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**Abstract** Berrett discusses point by point reasons why an ancient burial complex at Khirbet Beit Lei, sometimes called “Lehi’s cave,” is unlikely to have Book of Mormon connections.

Brown describes a carved altar inscribed to the tribe Nihm discovered in the southwest Arabian peninsula (Yemen)—this location may be the place Nahom where Nephi’s father-in-law, Ishmael, was buried, according to the Book of Mormon record.

The characters on the Anthon transcript reportedly taken by Martin Harris to New York to show to Professor Charles Anthon bear resemblance to characters on two Mexican seals made of baked clay.

Szink identifies another possible Semitic source for the name Alma in the tablets of Ebla uncovered in Syria.



## NEW LIGHT

# The So-Called Lehi Cave

LaMar C. Berrett

*Editor's Note: For nearly three decades Latter-day Saint audiences, especially travelers in Israel, have been told by some lecturers and tour guides about "Lehi's Cave" at a place called Khirbet Beit Lei about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Some church members have claimed that evidence found there shows that it is the spot where the sons of Lehi stopped when they fled from Jerusalem and from the servants of Laban, according to 1 Nephi 3:26–27. In 1982 Dr. LaMar C. Berrett, author of a widely circulated book, *Discovering the World of the Bible*, published an evaluation of these claims through FARMS.<sup>1</sup> Yet many Latter-day Saints are not acquainted with his critique. This short article summarizes what he found out about the Khirbet Beit Lei and the claim that Nephi and his brothers stopped there.*

In 1961 a road-building project by the government of Israel uncovered an ancient burial complex at Khirbet Beit Lei during construction in the area which is ten miles west-northwest of Hebron. Professor Joseph Naveh, an archaeologist at Hebrew University, excavated the site

One of the inscriptions in the cave.



for the Israeli government's Department of Antiquities.<sup>2</sup> He found a cave consisting of three chambers that anciently had been cut into the chalky limestone. The two inner rooms contained eight skeletons that lay on "benches" of limestone that had been left around the sides of the chambers. The entrance had been blocked by large stones. A ring, a bronze earring, and a bronze plaque were the only articles found with the skeletons.

Graffiti had been inscribed with a crude stylus on the walls of the central chamber. Three of these drawings show sketchy human figures ranging in height from 13 to 16 inches. In one, a man is shown holding what the archaeologist thought might be a musical instrument, a lyre. In a second, a man raises his arms, possibly in a prayer gesture. In a third spot, a deeply engraved figure of a man wears a strange head-dress. The outlines of two sailing vessels were on another wall.

Various Hebrew letters were also scratched on the walls. Naveh's attempt to read these was not very successful, but Professor Frank Moore Cross later analyzed them in more acceptable terms. One inscription is considered a plea for the deliverance of Jerusalem from some invader. Another constitutes a plea to be spared from guilt or punishment. The third takes the form of a prophetic oracle in which Yāhweh [Jehovah] speaks in the first person and in poetic form. The statement has God affirming his acceptance and assurance of the redemption of Jerusalem and Judah in phrasing reminiscent of Jeremiah. Details of how the written char-



acters are shaped indicate that probably all the writings in this chamber date from the sixth century B.C.

Cross thought the tomb was likely constructed in pre-exilic times (before 600 B.C.). Later the tomb complex was opened, and perhaps robbed, by the people who made the inscriptions. Those probably were "chance visitors, or . . . refugees or travelers who took shelter in the cave." Cross considered it likely that the inscriptions were made by some refugee fleeing the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar who conquered Judah and destroyed King Zedekiah's Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (see 2 Kings 25:1–4; from the biblical



Outlines of two ships scratched on the walls of the cave.

city of Lachish, only a few miles to the west and in the same time frame, come the famous “Lachish Letters,” messages written on pieces of broken pottery that tell about the tense military situation as the Babylonians approached the area). Manuscripts and papyrus documents have been found that were left in other caves in the land of Judah by men at this same historical moment. (Cross chose to “suppress the temptation” he felt to suggest that the inscriptions at the burial chamber at Khirbet Beit Lei may have been the work of “a prophet or his amanuensis [scribe] fleeing Jerusalem,” apparently hinting at Jeremiah and his helper Baruch.)<sup>3</sup>

Mormon interest in this burial chamber has focused on six points:

1. The name, Khirbet Beit Lei, which means ruins of the house of Lei. Adherents of the view that Nephi visited here have supposed that the name Lei is a variant of Lehi. Two aged Arab residents of the vicinity claimed that an ancient prophet named “Lei” judged his people in that locality.
2. The presence of a “cave” near Jerusalem that could be the one to which Nephi and his brothers resorted according to 1 Nephi 3:27.
3. The date of the inscriptions has been judged to fall early in the century that followed 600 B.C.,

View of the area around the site.

which is about when Lehi and his family left Jerusalem.

4. The plea in one inscription for the deliverance and redemption of Jerusalem.
5. Inscribed prophetic statements in the first person, supposedly meaning that a prophet (Nephi?) was present.
6. Sketches of ships on the chamber walls; Nephi’s party later built a vessel and crossed the ocean.

While these points may look impressive initially, examination of each of them establishes that they do not provide convincing evidence for any connection with Nephi or his brothers.

Point 1. Indeed there was a district named “Lehi” (see Judges 15:9, 14, 19) in the hill country of Judah near Philistine territory, and this may have been in the neighborhood where Khirbet Beit Lei is located. When Samson killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone (Hebrew *l’zi*) of an ass (see Judges 15:17), he named an area there “Ramath-lehi,” meaning “the heights of lehi,” or “lifting up of the jawbone” or “casting away of the jawbone.” A nineteenth-century book mentions a village named “beit leyi” in this general area,<sup>4</sup> although it is hard to imagine that the term *leyi* is derived from the

district that Samson named. After all, we do not definitely know where that was located; moreover, that name was bestowed over three thousand years ago, and there is no documentation during the intervening centuries of the name in this vicinity or anywhere else in the land of Israel. During those millennia the Jews were twice driven out of the land, and the language spoken changed at least twice—from Hebrew to Aramaic at the time of Jesus and much later to Arabic. Besides, the recent Arab inhabitants of Khirbet Beit Lei have no cultural continuity with the Jews of the prophet Lehi’s day. Thus the name *Lei* and the language and culture of the inhabitants of the area have only the slimmest prospect of relating historically to anything connected with Lehi or Nephi. Moreover, Lehi wanted to get away from people at Jerusalem who had sought his life. Evidently, he did not want his departure to be publicly known lest his enemies pursue him, and nobody claims that he was personally at this cave. So how would his name have become associated with the site?

Point 2. Nothing in Nephi’s record suggests that the “cavity in a rock” to which the sons of Lehi fled (see 1 Nephi 3:26–27) was anything but a



natural cave. The language Nephi uses does not fit a burial chamber hewed from soft limestone and shut up with skeletons inside, the case at Khirbet Beit Lei. Furthermore, the location of this tomb complex does not fit with Nephi's account. It lies well to the southwest of Jerusalem. That would have been a strange direction for Nephi's flight. This area was quite heavily populated, thus hardly the "wilderness" where their "cavity in a rock" was found. It made much more sense for them to head straight south from the capital city, back over the route (which has plenty of caves nearby) along which they had come from their father's camp near the Red Sea. Besides, if Nephi and his companions had actually entered this tomb, and Laman and Lemuel had beaten their younger brothers in this place, it would be strange for archaeologists in 1961 to find the eight skeletons in an undisturbed condition in the tomb; we would expect them to be somewhat pushed aside at the very least.

Point 3. The timing is far from decisive. Surely other refugees besides Nephi and his brothers were moving about in the land of Judah at this same period of Babylonian disruption and could have stopped at this spot for temporary shelter. Anyhow, Naveh felt that the tomb might have been used at various times and that the inscriptions could have been put there well after Nephi's day. Berrett documents in his paper that a number of features in the inscriptions (e.g., the lyre and outstretched arms and hands) were quite common in cave art in the land of Judah in the centuries after the Babylonian invasion.

Point 4. At the time of the Babylonian invasion (588–586 B.C.), it would be natural for many Jews to plead with Jehovah for deliverance of their sacred city. But Nephi would *not* have been one who would do so, for he was convinced that his father had been shown

by revelation that wicked Jerusalem was justly doomed (see 1 Nephi 1:13). His brothers would not have written any such plea either, because they did not expect that the city would or even could be destroyed (see 1 Nephi 2:13; 7:7).

Point 5. Given the circumstances facing Nephi at the time he and his three brothers were in their cave refuge—the brothers beating and intimidating him (see 1 Nephi 3:28–29)—he would hardly have made things worse by asserting his standing as a prophet by writing a sacred message on the wall.

Point 6. There is no hint in Nephi's record that at the time of the cave incident he or any in his family conceived that they would build a ship and cross the ocean. Only years later did the Lord reveal that information to them. In any case the conventional kind of sailing ship pictured in the inscriptions on the walls of the burial tomb at Khirbet Beit Lei seems not to have been the style of vessel that Nephi ended up building, for, he said, "neither did I build the ship after the manner of men . . . but . . . after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me" (1 Nephi 18:2).

Naveh felt that the ship shown in the tomb could be a symbol associated with death, a motif well known in Egyptian and other Near Eastern ritual, rather than a representation of a literal ship. Or perhaps the ships scratched on the wall here merely recalled sailing ships such as inhabitants of this area had seen only 20 miles away on the Mediterranean coast.

We would like more information about this site. But when what we do know is compared with what Nephi's record tells us about the cave where they stopped, it is most unlikely, Berrett concludes, that the Khirbet Beit Lei site has any connection with the Book of Mormon. The limited coincidences that can be found between the site and Nephi's account do not justify the tourist myth of "Lehi's cave." □

## NEW LIGHT

### "The Place That Was Called Nahom": New Light from Ancient Yemen

S. Kent Brown

A recently discovered carved altar from the southwest Arabian peninsula provides dramatic new evidence for locating "the place that was called Nahom," referred to by Nephi in his narrative.

Nahom was the location where Nephi's father-in-law, Ishmael, was buried (see 1 Nephi 16:34). The quest to pin down where that place might actually be in the vast desert wilderness of Arabia has raised issues for readers of the Nephite record that remain unsettled. Some LDS scholars have sought for years to identify where Nahom was located in order to understand the social and geographical circumstances of Lehi's trek through arid Arabia and grasp more fully what happened to the Lehite party as they sojourned there.

Inscribed altar dedicated by a man named Bixathar of the tribe of Nihm in the seventh or sixth century B.C. Photo courtesy Philippe Maillard.





Jebel (Mount) Nihm lies about 30 miles north of San'a, the modern capital of Yemen.

Hugh Nibley and others since him<sup>1</sup> have observed that the passive phrasing, “the place that *was called* Nahom” (emphasis added), connotes that the name had already been conferred on that area by local inhabitants before Lehi’s clan arrived. Unlike the case of “the Valley of Lemuel,” father Lehi did not coin his own name for this spot. Other people were already there and the little party had to cope with their presence. It has even been argued that the family faced serious economic and social dependency upon local inhabitants during and after their stay at Nahom. The first children of the recently married couples probably were born in this area (see 1 Nephi 16:7; 17:1),<sup>2</sup> and it may have been the birthplace of Jacob, Nephi’s brother. Moreover, the party apparently stayed there for some time.

When the travelers resumed the journey from Nahom, their route turned “nearly eastward” (1 Nephi 17:1). That course took them to the shore of the sea—“Irreantum” they called it—that bounded the land they named Bountiful. Why did they pause

at Nahom? Other travelers covered the entire distance of that trip from Jerusalem to the coast of the Indian Ocean in a matter of months, rather than in eight years (see 1 Nephi 17:4). Was this place a kind of “Winter Quarters”—a respite that allowed them to recover from the shock of the first long leg of their journey while they prepared for the last, grimmest portion?

One of the challenges facing LDS researchers has been determining where such a place might have been located. They have sought evidence in ancient sources of information that there was a spot, and a population, that was called Nahom. The first confirmation came twenty years ago, when the late Ross T. Christensen, an archaeology professor at BYU, discovered a place named “Nehhm” on an eighteenth-century map drawn by the famous German explorer Carsten Niebuhr. Presumably, the name Nahom was spelled with the same three consonants, N-H-M, assuring those knowledgeable in Semitic languages that “Nahom” could well be related to “Nehhm.”<sup>3</sup> In Hebrew, the combina-

tion of these three consonants points to a root word that can mean “comfort” or “compassion.” (The meanings are different in the Old South Arabian language.<sup>4</sup>) The reason Nephi mentioned this name while remaining silent about any other place names encountered on their trip (with the possible exception of Shazer) was likely because he considered that the existing name of the spot, “comfort” in his language, was evidence of the hand of the Lord over them, although Ishmael’s own family (including Nephi’s wife) seems not to have been at all positive (see 1 Nephi 16:35).

Warren and Michaela Aston have been the most persistent in following the lead offered by Christensen. In their book, they have drawn together references to a number of Arabic sources that predate the work of Niebuhr by several centuries. These Arab authors, Ibn al-Kalbi and al-Hamdāni, refer variously to a pagan god known as Nuhum (Ibn al-Kalbi), a tribal ancestor named Nuham (Ibn al-Kalbi), and a region and a tribe called Nihm (al-Hamdāni), all in southwest Arabia. Even so, these references come from the pens of individuals who lived in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., 1,400 or more years after Lehi’s party passed through the area. In reaching their conclusions, the Astons assumed that there was a continuity of such terms in that region for 1½ millennia because others had assumed it. After all, there is still a

Jebel (Mount) Nihm. Photograph courtesy David J. Johnson.



tribe and an area called Nihm to this day. Of course, the assumption was open to challenge, particularly because the earlier Greco-Roman authors who wrote about Arabia did not mention anything about a region or a tribe by the name of Nihm or Nehem. But that has now changed.

A German archaeological team under the leadership of Burkhard Vogt has been excavating the Bar-ân temple in Marib, the ancient capital of the Sabaean kingdom that lies about 70 miles due east of modern San'a, the capital of Yemen. (It is likely that the queen of Sheba began her journey to visit King Solomon from Marib.) Among the artifacts uncovered at the temple, the excavators turned up an inscribed altar that they date to the seventh or sixth centuries B.C., generally the time of Lehi and his family. A certain "Bi-athar, son of Sawâd, son of Naw-ân, the Nihmite" donated the altar to the temple. The altar has been part of a traveling exhibit of artifacts from ancient Yemen that appeared first in Paris and has most recently been shown in Vienna.

The inscribed reference to the tribe of Nihm on this altar is the earliest known mention of this name, or a variant of it. It predates by almost 1,500 years the Arabic sources cited by the Astons which refer to such a term. Moreover, the inscription establishes that a tribe by this name had produced a person of means who could donate a finely carved altar to the temple. Although we cannot determine that at that time there was a *place* called Nihm or Nehem, it is reasonable to surmise that the tribe gave its name to the region where it dwelt, evidently a few dozen miles north of modern San'a, in the highlands that rise to the north of Wadi Jawf. Was it this name that Nephi rendered Nahom in his record? Very probably. □

## NEW LIGHT

### "Anthon Transcript" Writing Found?

One of the rarely recognized tragedies of Book of Mormon studies is the failure of substantial earlier research to receive sufficient recognition to make it part of continuing investigation. A good example is a paper first published almost three decades ago by Carl Hugh Jones.<sup>1</sup> In it he examined the "Caractors" that Joseph Smith had transcribed from the plates so that Martin Harris could show them to Professor Charles Anthon in New York City. Issues that Jones raised remain today a challenge not yet taken up by scholars. Following Jones's lead should shed light on the plates and the text from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

Several copies of the Anthon transcript exist and have been published in various places. What appears to be the oldest version is in the possession of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Independence, Missouri. RLDS historians have reported that this copy of the characters is written on a piece of paper measuring 8 by 3¼ inches. The paper appears to be of the same quality and appearance as that on which the manuscript of the Book of Mormon was written. The sheet was in David Whitmer's possession in 1884, he having obtained it along with the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon from his brother-in-law, Oliver Cowdery, before the latter's death in 1850.

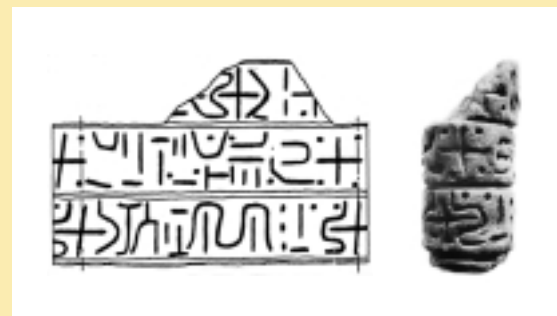
A photograph of the characters was published in a 1908 history of the

Reorganized LDS Church.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-two years later LDS historian B. H. Roberts published a new photograph of the same document in his *Comprehensive History of the Church*.<sup>3</sup> Whitmer claimed that this sheet was the very one copied by Joseph Smith Jr. to carry to Professor Anthon (however, there is reason to believe that more than one sheet was copied and conveyed by Harris).<sup>4</sup> There is little question that this transcript was at least part of the material presented to Anthon to display characters copied from the gold plates.

Jones first assigned a code (reference) number to each discrete character. He identified 56 of them that occur a single time and 39 more that appear more than once. Since Jones's study was the first to provide such an apparatus for reference to these characters, further studies should refer to the characters using his numbering system.

He made comparisons among the Anthon transcript characters as a step toward the discovery of possible

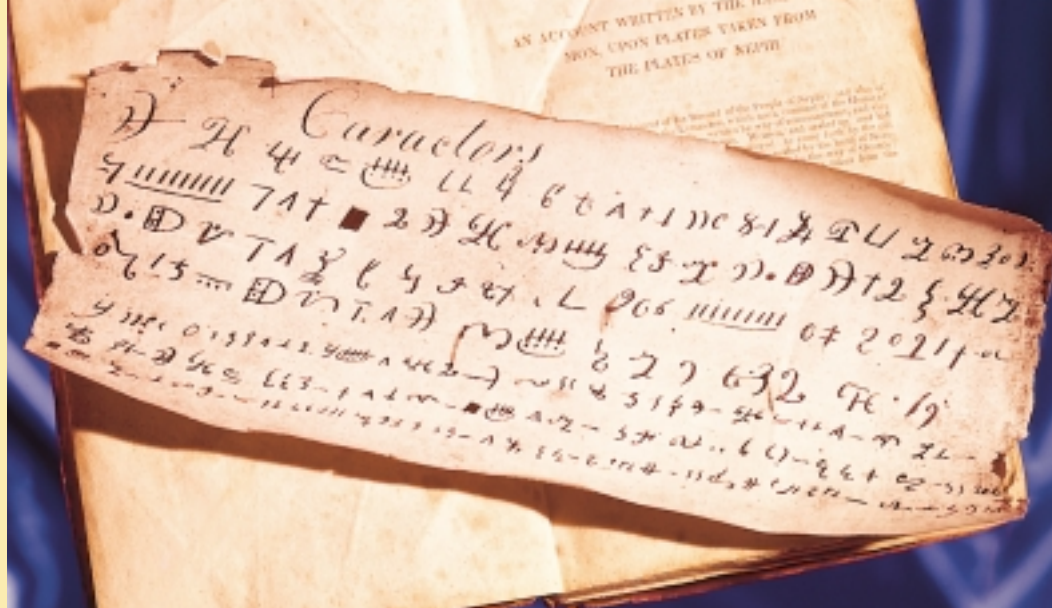
The inscribed cylinder seal from Tlatilco and rollout impression.



words or phrases. For example, one pair of consecutive signs appears in three different places in the seven lines of the Anthon transcript, two groups of three characters each appear twice, and a certain sequence of five characters appears twice. Jones thought that recognizing such repetitions might contribute to deciphering the script, although he never attempted any decipherment, considering himself linguistically unprepared to do so. Jones also felt that there was evidence for a simple single-stroke alphabet consisting of 20 to 32 letters depending on how finely one defined a stroke.

He also referred to similar characters that are displayed in a book of family reminiscences of the life of Frederick G. Williams, a Presiding Bishop in the early LDS Church.<sup>5</sup> A small feature in the book that came from Williams's papers showed a few more signs said to have been copied from the gold plates. When those are added to the 224 on the Anthon transcript, a significant sample of "reformed Egyptian" characters, as Moroni called them in Mormon 9:32, is available for students of languages to work with in trying to find internal consistencies or make external comparisons. Jones suggested that comparison of some of the characters with the demotic form of Egyptian writing was one approach that seemed promising; others have hinted at the same thing.<sup>6</sup>

Jones went on to identify Anthon transcript characters on two Mexican seals made of baked clay. One of those objects was first reported in 1966 when Dr. David H. Kelley discussed it in print. This inscribed "cylinder seal" had been found accidentally by workmen excavating soil for use as fill dirt at the famed archaeological site of Tlatilco near the western edge of the Valley of Mexico. Kelley, a renowned linguist and



Facsimile of the Anthon transcript on a copy of the first printing of the Book of Mormon. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

archaeologist, considered that the characters represented a "hitherto unknown writing system."<sup>7</sup> Archaeologist John A. Graham of the University of California later commented on this script: "The markings of this seal closely resemble various oriental scripts ranging from Burma and China to the rim of the Mediterranean. If the signs of this seal should be writing, and the seal should be accepted as authentic, we would almost surely be dealing with an instance of transpacific contact during the Preclassic" age (i.e., the period in Mesoamerica preceding A.D. 300).<sup>8</sup> Based on the many artifacts excavated at Tlatilco, a probable date for this seal can be inferred of not later than 400 B.C.

Jones also compared the Anthon transcript signs to some found on another clay seal excavated at the famous Olmec site of La Venta, Tabasco.<sup>9</sup> The characters on the La Venta artifact are much simpler than those on the one from Tlatilco, hence the comparisons are less interesting. Nevertheless Jones determined that he could see parallels between all the La Venta signs and those on the Anthon transcript.

He concluded that most of the Anthon transcript marks can be seen on these two artifacts. Moreover some of the characters on the Tlatilco seal

were grouped somewhat like those on the Anthon document. Jones felt that he had discovered through his comparisons support for the thesis that at least the Tlatilco seal offered a firm archaeological example of the type of script represented by the Anthon transcript.

Unknown to Jones at the time, other archaeological evidence had been uncovered in central Mexico for a system of writing that might be similar to that from Tlatilco and thus to the Anthon transcript. Physical specimens of this evidence are not available to us now. The reason deserves an explanation.

William Niven, a Scottish mineralogist, worked at a number of archaeological sites in the Valley of Mexico between 1921 and 1932. Aside from a scattering of second-hand references in popular media of the time, the rudiments of his story are only found in an article about the man by E. C. Baity and N. K. Owen in a Mexican conference volume in 1989.<sup>10</sup> With assistance from Niven's descendants who were still living in Mexico a decade ago, the authors relate that in the course of his digging, Niven excavated some 2,600 inscribed slabs. He reburied these after making drawings of them. Family members still have some of the drawings. Among schol-

ars who collaborated with Niven was the famous Maya archaeologist Sylvanus G. Morley, who said that the inscribed characters were totally unfamiliar to him. Some of the artifacts Niven dug up went to such prominent museums as the Peabody at Harvard, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and the British Museum. Moreover, among the thousands of clay figurines he excavated were some he considered to show “strongly Phoenician” or “Semitic” features. It remains to be seen whether any of Niven’s materials can now be retrieved for study. J. Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian Institution was impressed enough to propose sending a staff of archaeologists to report on the inscribed slabs, but evidently nothing came of it.

Baity and Owen urged that responsible scholars try to examine those items of Niven’s material that can still be located with the help of his family in order to subject them to modern analyses. Inasmuch as most of his excavation sites were only a few miles from Tlatilco, it could well be that Niven found further examples of the writing that Kelley reported some 40 years later.

The results of Jones’s investigation involving the Anthon transcript characters, plus the finds made by Niven in the field, are potentially important. Some enthusiasts who are interested in the subject of ancient writing and the Anthon transcript could now perform a valuable service by attempting to gather available information before the trail again grows cold. If larger samples of these characters could be obtained, cryptographic methods might make progress on the task that Jones began. □

## NEW LIGHT

### Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma

Terrence L. Szink

Last issue’s “What’s in a name?” included a photograph of one of the Bar Kokhba letters in which the name  $\text{ʔlm}^{\text{?}}$  (or  $\text{ʔlmh}$  as it is also spelled) appears. Paul Hoskisson explained that this means that the Book of Mormon name *Alma* is in fact a good Hebrew name and not necessarily from a Latin source, as many critics of the Book of Mormon have maintained. Yet some may argue that since the Bar Kokhba materials are late (dating to around A.D. 130), they cannot be used to elucidate Nephite culture which was separated from Israel with Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. However, to the evidence from the Bar Kokhba letters we may now add additional occurrences of the proper name *Alma* from another ancient Semitic source. This time, the texts precede Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem.

In 1975 Paolo Mathiae, an Italian archaeologist, uncovered a huge archive of clay tablets at a site in northwestern Syria called Tell Mardikh. The tablets were written in cuneiform, a writing system that predates the alphabet. The archive is mostly administrative in nature and deals with the palace economy of a large city-state that has been identified as the ancient city of Ebla. Ebla flourished in the second half of the third millennium B.C. and had economic and cultural ties with Mesopotamia and Palestine.

The language recorded on the tablets is Semitic. It has many grammatical features that link it to the Semitic language Akkadian, forms of which were used throughout Mesopotamia. It also has a fair amount of vocabulary from Western

Semitic, a branch of the Semitic language family tree which also includes Ugaritic, Phoenician, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

Among the texts of Ebla are six separate documents that contain the personal name *al<sub>6</sub>-ma* written eight times (on two of the tablets the name occurs twice). Originally there was some uncertainty about the reading of the cuneiform sign *al<sub>6</sub>*, but this has been resolved and *al<sub>6</sub>* is now an accepted reading at Ebla. It is not certain whether the transactions recorded at Ebla refer to just one person named *Alma*, or to several. In one document Alma is identified as a merchant from Mari, a city situated on the river Euphrates. Most likely the name *al<sub>6</sub>-ma* at Ebla is used to identify a male, there being few female merchants at Ebla.

No etymological explanation of *al<sub>6</sub>-ma* has yet been attempted; however in the transcriptions of the texts in which it occurs, the name is written in italics, indicating that the editors of the texts understand the name to be Semitic.

The occurrences of  $\text{ʔlm}^{\text{?}}$  and  $\text{ʔlmh}$  in the Bar Kokhba letters, which chronologically follow Lehi’s departure, and *al<sub>6</sub>-ma* at Ebla, which chronologically precede it, work together to provide fairly strong evidence that the personal name *Alma* could have been part of the cultural baggage that Lehi and his family took with them from Israel to the New World. Certainly the critics’ claim that Joseph Smith borrowed *Alma* from a Latin-based source is no longer the only possible explanation. □



*"The Place That Was Called Nahom":  
New Light from Ancient Yemen*  
S. Kent Brown

1. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 79; Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 95–98; Ross T. Christensen, "The Place Called Nahom," *Ensign*, August 1978, 73; Warren P. and Michaela Knoch Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 4–25.
2. See S. Kent Brown, "A Case for Lehi's Bondage in Arabia," *JBMS* 6/2 (1997): 206–8.
3. The exact equivalency of the root letters cannot be assured. It is probable that the term Nahom was spelled with the rasped or fricative Hebrew letter for "h" (het or chet) whereas the name Nihm, both in modern Arabic and in the ancient Sabaeen dialect, is spelled with a softer, less audible h sound. See G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 81, 602; and Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaeen Dialect* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 296. One has to assume, it seems to me, that when the members of Lehi's party heard the local name for "the place that was called Nahom" they associated the sound of that local name with the term Nahom, a Hebrew word that was familiar to and had meaning for them.
4. Biella (*Dictionary*, 296) defines the root nhm as "pecked masonry," that is, finished stone work whose surface has been chiseled purposely to make it rough to the touch.

*"Anthon Transcript" Writing Found?*

1. "The 'Anthon Transcript' and Two Mesoamerican Cylinder Seals," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historical Archaeology* 122 (Sept. 1970): 1–8.
2. Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1805–1835*, vol. 1 (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908). Jones referred to the eighth edition of this work.
3. Brigham H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:106.
4. John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 414–17, 453–55, 496–98.
5. Nancy Clemens Williams, *After One Hundred Years* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1951), 102. Two pairs of slightly varying characters that look generally like those on the Anthon transcript are said to have been interpreted by Joseph Smith as "Book of Mormon." Another two pairs of charac-

ters, again showing only slight variation between the two versions, were read as "The Interpreters of Languages."

6. See Sorenson, "Book of Mormon," 512 n.162.
7. David H. Kelley, "Cylinder Seal from Tlatilco," *American Antiquity* 31 (July 1966): 744–46.
8. See John A. Graham's comments on Hanns J. Premm, "Calendrics and Writing," in *Observations on the Emergence of Civilization in Mesoamerica*, ed. Robert F. Heizer and John A. Graham (Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Research Facility, 1971), 133.
9. Philip Drucker, "La Venta, Tabasco: A Study of Olmec Ceramics and Art," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 153 (1952): 202, fig. 43.
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*The So-Called Lehi Cave*  
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