

Bny ʿmwn: THE SONS OF AMMON

DANIEL I. BLOCK
Bethel Theological Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota 55112

It is apparent from the recent spate of English translations of the OT that scholarly consensus on the significance of the Hebrew form of the name for the Ammonite nation, *bny ʿmwn* (literally, "sons of Ammon"), is still lacking. Whereas the KJV is quite consistent in its rendering of the phrase as "children of Ammon,"¹ its lead has been followed by only the conservative literalistic NASB. Here the expression is translated almost uniformly as "sons of Ammon." Only occasionally does the gentilic, "Ammonite(s)," appear.² This contrasts sharply with most other recent translations. In the RSV, the only exceptions to the gentilic occur in Deut 2:19, 37; Jer 9:26 (Heb., vs. 25); 25:21; 27:3 (all "sons of Ammon"); Judg 11:27 ("people of Ammon"); and 2 Chr 20:10, 22, 23 ("men of Ammon"). The exceptions in the NEB simply delete the prefixed element, producing the shortened form, "Ammon."³ The JB transliterates the phrase as Bene-ammon in Gen 19:38. Otherwise, apart from the gentilic, the full form, "sons of Ammon," occurs thirteen times, and the abbreviated form, "Ammon," only once.⁴ The NIV translates *bny ʿmwn* as "people of Ammon" in 2 Kgs 23:13; as "men of Ammon" in 2 Chr 20:22, 23; as "men from Ammon" in 2 Chr

¹The gentilic, "Ammonites," occurs in 1 Sam 11:11 (cf. LXX and pc MSS); Jer 27:3; 40:11, 14; 41:10, 15; 49:1, 2; Ezek 21:20, 28 (Heb., vss. 25, 33); 25:2, 3, 5, 10; 2 Chr 27:5a.

²1 Sam 11:11; 2 Sam 10:1, 2, 3; 2 Kgs 24:2; 2 Chr 27:5 (three times). The marginal note to Gen 19:38 transliterates the expression as "Bene-Ammon."

³Judg 11:12, 33; 2 Sam 11:1; Isa 11:14; Jer 9:26 (Heb., vs. 25); 27:3; 40:11; 41:10; 49:2, 6; Ezek 25:5, 10; Zeph 2:8, 9. The full form, "people of Ammon," occurs in Jer 49:1.

⁴The full form appears in Num 21:24; Deut 2:19 (twice); Judg 3:13; 10:18; Jer 9:26 (Heb., vs. 25); 25:21; 49:1, 6; Amos 1:13; Zeph 2:8, 9; and Dan 11:41. The abbreviated form "Ammon" occurs in Ezek 25:5.

20:10; and as "leaders of Ammon" in Dan 11:41. The shortened form, "Ammon," is found in eight texts.⁵

In the translations which tend to prefer the gentilic, the reasons for deviating from this pattern are not always obvious. In many instances, the exceptional forms seem to be quite arbitrary, at times the changes occurring within the same context. It seems that a closer examination of the use of the Hebrew form of the expression, *bny ʿmwn*, is long overdue. I offer this study of the forms and usage of the name in the OT and in extra-biblical texts as a small contribution to the complex problem.

1. Ammon in the OT

Frequency and Distribution of the Name

As Table 1 indicates (see p. 199), the name Ammon appears 106 times in the OT. Of these occurrences, 104 use the full form, *bny ʿmwn*, representing almost 100% consistency.⁶ Gentilic forms are found in an additional twenty-one texts, or slightly more than 17% of all references to the Ammonites by name. More than three-fourths of the occurrences of Ammon appear in historical narrative; the remainder are found in prophetic and poetic texts.

These observations may be best interpreted by comparing them with the frequency and distribution of the names for Israel, for which the *bny*-GN form (i.e., "sons of" + Geographic Name) is also common, as illustrated in Table 2 (on pp. 200-201). The following chart highlights the areas of contrast:

<i>Point of Comparison</i>	<i>Ammon</i>	<i>Israel</i>
Ratio of <i>bny</i> -GN occurrences to the total references to the nation by name (excluding gentilics)	98.1%	25.3%
Ratio of <i>bny</i> -GN occurrences in the Pentateuch to the total occurrences of the <i>bny</i> -GN form	7.7%	59.1%
Ratio of <i>bny</i> -GN occurrences in the poetic/prophetic texts to the total references to the nation by name	95.4%	7.7%
Ratio of gentilics to all forms of the national name	16.5%	.2%

(Footnotes 5 and 6 appear on the following page)

TABLE 1
 Frequency and Distribution of References to
 the Ammonites in the OT

OT Book	<i>bny</i> ^c <i>mwn</i> ("sons of Ammon")	^c <i>mwn</i> ("Ammon")	^c <i>mwny</i> (<i>m, t, wt</i>) ("Ammonites")
Genesis	1	...	...
Numbers	2	...	...
Deuteronomy	5	...	2
Subtotals	8	...	2
Joshua	3	...	...
Judges	27	...	...
1 Samuel	2	1	2
2 Samuel	17	...	1
1 Kings	2	...	4
2 Kings	2	...	...
Subtotals	53	1	7
Isaiah	1	...	...
Jeremiah	10	...	...
Ezekiel	7	...	...
Amos	1	...	...
Zephaniah	2	...	...
Subtotals	21	...	...
Psalms	...	1	...
Daniel	1	...	...
Ezra	...	...	1
Nehemiah	...	...	6
1 Chronicles	14	...	1
2 Chronicles	7	...	4
Subtotals	22	1	12
Grand Totals	104	2	21

(Footnotes for p. 198)

⁵Judg 11:28, 33; Jer 9:26 (Heb., vs. 25); 25:21; 27:3; 40:11; Ezek 25:5; Amos 1:13.

⁶The only exceptions are 1 Sam 11:11 and Ps 83:8. L. Koehler, "Der Name Ammoniter," *TZ* 1 (1945): 155, suggests that the abbreviated form was determined in the latter text by metrical considerations. Concerning the former, certain ancient translations (including the LXX, Targumim, and Peshitta) assume *bny*. Cf. S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1890), p. 66.

TABLE 2
 Frequency, Distribution, and Genre of
bny yśrʿl in the OT

OT Book	Form		Genre of <i>bny yśrʿl</i>	
	<i>yśrʿl</i> ("Israel")	<i>bny yśrʿl</i> ("Sons of Israel")	Narrative	Poetry
Genesis	43	7	7	...
Exodus	170	124	124	...
Leviticus	70*	54	54	...
Numbers	238	171	171	...
Deuteronomy	72	21	20	1**
Subtotals	593	377 (64%)	376	1
Joshua	160	69	69	...
Judges	184	61	61	...
1 Samuel	151	12	12	...
2 Samuel	117***	5	5	...
1 Kings	203	21	21	...
2 Kings	164	11	11	...
Subtotals	979	179 (18%)	179	...
Isaiah	92	5	3	2
Jeremiah	125	9	1	8
Ezekiel	185	11	11	...
Hosea	44	6	5	1
Joel	3	1	...	1
Amos	30	5	1	4
Obadiah	1	1	...	1
Jonah	...	...	...	...
Micah	12	1	...	1
Nahum	1	...	...	...
Habakkuk	...	...	...	...
Zephaniah	4	...	...	...
Haggai	...	...	...	...
Zechariah	5	...	...	...
Malachi	5	...	...	...
Subtotals	507	39 (8%)	21	18

TABLE 2 (cont.)

OT Book	Form		Genre of <i>bny ysr'ʔl</i>	
	<i>yśr'ʔl</i> ("Israel")	<i>bny yśr'ʔl</i> ("Sons of Israel")	Narrative	Poetry
Psalms	62	2	...	2
Job	...	...	...	...
Proverbs	1	...	...	...
Canticles	1	...	...	...
Ruth	5	...	...	...
Lamentations	3	...	...	...
Qoheleth	1	...	...	...
Esther	...	...	...	...
Daniel	4	1	1	...
Ezra	40	4	4	...
Nehemiah	22	9	9	...
1 Chronicles	114	4	4	...
2 Chronicles	186	23	23	...
Subtotals	439	43 (10%)	41	2
Grand Totals	2517	638 (25%)	617	21

*Excluding the four gentiles in Lev. 24:10-11.

**Deut 32:8. Cf. LXX *aggelos*; Qumran fragment, *bny ʔlhym*, "sons of God." P. Skehan, Qumran and the Present State of the Old Testament Text Studies: The Masoretic Text," *JBL* 78 (1959): 21-25.

***Excluding the gentile in 2 Sam 17:25.

How are these dramatic differences in forms and distribution to be explained? The first point of comparison is probably the most difficult, but the explanation will emerge as the study proceeds. The marked difference in the Pentateuchal occurrences may not be written off by simply noting that the history of Israel touches that of the Ammonites more frequently in the post-Pentateuchal texts. I have argued elsewhere⁷ that the prominence of the form *bny ysr²l* ("sons of Israel") was related directly to the consciousness of tribal interrelationships and the Israelites' belief in their common descent from a single ancestor. The farther back the traditions go, the more common is the compound form. With the institution of the monarchy, the minimizing of the significance of these tribal associations resulted in a drastic reduction in the use of the full form of the name.

Concerning Ammon, on the other hand, the transition from a tribal organization to monarchic structures appears to have had no effect on the form of the name. Although the beginnings of the Ammonite monarchy are unclear, by the time of Jephthah a king (*mlk*) seems to have been in firm control of the state.⁸ Even so, apart from Ps 83:8 and possibly 1 Sam 11:11, the long form of the name remains the only acceptable form.

In my previously mentioned investigation,⁹ I also observed that the distribution of *bny ysr²l* was affected by the literary genre of the documents. In the poetic and prophetic texts, only 7.7% of the occurrences use the long form of the name. Since Ps 83:8 represents the sole exception to the full form of *bny ^cmwn* in the same types of texts, it is obvious that the literary style had no similar bearing on the form of the name preferred.

The fact that the gentilic form for Israel occurs only five times (always in the singular) suggests that *bny ysr²l* was employed as the gentilic as well as the simple national name. However, because gentilic forms of Ammon appear twenty-two times out of a total of 127, it may not be argued that *bny ^cmwn* was the normal gentilic form.

⁷D. I. Block, "'Israel'-'Sons of Israel': A Study in Hebrew Eponymic Usage," forthcoming in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*.

⁸Judg 11:12, 13, 14, 28. References to the kings of Ammon occur also in 1 Sam 12:12, 2 Sam 10:1, Jer 27:3, 40:14, 1 Chr 19:1, and 2 Chr 27:5. Cf., too, the Tell Siran Bottle Inscription, lines 1, 2, 3. See n. 36, below, for references.

⁹See n. 7, above.

Usage

The syntactical constructions involving *bny yśrʔl* and *bny ʕmwn* present similar contrasts. Although construct chains like *ʕdt bny yśrʔl* ("the congregation of the sons of Israel"),¹⁰ *mṭwt bny yśrʔl* ("the tribes of the sons of Israel"),¹¹ *šbt̄y bny yśrʔl* ("the tribes of the sons of Israel"),¹² *zqny bny yśrʔl* ("the elders of the sons of Israel"),¹³ and *bkwr bny yśrʔl* ("the first-born of the sons of Israel")¹⁴ do occur, there appears to have been a general resistance to certain combinations. *Bny yśrʔl* never appears as the genitive of a designation for God; only once is it found after a term representing the territory of the nation;¹⁵ kings and judges are never identified as "the king(s)/judge(s) of *bny yśrʔl*."

The situation is reversed for *bny ʕmwn*. The expressions *mlk bny ʕmwn* ("the king of the sons of Ammon")¹⁶ and *ʔr̄š bny ʕmwn* ("the land of the sons of Ammon")¹⁷ occur more frequently than any other. When we add to these *ʔlhy bny ʕmwn* ("the gods of the sons of Ammon")¹⁸ and the euphemistic *šqš bny ʕmwn* ("the abomination of the sons of Ammon"),¹⁹ along with another geographic phrase, *gbwl bny ʕmwn* ("the boundary of the sons of Ammon"),²⁰ more than two-thirds of all bound structures involving *bny ʕmwn* are accounted for. Even references to the main Ammonite city, *rbt bny ʕmwn* ("Rabbah of the sons of Ammon") always uses the compound form when the nationality of the city is identified.²¹ Whatever reasons there might have been for the hesitation to make similar grammatical associations with *bny yśrʔl*, here they are not a factor.

¹⁰Exod 16:1 + twenty-six times.

¹¹Num 36:8, 9; Josh 19:51.

¹²Num 36:3; Josh 4:5, 8.

¹³Exod 4:29.

¹⁴Num 3:45, 46, 50; 8:17.

¹⁵Josh 11:22, *ʔr̄š bny yśrʔl*.

¹⁶See n. 8, above, for references.

¹⁷Deut 2:19, 37; Josh 13:25; Judg 11:15; 2 Sam 10:2; 1 Chr 19:2; 20:1.

¹⁸Judg 10:6; 1 Kgs 11:33.

¹⁹1 Kgs 11:7.

²⁰Num 21:24; Deut 3:16; Josh 12:2; 13:10.

²¹Deut 3:11; 2 Sam 12:26; 17:27; Jer 49:2; Ezek 21:25.

The consistent use of *bny* ^c*mw**n* in association with the names of surrounding nations is also significant. We may note the following sequences:

- Judg 10:6 ²*lhy* ²*rm* *šydw**n* *mw*²*b* *bny* ^c*mw**n* *plš**tym* ("the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, Bene-ammon, Philistines")
- Judg 10:11 *mšrym* *h*²*mry* *bny* ^c*mw**n* *plš**tym* ("Egypt, Amorites, Bene-ammon, Philistines")
- 1 Sam 14:47 *kl* ²*ybyw* *bmw*²*b* *wbbny* ^c*mw**n* *wb*²*dwm* *wbmlky* *šwbh* *wbplš**tym* ("all his enemies, against Moab, and against Bene-ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines")
- 2 Sam 8:11b-12 *kl* *hgwym* ²*rm* *mw*²*b* *bny* ^c*mw**n* *plš**tym* ("all the nations: Aram, Moab, Bene-ammon, Philistines") (= 1 Chr 18:11)
- 1 Kgs 11:33 ^c*štr* ²*lhy* *šdyn**n* *kmwš* ²*lhy* *mw*²*b* *wmlkm* ²*lhy* *bny* ^c*mw**n* ("Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of Bene-ammon")
- 2 Kgs 23:13 ^c*štr* *šqš* *šdyn**m* *wkmwš* *šqs* *mw*²*b* *wmlkm* *tw*^c*bt* *bny* ^c*mw**n* ("Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and Milcom the abomination of Bene-ammon")
- 2 Kgs 24:2 *gdwdy* *kšdym* ²*rm* *mw*²*b* *bny* ^c*mw**n* ("bands of the Chaldeans, Aram, Moab, and Bene-ammon")
- Jer 9:25
(Eng., vs. 26) *mšrym* *yhw**dh* ²*dwm* *bny* ^c*mw**n* *mw*²*b* *wkl* *qšwšy* *p*²*h* *hyšbym* *bmdbr* ("Egypt, Judah, Edom, Bene-ammon, Moab, and all side-trimmed dwellers in the desert")
- Jer 25:19-23 *mlky* *mšrym* ²*rš* *h*^c*wš* ²*rš* *plš**tym* ²*dwm* *mw*²*b* *bny* ^c*mw**n* *šr* *šydw**n* *h*²*y* ²*šr* *b*^c*br* *hym* *ddn* *tym*² *bwz* *wkl* *qšwšy* *p*²*h* ("the kings of Egypt, the land of Uz, the land of the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Bene-ammon, Tyre, Sidon, the coastland which is across the sea, Dedan, Tema, Buz and all side-trimmed")
- Jer 40:11 *kl* *hyhwdym* ²*šr* *bmw*²*b* *wbbny* ^c*mw**n* *wb*²*dwm* *w*²*šr* *bkl* *h*²*ršwt* ("all the Jews who were in Moab and among Bene-ammon and in Edom and all who were in all the lands")

Amos 1-2 *dmšq ʿzh šr ʾdwm bny ʿmwn mwʾb yhwdh yśrʾl*
 (“Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Bene-ammon,
 Moab, Judah, Israel”)

The only example of the abbreviated form occurs in Ps 83:7-9 (Eng., vss. 6-8), *ʾhly ʾdwm wyšmʿlym mwʾb whgrym gbl wʿmwn wʿmlq plšt ʿm yšby šwr ʾšwr* (“the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre, Assyria”). It should be noted that here the shortened form of *plštym* (“Philistines”) is also used, perhaps determined by rhythmic considerations.

On the other hand, where the lists consist of gentilic forms, *bny ʿmwn* is also replaced by the true gentilic, *ʿmwny* (“Ammonites”):

Ezra 9:1 *mʿmy bʾršwt ktwʿbtyhm lknʿny hḥty hprzy hybwsy*
hʿmny hmwʾby hmšry whʾmry (“from the peoples
 of the lands with their abominations, from the
 Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites,
 the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and
 the Amorites”)

Neh 4:1 *hʿrbym whʿmny m whʾšdw dym* (“the Arabs, the
 (Eng., vs. 7) Ammonites, and the Ashdodites”)

2 Chr 26:7-8 *plštym hʿrbym hyšby m bgwr bʿl whmʿwnym . . .*
hʿmwnym (“Philistines, the Arabs who lived in
 Gurbaal, and the Meunites . . . the Ammonites”)

This suggests that the full form *bny ʿmwn* was perceived to bear the same significance as “Edom” or “Moab.”

Finally, attention should be drawn to two texts in which the compound form of the name appears to carry a geographic sense. The inconsistency in the gender of the name in Ezek 25:1-7 is striking. To begin with, in vss. 2-3a, *bny ʿmwn* is treated as masculine.²² However, with the commencement of the direct divine address, the gender changes.²³ In vs. 5b, a reversion to the masculine occurs,²⁴

²²Note the suffix in *ʾlyhm* (vs. 2), and the form of the imperative, *šmʿw* (vs. 3).

²³Note the Masoretic pointing of the infinitive, *ʾomrēk* (vs. 3b). This is consistent with the following *nōtʿnāk, bāk, piryēk, ḥʾlābēk*.

²⁴Note *ydʿtm*.

this gender being maintained until the end of vs. 7. Although the anomalies of vss. 3b-4 may easily be removed by slight alterations to the Masoretic pointing, this solution cannot be applied to vs. 10, where, along with Moab, *bny ʿmwn* is clearly presented as feminine, even by the consonantal text.²⁵ *Bny ʿmwn*, probably intended here as a geographic designation, will become a possession for *bny qdm*.²⁶

A geographic significance for *bny ʿmwn* seems to be intended in Zeph 2:9, as well. First, here Moab and *bny ʿmwn* are compared with Sodom and Gomorrah, respectively, both of which are well-known place names. Second, the verb which follows Moab (and in view of the parallelism, also does double duty for *bny ʿmwn*) is feminine (*thyh*).²⁷ Third, the following lines speak of desolate places.²⁸

All the foregoing observations on the frequency and distribution of *bny ʿmwn*, and on its usage in the OT, demonstrate that the Hebrew employment of the full form of the name was governed by fundamentally different considerations from those applied to the use of *bny ysr ʔl*.

2. Ammon in Extra-biblical Sources

To date, aside from the biblical references, the name of the Ammonite nation has surfaced only in the annals of the neo-Assyrian kings and in one indigenous Ammonite text.

²⁵*lbny qdm ʿl bny ʿmwn wnttyh lmwršh lmʿn lʔ tzkr bny ʿmwn bgwym.*

²⁶Contra Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 440, *mwršh* is used elsewhere only with reference to land.

²⁷On the use of the feminine for names of countries and cities, see K. Albrecht, "Das Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter," *ZAW* 16 (1896): 56-60. Cf. also *GK* 122h-i.

²⁸The preformative *m* in *mmšq* and probably also in *mkrh* should be interpreted as *m locals*. Cf. *GK* 85e. Therefore, the verse may be translated as follows:

Surely Moab will be like Sodom,
And *bny ʿmwn* like Gomorrah;
A place of nettles and salt pits,
A perpetual wasteland.

This geographical sense may be required, as well, where verbs of motion are combined with the preposition *ʔl* (e.g., Jer 41:10, 15 and perhaps also Dan 11:41).

Neo-Assyrian Sources

Three basic forms of the name appear in the Assyrian texts: (1) a short form, ^{c/1}*Am-ma-na*; (2) a lengthened form, ^{m/c/1}*bīt Am-ma-na*; and (3) a second lengthened form, ¹*ba-an Am-ma-na*.²⁹ Of these, the first occurs but twice, the last only once.³⁰ It is apparent that, as in the Hebrew writings, the scribes displayed an overwhelming preference for a compound form of the name. But why *bīt* should have been prefixed to *Am-ma-na* is not clear. If it was intended as a translation of the Canaanite *bn* (cf. *bny* ^c*mwn*), the bound form of *mārum* would have been anticipated. This word, however, is never employed as an element in a place name. F. Hommel has suggested that Bīt Amman was actually a shortened form of Bīt Rabbath Amman.³¹ It seems more likely, however, that *bīt*, "house, household,"³² functioned as an approximate equivalent of the Hebrew *bny*, perhaps a rough translation, the form of which was influenced by the propensity of the Assyrians to identify states on the *bīt*-GN model.³³

The most remarkable form, however, is the single occurrence of ¹*ba-an Am-ma-na*. The prefixed *ba-an* is totally unexpected, since it is found in no other toponym. Furthermore, if *bānu* was intended as an Akkadian translation of Canaanite *bn*, this too is unprecedented, since this form never occurs with this sense.³⁴ It would appear,

²⁹For references, see S. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), pp. 16, 76.

³⁰In contrast, the only reference to the name Israel to have surfaced to date uses the short form, *Sir-²a-la-aja*. The same applies to the Akkadian equivalents of Moab and Edom. Cf. Parpola, s.v., "*bīt*."

³¹F. Hommel, *Ethnologie und Geographie des Alten Orients* (Munich, 1926), p. 164, n. 1.

³²*CAD* 2:282-295 (and cf. *AHW*).

³³For hundreds of citations, cf. Parpola, s.v., "*bīt*."

³⁴The form *bīnu*, however, does occur occasionally: (1) In personal names, e.g., *Bi-in-ka-li-šar-ri* (Sargonic period) (*CAD*, 2:243); *Bi-in-Na-rum* (Hammurabi era) (H. Ranke, *Early Babylonian Personal Names from the Published Tablets of the So-called Hammurabi Dynasty B.C. 2000* [Philadelphia, 1905], p. 75); *Bi-in-am-mi* (West Semitic, Kassite period) (A. T. Clay, *Personal Names from Cuneiform Inscriptions of the Kassite Period*. Yale Oriental Series, 1 [New Haven, Connecticut, 1912],

therefore, that here in ¹*ba-an Am-ma-na* we are to recognize a simple transliteration of West Semitic *bn ʿmn*.³⁵ The singular form of the prefix remains problematical.

Ammonite Sources

The only certain native documentation of the name Ammon is contained in a recently discovered seventh-century B.C.E. bottle inscription from Tell Siran.³⁶ The pronunciation of the name *bn ʿmn*,

p. 65); ^d*Nabu-bi-na-uka*²*in* (Neo-Assyrian) (J. J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung* [Leipzig, 1939], p. 38). (2) In a votive inscription, wherein Marduk is called *bi-in-Du-ku* (C. J. Gadd, "On Two Babylonian Kings," *SOr* 1 [1925]: 29-31). (3) In a Sargonic cylinder inscription: *ina arḫi šitan araḫ bin Dàra-gala [Ea]*, "in the new moon of the month of the son of [Ea]." (4) In a hymn: *bukir bi-in Anim luzmur dunnaka*, "O child, son of Anu, let me sing your strength" (*KAR* 158 i 120, as translated by *CAD*, loc. cit.). (5) *Bīmu* in parallel to *māru* in Atra-ḥasis I:93-96 (cf. the comments by W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Ḥasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Oxford, 1969], pp. 150-151). (6) In synonym lists, as one of the synonyms of *māru* (A. Draffkorn Kilmer, "The First Tablet of *malku-šarru* Together with Its Explicit Version," *JAOS* 83 [1963]: 436-437). Cf. also the equation of *bīmu* with *ze-ru*(?) (Kilmer, pp. 322-331). For Mari names beginning with *bin*, see H. B. Huffman, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts: A Structural and Lexical Study* (Baltimore, Md., 1965), p. 176.

³⁵So also H. Donner, "Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des Staates Moab in der zweiten Hälfte des 8. Jahrh. v. Chr.," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 5 (1957): 161, "Das Element *ba-an* versucht den stat. cstr. plural *bny* keilschriftlich wiederzugeben."

³⁶The first three lines of the text read as follows:

<i>m^cbd ʿmndb mlk bn ʿmn</i>	"The product of Amminadab, king of <i>bn ʿmn</i> ,
<i>bn ḫšl² mlk bn ʿmn</i>	the son of Hiššil-El, king of <i>bn ʿmn</i> ,
<i>bn ʿmndb mlk bn ʿmn</i>	the son of Amminadab, king of <i>bn ʿmn</i> ."

The foregoing is the transliteration of H. O. Thompson and F. Zayadine, "The Tell Siran Inscription," *BASOR*, no. 212 (1973), p. 9. Cf. F. Zayadine and H. O. Thompson, "The Ammonite Inscription from Tell Siran," *Berytus* 22 (1973): 132; F. M. Cross, "Notes on the Ammonite Inscription from Tell Sīrān," *BASOR*, no. 212 (1973), pp. 12-15; P. E. Dion, "Notes d'épigraphie Ammonite," *RB* 82 (1975): 24-33; C. Krahmalkov, "An Ammonite Lyric Poem," *BASOR*, no. 223 (1976), pp. 55-57; O. Loretz, "Die ammonitische Inschrift von Tell Siran," *Ugarit Forschungen* 9 (1977): 169-171; William H. Shea, "The Siran Inscription: Amminidab's Drinking Song," *PEQ* 110 (1978): 107-112; and R. B. Coote, "The Tell Siran Bottle Inscription," *BASOR*, no. 240 (1980), p. 93.

which occurs in lines 1, 2, and 3, is not certain.³⁷ *Bn* is usually interpreted as a plural with the final *mater lectionis* missing.³⁸ In accounting for this feature, appeal has been made to the Phoenician practice, which regularly omitted this orthographic element.³⁹

This solution is doubtful, however. First, it would be surprising if the Aramaeans to the north,⁴⁰ the Hebrews to the west,⁴¹ and the Moabites to the south⁴² should have adopted the practice, but the Ammonites, located in the center of these three, should have resisted the development. Second, a final *mater lectionis* has been identified on a sixth-century B.C.E. ostrakon from Heshbon,⁴³ rendering unlikely the suggestion by F. Zayadine and H. O. Thompson that "the absence of the *matres lectionis* could be characteristic of the Ammonite language."⁴⁴ Appeal to *m^cbd* in line 1 as another illustration of an omitted final *y* is speculative.⁴⁵

Two alternative solutions are possible. P. E. Dion has argued that *bn^cmn* should be treated as a single word, in which case the missing element would be an internal vowel letter, whose absence would be in keeping with early Aramaic, Moabite, and Hebrew orthography.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the possibility remains, though

³⁷The reading *bn^cm[y]*, proposed for the Amman Theatre Inscription by R. W. Dajani, "The Amman Theatre Fragment," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, 12-13 (1967-68): 65-67, has been recently revised to *bn^cš[. . .]*, by W. J. Fulco, "The Amman Citadel Inscription: A New Collection," *BASOR*, no. 230 (1979), pp. 38-40.

³⁸Zayadine and Thompson, "Ammonite Inscription," p. 129; Thompson and Zayadine, "Tell Siran Inscription," p. 9; Cross, p. 15.

³⁹Zayadine and Thompson, "Ammonite Inscription," p. 136. On the Phoenician orthography, see J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik*, AnOr 46, 2d rev. ed. (Rome, 1970), pp. 40-41; F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence*, AOS 36 (New Haven, Connecticut, 1952), pp. 20-21; Z. Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p. 4.

⁴⁰Cross and Freedman, pp. 31-33; Zevit, pp. 11-36.

⁴¹Cross and Freedman, pp. 56-57; Zevit, pp. 4-5.

⁴²Cross and Freedman, pp. 43-44.

⁴³See *bny gbl^p* in Cross, "Heshbon Ostrakon II," p. 126.

⁴⁴"Ammonite Inscription," p. 136.

⁴⁵Krahmalkov, p. 56, translates, "poem"; Loretz, p. 170, "Gegenstand"; Shea, p. 108, "From the cultivation of . . ."; Coote, p. 93, "product."

⁴⁶Dion, p. 26. Cf. Cross and Freedman, pp. 31-32, 43-44, 56-57.

perhaps remotely, that *bn* is intended as a singular. This could explain the form of the Akkadian transliteration, *ba-an*, but would contradict the consistent Hebrew form of the binomial.

The final vowel of ^c*mn* is equally uncertain. Again the absence of an internal *mater lectionis* makes it impossible to determine if a *u*-class vowel (as preferred in the Canaanite dialects) or an *a*-class vowel (as in the Akkadian transliteration, *Am-ma-na*)⁴⁷ is intended.⁴⁸

Ugaritic Sources

Although the Ugaritic texts naturally contain no references to the Ammonite nation, they are of great importance to the present investigation because they attest to a personal and guild name which closely resembles the national appellation. The forms identified to date range from the independent ^c*my* to the full form, *bn* ^c*myn*.⁴⁹ Whatever else the significance of these names may be, their existence should caution against explaining away the personal name of Lot's son in Gen 19:38 as a mere popular etymology for the name of the nation, devoid of any historical memory of an actual person or clan by that name.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Cf. the occasional retention of the *u*-class vowel in *Mu-²a-a-ba* (Moab) and the consistent spelling of *U-du-mu* (Edom). See Parpola, s.v., "*bīl*."

⁴⁸The significance of the *-ōn* ending in Hebrew has been debated. L. Koehler, "Der Name Ammoniter," *TZ* 1 (1945): 156, has argued that it serves merely as a stylistic variation of the original name, devoid of any real meaning. J. J. Stamm, "Zur Ursprung des Names der Ammoniter," *ArOr* 17/2 (1949): 382, maintains that the *-ōn* ending gives the name a diminutive sense, and should be understood as "kleiner Onkel." Huffmon, p. 136, has pointed out that **-ānum* in Akkadian, from which is derived Canaanite *-ōn*, "is a legitimate Northwest Semitic ending" and "appears to go back to a Proto-Semitic feature as a diminutive suffix." Cf. W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik, samt Ergangungssheft zum Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, AnOr 33/47 (Rome, 1969), pp. 70-71.

⁴⁹For references, see C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, AnOr 38 (Rome, 1965), p. 457, #1865. For a detailed discussion of *bny*-PN names, see A. Alt, "Menschen ohne Namen," *ArOr* 18 (1950): 9-24. Cf. also D. J. A. Clines, "X, X ben Y, ben Y: Personal Names," *VT* 22 (1972): 266-287; and G. M. Landes, "A History of the Ammonites . . ." (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1956), pp. 4-12. Note also from the Kassite period, *Bi-na-am-mi* (see above, n. 33).

⁵⁰So too Landes, p. 10; and also in subsequent publications by Landes: "The Material Civilization of the Ammonites," *BA* 24 (1961): 66-68; and "Ammon," in *IDB* 2: 109.

3. *Conclusions*

On the basis of the biblical data, it is clear that *bny* ^c*mw**n* cannot be interpreted along the same lines as *bny* *yśr*^l. The Ammonite and Akkadian references agree with the consistent Hebrew pattern of including the prefixed element as an integral part of the national name. The Ugaritic texts confirm that names resembling *bn(y)* ^c*mn* were commonly applied to individuals and clans.

It may be concluded, therefore, that the prefixed *bn/bny* is not primarily an indicator of the common genealogical roots of the Ammonites, as it is in expressions like *bny* *yśr*^l, *bny* ^c*św* ("sons of Esau"),⁵¹ *bny* *l*^t ("sons of Lot"),⁵² *bny* *ś*^c*yr* ("sons of Seir"),⁵³ and *bny* *h*^t ("sons of Heth").⁵⁴ Nor does it indicate citizenship or residence in a place, as in "sons of Bethlehem," "sons of Jericho," "sons of Jerusalem," etc.⁵⁵ If the name provides any hints concerning the ethnic cohesion of the Ammonites, these are to be found in the perception of the individual, Ben-^c*ammi*, as the eponymous ancestor.⁵⁶ In this respect, then, the significance of the full form, Bene-ammon, compares with Moab, Israel, and Heth. In the aetiological account of Ammonite origins preserved in Gen 19:30ff., the personal name is described as summarizing the story of the ancestor's origins, providing a close semantic parallel to that of his brother/cousin Moab.⁵⁷

⁵¹Deut 2:4, 12, 22, 29.

⁵²Deut 2:9, 19.

⁵³Gen 36:20; 2 Chr 25:11.

⁵⁴Gen 23:3, 5, 7, 10, 16, 20; 25:10. On all of these, cf. Block, forthcoming (see n. 7, above).

⁵⁵For references for these and many more, cf. H. Haag, "Ben," *TDOT* 2: 151.

⁵⁶Cf. *bn ymyn*, the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Benjamin; Gen 35:18.

⁵⁷*Ben-^cammi* signifies "son of my paternal kinsman." Moab seems to be derived from *min-³āb* (> *mē³āb*), "from (my) father." In the absence of scholarly consensus on the actual origins of the name "Moab" (for suggestions and bibliography, see D. I. Block, "The Foundations of National Identity: A Study of Ancient Northwest Perceptions" [Ph.D dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1982; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1983], p. 397, n. 2), Gen 19:37 provides the clearest hint of the Hebrew understanding.

Consequently, it is possible that the best way to interpret *bny ʿmwn* throughout the OT would be to follow the lead of the JB in Gen 19:38, and thus simply to transliterate the full name Bene-ammon, as we do with Israel, Moab, Edom, Judah, and many other national names. The only improvement that might be made in the treatment of this Genesis text would be to drop the definite article.