

In Search of the Meaning of “Zarahemla”

Using the *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon (B-D-B-G)* and *The Scriptures (LDS)* on CD-ROM with Advanced Study Aids.

Vowels tend to be variable in Hebrew, while the order of consonants forming words tends to preserve root meanings. We know that the language of Zarahemla “had become corrupted”. (Omni 1:17) Even so, the Nephites may have identified and restored the meaning of the name “Zarahemla”. We learn however, that even Nephite Hebrew was “altered”. (Mormon 9:33) What is more, names in the English translation of the Book of Mormon tend to follow *King James Bible (KJV)* spellings and pronunciation conventions. Though this bestows on the English translation a spirit of familiarity, it is often at the expense of more authentic pronunciation. These considerations widen the range of Hebraic possibilities for the name “Zarahemla”. If “Zarahemla” is Hebrew, it must be a compound name! It is reasonable to search for the meaning of at least two parts - a part (a) and a part (b). English terms “of” and “is”, may be implied.

(1a)

זָרַע had sown, ([Judges 6:3](#))

(זָרַע Heading - KJV)

זָרַע, zera ; h2233

From זָרַע {h2232}

Mean *seed; figuratively fruit, plant, sowing-time, posterity*

KJV X carnally, child, fruitful, seed (-time), sowing-time

(*B-D-B-G*) pg. 281; 2232 – “zara” (verb): sow, scatter seed.

Pg.282; 2233 – “zera” (masculine noun): sowing, seed, offspring.

(2a)

זָרְהָה hath been winnowed ([Isaiah 30:24](#))

(זָרְהָה Heading - KJV)

זָרְהָה, zrh ; h2219

From a primitive root [compare זָרַח {h2114}]

Mean to *toss* about; by implication to *diffuse, winnow*

KJV cast away, compass, disperse, fan, scatter (away), spread, strew, winnow

(*B-D-B-G*) pg. 279; 2219 – “zarah” (verb): scatter, fan, winnow, cause to fly.

(3a)

וְיָרֵעַ and the arm, ([Deuteronomy 7:19](#))

(זרוע Heading - KJV)

זָרוּעַ, z'roa

or (shortened) **זָרַע**, zro

and (feminine) **זָרוּעָה**, z'roah

or **זָרָעָה**, z'roah ; h2220

From זרע {h2232}

Mean the *arm* (as *stretched* out), or (of animals) the *foreleg*; figuratively *force*

KJV arm, + help, mighty, power, shoulder, strength

(B-D-B-G) pg. 283; 2220 - “z’roa” (feminine noun): *arm, shoulder, strength.*

(4a)

וַיִּזְרַח and rose up (Deuteronomy 33:2:5)

(זרח Heading - KJV)

זָרַח, zerach ; h2225

From זרח {h2224}

Mean a *rising* of light

KJV rising

זָרַח, zerach ; h2226

From the same as זרח {h2225}

Mean *Zerach*, the name of three Israelites, also of an Idumaeen and an Ethiopian prince

KJV Zarah, Zerah

(B-D-B-G) pg. 280; 2224 – “zarah” (verb): *rise, come forth.*

Pg. 280; 225 – “zerah” (masculine noun): *dawning, shining.*

Pg. 280; 226 – “Zerah” (proper noun): *i.e. son of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38:30)*

זָרַח Zarah. (Genesis 38:30, KJV)

(5a)

צורתו (צורתיו) the forms thereof, (Ezekiel 43:11)

(צורה Heading - KJV)

צוּרָה, tsurah ; h6699

From feminine of צור {h6697}

Mean a *rock* (Job 28:10); also a *form* (as if *pressed* out)

KJV form, rock

(B-D-B-G) pg. 848; 6696 - “tsur” (verb): *confine, bind, besiege.*

Pg. 884; 4692 - “matur” (masculine noun): siege-enclosure, siege, entrenchment.

Pg. 849 ; 6697 - “tsur” (masculine noun) : rock, cliff.

(1b)

הַמּוֹלָה a tumult (Jeremiah 11:16:12)

(הַמּוֹלָה Heading - KJV)

הַמּוֹלָה, hamullah

or (too fully) הַמּוֹלָה, hamullah (Jeremiah 11:16); h1999

From feminine passive participle of an unused root meaning to *rush* (as rain with a windy roar)

Mean a *sound*

KJV speech, tumult

(B-D-B-G) pg.242 ; 1999 - “hamulah”: rain-storm, rushing or roaring sound, sound of a great storm, of wind fanning flames in a tree (figuratively Jehovah’s judgment on Judah according to Jeremiah). Likely “hamulah” is related to *hml* which means: *shed tears, rain steadily*.

(2b)

וַיִּתְחַמֵּל And she had compassion (Exodus 2:6:9)

(וַיִּתְחַמֵּל Heading - KJV)

וַיִּתְחַמֵּל, chml ; h2550

From a primitive root.

Mean to *commiserate*; by implication to *spare*

KJV have compassion, (have) pity, spare

(B-D-B-G) pg. 328; 2550: “*hamal*” (verb): *spare, have compassion*.

Pg. 328; 2551 - “*hemlah*” (feminine noun): *compassion, mercy*.

Pg. 328; 2538 - “*Hamul*” (proper noun): *Grandson of Judah (Gen. 46:12)*

וַיִּתְחַמֵּל and Hamul. (Genesis 46:12, KJV)

(3b)

עֲמָל perverseness (Numbers 23:21)

(עֲמָל Heading - KJV)

עֲמָל, amal ; h5999

From עֲמָל {h5998}

Mean *toil*, i.e. *wearing effort*; hence worry, whether of body of mind

KJV grievance (-vousness), iniquity, labour, mischief, miserable (-sery), pain (-ful), perverseness, sorrow, toil, travail, trouble, wearisome, wickedness

עָמַל, amal ; h6000

From the same as עָמַל {h5999}

Mean *Amal*, an Israelite

KJV Amal

(B-D-B-G) pg. 765; 5998 - “amal” (verb): labor, toil

Pg. 765; 5999 - “amal” (masculine noun): trouble, labour, toil.

(4b)

אָמַלְהָ weak is (Ezekiel 16:30)

(אָמַלְהָ Heading - KJV)

אָמַל, ml, amulah (in above verse) ; h535

From a primitive root

Mean to *droop*; by implication to *be sick*, to *mourn*

KJV languish, be weak, wax feeble

(B-D-B-G) pg.51; 535 – “amal” (verb): be weak, languish

Concluding remarks:

Was *Zarahemla* a descendent of Zerah and or Hamul? Is the name therefore genealogical? Was *Zarahemla* named in recognition of the fulfillment of the judgment and *scattering* of Judah prophesied by Jeremiah? The name seems rich in Hebraic possibilities, including word-play. Even the terrible judgment that came upon the city took the form of a *powerful storm* and *roaring fire* similar sounding to its name. (3 Nephi 8:5, 8)

If I had to prefer a meaning for the name “Zarahemla”, I would choose (1a) + (2b) = “**zera-hemlah**” = “**seed spared**” = “**seed of compassion (sparing)**”. In other words: “**spared offspring**”. Without explicitly mentioning the name of the LORD, “Zera-hemlah” bespeaks the LORD’s *mercy - sparing the seed* of Zedekiah. (Helaman 8:21) This implication of God’s mercy, however, may have had to be pointed out to the people of Zarahemla by the Nephites; in as much the people of Zarahemla had at some point come to dismiss the providence of the LORD; and had apparently, even ceased to refer to “Mulek” by his full and proper name “MalkiYahu” - “my King is Jehovah”. (Jeremiah 38:6)

Is one of the reasons the Lord requested or approved that “the name of Zarahemla be named upon” one of the gathering places of the saints in Iowa, because of an appropriate meaning of the ancient name? (*LDS Doctrine and Covenants* 125:1-4)