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(Alma 27:4; 53:13):  
Toponymic Wordplay on *Zarahemla*  
and *Jershon***

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**“THEY WERE MOVED WITH COMPASSION”**  
**(ALMA 27:4; 53:13):**  
**TOPONYMIC WORDPLAY ON ZARAHEMLA**  
**AND JERSHON**

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**Matthew L. Bowen**

*Abstract: As in Hebrew biblical narrative, wordplay on (or play on the meaning of) toponyms, or “place names,” is a discernable feature of Book of Mormon narrative. The text repeatedly juxtaposes the toponym Jershon (“place of inheritance” or “place of possession”) with terms inherit, inheritance, possess, possession, etc. Similarly, the Mulekite personal name Zarahemla (“seed of compassion,” “seed of pity”), which becomes the paramount Nephite toponym as their national capital after the time of Mosiah I, is juxtaposed with the term compassion. Both wordplays occur and recur at crucial points in Nephite/Lamanite history. Moreover, both occur in connection with the migration of the first generation Lamanite converts. The Jershon wordplay recurs in the second generation, when the people of Ammon receive the Zoramite (re)converts into the land of Jershon, and wordplay on Zarahemla recurs subsequently, when the sons of these Lamanite converts come to the rescue of the Nephite nation. Rhetorical wordplay on Zarahemla also surfaces in important speeches later in the Book of Mormon.*

**F**irst proposed by John A. Tvedtnes, “seed of compassion” or “seed of pity” has become the widely accepted etymology for Zarahemla.<sup>1</sup>

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1 John A. Tvedtnes “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” 65; Tvedtnes, “What’s in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon (Review of *I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon*)” *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 42; See also John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *JBMS* 6/2 (1997), 259. Joseph R. and Norrene V. Salonimer (*I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon* [Independence, MO: Salonimer, 1995]. Cited in Tvedtnes and Ricks, “Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Names,” 259), two Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) scholars, arrived at the same conclusion, positing the meaning “child of grace, pity, or

More recently, David E. Bokovoy and Pedro Olavarria have found support for this etymology in the texts of Mosiah 9:2 (“and we returned, those of us that were **spared**, to the land of **Zarahemla**”)<sup>2</sup> and 3 Nephi 8:24 (“and then would our brethren have been **spared**, and they would not have been burned in that great city **Zarahemla**”).<sup>3</sup>

In this study, I will explore additional examples of toponymic narration that utilize the name *Zarahemla* not noted in the aforementioned studies, namely in Alma 27:4-5 and 53:10-13 as well as in the speech of Nephi the son of Helaman, recorded in Helaman 8:21. In the latter verse, Nephi asks the decadent inhabitants of Zarahemla, “Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek [Muloch<sup>4</sup>]? Yea, and do ye not behold that the **seed** [Hebrew *zera*] of Zedekiah are with us?” The national capital *Zarahemla* was named after the first descendant of Mulek encountered by Mosiah I and the righteous Nephites who fled from the land of Nephi (Omni 1:12-13).<sup>5</sup> The same Zarahemla was, at that time, king of the Mulekites, who subsequently

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compassion.” Tvedtnes, for his part, seems to have arrived at this etymology at least as early as 1983 (Paul Hoskisson, personal communication, August 2015).

2 David E. Bokovoy and Pedro Olavarria, *Zarahemla: Revisiting the “Seed of Compassion,” Insights* 30/5 (2010): 2-3. Emphasis added in all scriptural citations.

3 Other possible examples might include Helaman 13:12-14 (cf. Alma 62:40) and Alma 60:30-32.

4 The printer’s manuscript has Muloch in Mosiah 25:2. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three: Mosiah 17–Alma 40* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2006), 1464-1470.

5 Omni 1:12-13: “Behold, I am Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness — And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesyings. And they were admonished continually by the word of God; and they were led by the power of **his arm** [Hebrew *zērō’ōl*], through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of **Zarahemla**.” This would constitute a pun (paronomasia = a play involving similarly sounding, but unrelated word) on Zarahemla and “arm” in Hebrew. Amaleki also begins to close out his record (and the small plates) with an apparent pun on Zarahemla: “... king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of **Zarahemla**. And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no **seed** (*zera*) and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore, I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel ...” [Omni 1:24-25].

united with these Nephites (Omni 1:14-19). The wordplay on *Zarahemla* in Alma 27:4-5 and 53:10-13 emphasizes the latter element<sup>6</sup> in the names *pity* and *compassion* (\*are *hemlá*).<sup>7</sup> “Zarahemla” became not only a symbol of the miraculous survival of Zedekiah’s (and thus King David’s) “seed” among the Nephites, but also the faithful Nephites’ first refuge after their flight from the land of Nephi and later their new homeland and long-term capital city.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Mormon uses the name “Zarahemla” as a symbol of the acts of “compassion” or “pity” that saved the lives of converted Lamanites who fled from the land of Nephi.

Moreover, I will show how the story of the resettlement of Ammon’s Lamanite converts is told twice, both using the same wordplay involving two toponyms: “Jershon” and “Zarahemla.” Alma 27 emphasizes that while Ammon and his brethren were “moved with compassion” for these converted Lamanites, the Nephites did not admit these Lamanites into the city of Zarahemla but instead gave to them the land of Jershon “for an inheritance.” Alma 53:10-13 emphasizes, rather, that the converted Lamanites were “brought down **into** the land of Zarahemla” because of the “pity” of Ammon and his brethren. This “pity,” then, constitutes the basis for the later “compassion” of the Lamanite converts who allow their sons to fight on behalf of the Nephites when the survival of the latter is threatened by massive Lamanite military assaults from the land of Nephi (Alma 53). The differences in the narratives’ respective literary emphases reflect the reality that existed during the time of Helaman the son of Alma: the converted Lamanites (the people of Ammon) were then (a generation later) living in the land of Zarahemla, at least near Melek and thus *much nearer* to the city of Zarahemla rather than in the land of

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6 Michael P. O’Connor (“The Human Characters’ Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age West Semitic and the Name Daniel in Particular,” in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 271) notes that wordplay is often “incomplete, as puns, casual rhymes, and verbal echoes often are, in all literary texts of all types and times.”

7 \**hemlá* = “compassion, mercy” (Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* [1906; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996], 328 [hereafter cited as BDB]); “forgiveness,” “[*humlá*] have compassion” (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001], 328 [hereafter cited as HALOT]); see Genesis 19:16, Isaiah 63:9; cf. Ezekiel 16:5.

8 Zarahemla is specifically called the Nephite “capital” in Helaman 1:27.

Jershon (see especially Alma 47:29).<sup>9</sup> Thus the name *Zarahemla* not only became a symbol of the “compassion” or “pity” that Ammon and his brethren had for the Lamanites and a symbol the converted Lamanites had a generation later for the Nephites – but can still be seen as a symbol of the Lord’s “compassion” for the seed of Jacob today.

### Biblical Wordplay Involving Toponymy

Toponymic wordplay on *Zarahemla* and *Jershon* has numerous antecedents in Hebrew biblical narrative,<sup>10</sup> examples of which would have been available and familiar to Book of Mormon writers from the brass plates, including later writers like Alma the Younger and Mormon. Toponymic wordplay on the biblical toponym Salem (Hebrew *šālēm*) in terms of the Hebrew word *šālôm* (“peace,” Alma 13:17-18) — Hebrew being one of the two languages the Nephites said they used throughout their history<sup>11</sup> – is at least one indication that Alma and Mormon were familiar with and incorporated toponymic wordplay in their own narratives, at least in part to show that toponyms were appropriate in light of what occurred there.

Salient examples of biblical toponymic wordplay in Hebrew include the renaming of “Luz” as “Bethel” explained in several biblical passages, beginning in Genesis 28:10-19. At this location, Jacob “dream[t]” and saw “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (28:12). Jacob also saw “the Lord standing above” the latter (28:13), and here the Lord gives him the Abrahamic promise (28:13-15). Then the narrator records:

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God [bêt ’ēlohîm], and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for

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9 Compare John L. Sorenson’s map (*Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2013], map 1), which places Jershon much further away to the north near the narrow neck of land.

10 See, e.g., Genesis 11:9; 19:19-22; 22:14; 25:30; 26:20-22, 25-33; 28:16-19; 31:47-49; 32:2, 20; 33:17; Exodus 15:23; 17:7; Numbers 11:3, 34; 21:3; Joshua 5:9; 7:26; Judges 2:4-5; 15:19; 1 Samuel 23:27-28; 2 Samuel 5:20; 6:8; 18:18; Isaiah 10:31-32; 11:11, 16; 63:1-2; Amos 5:5; Joel 3:2, 12; Hosea 2:22-23; Micah 1:10-13; Zephaniah 2:4 among many, many such examples.

11 1 Nephi 1:2; Mormon 9:32-33.

his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el [or, Bethel (bêt-’él)]: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. (Genesis 28:16-19; cf. 35:6-7; Judges 1:22-26)

In the Genesis narrative, Bethel (“House of EL,” or “House of God”) — which becomes an important cultic site within Israel — is described as a place already functioning as a temple: a *bêt ’ēlohîm* (“house of God[s]”) with the Lord himself standing at the “gate of heaven” (cf. 2 Nephi 9:41 and Helaman 3:28)<sup>12</sup> and with the angels of God coming and going like priestly officiants. Even the old name “Luz” (“almond [tree]”) possibly suggests the earlier sacredness and cultic use of this site (cf. Genesis 48:3).<sup>13</sup> This renaming story is briefly retold again in Genesis 35:6-7, emphasizing the “EL” element in the name: “So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place *El-beth-el*: because there [the] God[s] [*hā-’ēlohîm*] appeared [*niglû*, plural verb] unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.” In the Genesis 28 version, Jehovah and the angels of God appeared to Jacob at Luz/Bethel.

A later Deuteronomistic narrative in Judges 17–18 polemicizes against Bethel as an illicit “house of gods” built by Micah, an Ephraimite who employs a rogue Levite who is later taken away from the former by Danites. The narrator uses the same expression to play on Bethel: “And the man Micah had an house of gods [*bêt ’ēlohîm*]” (Judges 17:5). There is in the Deuteronomistic recounting of this story an anticipation of the events of 1 Kings 12-13 and the establishment of Dan and Bethel as the main cult sites in the northern kingdom. As Sergei Frolov observes, “What makes Micah’s artifacts even worse” than the later calves of Dan and Bethel of 1 Kings 12-13 (i.e., bull-images of Jehovah) “is the provenance of the treasure used to manufacture them: according to Judges 17-18, both Bethel and Dan have their origin in blood money.”<sup>14</sup> Yet another version, a Josephite conquest of Luz/Bethel is told in

12 The phrase “gate of heaven” occurs only in Genesis 28:17 and Helaman 3:28. The “gate of heaven” is certainly the gate referred to in 2 Nephi 9:41.

13 The “Menorah,” the stylized “tree of life” of the Jerusalem temple, was an almond tree. Jacob’s statement to Joseph in Genesis 48:3 (yet another brief retelling of this story) resonates temple significance: “And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty [*El Shaddai*] appeared unto me at Luz [Almond (tree)] in the land of Canaan, and blessed me.”

14 Sergei Frolov, *Judges* (Forms of the Old Testament Literature 6b; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 298-299.

Judges 1:22-26, a version in which Luz is rebuilt somewhere on Hittite land. The importance of Bethel as an Israelite city is evidenced by the number and variety of stories told about its incorporation into Israel.

Similarly, the toponym Hormah, which Hugh Nibley suggested might stand behind the Book of Mormon toponym “Desolation,”<sup>15</sup> is explained at least twice by wordplay in terms of the Israelite policy of proscription, i.e., “utter destruction” of the Canaanite peoples in the land of promise: “And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed [*wayyahārēm*] them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah [*hormā*].” (Numbers 21:3) The narrator suggests that the name Hormah is an appropriate toponym because of the policy of “utter destruction” (\**hrm*) being carried out at this spot.

A different text later in Judges “retells” the naming of Hormah: “And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it [*wayyahārīmū*]. And the name of the city was called Hormah [*hormā*] (Judges 1:17). This time, the naming of “Hormah” is actually a “renaming” of the town Zephath. As Kevin A. Wilson notes, “Numbers 2:3 explains the meaning by saying that the Israelites destroyed the Canaanite towns in the area. According to Judg[es] 1:17, however, the city was originally called ZEPHATH, but its name was changed after Judah helped Simeon destroy it.”<sup>16</sup> It is also noteworthy that Joshua 15:30 assigns the city to the territory of Judah, while Joshua 19:4 (see 19:1-8) and 1 Chronicles 14:30 (see 14:24-31) assign the territory to Simeon.<sup>17</sup> Joshua 15:30 may reflect the later reality already hinted at in Joshua 19:1-8 and 1 Chronicles 14:24-31: the tribal inheritance of Simeon in the south was eventually absorbed into the inheritance of Judah.

In both etiologies (Numbers 21:3 and Judges 1:17), the policy of “utter destruction” is cited as the reason for the appropriateness of the toponym. In the first interpretation (or telling) of the event, the utter destruction of multiple Canaanite towns is given as the basis for the toponym *Hormah*; in the second interpretation (or retelling), the “utter

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15 Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (2nd ed.; CWHN 7; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988) 171. Another possibility is *hārbā* = “site of ruins”; see HALOT, 350. This term is related to “Horeb” (another name for Sinai and its vicinity), which would also mean “desolation.” Cf. *hārēb/hōreb/hōrēb/hōrēb*, BDB 351-352.

16 Kevin A. Wilson, “Hormah,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007) 2:890-891.

17 Ibid.

destruction” of Zephath is the basis. Moshe Garsiel cites this second example as an instance of toponymic wordplay in which “the author dispenses with ... connective words on the assumption that the linkage is clear enough without it.”<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes wordplay in toponymic narrative is even more subtle. The final verses of 2 Samuel 12 describe David’s conquest of the Ammonite capital Rabbah (“great,” “populous,”<sup>19</sup> i.e., “the great city,”<sup>20</sup> a name that we might also interpret as “Bountiful,”<sup>21</sup> i.e., the “Bountiful” city). The biblical text here connects the name “Rabbah” with “great abundance”:

And David gathered all the people together, and went to **Rabbah** [*rabbātâ*] and fought against it, and took it. And he took their king’s [or, (the god) Milcom’s] crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David’s head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in **great abundance** [*harbēh mē’ōd*]. (2 Samuel 12:29-30)

The “great abundance” of the spoil taken from Rabbah emphasizes not only the significance of David’s victory over the city but also, within the narrative context, the appropriateness of the name “Rabbah”: a “great abundance” of spoil is to be expected from a capital city whose name denoted “greatness” or “abundance.” Many other such examples of toponymic wordplay in the Hebrew Bible could be cited.

The main point here is that these kinds of toponymic narratives, including toponymic wordplay, constituted an important part of the scriptural/literary heritage the Lehtes brought with them from

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18 Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, ISR: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 14-15.

19 BDB, 913. Note how Alma 18:13 glosses the Lamanite term “Rabbanah”: “And one of the king’s servants said unto him, Rabbanah, which is, being interpreted, powerful or great king, considering their kings to be powerful; and thus he said unto him: Rabbanah, the king desireth thee to stay.”

20 HALOT, 1178.

21 Cf. 1 Nephi 17:5-6, where Nephi glosses the name “Bountiful” in terms of the “much”-ness of what they found there: “And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters. And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore; and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so much that we cannot write them all, we were exceedingly rejoiced when we came to the seashore; and we called the place Bountiful, because of its much fruit.”

Jerusalem. Such toponymic narratives, which sometimes included etiological components, endeavored to show why a toponym was appropriate in light of events that occurred there. As I will endeavor to show, it remained an important part of the Nephite scriptural tradition.

### A Tale of Two Toponyms

Robert F. Smith and John W. Welch were the first to correlate a toponym (“place name”) in the Book of Mormon with wordplay in the underlying text when they individually noticed the juxtaposition of “Jershon”<sup>22</sup> (“place of inheritance”)<sup>23</sup> with the terms “inherit” and “inheritance” (also “possess” and “possession”) represented by the root *yrš* (“to inherit,” “possess”) in Hebrew.<sup>24</sup> This wordplay occurs as a theme in Alma 27:22–26; 35:14; 43:22, 25.<sup>25</sup> The fact that this juxtaposition occurs repeatedly in three separate pericopes suggests that the wordplay is intentional.

The Book of Mormon texts exhibits similar, intentional wordplay on Zarahemla. John Tvedtnes concluded that Zarahemla is formed from the Hebrew elements *zera* (“seed”) + *hemlâ* (“compassion,” “pity”), with the meaning “seed of compassion.”<sup>26</sup>

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22 Robert F. Smith, unpublished manuscript. In a personal communication (October, 2015), he indicated to me that he first noticed the correlation of Jershon and “inheritance” in the late 1960s. Paul Hoskisson (personal communication, August 2015) suggests that Jack Welch “came up with his ideas while learning Hebrew in L[os] A[ngeles].” The idea has been subsequently noted in print by Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” 258-259.

23 See also J. A. Tvedtnes, “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” 65; Tvedtnes, “What’s in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon,” 41; Paul Y. Hoskisson, “An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a 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), 2:129; and Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Book of Mormon Names,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:187.

24 \**yrš* = “take possession of; inherit; dispossess” (see BDB, 439-440); “to take possession of”; see, HALOT, 441-442.

25 Cf. Matthew L. Bowen, “Becoming Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand: King Benjamin’s Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name” *JBMORS* 21/2 (2012): 4.

26 See note 1. Tvedtnes “Since the Book of Mormon,” 65; Tvedtnes, “What’s in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon,” *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 42; See also Tvedtnes and Ricks, “Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” 259.

Zarahemla and Jershon represent important test-cases: both constitute Book of Mormon names/toponyms that are not otherwise attested in the biblical record, both of which follow the rules of normal Hebrew name formation and evidence transparent Hebrew etymologies and meanings. It is probably significant, then, that the Book of Mormon text manifests an awareness of the meaning of both Zarahemla and Jershon in the same narrative block (i.e., the resettlement of converted Lamanites in Jershon) and that the juxtaposition of each name with its putative meaning occurs repeatedly throughout interrelated segments of narrative (i.e., the resettlement of Zoramite refugees in Jershon among the converted Lamanites who accepted them and who subsequently migrated, themselves, from Jershon [Alma 35; nearer to or into the city of Zarahemla, see 47:29], and the children of the converted Lamanites coming to the aid of the Nephites against the Lamanites in plight of the former a generation later).

### **“Compassionate” Lamanite Resettlement in a Place of “Inheritance”**

Not long after their conversion, the Lamanites under the leadership of Anti-Nephi-Lehi and Ammon fled the land of Nephi and began a mass migration. The religiously motivated slaughter of the converts forced this dramatic population movement. Mormon states that Ammon and his brethren, out of “compassion,” directed the converted Lamanites’ emigration toward Zarahemla:

Now when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction among those whom they so dearly beloved, and among those who had so dearly beloved them — for they were treated as though they were angels sent from God to save them from everlasting destruction — therefore, when Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction, they were **moved with compassion**, and they said unto the king: Let us gather together this people of the Lord, and let us go down to the land of **Zarahemla** [the land of the-seed-of-compassion] to our brethren the Nephites, and flee out of the hands of our enemies, that we be not destroyed. (Alma 27:4-5)

The wordplay on Zarahemla suggests that Zarahemla is the appropriate destination because “compassion” is in the name. The Nephites had taken refuge in the same place a few generations earlier (Omni 1:12-19). Only one generation earlier, the converts of Alma the

Elder — and refugees from the land of Nephi — had been “received with joy” in Zarahemla (Mosiah 24:25) after the Lord had “been merciful unto them ... and had delivered them out of bondage” from Amulon (a name which the narrator seems to deliberately tie to the idea of *‘āmāl/‘āmēl*, “toil,” “trouble,” or “travail,” i.e., “man of toil,” “man of trouble” [*‘āmāl* + appellative – *ôn* “man/person of”]);<sup>27</sup> see especially Mosiah 23:8-11) and the Lamanites over whom Amulon had authority (Mosiah 24:21). Similarly, when the people of Limhi “arrived in the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 22:14) after fleeing out the land of Nephi from the Lamanites, Mormon reports that “Mosiah received them with joy” (Mosiah 22:15).<sup>28</sup>

Significantly however, he also notes that Ammon’s Lamanite convert-refugees were *not* admitted or received into the city of Zarahemla itself, perhaps due to the inimical relationship that had existed for so long between the Nephites and Lamanites and to the inevitable sociological issues of incorporating disparate cultures — something the Nephites and Mulekites of Zarahemla had experienced recently (see Omni 1:17-19; Mosiah 26:4). When Ammon and his brothers proposed a mission to the Lamanites, at least some Nephites in Zarahemla counter-proposed a preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites, a decidedly *uncompassionate act* (Alma 26:23-25; see further below).<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting to recall Zeniff’s apparent wordplay on Zarahemla and *hāmāl* (“we returned, those of us that were spared, to the land of Zarahemla,” Mosiah 9:2),<sup>30</sup> which occurs in the context of another proposed preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites (9:1-2). Zeniff had been part of a party that had gone up from Zarahemla to

27 Cf. the entries for *‘āmāl* and *‘āmēl* in HALOT, 845. See also BDB, 765-766.

28 Note the “compassion” that the Lamanites have on the people of Limhi (Mosiah 19:14; 20:26) that preserves them long enough to be “received” in safety in Zarahemla. The Lamanites had similar “compassion” on Amulon and his brethren (Mosiah 23:34) that preserved their lives. According to Robert Cochran, with whom I have taught at BYU-Hawaii, the story in the Book of Mosiah of Nephites returning to Zarahemla is the story of “going home” (personal communication). Zarahemla, thus, stands as a “type” of heaven in the Book of Mosiah: the return to Zarahemla is a metaphor of the theological return to our heavenly home.

29 I believe Mormon is aware of the irony of the meaning of the name *Zarahemla* (Alma 26:24), “seed of compassion,” in view of what Ammon said the skeptics in Zarahemla had counter-proposed (Alma 26:25-26). The Nephites had been received compassionately into Zarahemla during the time of their great-grandfather (Mosiah I) when they fled and yet their posterity (seed) were unwilling to extend the same compassion toward their Lamanite brethren, fleeing under (perhaps) similar circumstances.

30 Bokovoy and Olavarria, “Zarahemla,” 2-3.

the land of Nephi to “spy out” and “destroy” the Lamanite forces, but “saw that which was good,” i.e., that which was essentially Nephite (a play on the meaning of “Nephi,” “land of Nephi,” and “Nephite”)<sup>31</sup> and “was desirous that they should not be destroyed.” Internecine bloodshed ensued because of Zeniff’s compassion, and fortunately he was one of the “spared.” Mormon seems to allude to Zeniff’s first person account in the wordplay on Zarahemla in Alma 27:4 and perhaps he has all of these events in mind when he describes the genocidal oaths that led to the final destruction of the Nephite nation, which oaths caused Mormon to recuse himself from leading the Nephites (Mormon 3:9-16). Appropriately, Mormon had at that time the toponym Desolation, and the Nephites’ “utter destruction” in view.<sup>32</sup>

At this stage, however, the Nephites of Zarahemla come up with a more humane solution according to Mormon’s account:

And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: Behold, we will give up the land of **Jershon**, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful, which is on the south of the land Bountiful; and this land **Jershon** is the land *which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance*. And behold, we will set our armies between the land **Jershon** and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land **Jershon**; and this we do for our brethren, on account of their fear to take up arms against their brethren lest they should commit sin; and this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness. And now behold, this will we do unto our brethren, **that they may inherit** the land **Jershon**; and we will guard them from their enemies with

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31 See Matthew L. Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision. The Fortieth Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson; Salt Lake City Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2011), 246-248, 255. On the meaning of “Nephites,” see further idem, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi,” *Insights* 23/6 (2003): 2-3.

32 See 3 Nephi 3:4; Moroni 9:22. Cf. Mosiah 12:8; Alma 9:12, 18; 10:18, 22; 58:19; Helaman 13:10; 15:16-17; Ether 11:12, 20.

our armies, on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies. Now, it came to pass that when Ammon had heard this, he returned to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and also Alma with him, into the wilderness, where they had pitched their tents, and made known unto them all these things. And Alma also related unto them his conversion, with Ammon and Aaron, and his brethren. And it came to pass that it did cause great joy among them. *And they went down into the land of Jershon, and took possession of the land of Jershon;* and they were called by the Nephites the people of Ammon; therefore they were distinguished by that name ever after. (Alma 27:20-26)

The text repeatedly emphasizes that the converted Lamanites, not admitted into the land of Zarahemla, “inherited” the land of Jershon (“place-of-inheritance”) “for an inheritance.” Perhaps the Nephites (and the Nephite leadership) at the time saw the name of the land Jershon as a kind of sign (*nomen est omen*) of how the inevitable sociological problem of a great and sudden influx of Lamanite converts could best be solved. In any case, the narrator (here Alma or Mormon) recognized that the name Jershon was appropriate because of what happened there on this occasion: because of the “compassion” of Ammon and his brethren, the lives of the Lamanites were saved, and they received “inheritances” in Jershon, the “place-of-inheritance,” and “took possession” of Jershon, the “place-of-possession.” The narratological emphasis on this connection suggests that the narrator considered it important. This is subsequently confirmed in Alma chapter 35.

### **The Resettlement of Poor Zoramite Converts in Jershon and Second Forced Emigration of the People of Ammon (Alma 35)**

When mass resettlement next becomes an issue, wordplay on Jershon again resurfaces in the narrative. Ammon’s Lamanite converts did not long remain in Jershon. Even after “a tremendous battle ... even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem” (Alma 28:2) in or near Jershon, another contention begins over some Zoramites (Nephite dissenters) who reconvert at the preaching of Alma, Amulek, Zeezrom, and others. These poor “reconverts” are “cast out” by the Zoramite leadership and subsequently seek refuge among Ammon’s Lamanite converts in Jershon. Wordplay involving Jershon and inheritance is again evident:

And it came to pass that after they had found out the minds of all the people, those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were many; and they came over also into the land of **Jershon** [**“place of inheritance”**]. And it came to pass that Alma and his brethren did minister unto them. Now *the people of the Zoramites were angry with the people of Ammon who were in Jershon*, and the chief ruler of the Zoramites, being a very wicked man, sent over unto the people of Ammon desiring them that they should cast out of their land all those who came over from them into their land. And he [the leader of the Zoramites] breathed out many threatenings against them. And now the people of Ammon did not fear their words; therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came over unto them; and they did nourish them, and did clothe them, *and did give unto them lands for their inheritance*; and they did administer unto them according to their wants. (Alma 35:8-9)

The Lamanite converts (the people of Ammon) give the Zoramite reconverts “lands for their inheritance” in “Jershon,” as the Nephites had previously done for them — another wordplay on Jershon. Notably, these Lamanites not only give them lands for their inheritance but also “nourish them” and “clothe them.” The narrative emphasizes that these Lamanites “did receive all the poor of the Zoramites” and “did not cast them out.” The Nephites wanted to protect Ammon’s Lamanite converts, but did not — at least at that time — admit them into the city of Zarahemla itself (see Alma 27:20-24). The converted Lamanites were unable to “protect” those poor Zoramites militarily, but they were able to “administer unto them” in a purely “compassion[ate]” way, just as Ammon and his brethren had ministered to them. (cf. Alma 27:4) This ministration was yet more evidence of the “firmness” of their faith in and the strength of their conversion to Christ,<sup>33</sup> versus stereotypical Lamanite “unbelief.”<sup>34</sup>

But here Mormon further notes that the converted Lamanites did not stop at “giv[ing] unto [the converted Zoramites] lands for their

33 See also Alma 24:19; 27:27; Alma 57:19-20, 27; Helaman 15:8, 10.

34 On “unbelief” (Heb. *l’ ’mn*, cf. Deuteronomy 32:20) as a stereotypical pun on the name *Laman* and *Lamanites* that enjoyed currency among the Nephites, see Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit,” 240-263, esp. 242-243.

inheritance” in Jershon, but they *gave up their own inheritances in Jershon for the protection of the Zoramite reconverts*:

And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges; and an account shall be given of their wars hereafter. And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the two sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing many of the Zoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but they [the converted Zoramites] have lands for their **inheritance** in the land of **Jershon**, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands. (Alma 35:13-14)

Here Mormon reports that the people of Ammon migrated *en masse* out of the land of Jershon into the land of Melek, another Nephite land. Melek was a city/land “on the west of the river Sidon” (Alma 8:3) and “three days’ journey” south of the land of Ammonihah (Alma 8:6) and evidently nearer the land of Zarahemla (see Alma 45:18). This passage reemphasizes the role of the land of Jershon as “place-of-inheritance” — the place where the converted Zoramites received “lands for their inheritance” because of the complete unselfishness of the Lamanite converts. For their part, these Zoramites, unlike Ammon’s converted Lamanites, were able to join the Nephite military defending themselves, their families, and their lands.<sup>35</sup> And yet, these Lamanites — specifically

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35 After Alma 35, Mormon inserts first-person paranetic material by Alma directed to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton (Alma 36-42) before resuming his narrative in Alma 43. There Mormon describes the beginning of a battle that will be a kind of sequel to the battle in Alma 47. The Lamanites together with the unconverted Zoramites (who become Lamanites) come against the Nephites first at Jershon, but when the Lamanites see the degree of the Nephite preparation, they attempt to attack them elsewhere in the land of Manti. Mormon notes that Moroni left “a part of his army in the land of **Jershon**, lest by any means a part of the Lamanites should come into that land and **take possession** of the city” (Alma 42:25). This last iteration of the “Jershon”/”inherit[ance]”/”possess[ion]” wordplay suggests that the Nephites continued to consider *Jershon* important as “place-of-inheritance.”

their own sons — would be able to aid the Nephites in their own unique way a generation later.

### Reciprocal “Pity” and “Compassion”

It may be worth noting here that the emigration movements of Ammon’s Lamanite converts (from the land of Nephi to the land of Jershon to the land of Melek) are not entirely dissimilar to the migratory movements of the early Latter-day Saints from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, to Utah, i.e., being forced to repatriate over great distances every few years. The narrative does not tell us about the movement of the people of Ammon after they evacuate the land of Jershon. However, it would seem that many — perhaps most — of them were by the second generation actually living further south in the land of — if not the city of — Zarahemla rather than in the land of Jershon further north.<sup>36</sup> This would explain why the narrator, when *retelling* the story of the initial resettlement of the people of Ammon, makes no mention of the land of Jershon. Instead the narrator (Alma or Mormon) emphasizes the connection between the converted Lamanites and the broader land of Zarahemla, rather than including Jershon:

And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of **Zarahemla**, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren; for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more; and according to their oath they would have perished; yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren, had it not been for **the pity** and the exceeding love which Ammon and his brethren had had for them. *And for this cause they were brought down into the land of **Zarahemla***; and they ever had been protected by the Nephites [cf. Alma 27:23-24]. But it came to pass that when they [the converted Lamanites] saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, **they were moved with compassion** and were desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country. (Alma 53:10-13)

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36 See Sorenson’s map (*Mormon’s Codex*, map 1).

In retelling the story of the emigration of the converted Lamanites out of the land of Nephi, the narrator makes no mention of the fact the Nephites did not initially receive the converts into (the city of) Zarahemla but instead gave them Jershon for an “inheritance” (see again Alma 27:22-26). Rather, he reemphasizes that the Lamanites had dwelt in the land of Zarahemla (in a very broad sense) as well as the protection that the Nephites had given these Lamanite converts (see again Alma 27:23-24), who would not protect themselves because of the covenant they had made with God. By reiterating the wordplay on Zarahemla in Alma 27:4-5, he also reemphasizes “the pity” or “compassion” (\**hemlâ*) that Ammon and his brethren had for their Lamanite converts. The narrative states here that the Lamanites were “brought down into the land of Zarahemla” and makes no mention of the resettlement in Jershon.

In the earlier account, the Lamanites “came into the wilderness that divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land” (27:14). Ammon at that time stated: “*ye shall remain here* until we return; and we will try the hearts of our brethren, whether they will that ye shall come into their land” (Alma 27:15). Ammon had good reason to “try” the hearts of his “brethren” in the land of Zarahemla, who, when Ammon and his brothers proposed their mission to the Lamanites, not only “laughed [them] to scorn” (Alma 26:23) but proposed a preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites (26:25) — a lack of compassion that contrasts starkly with Ammon and his brothers’ compassion, as noted earlier.

Also as noted previously, the converted Lamanites were subsequently admitted into the land of Jershon but not directly into the city of Zarahemla itself (or its environs, see again Alma 27:20-24). Over the course of a generation, however, the converted Lamanites migrated from Jershon to the land of Melek, nearer the city of Zarahemla. Alma 47:29 explicitly places the Lamanites in the land of Zarahemla<sup>37</sup> (“seed of compassion”), if not in the city of Zarahemla itself, and thus they were still the beneficiaries of the “compassion” (Alma 27:4) or “pity” (53:11) that Ammon and his brethren had shown them.

After retelling the story — the Nephites’ being in serious military danger during that subsequent generation — the narrator (Mormon abridging Helaman’s record) gives the wordplay on Zarahemla a new

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37 Alma 47:29: “Now when the servants of the king saw an army pursuing after them, they were frightened again, and fled into the wilderness, **and came over into the land of Zarahemla and joined the people of Ammon.**” Mormon here places the Ammonites, at long last, in Zarahemla.

twist. The Lamanite converts recognize this danger and are even willing to break their covenant of burying their weapons to come to the Nephites' aid. The text states that "they were moved with compassion" (Alma 53:13), a verbatim reprise of Alma 27:4. The collocation "they were moved with compassion" is found only in these two passages in the scriptures.

The "pity" or "compassion" of Ammon and his brethren for their Lamanite converts, then, is the basis for their converts' "compassion" for the Nephites in their moment of need a generation later. The reiteration of the wordplay involving "pity"/"moved with compassion" (\**hēmlâ*/\**hml*) and "Zarahemla" not only bespeaks the magnanimity of what Ammon and his brethren had done a generation earlier, as well as the Christ-like compassion of the converted Lamanites but also attests the divine providence that continued to attend the Nephites,<sup>38</sup> this often in spite of themselves. The narrative suggests that the name "Zarahemla" was a fitting symbol of divine compassion not because of the Nephites as a whole, but because of Ammon, his brethren, and his Lamanite converts: Ammon and his brethren came up from Zarahemla "not with the intent to destroy [their] brethren, but [to] ... save some few of their souls," and because of their "compassion" and "pity," they saved many Lamanites lives (both temporally and eternally); then, a generation later, their converts returned the favor for the Nephites, ultimately allowing their own children to go to war on behalf of the Nephites, thus saving or "sparing" the Nephites as a nation. The name "Zarahemla" becomes increasingly ironic in later Nephite history when the Nephites become more wicked than the Lamanites, in the end utterly losing their compassion, and thereafter the Lord will no longer "spare" them (see Mormon 3:9-15).

### **"The Lord Will Be Merciful ... and Increase Their Seed" (Helaman 7:24)**

Mormon's source for much of the material in Alma 53 is Helaman's letter to Moroni (Alma 56–58) regarding the two thousand sixty<sup>39</sup> Lamanite "stripling"<sup>40</sup> sons who go to war on behalf of the Nephites. From this point

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38 Cf. Alma 19:27.

39 See Alma 57:6, 19–20, 25.

40 The word "stripling" occurs only one time in the KJV, and there it translates the Hebrew word *'elem* (or *'ālem* in its pausal form). This word is the source of the name "Alma" (*'lm*), which means "[God's] young man" or "[God's] stripling." The *-a* (') on the end of Alma is a theophoric hypocoristic aleph (i.e., representing

forward, for a generation or more, the Lamanites grow greater in their faithfulness, while the Nephites diminish (see, e.g., Helaman 6:34). By the time of Nephi the son of Helaman, the Lamanites are more righteous than the Nephites, as he points out to the Nephites of Zarahemla:

Now therefore, I would that ye should behold, my brethren, that it shall be better<sup>41</sup> for the Lamanites than for you except ye shall repent. For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed [Heb. zar‘ām], even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shalt repent. (Helaman 7:23-24)

In the Zarahemla context of Nephi’s speech, his prophecy that the Lord will “be merciful,” i.e. have compassion on the Lamanites and “increase their seed,” constitutes a plausible play on the name Zarahemla. This speech also may include further example of wordplay on Zarahemla (as noted above): “Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed [*zera*<sup>1</sup>] of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem” (Helaman 8:21).

By the time of Nephi the son of Helaman, the Nephites knew what it was like to lose inheritance or “possession”<sup>42</sup> of the land of Zarahemla

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the name of a deity). See Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Alma as a Hebrew Name,” *JBMS* 7/1 (1998): 72 — 73; see also Matthew L. Bowen “And He Was a Young Man: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay,” *Insights* 30/4 (2010): 2–3. If ‘*elem*’ is indeed the word that represents “stripling” in the underlying text, Mormon has very appropriately included this story in the “the Book of Alma” (cf. “they were all of them very young,” Alma 56:46).

41 Perhaps an allusion to Jacob 3:7: “Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much better are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator?” See Bowen, “*Not Partaking of the Fruit*,” 245. Note that in Helaman 7:26, Nephi the son of Helaman prophesies to the Nephites of Zarahemla: “Yea, we shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up **beyond that which is good** because of your exceedingly great riches!” This is another rhetorical wordplay on Nephi/Nephites.

42 Helaman 5:4: “And in the fifty and seventh year they did come down against the Nephites to battle, and they did commence the work of death; yea, insomuch that in the fifty and eighth year of the reign of the judges **they succeeded in obtaining possession of the land of Zarahemla**; yea, and also all the lands, even unto the land which was near the land Bountiful.”

(Helaman 4:5) to the Lamanites, even half of their “possessions” (4:13). Yet when these unconverted Lamanites were converted, they not only “yield[ed] up unto the Nephites the lands of their **possession** (5:51-52), they “did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites the manner of their conversion, and did exhort them to faith and repentance” (6:4).

The Nephites will experience the destruction (3 Nephi 9:3) and rebuilding of Zarahemla before history again repeats itself. Mormon later informs us that during his youth the war of extinction that culminated in the destruction of the Nephites as a nation began “in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon” (Mormon 1:10). In Mormon 2, Mormon tells us about the Nephites’ finally being “driven” out of (the city and land of) Zarahemla and all of their lands south of the land of Desolation before being “utterly destroyed” as prophesied and promised. What had been a long-lasting symbol of the Lord’s “compassion” for the seed of Mulek [Muloch] and later the seed of Nephi became a symbol of the Lord’s “utter destruction” of the Nephites. And yet the promise still remains that Lord will “be merciful” unto the Lamanites and will “**increase** [compare Heb. *yôśîp*]<sup>43</sup> **their seed** [*zar’ām*]” (Helaman 7:24), or as Mormon states it elsewhere: “Surely he ... hath been merciful unto the **seed of Joseph** ... Yea, and surely **shall he again** [*yôśîp*] bring a remnant of the **seed of Joseph**<sup>44</sup> to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And as surely as the Lord liveth, **will he gather** in from the four quarters of the

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43 *Yôśîp* - perhaps this Hiphil (causative) form of the Hebrew verb *yâśap* underlies the English text or is alluded to by a term translated “increase.” “Joseph” (“May he add,” “may he increase”) is also formed from the Hiphil stem of this verb.

44 This same kind of wordplay may be found in the speech of Samuel the Lamanite to the wicked Nephites of Zarahemla: “And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall again be brought to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep. Therefore I say unto you, it shall be **better** for them than for you except ye repent. For behold, had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown unto you, yea, unto them who have dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers, ye can see of yourselves that they **never would again have dwindled in unbelief**. Therefore, saith the Lord: I will not utterly destroy them, but I will cause that in the day of my wisdom **they shall return again** unto me, saith the Lord. And now behold, saith the Lord, concerning the people of the Nephites: If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, *I will utterly destroy them*, saith the Lord, **because of their unbelief** notwithstanding the many mighty works which I have done among them; and as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be, saith the Lord.”

earth all the remnant of the **seed of Jacob**, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth ” (3 Nephi 5:21, 23-24; cf. Alma 46:23-27).<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

Michael O’Connor has observed that, “The ancients display awareness of the meanings and shapes of names chiefly in literature.”<sup>46</sup> This is true of Hebrew biblical narrative as it is of Book of Mormon narrative. We have seen in this study that Mormon and his sources for the Book of Alma (including Alma the Younger and his son Helaman) appear to be very aware of the Hebrew meaning of the names “Jershon” and “Zarahemla,” and several of the narratives in Alma that deal with these names are written in part to show these names are appropriate and ironic in view of what transpired in their vicinities.

“Jershon” serves as a “place of inheritance” and “Zarahemla” as a source of life- and soul-saving “compassion” in multiple instances, even in spite of the lack of “compassion” of many of the Nephites. The “compassion” that Ammon and his brethren had shown the Lamanites (Alma 27:4-5; Alma 53:11) and the reciprocal “compassion” shown by the Lamanites a generation later (Alma 53:13) would have served both the Nephites and the Lamanites well during Mormon’s own time when each sought to “utterly destroy” the other near — appropriately enough — the city of Desolation (Mormon 3-4). The Nephites might otherwise have retained lands of inheritance and an existence (Mormon 4:4). Furthermore, this kind of “compassion” amongst traditional foes would serve Mormon’s latter-day audience well (whether Jew or Gentile), especially those plagued by genocide and war. “Compassion” like the Savior’s<sup>47</sup> is the word.

Yet again we see that the Book of Mormon not only constitutes a sacred history for a latter-day audience but a highly “literary” work and a skillfully-woven narrative filled with literary devices and intertextual allusion. This bespeaks the work of skilled ancient authors and Mormon’s

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45 On the wordplay on *Joseph* in 3 Nephi 5:21-24, see Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Shall Add’: Wordplay on the name *Joseph* and an early instance of *Gezera Shawa* in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 30/2 (2010): 2-4.

46 O’Connor, “Human Characters’ Names in Ugaritic,” 270.

47 E.g., 2 Chronicles 36:15,17; Malachi 3:17; Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27, 33; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20; Mosiah 15:9; 3 Nephi 17:6-7; Ether 1:35, 37, 40; D&C 88:40; 101:9.

deft editorial work rather than a nineteenth century author with limited literary attainments.<sup>48</sup>

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48 Toward the end of her life, Emma Smith Bidamon, the widowed wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith testified: "Joseph Smith ... could neither write or dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, 'a marvel and a wonder,' as much so as to any one else." See Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald* 26/19 (1 October 1879), 290.

