

# Code Language in the Book of Mormon

By Chauncey C. Riddle

## Summary

Recognizing that individual languages use certain conventions or codes to communicate messages, Chauncey Riddle looks at language used in the Book of Mormon to illuminate what might be hidden meanings. The code language of the Book of Mormon points toward Jesus Christ. His calling and his attributes can be found in the names used in scripture, in words used in ordinances, and in words of worship and blessing. All of this was done so that the trace of the true Savior would not become lost among the children of Israel, try as they might to avoid it.

Paper

Book of Mormon, Literature

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# Code Language in the Book of Mormon

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Caveat: This paper has been created to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon is a text worthy of careful pondering and solemn thought. No reader should take anything said herein as Gospel truth. What is said is an invitation to every person to turn to the Book of Mormon and through prayer and meditation about what is contained therein to establish a living link with heaven through the personal manifestations of the Holy Spirit. It is what the Holy Spirit teaches an individual as the person ponders the text that is the important thing about the book of Mormon. Commentaries on the text, such as the following paper, do more harm than good if someone believes them without further inquiring of Father in the name of Jesus Christ as to exactly what he or she should believe about such matters. Now to the commentary.

The title of this work is a bit misleading. All human mother tongues are code languages. To become an adult in any culture is to learn well the language of that culture. This involves being able to interpret and to use the code or physical form of the language to represent to oneself the meanings of various other persons who use the same coding and to express meaning to them. This is always done within a cultural worldview and a common physical environment which provide limiting and enabling parameters for “meaning” something using a given language. So all of the language of the Book of Mormon is code language.

The actual import of the title is to point out that there are special codes or usages in the Book of Mormon which are not culturally transparent to the user of ordinary English (whatever ordinary English might be taken to be). These codings are not those of the sort of “King James style” of English which Joseph Smith employed in translating the text. This paper will focus on four major kinds of hidden meaning which the ordinary contemporary reader of the Book of Mormon might miss even though he or she might be fluent in King James as well as contemporary English usage.

The stated purposes of the Book of Mormon, given on the title page are: “To show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they might know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever — And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” These purposes are achieved in a narrative that is primarily a historical record of a people interspersed with commentary, sermons and admonitions, scriptural quotations, and allegorical allusions.

The four major kinds of hidden meanings with which we shall concern ourselves in this paper are as follows:

1. Obscure usages.
2. Technical usages.
3. Metaphorical/allegorical usages.
4. Double entendres.

### **1. Example of text having obscure meaning: Jacob's mark.**

An obscure meaning is the usage of ordinary words of a language in such a way that the reader has to puzzle out what the author means by a given coding. For instance, in Jacob 4:14 we read:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and despised the words of plainness, and sought for things that they could not understand, Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath take away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

The question arises, what is the mark? A good deal of speculation about this topic is observed in LDS scriptural discussions. But the issue is interesting, because Jacob has taken pains to lay a ground work for his remark, which groundwork, if ignored, leads the reader of the Book of Mormon into the same trap as he describes for the ancient Jews: the modern reader can also easily look beyond the mark by misinterpreting the "the mark."

The context of Jacob's allusion to the mark is a discussion of Christ. In the preceding verse 4 Jacob mentions that he and others took the pains to make a record on metal plates so that their children would not lose that most precious of all knowledge, an understanding of Christ and his mission. He mentions that they (those who wrote upon the plates) worshipped in the name of Christ and kept the law of Moses because it pointed to Christ. In verse six he points out that the message of Christ has not been lost on them; through their knowledge of Christ, they have obtained a hope in Christ, and their unshaken faith has enabled them to do great miracles. But notwithstanding the greatness of those miracles, they knew their weaknesses, and they knew that only in the grace of Christ could they do those things. In verse eight, Jacob extols the work of Christ, the Lord, his mysteries and his mighty works. In verse ten he commends the reader to take counsel from Christ the Lord, who counseleth over all his works in great mercy. In verse eleven, he asks all his readers to be reconciled to Father through the Atonement of Christ. In verse twelve he asks why not attain to a perfect knowledge of Christ? In verse thirteen the points out that we can attain this knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and that all the prophets have testified of these things.

Then, in verse fourteen, he speaks of the mark. With that preceding context could the mark reasonably be anything or anybody but Christ himself? Jacob seems to be saying that our life has one point and one point only: to come unto Christ, to be redeemed, saved, and reconciled to Father. To pursue any other goal is to miss the mark or the point of living a mortal life.

The Jews missed the mark by seeking after knowledge of distant things. They seemed to have delighted in mysteries and metaphysics. Their quest to align themselves with a recondite and mythological truth was away of ever laboring and never coming to the goal. They seemed not to realize that the point of life is to become a little child in establishing a very personal relationship with the most important person, Christ, and that through becoming his child they could gain all other good things as well, including truth. Jacob seems to be saying that not to see that the mark, the goal of human life held highest by the scriptures, is to know Christ face to face in mortality, is to look beyond the mark in any time and age.

### **2. Example of a term in technical usage: Innocent blood.**

Technical usage in a language is opposed to common-sense usage. Common-sense usage is a fuzzy, family relationship type of meaning where the purpose is to approximate, not to be precise. When there is a need to be precise in order not to be misunderstood, technical language is introduced. Technical language has an essence, a specifiable and precise core content of meaning, which common-sense language does not have.

A good example of coding which represents technical usage is found in the Book of Mormon usage of the phrase "innocent blood." After preaching his second witnessing to the wicked King Noah and his court, Abinadi warns the king that though he is willing to die, should the king choose to kill him the king will shed innocent blood. (Mosiah 17:10) Examination of the scriptures shows that the word "innocent" means having no sin to one's charge. Thus we read in the Doctrine and Covenants: "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed men from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God." (D&C 93:38) I take this to mean that though every spirit was innocent in the beginning, having no sin to its charge. Being born under the curse of the fall of Adam would have caused little children born into this life to be under the curse of sin were it not that the Savior prepared a redemption from the fall and thus every person is innocent or guilty according to his or her own sins and not because of Adam's transgression.

But being innocent, either not having sinned or having been forgiven of one's sins, does not of itself create the technical matter known as "innocent blood." The repentant people of Ammonihah were burned by the wicked inhabitants of that city. Alma notes that in burning them the

people of Ammonihah were bringing upon themselves the “blood of the innocent.” Those who burned others were guilty of murder, and would have to answer for that. But there is no suggestion that they were shedding innocent blood.

It is in D&C 132 that the key is given to know how and why Abinadi’s blood was innocent blood whereas the blood of the repentant women and children of Ammonihah was the blood of the innocent. The phrase is used repeatedly which says: “if ye abide in my covenant and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood.” (D&C 132:19) This introduces the idea that the shedding of innocent blood pertains to the New and Everlasting Covenant and to it only. A later verse then clarifies the matter. “The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God.” (D&C 132:27)

The sum of the matter is then that innocent blood is the blood of Christ or his personal priesthood representative who has been sent to other covenant servants of Christ. Abinadi was sent by God to call Noah and his courtiers to repentance. In slaying him, they in effect slew the Savior himself, and that after having partaken of the New and Everlasting Covenant and pretending to administer and to teach it. For this there can be no forgiveness of sins, either in this world or the next. The case of the wicked people of Ammonihah was different. They had explicitly rejected the New and Everlasting Covenant and were not bound by it. The murders they committed were indeed laid to their charge, but they were not charged with deliberate murder of the Savior. There is murder, and then there is murder whereby one sheds innocent blood.

In another passage of the Book of Mormon, the father of King Lamoni uses the term innocent blood mistakenly. Ammon has just warned the old king that should he slay his son, he would be killing an innocent man, for Lamoni had repented and had been forgiven of his sins. The old king replies: “I know that if I should slay my son I should shed innocent blood; for it is thou that has sought to destroy him.” This usage is understandable, but does not qualify as a technical usage of the term innocent blood, for the king had not yet received the New and Everlasting Covenant, nor did his son preside over him in priesthood authority. Therefore had the old king killed his son he also would have been shedding the blood of the innocent.

### **3. Example of metaphorical/allegorical meaning: Alma’s tree of life.**

The Book of Mormon contains a significant number of references to plants and trees, used in a metaphorical sense to represent persons. One of these references is puzzling because no interpretation is given as it was by Nephi telling his brothers about father Lehi’s tree of life vision. The

reference in question is Alma’s reference to another tree of life in Alma 32. The question is, who is the person represented by the tree of life? Is it God as the tree of life, as it was in Lehi’s vision? Or is it some other person? Again, close reading of the text provides our clues for interpretation.

In Alma 32:28 the word is compared to a seed, and is specifically identified as the Spirit of the Lord. A message from the Lord is received through the spirit and is to be planted in the heart of the hearer. The test that the seed is good is that it swells, sprouts and begins to grow. (Verse 30) By that the hearer may know that the seed is good. Further confirmation of the goodness of the seed comes in the fact that the soul also begins to expand, the understanding is enlightened and the mind doth begin to expand. (Verse 34) Alma says that it is the hearer’s heart and mind which are growing and expanding. So, what is the tree?

Alma further warns the hearer that the tree must be nourished with great care, lest the sun come and scorch it because it has no root. He tells us that we do this by not laying aside our faith, but by continuing to exercise our faith. (Verse 36) But if one nourishes the tree with faith unto great diligence, the tree will take root and will be a tree springing up unto everlasting life. (Verse 41) Alma concludes by saying that “Because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit until ye are filled, even that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.” (Verse 42)

Now it seems plain that the hearer is the tree of life. It was in his heart that the seed was planted, being the spirit of the Lord. It is he that is transformed in heart and mind, swelling and expanding as the seed grows. It is he that must continue to nourish the seed by continuing in faith to hearken to the spirit of the Lord. And it is his own self that is the tree of life, bringing forth the pure fruit of Christ in the deeds of pure love done for others.

One might be confused by Alma’s wording that the hearer himself feasts upon this fruit, thinking that perhaps the tree might be another person by whom the hearer is blessed. But that does not fit the analogy. It is not in another’s heart that the seed is planted, nor is it another person’s heart and mind which swell and expand. Indeed, the hearer becomes the tree of life, for the only way to attain everlasting life is to *be* a tree of life, doing good for others in the pure love of Christ. Then indeed one never hungers nor thirsts again, for one has then the most satisfying opportunity in the universe, that of doing all that is possible in righteousness to bless others.

The final clincher to this is the factor of testimony, of knowledge, which was the purpose of Alma's rehearsing this allegory. The original purpose was to know "whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ." (Alma 34:5) Alma has been explaining to the Zoramites how to know if what they were preaching of Christ were indeed the true word of God. Alma tells them that the way to know for sure is to plant the seed, the word of God as it came to them by the Spirit of the Lord, that they might know for themselves. The swelling and sprouting would tell them that the seed was live and good; but only when the tree was mature could they know exactly what that seed would lead to. Only when one lives the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the end and produces the fruits of love and peace himself or herself does that person know for sure that this is the seed which is pure above all that is pure and produces a fruit that is white above all that is white. "By their fruits shall ye know them." The person who does the will of God unto producing that fruit knows the truth of the Gospel in a way that one who is only blessed by the love of God through the labors of others can never know.

#### 4. Examples of double entendre.

The double entendre type we are concerned with here is language use where there is a plain, straight-forward and legitimate ordinary interpretation of a language usage which is underlayed by a second, more significant but abstruse meaning. Punning is another type of double entendre with which we are not here concerned.

##### a. "Prosper in the land."

The Book of Mormon abounds in references to the fact that if the children of Lehi keep the commandments of God they will prosper in their land of promise. (1 Nephi 4:14) The obvious and straight forward meaning is that they will do well as to the things of this world in the land which is choice above all other lands, which land abounds in natural resources. And the children of Lehi certainly did prosper in this land of promise. They produced abundance in flocks and herds, grain and fruit, gold and other metals, until they were rich as to the things of this world.

The second and more significant meaning of prosper is uncovered by reflection on the negative reward which is the complement of the prospering. "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence." (2 Nephi 1:20)

This passage reveals that the cursing for not keeping the commandments of the Lord is to not have the opportunity to enter into his rest, which is the fullness of his glory. (D&C 84:24) Jacob says: "Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the

days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness." (Jacob 1:7) To keep the commandments of God is the only way to come unto Christ. And the reward for that is to be with Christ, to enjoy the glory of his presence. But those who will not keep the commandments cut themselves off from that strait and narrow path which leads to his presence and cannot enjoy that presence in mortality.

The meaning of the phrase "land of promise" figures in this double meaning. A land of promise is a special place where one goes to meet the Lord, which is to prosper in the land. The Savior told his disciples in Jerusalem: "After I am risen, I will go before you unto Galilee." Why should the disciples go to Galilee? Because there they would meet the Savior. Likewise, when the Savior gives anyone a promised land, he goes before them to that land. That land is then the place where they can and will meet the Savior, if in that land they keep his commandments. Abraham was given a promised land, and there kept the commandments and knew the Lord face to face. (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1) Moses tried to get the children of Israel to keep the commandments so that they could prosper in the land, but they would not. (D&C 84:19-25) And among the Nephites, many kept the commandments and were thus prospered. (Alma 13:10-13)

##### b. *The seed of Abraham.*

In 1 Nephi 22:8-9 we read:

And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders. And it shall be of great worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

The question arises: What does the text mean in alluding to the seed of Abraham?

The surface meaning of seed is plain in the passage mentioned. Nephi speaks of the children of his brothers and of himself as "our seed," a common usage in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon. So the plain interpretation of the seed of Abraham is his physical posterity. Through the children of Abraham will all nations eventually be blessed.

The deeper meaning of this usage relates to the fact that "Abraham" is the new name given unto Abram. Abraham had a son named Ishmael when he was as yet Abram. Will all the nations of the earth be blessed through Ishmael? It appears not, though great blessings are given to Ishmael and his seed:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him, exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. (Genesis 17:20)

But the greater blessings were reserved to Isaac, who was conceived and born after Abram's name was changed to Abraham:

Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. (Genesis 17:19)

Now the question is, Are all of the children of Isaac the seed of Abraham through which the nations of the earth will be blessed? Again the answer seems to be "No". The matter is explained in the Book of Abraham:

My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

And I will bless them that bless thee; and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood) for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. (Abraham 2:8-11)

Now it is plain from this passage that the blessings which Abraham's seed give to the nations come through the holy priesthood. It is true that the seed of Abraham according to the flesh have first rights to the priesthood because of the righteousness of Abraham, but they will receive the priesthood only upon their own righteousness. If they come into the New and Everlasting Covenant and receive the holy priesthood, then indeed they can and will be ministers of the blessings of Jehovah to all nations. But if they will not come into the covenant, they will be replaced by Gentiles who are not the literal seed of Abraham's body, but who are adopted unto Abraham, and thus counted as his seed in the priesthood, in their acceptance of the New and Everlasting Covenant.

But the matter does not rest, even there. The new name which Abram received, Abraham, literally means "father of many people." While it is true that Abram/Abraham is the father of many people, the title Abraham is rightfully the

name of the great Jehovah, the true father of many people. In putting the name Abraham upon Abram, Jehovah (that is to say, Christ) is putting his own name upon his faithful servant. Thus the seed of Abraham, speaking of that portion of his seed who will bless the nations, is actually a designation of the children of Christ. The blessing that is given to the nations is that the children of Christ invite all others to become the children of Christ, and administer that opportunity through the holy priesthood which has been put upon them by Christ. But the Savior chooses to honor his faithful servant Abram by putting upon Abram his own name, his own covenant, his own priesthood, and by calling his own seed the seed of Abraham.

### c. *The house of Israel.*

One of the most common references in the Book of Mormon is to Israel and the house of Israel. The surface meaning of the name "Israel" is that it is a reference to Jacob, the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, and the father of the twelve tribes. A principal concern of the writers of the Book of Mormon is what has happened, what was happening and what would happen to the house of Israel, and particularly to their own family, a branch of the house of Israel. In general, Israel is important as a people in the history of the world because it is through Israel that the blessing of all nations by the seed of Abraham will be administered.

The tie to the seed of Abraham gives us a clue to the deeper, more important meaning of the name Israel. First we know that the name is again a new name given to one who was a faithful servant of Jehovah. As a new name, it is given of Jehovah, or Christ, as a reward, and to signify a new relationship of the recipient to Christ. If we look at the name "Israel" etymologically, we see that it is purported to come from two roots. One of the roots means, mighty, a prince, one who rules. The other root is the Hebrew name for God. The standard references tell us that the name Israel means "he will rule as God," or "he rules as God."

Now it is plain that he who rules or will rule as God is Jehovah, himself, or Jesus Christ. The new name for Jacob is also a name of God himself, even as was Abram's new name. The conclusion is that the house of Israel is the house or family of Jehovah, the house of Christ. The children of Israel are thus of two kinds: the seed of the flesh, the literal descendants of Jacob; and the children of the new and everlasting covenant, who are the children of men who have come unto Christ and have become his Sons and daughters, his seed.

Thus does Abinadi explain:

When his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? Who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of

the Lord — I say unto you, that all those who have harkened unto their words and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 15:10–11)

Now we might push the matter a bit further. Pointing, or the designation of vowels in the Hebrew language and script is a rather late invention. For this reason, we can call into question the pointing that is given to the name “Israel.” Without pointing we can see that the roots can be taken to be *yashar* and *El*. Israel could thus mean the just God, the righteous God. Pushing it a bit further, it could be *Ja*, the prince of God. *Ja* is the shortened version of what we call “Jehovah” or “jahvah”. These interpretations give meaning to the statement that every prophet who has prophesied since the beginning has testified of Christ. Perhaps the testimonies did not use the name “Christ,” but every prophet has used one of the names of Christ, one of which is Israel.

#### **d. The name of God.**

In reading the Book of Mormon we encounter passages such as the following:

Behold, my soul abhorreth sin, and my heart delighteth in righteousness; and I will praise the holy name of my god. (2 Nephi 9:49)

Behold, my beloved brethren, remember the words of your God; pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night. (2 Nephi 9:52)

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name. (2 Nephi 25:13)

And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. (Mosiah 5:8)

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. (3 Nephi 13:9) that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep the commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his spirit to be with them. (Moroni 4:3)

Careful inspection of those passages reveals that something unusual is going on. The surface meaning of praising the name of God and taking that name upon us is to praise the words “Jesus Christ” and being known as

servants of Jesus Christ. The surface meaning is good and true. But it is plain that there is more. For salvation comes by this name. Being known by the name of Christ does not bring salvation; so there must be something more.

That something more, the deeper level of interpretation, is alluded to in other scriptures:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:22–27)

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break down their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God. But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shall ye come. (Deuteronomy 12:2–5)

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy father, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. (2 Samuel 7:12–13)

I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.. Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name. For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. (D&C 110:4–7)

These references show us that indeed there is something more referred to than the bare mention of the name of Jesus Christ. What seems to be alluded to by the words “the name of the Lord” is the ordinances of salvation, specifically the temple ordinances. To take upon ourselves the name of the Lord is to take the covenants of the Lord upon us. In ancient times this apparently was the ordinances of the Law of Moses as fulfilled in the temple. In the latter-days this is to receive all the ordinances of his holy house.

So when the prophets say: Blessed be the name of the Lord! that saying has a double meaning. Indeed blessed is the sacred name of Jesus Christ. But also blessed be the ordinances of salvation by which we by further degrees take more and more of the name of Jesus Christ upon ourselves.

The importance of this double entendre may be seen when one uses the name of the Lord to do his work. If one has taken little of the name of the Lord upon himself, he probably has little power to cast out devils or to bless. But if one has fully received the ordinances, both in the sense of having made the covenants and having honored them, then when one acts in the name of the Lord, he acts in great power unto fulfilling the works that the Savior would have him do.

So “the name of the Lord” has a precious double meaning. It is both a literal designation of the name by which we know our God, but is also in most places also a representation of the power and authority from God which we may receive in the ordinances of the holy temple. Hopefully we will not take the name of the Lord in vain.

#### *e. Amen.*

The final item in this discussion of double entendres is a concern with the word “Amen.” The surface meaning is the one usually given, the “So be it” of the tradition or the idea of an ending. The Book of Mormon is replete with instances of the use of the word. In most places where it is used it comes at the end of a commentary, a sermon, or a doctrinal discourse. In each of those settings the surface meaning is appropriate and useful.

It is my hypothesis that the underlying meaning is that the word designates one of the special names of Jesus Christ. Each usage of it therefore might also be interpreted to say “in the name of Jesus Christ.” There is only one place in all of the scriptures where such an underlying meaning seems inappropriate, and that is in the discussion of the priesthood in D&C 121:37. Let us now recount some evidences for this hypothesis of underlying meaning.

In Revelation 3:14 we read: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works...” This plainly is a reference to the Savior, the Firstborn.

In the New Testament there are over seventy references where the Savior uses the construction “amen lego” in the Greek. These are translated in the English version to say “verily, I”, but that is an interpretation as much as it is a translation. It is my opinion that the correct interpretation is to see that the Savior is saying “Amen, I say unto you” or “I, Amen, say unto you.” No one else uses that construction in the New Testament. If it meant only “verily, I say unto you” it seems likely that it would have been used by the apostles as well.

One of the special names of the Savior as designated in latter-day scripture is the name Ahman. “Wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer, even the Son Ahman.” (D&C 78:20) Again we read: “And let the higher part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for the school of mine apostles, saith Son Ahman; or in other words Alphus; or, in other words, Omegus; even Jesus

Christ your Lord.” (D&C 95:17) Ahman is an appropriate vocalization of the Amen of the Greek or Hebrew. Ahman is the vocalization given for the word in at least one Hebrew concordance.

The word “amen” in its unpointed Hebrew form means just or righteous, a very appropriate name for the Savior. The Egyptians took that name for their god Ammon.

Finally, we note that in giving the manner of prayer both to the Jews and to the Nephites the Savior specified that a prayer should end in the word “Amen.” On the theory that he would not have given his faithful followers a deficient pattern, we see another reason for seeing that the word “Amen” is a name of Jesus Christ. To say “Amen” at the conclusion of a prayer, either as mouth or as hearer could thus be to affirm our own witness that the order of the prayer was correct; that the prayer was inspired of God and thus is appropriately closed in the name of Jesus Christ. While it certainly is true that no one can mean by a word in a prayer anything but what is in their own heart and mind, it is also plain to see that for those who understand the possibility, they could be saying at the conclusion of their prayer: “I say this prayer in that special name of Jesus Christ which is Amen.”

## **5. Conclusion**

If the work of this paper has been done well, the conclusion should be obvious, at this point. The conclusion I draw is that the code language of the Book of Mormon points toward Jesus Christ. It points to him so many ways that one has no trouble seeing that what the Nephites said of themselves is true: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do... And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” (2 Nephi 25:22–26)

Our Savior has several hundred names, some of which have figured prominently in this discussion. Many of his names are code words in the scriptures. It is as though it was known from the beginning that men would not properly use and would try to lose the name of God, so his name was spread out among many names so that his names would never be entirely lost. Some names were never pronounced, and thus became unknown in their true form, as in Jehovah as a representation of the tetragrammaton. Some were made common words of the vocabulary, such as Amen. Some were given to others so that they would not go out of use, such as Abraham, Israel, and Melchizedek. All of this so that the trace of the true Savior would not become lost among the children of Israel, try as they might to avoid it.

Understanding these code usages also gives understanding to the words of Jacob: “We have written

these things that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshipped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name.” And may the day soon come when all mankind will worship the Father in his name.