact that the name Sariah is found only for men. He discusses the difference between etymology and attestation of names. In the first article of this discussion, Hoskisson concluded that personal names containing parts of the body are rare in all the ancient Semitic languages. Tvedtnes, on the other hand, finds numerous examples of personal names derived from body parts. He concludes with his analysis that Sariah means “Jehovah is (my/a) prince” and that Lehi means “cheek, jawbone.”
Hoskisson writes that “the name Sariah is not attested, as far as I am aware, in an ancient Near Eastern source.” He seems not to be aware of the 1993 article by Jeffrey R. Chadwick. The name is also known from three seals and two bullae. Hoskisson cites “the masculine biblical personal name Seraiah” as a comparison with Sariah. Actually, the vocalization Seraiah may be incorrect. Vowels were added to Hebrew at a late stage and were not written in Old Testament times. Thus the name could have been vocalized Sariah at an earlier time. Indeed, this makes much more sense for Hebrew šār (“prince”) + Yāh (“Yah,” the abbreviated form of the divine name sometimes rendered “Jehovah” in English). We should not be dissuaded by the fact that the name is found only for men on the seals and bullae found in Israel. Even the name Solomon, generally associated with the Israelite king of that name, is attested on a bulla for a woman. Sariah could mean either “Jehovah [Yāh] is prince” or “Jehovah is my prince,” in the same way that the biblical name Ahijah can mean either “Jehovah is a brother” or “Jehovah is my brother.”

This brings up a point that we should stress in all of our name research, i.e., the difference between etymology and attestation of names. Determining possible etymologies for nonbiblical Book of Mormon names is, in many cases, a relatively simple matter. A viable etymology lends evidence for the authenticity of the name. But some Book of Mormon names have defied establishing a meaning. Among these are Abish, Himni, and Hagoth, all of which are now attested from Hebrew inscriptions found in Israel. The attestation of a name in such an inscription provides stronger evidence than does a viable ancient Near Eastern (especially Hebrew and Egyptian) etymology.

Hoskisson objects to Lehi being equivalent to the Hebrew term lehi on the grounds that “personal names containing parts of the body are rare in all the ancient Semitic languages.” He then follows Nibley’s suggestion that derives Lehi from l-ḥy, “(belonging) to/for the living one.” He does not tell us, however, that names beginning with prepositions (the l- in this case) are even more rare. Moreover, among the personal names deriving from body parts are Shechem (“back, shoulder,” fifty-four times in the scriptures), Rosh (“head,” Genesis 46:21), Bohan (“thumb,” Joshua 15:6; 18:17), and Seir (“hair,” Genesis 36:20–21). In Joshua 19:25, we have the place-name Beten, which means “womb, belly.” Nibley and Hoskisson want to derive Lehi from a place-name, La-hai-roi, meaning “(belonging) to/for the living one who sees me,” but for some reason reject a tie to the biblical place-name Lehi (“jaw, cheek,” Judges 15:9, 14, 19). I find this a rather strange approach. Occam’s razor would dictate that we opt for the simplest etymologies. In the case of Sariah, it is “Jehovah is (my/a) prince,” while in the case of Lehi it is “cheek, jawbone.”
constitute verse 2 and the first half of verse 3.


24 See, for example, "The Indian Hunter" ("Oh, why does the eagle of the forest fly! / Like the hound on the tiger's track?"); by the English poet Eliza Cook (1813–1889), one of three Cook poemsanthologized in Hazel Fellenbaum, comp., The Best Loved Poems of the American People (New York: Doubleday, 1936), 625; or "Memories" by John Greenleaf Whittier: "My father loved the white men, / when / They were but boys, shelterless, / Nor was it given him to know / That children whom he cherished then / Would rise to action, like armed men, / To work his people's overthrow."
The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1894), 489. Elizabeth C. Snow was also fond of this tradition. One of her first published poems (in 1830, five years before she became a Latter-day Saint) was "The Red Man of the West," as said to our forefathers gave / All the lands 'twixt the eastern and western big wall."
Ohio State March 30, 1839. Much later she lengthenides and "Mormonized" this poem, retitling it "The Lamanite." It was published in the Deseret News, 20 September 1839. It is the third title version promises that "The scales will fall which now besedock their eyes. / And they, in faultless purity arise."


26 Parley P. Pratt, "When earth in bondage long had lain," in Young, Pratt, and Taylor, A Collection of Sacred Hymns . . . in Europe, (1840), 238.

27 Parley P. Pratt, "The solid rocks were rent in twain," in Young, Pratt, and Taylor, A Collection of Sacred Hymns . . . in Europe, (1840), 238.

28 Parley P. Pratt, "O that who has search'd in the records of old," in ibid., 240.

29 Author unknown, "To the wagon nations, now gone east," in ibid., 250.

30 When the plight of the Indians was treated in popular poetry, it was common for an Indian person to speak a first-person lament: all three hymns printed with this article use this device.


32 The tune paired with this text in the Padmore (312) is "See, the conqu'ring hero" from George Frederic Handel's Judas Macabeus (New York: Vanguard, 1975), high expectations indeed from a congregation!

33 Louise A. Greene Richards, "The Savior at Jericho" in Deseret Sunday School Songs, 431.


35 This hymn is not listed under the Book of Mormon heading in the topical index! The text is aesthetically satisfying because the inclusiveness, eccumenical use makes it useful of the Book of Mormon, but apparently in connection with its source is therefore more abstract.

36 Although the Book of Mormon presence in our modern hymnbook is rather modest, other kinds of music make rich use of Book of Mormon materials. The importance of Book of Mormon songs for the Primary organization has already been mentioned; although the Book of Mormon headed in Children's Songs lists only twelve songs, many of these are immensely popular, and they play a crucial role in familiarizing young Latter-day Saints with the Book of Mormon. A great deal could be written about the significance of the Book of Mormon in the works of serious Latter-day Saint composers, including Leroy Robert's "Overture from the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Leroy Robertson, 1953) and Crawford Gates's score for the Hill Cumorah Pageant, Music from the Hill Cumorah: The Pageant, America's Great Christ for the Church, the Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, VSOIT 4188 (1988). Other examples are Robert J. Newell's "1 Nephi 3-13, I Come unto My Own," Ralph G. Rodgers Jr. (lyricist), 3 Nephi Nephite (1988) and Valley Forge Pageant LP 14457 (1978). In addition, popular vocal music written for the Mormon market that has used the Book of Mormon with great success; as fairly free-form works, without the strict requirements of meter and rhyme found in a hymn stanza, these songs often use paraphrased text. An example familiar to many English-speaking LDS people is "Oh, That I Were an Angel" (Alma 29:1; music by Wanda West Palmer).

37 Alfred Tennyson (lyric), Crawford Gates (music), "Hail, Columbus!"
Harmonies, 1855, 215.

38 Desert Sunday School Song Book (Salt Lake City: Desert Sunday School Union, 1899).


40 Conversation with the author, 30 November 1999.

Seeking Agreement on the Meaning of Book of Mormon Names

1 Several researchers have worked on onomastic studies over recent decades. Hugh Nibley started the genre with several major articles in the Deseret in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952). Robert F. Smith privately distributed several papers that are still unpublished. John A. Tvedens did the same; in addition see his "A Phenomenic Analysis of Nephi and Jaredite Proper Names," Society for Early History Archaeology Newsletter and Proceedings 141. (December 1977): 3-8. Joanne Carlson, a Semitist in southern California, with John W. Welch produced a 1981 FARMS Paper, "Possible Linguistic Roots of Certain Book of Mormon Names." A particularly useful introduction to the field is Paul Y. Hoskinson's "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for the Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 212-36.

Lehi and Sarah Paul Y. Hoskinson

1 See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, Heinrichs, and Aramaisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament, 3rd ed., rev. Walter Bauernfeind, Johann Jakob Stamm, and Benedikti Hartmann (Leipzig: Brill, 1995). See for example the "Name List" in Appendix 3 of Jeanne A. Fowler, Thespis, Personal Names in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 3rd ed., revised and enlarged (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 334ff.; for this reference I wish to thank my colleague Dana M. Pike of Religious Education at BYU. The bibliographical personal names and its gentile parent, Ormisa (see Numbers 26:16 and Azaniah (see Nehemiah 10), though related to the word for "name", are probably denominational and, like Thespis, Thespis, Personal Names, Appendix 3, sub die, 34, 36, and 38.

2 Chicago Assyrian Dictionary: I, 150. I would like to thank Jonathan Gimmell for finding this rather obscure example.

3 Paul Haupt, a German-American scholar working around the turn of the last century, was one of the first to derive the personal name Rite from "chek" or "globose." Hugh Nibley downplayed this interpretation, preferring Nelson Glueck's reading "Labah," but suggested for the bibliographical place Laboh in Genesis 24:62 and 25:11. See Hugh W. Nibley, An Appendix to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 239.


6 See the similar construction in Ran Zadok, The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthropophagy and Prospography (Leuven: Peeters, 1988), 61; "Lal'ô (W): Of God; Efrî (P): Efrî (or my light)."

The Names Lehi and Sarah—Language and Meaning

Jeffrey R. Chadwick

1 Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 136.


Lehi and Sarah Comments

John A. Tvedens


3 Ibid.

Response to the Comments
Paul Y. Hoskinson


2 In the original article I could have added more examples of the masculine name Sarâh, but it seemed to me unnecessary, a clear-cut example of the name used for a female would be more helpful.

3 Who is interpreted as "she of the other," god has