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# **CHOICE ABOVE ALL OTHER LANDS**

Book of Mormon Covenant Lands  
According to the Best Sources

By W. Vincent Coon

First Extended E-book Edition, 2011

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## About the Author and this Book

Ward Vincent Coon has served in numerous capacities as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He sees every calling as an opportunity to teach from the scriptures.

Brother Coon graduated Cum Laude with Hebrew as a foreign language, having studied Modern Hebrew at the University of Utah and in Israel at the Ulpan Akiva, near Netanya. He has a Masters degree in Physics, and a Six Sigma Black Belt. He works in the field of medical x-ray devices as an R&D Engineer.

Brother Coon's research on the topic of Book of Mormon covenant lands shows that the scriptures, and statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith, are sufficient for locating the regions that the messenger referred to when telling young Joseph of a book "giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent..."

Determining the general location of the American Promised Land, based on LDS scripture, and first hand, verifiable statements by the Prophet, is preferable to speculative geographies and archaeological endeavors inspired by anonymous newspaper articles of the 1840s. Objective LDS and non-LDS historians alike can agree on this approach. One doesn't have to prove events that the Bible says took place long ago at "Carmel by the sea" (Jeremiah 46:18) in order to reach agreement on the location of Carmel. The same is true for the location of Cumorah established in LDS scripture.

Whether or not its divine origin is accepted, the Book of Mormon has an Old and New World setting. Historians, who study the 19th century literary genre treating North America's mysterious mound builders, recognize the original American setting for the Book of Mormon. Historians have arrived at the Book of Mormon's mound builder setting by purely secular means. Brother Coon has come to agree with the mound builder setting by study and also by faith.

# Preface

As a teenager, I committed to read at least one chapter from the Scriptures every day without fail. This was a commitment that I determined to keep no matter what! When I went camping, I brought my scriptures along and read them. If I had to read by flashlight, I did! When I came home late from a drive-in movie and found that I had yet to read Jacob 5, I stayed up and read it. Even when I did not understand the chapter, I read it anyway. I read at least one chapter from scripture each day - even if I did not feel like reading.

Keeping this commitment I read and reread all of the Standard Works of the Church: The Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price - over and over again. As the years passed, I lost count of the number of times that I had read the Book of Mormon cover to cover.

Eventually, I undertook to daily study, from more than one book of scripture. Usually, I would study the Book of Mormon in addition to another scripture. If I listened to the scriptures on tape during the day, I would still read at least one chapter from the Book of Mormon before going to bed.

Occasionally I would reread the entire Book of Mormon with a particular subject in mind. For instance, on the subject of the Doctrine of Christ, as I came upon passages that pertained, I recorded them. I made short notes on 3" x 5" cards, recording who in scripture taught certain principles, and adding a comment or two on the historical setting, and the approximate time period. I found that over the span of its history, the Book of Mormon is doctrinally very consistent – like an iron rod.

There came a time when I became very sick. I woke from a delirium and read a chapter from scripture. I believe that the LORD had broken my fever and had awakened me, so that I could keep my daily commitment.

On more than one occasion my scriptures were caught with me in a downpour. Blue and red ink from underlining ran through the pages. A dear friend tried to make me feel a little ashamed for marking Holy Writ. But I felt that the battered and bleeding pages, typified the cost of my salvation. "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance." (Doctrine and Covenants 131:6)

My worn and marked scriptures were dear to me. I was eventually given an edition that had all of the Standard Works, bound together. But I would not discard my old marked set. The annotations, the insights, the notes that married verse to verse, were too valuable. I placed the old set on a shelf to be used as a reference, and started with the new edition.

Once on my mission, my scriptures had fallen off the back of my bike where they had been strapped down with bungee cords. My companion and I retraced our route but my set of scriptures was nowhere to be found. I was sickened at their loss and prayed for their return. Some time passed, and a small miracle happened! Somehow my scriptures had ended up at a water treatment plant. They had gone on a mission of their own. Eventually they were handed over to other LDS missionaries who returned them.

In case I should ever be in a predicament without my scriptures for a day, I memorized a few chapters: a psalm and a couple of chapters from Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon. I would at least be able to recite a chapter or two if I had to.

In 1986 after taking a quarter of Hebrew from Shelomo and Leah Lederman at the University of Utah, I followed my heart to Israel. I was given the opportunity to work for a basic education in Modern Hebrew at the Ulpan Akiva. The Ulpan (Hebrew School) was named after the honored Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva (Akiba ben Joseph) was at one time a poor shepherd. He started his formal education somewhat late in life. He was encouraged by his beloved wife.

At the little Hebrew School on the coast of the Mediterranean, I was put in charge of Shabbat (Sabbath) preparations. As the Ulpan's token Mormon, I was trusted with the keys to the wine closet. I was also responsible for placing the candles, the tablecloth and the platter for the hallah (braided egg bread).

Preparing for one Sabbath, I spent an hour or two decorating a class room. I thoroughly washed and wiped the chalk board and then carefully drew in colored chalk a depiction of the golden Ark of the Covenant, with a large caption in Hebrew which read "Peace and Blessings!"

It may interest the reader to know that in Israel even members of the Church attend sacrament meeting on the Jewish Sabbath. Yom Rishon (Sunday) begins the work week.

1986 was a special year for the Ulpan Akiva. It was the year that the directress of the Ulpan, Shulamit Katznelson was awarded the prize of Israel for her years of work. The Ulpan had brought peoples of diverse backgrounds together, to learn the Hebrew language. A very talented man named Ofer had assisted her through the years.

It is difficult to define Ofer's job at the Ulpan. He wore so many hats. He played the accordion, sang and performed, conducted students on outings – did office work. His eyes were dark and his skin was a beautiful olive tone. He did not look European. Middle aged, Ofer was lean, energetic and spoke English very well. He had been in the Israeli military. He had a family in Netanya, a short distance north of the Green Beach Hotel out of which the Hebrew school operated. In Hebrew "Green Beach" sounds a lot like "Green Chicken". Endless dining room jokes hatched over this!

Shulamit decided to hold Tenakh (Bible) studies for anyone at the Ulpan who wanted to attend. Tenakh is an acronym like LASER (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) or like NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). Tenakh stands for Torah (Law), Neviim (Prophets) and Ketavim (Writings). The Tenakh is essentially what westerners call "the Old Testament". You may have noticed that Jesus referred to "the law and the Prophets". He never seems to call the body of Hebrew Scriptures the Old Testament.

It wasn't long before I gained something of a reputation at the Ulpan for knowing scripture. This wasn't hard to do. Most of those who attended the Tenakh studies were from the States or from Europe and were trying to get in touch with their heritage. Some had been irreligious and were considering immigrating to Israel. I shared a few insightful and inspiring verses from the Psalms with Shulamit and others. No one felt proselytized.



One day Ofer asked me where a particular verse of scripture could be found. Ofer wanted to include it in the school's newsletter. I replied, something to the effect, "its in the Tehillim (Psalms), give me a few minutes and I'll find it for you"; to which Ofer kindly replied, "It's all right, I'll telephone my father. He has the book of Psalms memorized." Ofer's father was from Yemen.

Centuries ago groups of Jews left Jerusalem and traveled south through the Arabian wilderness. They followed nearly the same route that Lehi of the Book of Mormon took in the borders near the Red Sea; except that instead of turning east to the land Bountiful, building a ship, and sailing to America, these Jews decided to settle in the southwest corner of Arabia - in Yemen. And there they survived for centuries. Like Lehi, they carried their precious scriptures with them. It has only been this past century that the Yemenite Jews have been relocated, in mass, to their homeland. The LORD said by his prophet, "...with great mercies will I gather thee." (Isaiah 54:7, 3 Nephi 22:7)

Events at Jerusalem and teetering family relations, made it unwise for Lehi's family to consider flight to the populous Mediterranean coast; there to set sail for another land of promise. The desert offered seclusion and for a time, cohesion.

Not long after Ofer's remark to me about his father, I had the privilege of attending the bar mitzvah of young Ori, one of Ofer's sons. The service was held in a little Yemenite synagogue on the outskirts of Netanya. In the synagogue the men and women separated. I put a kippah (skullcap) on my head and stood with the men. The men put their tallits over their shoulders and heads.

A tallit is a prayer shawl, but the word literally means little lamb because anciently it was made of skins.

Before us was a representation of the veil of the ancient temple, and behind it a cabinet which kept the sacred scrolls of the covenant and of scripture. A scroll was brought forth and presented. Young Ori showing the skill expected of him, read to the congregation. Then an old man stood and without needing the scripture before his eyes, recited by heart line upon line upon line upon line of the poetry of Yesha'Yahu (we call him Isaiah) and wept!

There are peoples in this world who do so much more with the little they have, than many of us do with the much we have been given.

I have studied the scriptures every day without fail for some decades now, but with Ori's grandfather in my thoughts, I cannot regard this as any great accomplishment.

The search for Lehi's covenant land should begin with the Scriptures and not a bestseller on ancient American ruins. Much time, talent, effort and means have been channeled to look for the wrong things in the wrong places, all because a faulty premise was popularized and taken to heart.

Of course, some will say there are more important things than Book of Mormon geography. But please understand that my purpose here is not described so well by the word "geography" as it is by another word; "ha-arets". It means "the land".

In the devout Israelite mind, identifying and knowing the God of the land, the covenant people, and the covenant land is paramount. An Israelite drawn into the

covenant message of the Book of Mormon, is not likely to be satisfied with knowing that Lehi's covenant land is somewhere in the Americas or the Western Hemisphere. Fortunately, the LORD answers liberally if we seek not amiss. (2 Nephi 4:35)

So why is it important to know covenant lands? One of the best ways to answer this question is to study the Book of Mormon in earnest. The following short selection of verses aid in understanding the importance of identifying Lehi's covenant land:

1 Nephi 2:20; 4:14; 14:1-2, 5  
2 Nephi 1:3-12, 20, 31-32; 3:2  
Enos 1:10  
Jarom 1:3, 9-12  
Omni 1:6-7  
Mosiah 29:31-32  
Alma 46:16-17, 22  
3 Nephi 5:24-26; 20:22; 21:2-4, 22-24; 29:1  
Mormon 5:19-24,  
Ether 2:7-12, 15; 9:20; 10:28; 13:4, 8  
Doctrine and Covenants 10:48-51; 38:18-22

One will also find important references listed under the topics "LAND", and "PROMISED LAND" in the Index to the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. This is a topic that the Prophet Joseph Smith very much cared about. From reading these passages, it becomes clear that even "Gentiles" inhabiting the land, are expected to come to a realization of Lehi's covenant land of liberty, that they "may know the decrees of God" – that they may repent and "not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God" upon them "as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done." (Ether 2:11)

Like others, I had been led to believe that Joseph Smith taught that Lehi landed a little south of Panama. Having found the general location of the land Cumorah given in the scriptures, I became confused and unable to reconcile this with the alleged location of Lehi's landing. From the scriptures I could see that the land Cumorah was not thousands of miles from where Lehi had finally disembarked.

Other members of the Church have likewise been confused over these things. Some have chosen to dismiss passages of LDS scripture, rather than a favorite geographic setting. I became committed to thoroughly investigate the authority of the conflicting statements. What I found has removed the confusion from my mind altogether. I am pleased to think that the findings presented in this book will help others in the same way.

To say that the covenant land of the Book of Mormon is somewhere in the Americas is to imply that it could be anywhere from Alaska to Patagonia. Let's not forget that the Americas also include numerous islands. While some Church leaders have stressed that the precise locations of Book of Mormon events are not conclusively known at present, far more have testified, with conviction, that at least we know the location of Cumorah.

The purpose of this book is not to pinpoint the location of Zarahemla, or any other Book of Mormon city. This book demonstrates that the scriptures, together with verifiable statements from the Prophet Joseph Smith, are enough to bring the general location of Lehi's covenant land into better focus.

Some may ask why the LORD has not revealed more through his prophets regarding the location of the New World Promised Land. Actually, a great deal has been revealed about the general location. More may be forthcoming as we better appreciate what has already been given.

# Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my wife Deborah for her help with the manuscript. The author also wishes to express thanks to many colleagues, associates and friends for their involvement and support, especially Ron and Phyllis Olive.

This work is motivated by an enduring love for the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the LORD. Those who keep God's commandments, the scriptures teach, are entitled to inherit the land promised their fathers, and to prosper there.

# Introduction

## ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE AND A CHOICE SEER

The locations of Book of Mormon places proposed by some associates of Joseph Smith do not fit the general location of the Book of Mormon land Cumorah indicated by the Prophet himself. The much publicized Mesoamerican setting has evolved from the ideas of enthusiastic brethren who were taken with an 1841 bestseller. The two-volume bestseller touched on legendary origins of ancient American people, and described stone ruins in Central America.

Had members of the church early on, been more aware of Book of Mormon details, and given greater weight to reconciling these details with statements made by the Prophet Joseph Smith, a different geography of Nephite lands might have presented itself to their minds.

Three things might have become clear to more Latter-day Saints:

1. Much of the New World drama described in the Book of Mormon, took place within a region not more than a few hundred miles by a few hundred miles. Similarly, Promised Land events of the Bible occurred within a state-sized territory.

Some of Joseph Smith's contemporaries adopted an exaggerated Western Hemisphere inclusive geography for the Book of Mormon. But as sources are scrutinized, no statement by Joseph Smith is found endorsing this gross geography. The Book of Mormon consistently describes a much more limited territory for its American setting.

2. The state-sized New World territory of the Book of Mormon must be located in northern America (the mainland of the United States and Canada) because this fits best with scripture, and statements made by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

3. Book of Mormon peoples migrated by land and water to other places outside of the limited region described in scripture. (4 Nephi 1:23, 1 Nephi 12:20-23)

Joseph envisioned distant migrations and great civilizations occupying vastly separate places in the Americas. Just because Joseph came to believe that peoples of Mesoamerica were connected historically with the Book of Mormon does not mean that he had reversed himself about Book of Mormon lands residing in northern America. (D&C 10:48-51, 1 Nephi 13:30)

Joseph, for a short while, took the editorial reins of the *Times and Seasons* to affect its reputation as a newspaper newly acquired by the Church. Joseph became editor, even though he had far greater concerns and responsibilities. Shortly before he relinquished editorial responsibility, articles appeared which highlighted John Lloyd Stephens' popular book on Central American ruins. It was in these articles that a south of Panama landing site for Lehi, and a Central American Zarahemla were asserted.

Who wrote the conflicting articles, and the extent to which the Prophet was concerned with their opinions, is not known for certain by mortal members of the

Church. Some make every effort to implicate Joseph Smith because he was accountable for the Mormon periodical. What is certain is that Joseph made several powerful, even scriptural statements placing Nephite lands in northern America. Though Joseph Smith's statements locating Nephite lands are not favored at present by some LDS writers and artists, the writings of an 18th century Spanish gentleman, recently translated into English, aid the Prophet's defense.

Yes, Book of Mormon peoples (or their descendents) could have had something to do with the impressive stone works of Mesoamerica. Joseph Smith suggested as much. But when it comes to locating Lehi's land of liberty, Cumorah, and the "plains of the Nephites," we should look to the thousands of earthen mounds and ancient timber bulwarks of northern America. We should look to statements unambiguously made by Joseph Smith and let the Book of Mormon plainly speak.

*Ancient America Rediscovered*<sup>1</sup>, a first translation of Don Mariano Veytia's *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, gives an account of America's ancient settlers who left from the Biblical Tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues. Several items of native legend detailed in Veytia's record, fortify ones' testimony of the Book of Mormon and tacitly challenge the idea that Book of Mormon lands reside in Mexico and Central America.

As for those unsigned newspaper articles that some so desperately want to pin on Joseph Smith; Elders John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff were in charge of the printing establishment when they were printed. They must have known who wrote them. One of the articles contradicted Orson Pratt's opinion regarding where the Book of Mormon land of Zarahemla was located. If Joseph Smith had authored the unsigned article, why did President John Taylor and Elder Woodruff later allow Elder Pratt's speculative geography to feature in the footnotes of the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon? ([See Appendix: "Joseph Smith, Josiah Priest and the \*Times and Seasons\*"](#))

## Footnote

**1** Don Mariano Fernandez de Echevarria y Veytia (1720 - 1778), Knight of the order of Santiago, Alderman of his country and Advocate of the Audience of Mexico is a revered Mexican historian – native of la Puebla de los Angeles. Mariano Veytia is recognized as a scholar of great integrity. A portion of his valuable History of Ancient Mexico, has recently been translated by Ronda Cunningham, compiled by Donald W. and W. David Hemingway, and published by Bonneville Books under the title *Ancient America Rediscovered*.

Much of the history Don Veytia recorded is corroborated by the seventeenth century Mexican historian Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxochitl (pronounced “Easht leal sho cheet ill”).



MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH DURING HIS EARLY LIFE AND MINISTRY.



# Chapter One

## Comparing the Book of Mormon with Veytia's History of Ancient Mesoamerica

### They Came from the North

**The Jaredite nation was completely destroyed from off the face of the “land choice above all lands.” However, in Mexico and Central America there are numerous people alive today who are descendents of seven families that came from the Tower of Babel.**

Jared, the brother of Jared, their families, some others (about twenty two in number) and their families, went down<sup>2</sup> from the land of Shinar and the building of the great tower, and were carried by the LORD into a land “choice above all the earth” – a land on which rests this covenant blessing and curse: If the nation possessing the land will serve the God of the land, they will “be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven”. If not, the inhabitants of the land will be “swept off” when filled with iniquity. (Ether 2:10-12; 9:20, Alma 37:21, 25, 28-31)

Upon this covenant land, the LORD promised to lift up a mighty nation “above all other nations”. (1 Nephi 13:30) This same choice land would become a “land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.”<sup>3</sup> For the LORD would “fortify this land against all other nations.” (2 Nephi 10:10-14)

Mexico on the other hand, has had several kings upon the land: Emperor Iturbide (1783-1824), Dictator Santa Anna (1794-1876) and Emperor Maximilian (1832–1867). Santa Anna in particular, ruled as “perpetual dictator” of Mexico and did not perish as a consequence of his ambition.

It happened that John Lloyd Stephens and the accomplished British artist, Frederick Catherwood, arrived in Central America during a sanguinary civil war. The war had torn apart the United Provinces of Central America. In his 1841 bestseller, Stephens makes numerous references to the progressive minded tyrant Francisco Morazán (1799–1842). After being defeated, Morazán went into voluntary exile until his recall by Costa Rica in 1842. He was soon after betrayed and shot by his own partisans.

Failing to reestablish the Central American Federation by constitutional means, Justo Rufino Barrios (1835-1928), president of Guatemala (1873-1885), resorted to dictatorial methods and brute force. He did not succeed. The dictatorship of Nicaraguan president José Santos Zelaya (1853-1909) also sought to reestablish the Central American Federation. Zelaya was eventually overthrown and exiled. Such have been the struggles for power in Mexico and Central America.

It is true that the British colonies were ruled by a distant monarchical mother. Great Britain sent forces “upon the waters, and upon the land” to battle against the

American colonists. (1 Nephi 13:17-19) Still the description, “land of liberty” with “no king upon the land who shall raise up unto the Gentiles” best describes land occupied by the United States of America. Here indeed is a nation, “above all other nations”. In fact, the Book of Mormon’s prophetic reference to the pilgrim’s landing and the American War of Independence upon the covenant land of Lehi’s inheritance can hardly be misconstrued. (1 Nephi 13:13, 15, 20, 30) The Book of Mormon land of promise is clearly not thousands of miles distant from where these historic events took place.

In the process of time, the Jaredites in the land of liberty became committed to wickedness. Ultimately, their seed was swept from the covenant land. Except for Ether, “all” of the Jaredites in the Promised Land who were not already slain, were gathered from “all the face of the land” to a battle of extermination. (Ether 15:11-15) Their bones became as “heaps of earth upon the face of the land...” (Ether 11:6)

Prophets had warned the Jaredite people of the great destruction that would come among them; “that the Lord would utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth except they repented of their iniquities...the Lord God would execute judgment against them to their utter destruction; And that the Lord God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land...” (Ether 11:12, 20-21, see also Jacob 5:43-44) But the people did not repent. (Ether 13:17, 22, 15:19)

Of all Jaredites in the Book of Mormon land of promise, only Coriantumr survived to witness another people (the people of Zarahemla) inherit the land. Coriantumr dwelt with them for nine moons, died, the last of his house, and was buried by the Middle Eastern strangers. (Omni 1:20-22, Ether 13:20-21; 33-34)

The history of “New Spain” is the history of Central America, or more precisely the land called by its ancient inhabitants “Anahuac” (the land among the waters) because it is situated between the Gulf of Mexico to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south.

Though the Jaredite nation was completely swept from the covenant land and replaced by other peoples, the various peoples of Anahuac or Central America share a common surviving ancestry from the great tower:

“...the origin and first parents of all of them were seven families who, in the scattering of peoples because of the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, joined together because of finding themselves of one language that they called Nahuatl which is known as the Mexican language, and they traveled to these parts, where they established themselves and multiplied, and went on dividing into towns and nations.” (*Ancient America Rediscovered*; abbreviated hereafter as *A. A. R.*, First English Translation by Ronda Cunningham, Compilation by Donald W. and W. David Hemingway, 2000, pg 40)

Regarding the ancients of Central America, the historical account recorded by Bernadino de Sahagun (1529 – 1590) suggests they came from the north, likely northern America:

“Concerning the origin of these peoples, the report the old men [of Mexico-where

Sahagun lived many years] give is that they came by sea from the north [i.e., down the Gulf Coast of Mexico], and true it is that they came in some wooden boats but it is not known how they [the boats] were hewn, but it is conjectured by a report found among all these natives that they came from seven caves, and that these caves are the seven ships or galleys in which the first settlers of this land came, as gathered from likely conjectures.

“The people first came to settle this land from the direction of Florida, and came coasting along the coast disembarking in the port of Panuco, which they call Panco, which means “place where those arrived who crossed the water.” (Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*; abbreviated hereafter as *A. A. and the B of M*, 1957, pp 30-31)

Sahagun’s account does not fit well with the theory that the Jaredites crossed the Pacific, landing on a western shore of Mexico.

Veytia admits that every ancestral origin of the mixed peoples of Mesoamerican is “not easy to find out.” He is aware, for instance, of “native traditions of the people of Guatemala, (who claimed as being descended from the Toltecs, consanguinity with the Mexicans,)” and recorded “that their ancestors were Jews who had quitted Palestine, or that part of Arabia which is contiguous to the Red Sea, and had crossed the Atlantic to America.” (*A. A. R*, pg 53)

Veytia’s historical research leads him to conclude that there were many migrations from the north (northern America) by land and by raft or boat into Mexico and Central America. Ancient people migrated to Central America from “far to the north, beyond the Apache nations...” (*A. A. R*, pg 51)

But Don Veytia’s investigation into the primary ancestors of the land of Anahuac leads him to surmise that “...all the settlers of this new world which is called America came from those seven families that joined together in the dispersion of Babel, that they came from the North, crossing rivers and arms of the sea, and sailed along its banks in rafts of reeds or light wood, as they are accustomed to doing in many places today; that the first place that was settled was the northern part of America, which goes from the Tropic of Cancer on the North from the height of 24 degrees to 75...” (*A. A. R*, pg 192)

Whatever connections there are between the native peoples of Central America and the Jews or any other nation, Don Veytia is at least convinced that their principal ancestors were seven families that “came from the dispersion of Babel...” (*A. A. R*, pg 138)

These ancient people spread throughout Anahuac, establishing cities on both sides of the wide Mesoamerican isthmus. The Jaredites in Book of Mormon lands, on the other hand, established themselves in the land northward, and preserved the land south of a narrow neck of land, for a hunting ground. (Ether 10:20-21) The Jaredites in the land of promise remained predominantly in the land northward until the time of their destruction - “from off the face of the earth...” (Alma 37:25) It was in the land northward that their civilization was concentrated, brought to ruin and left as a testimony and a warning to other peoples. (Omni 1:21-22, Alma 22:30-31; 46:17, 22, Helaman 3:3-6,

## No Loss of Life!

**Upon the Savior's death, numerous earthquake fatalities occurred in Book of Mormon lands. In the first century A.D. an earthquake shook Mexico / Central America, but with no reported loss of human life!**

Isaiah prophesied:

“Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.” (Isaiah 29:6 (KJV), also 2 Nephi 27:2)

We read of terrible upheavals in Book of Mormon lands:

“And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month ...there arose a great storm...

“...there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it were about to divide asunder.

“And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.

“And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

“And the city of Moroni did sink into the sea...

“And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah...” (3 Nephi 8:5-10)

According to Don Veytia a tremendous earthquake shook Central America, presumably at the time of the Savior's death. The natives recorded that “...an earthquake was felt as horrible as they had ever experienced, because the stones crashing against one another were broken into pieces, and the earth opened up in many parts...” (A. A. R, pg 148)

The Book of Mormon speaks of “rocks” rending (3 Nephi 10:9), and we learn that buildings burned and or fell, crushing their inhabitants. (3 Nephi 8:14; 10:13) Ancient peoples of northern America used rocks and boulders in some of their constructions. (Alma 48:8) Massive wall piles, made by “the mound builders”, can be seen in Ohio. (Henry Clyde Shetrone, *The Mound Builders*, “ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING”, Chapter III, pp 36-53)

Concerning the destruction of the wicked among his people, Nephi prophesied that, “...buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder.” (2 Nephi 26:5, compare with Matthew 21:42-44, Luke 20:17-18) This does not mean that any of the buildings Nephi saw in vision were made of hewn stone. The Messianic Kingdom, descending in crushing judgment, is likened to a rough, rolling stone. (Daniel 2:34) Samuel the Lamanite prophesied specifically of “rocks” being

“broken up” and rending:

“...at the time that he shall yield up the ghost...the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath...shall be broken up;

“Yea they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath.” (Helaman 14:21-22, compare with Matthew 27:50-53)

The Lamanite prophet makes no mention of hewn stone structures tumbling to the ground. The Book of Mormon tells us specifically that the Nephites built “their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings” out of timber. (Helaman 3:9)

The most severe judgments came upon the covenant lands of the Book of Mormon. Numerous wicked and unrepentant souls perished as a consequence of the earth’s upheavals:

“And behold, that great city of Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face...

“And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face...” (3 Nephi 9:5, 8)

But there was a very different outcome to the Central American earthquake:

“...Confused and bewildered they believed that the end of the third age of the world had already arrived, which, according to the predictions of their wise men in Huehuetlapallan, should end in strong earthquakes, in whose violence many living people would perish, and mankind would suffer the third calamity; but the earthquake ceasing entirely and the sun once again being uncovered perfectly, everyone was found to be whole, without any living person having perished, and this caused them such great wonder that they noted it in their histories with singular care.” (*A. A. R*, pg 148)

Veytia’s account parallels the venerable Ixtlilxochitl:

“...the sun and the moon eclipsed, and the earth trembled, and the rocks broke, and many other things and signs took place, although there was no calamity whatever toward men. This happened in the year of ce Calli, which, adjusting this count with ours, comes to be at the same time when Christ our Lord suffered, and they say it happened during the first days of the year.” (*A. A. and the B of M*, pg 190)

Compare this account with “the great and terrible destruction” that descended on all Book of Mormon lands. There the destruction and loss of life was truly widespread! As terrible as the destruction was in the land southward, “there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward...” (3 Nephi 8:11-12)

## Stars Were Seen at Day

**Three days of smoky, vaporous darkness covered Book of Mormon lands near the time of the Savior’s death. No light of any kind was seen! In Mexico / Central America, there was also an episode of darkness, but it was caused by an eclipse of the sun, during which the day became as night, and stars could be seen in the heavens.**

As a sign of the Savior’s death, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied, “...the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead.” (Helaman 14:20)

In Central America, presumably in the first century A.D. “...the sun was eclipsed at midday, the solar body being totally covered, such that the earth became darkened so much that the stars appeared and it seemed like night...” (A. A. R, pg 148)

In the Promised Land of Lehi terrible lightning set forests ablaze. Whole cities (built of timber) were “burned with fire...” The inhabitants were destroyed, “by fire and by smoke...” (3 Nephi 9:9-11; 10:13-14, also 2 Nephi 26:6) Mists of darkness blanketed Book of Mormon lands. For the space of three days, “...there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither sun, nor moon, nor the stars...” (3 Nephi 8:22)

The “vapor of smoke” that covered the face of the land is attributable, at least in part, to the burning of woodlands and cities. (1 Nephi 19:11; 22:18) A steamy fog may have also contributed to the “vapor” and “mists”. The moisture content of the fog could explain the difficulty some had kindling fire. (1 Nephi 12:1, 4-5, 3 Nephi 8:19-22) Dry wood taken out into a steamy atmosphere may not kindle even if the thick mist is laden with enough oxygen to support human respiration.

A verse from the prophet Isaiah, included in the Nephite record, reminds us that “...wickedness burneth as the fire; it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forests, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of Hosts is the land darkened...” (2 Nephi 19:18-19, Isaiah 9:18-19. See also Mormon 8:29)

The Ancient Hebrew term translated “darkened” may mean “burned by heat”. It may also mean “clogged in speech” or “suffocated” due to the effects of fire. The image communicated by this interpretation of the Hebrew word is that of a thick, choking smoke covering the land. (“atam”, *Brown – Driver – Briggs – Gesenius Hebrew -*

*Aramaic Lexicon*, 6272, pg 801)

It comes as no surprise that Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America* notes volcanoes. But volcanoes are nowhere mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Firestorms are described, caused at least in part by lightning. Thus we read:

“And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.”

“And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.” (3 Nephi 8:7-8)

Of wicked cities burned in the great destruction, the LORD said, “...I did send down fire and destroy them...” (3 Nephi 9:11) Fire from heaven could mean lightning – it could also mean something else. Author Phyllis Carol Olive has found a reference to a Native American legend telling of a “blazing star” that “fell ...on the banks of the St. Lawrence, and destroyed the people.” (Olive cites Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Notes on the Iroquois*, New York, 1846, pp 39-40) A meteor or comet airburst, similar to the Tunguska Event of 1908, could in a single stroke, account for all of the diverse modes of destruction involved in the “great and terrible day”: fire from the sky, bright flashes and lightning, claps of thunder and rumbling, seismic shocks and after shocks, strong gusts, “tempests”, “whirlwinds” (tornados), destructive waves, brush and forest fires, clouds of smoke and water vapor. Smaller (600 ton TNT equivalent) airbursts have been recorded over the Great Lakes region in recent history e.g. 1965, 66 and 67 and earlier. A luminous “large meteor” was seen hurling over western New York in Joseph Smith’s day. “Its direction was northerly, and the explosion took place, probably, over the lake.” It “burst” with a “report” that shook houses. (“SPLENDID METEOR”, *Times and Seasons*, May 16, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 14, pg 784) Gary L. Black, author of *Unsolved History, Enigmatic Events*, writes on the Tunguska event:

“The effects of the explosion were felt well beyond Siberia. The Seismic waves it generated were recorded all over Europe. The dust and smoke it sent up caused strange atmospheric effects for days afterward. As far away as Spain, people observed “remarkable lights” in the night sky. In London they were so bright that, even at midnight, “it was possible to read large print indoors.” (pg 46)

Could the night of “great lights” experience by Book of Mormon peoples at the Messiah’s birth have something to do with dispersed atmospheric particles from an earlier event? (Helaman 14:3-4, 3 Nephi 1:8, 12-19; see also History of the Quichés in Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. Vol. II, pg 173)

The LORD said, “...O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten by me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” (Isaiah 44:21-22, KJV. See also 3 Nephi 10:5)

We are informed that the “three days of darkness” was given as a sign “more especially” to the house of Israel inhabiting the “isles of the sea” (1 Nephi 19:10) The Hebrew word “iim”, translated “isles”, literally means “coasts”, “regions”, “borders”, “habitable lands”. (Isaiah 42:10 KJV) It is worth considering scriptural accounts of

extraordinary obscuring clouds that seem unrelated to volcanism. (Helaman 5:23-49, also Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24; 19:9,16, Numbers 9:15-22, Psalm 105:39, Matthew 17:5, Acts 1:9, 3 Nephi 18:38, Mosiah 27:11, Ether 2:4-5:14, Alma 14:26-29)

Tempests, tornadoes and earthquakes threaten the northeastern United States where Cumorah resides. The God of nature is certainly able to subject the Great Lakes region of America to three hours of cataclysm, followed by three days of profound darkness. It is wise to recognize other cataclysmic and sky darkening potentials in nature besides volcanoes and volcanic ash. There are, for instance, immense deposits of methane on the floor of the North Atlantic. If released in sufficient quantity by earthquake or cosmic impact, an explosive cloud of horrific potential could rise from the ocean depths. A single lightning strike might detonate the cloud and trigger dreadful repercussions in air, sea and land. Large swaths of shrubbery and wooded coastline could be conflagrated suddenly.

What ever the cause or causes of the “great and terrible day” and darkness, there are cases of profound atmospheric darkness in places where there seem to be no active volcanoes. Phyllis Olive is perhaps the first LDS author to call attention to the article titled “THE DARK DAYS AND EARTHQUAKES IN CANADA” published in *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America* (editor John G. Shea, New York, Vol. VIII, 1864, pp 60-65).

It is a fact that regions of Canada just to the north of New York have seen enigmatic episodes of daytime darkness so profound and extensive that observers, right or wrong, have attributed the phenomena to volcanism. The Historical Magazine of 1864 cites several well documented examples and presents the opinions of notable witnesses of the phenomena. Chief Justice Sewell, President of the Library and Historical Society of Quebec was one eye witness to the phenomena and investigated previous occurrences. He surmised:

“As to the conflagration of a forest, the facts of which we are in possession do not appear to warrant a belief that such can be the cause. It seems impossible to suppose that the conflagration of a forest could have produced a mass of smoke so dense and so extensive as to overspread, as it did in October, 1785, the surface of a territory exceeding certainly 300 miles in length, and probably 200 miles in breadth, and producing at its utmost longitudinal extremity, and at mid-day, the obscurity of the darkest night...” (“THE DARK DAYS AND EARTHQUAKES IN CANADA”, *The Historical Magazine*, pg 61)

The editor counters:

“Assuming that there existed in the great peninsula of Labrador no other combustible material besides the stunted trees, there would be good ground for attributing the “Dark Days of Canada” to some other agency than that of burning vegetable matter; but when we reflect that the country is almost everywhere covered with a thick coat of lichens and mosses where these have not been burnt, and that they are even better adapted, when dry, to burn with extraordinary rapidity, and afford



during their combustion a greater cloud of smoke than forest trees, it will be apparent that the precise element for producing the phenomena of smoke and ashes existed in the Labrador Peninsula to a remarkable degree. Dry caribou moss burns with wonderful rapidity, as we found to our cost; it also emits dense volumes of smoke, and leaves behind a great quantity of ash and charcoal...After having witnessed the combustion of caribou moss on a large scale, and the appearance of the burnt country on the borders of the great table-land of Labrador, I am inclined to the opinion that the "Dark Days of Canada" were the result of a vast conflagration in the interior of the Labrador Peninsula, and that the materials which assisted most in feeding the fires were the lichens and mosses which grow in such rich abundance and extraordinary luxuriance and beauty in that desolate country. The astonishing speed with which fire runs through the moss has been describes by several writers, and there is no valid reason why a fire should not stretch from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence in a few days..." ("THE DARK DAYS AND EARTHQUAKES IN CANADA", *The Historical Magazine*, pg 63 - 65)

It is well established that western New York (including the region of Cumorah) is prone to strong earthquakes. (See "Why Does the Earth Quake in New England? The Science of Unexpected Earthquakes", by Alan L. Kafka, Ph.D., Weston Observatory, Department of Geology and Geophysics, Boston College, Revised, January 3, 2004) According to Veytia, a horrible earthquake occurred in Central America "at the same time" as a total solar eclipse. The historian determines these events to be at the death of Jesus Christ, which he places at 33 A.D.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tell us that during the Savior's crucifixion, darkness was "over the whole land" from the sixth hour to the ninth. (Mark 15:33) Veytia presumes that "because of the circumstances surrounding this eclipse and earthquake, it is impossible for it to be any other than that which was observed at the death of Jesus Christ Our Lord..." (*A. A. R.*, pg 148, Matthew 27:51, Luke 23:44-45) Veytia seems unaware that eclipses are local events, and that their duration is measured in minutes.

Samuel the Lamanite's Book of Mormon prophecy indicates that the darkness "upon the face of this land" was a local or regional occurrence. (Helaman 14:20, 28) The Hebrew word "erets" or "arets" is often translated "earth" in the King James Bible. The word can simply mean "land". Similar use of the word "earth" is found in the Book of Mormon. (Ether 13:17; see also *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Volume 5, The World of the Jaredites*, Ch. 2, pg 173)

Unfortunately, the translated expression "whole earth", is often interpreted to mean the entire planet, when the scriptural perspective is less global. For instance, Genesis 41:56 (KJV) reads, "And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses..." The expression "all the face of the earth" should not be taken to mean planet wide. (Acts 7:11) The same is true for the Book of Mormon description: "darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days." (Helaman 14:27) The scripture goes on to explain "that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land..." (Helaman 14:28)

The description of regional darkness in Exodus 10:15, 21-23 is comparable. Of course volcanic activity near the time of Christ may have had far reaching effects. Alaska's Mt Churchill eruption of 60 A.D. ± 200 years was colossal. Volcanic ash has been known to travel thousands of miles, but the intensity and duration of the darkness that visited the coasts of Book of Mormon lands seems to suggest more local influences.

The moon, passing in front of the sun, cannot account for the longevity of the profound darkness described in 3 Nephi. Besides, total solar eclipses occur when the moon is on the daytime side of the earth. Passover (when the Savior gave up his life) always occurs near a full moon (when the moon is on the nighttime side of the earth). A solar eclipse is then impossible.

The NASA Catalog of Solar Eclipses lists times and locations of eclipses that occurred in the first century A.D. Tidal friction affecting the earth's rotation, is the biggest contributor to uncertainty in the estimated time of an eclipse. Estimating back to the first century A.D. there is a margin of uncertainty on the order of a few hours.

There was an eclipse, observable from the Middle East, on November 24, 29 A.D., another on May 20, 49 A.D. and another on April 30, 59 A.D. None of these seem to fit very well with the expected date of the Savior's crucifixion, when a daytime darkness shrouded the environs of Jerusalem.

We know from scripture that the Savior laid down his life and took it up again in the spring, in the first month of the ancient Hebrew calendar (also the first month of the Nephite calendar) – the time of the Feast of Passover. This was also the time when the great destruction befell the lands of promise in America. (Helaman 14:21) Was there a total eclipse in Central America in the first century A.D. near this time? No. Because the moon is full near Passover, the solar eclipse that Mesoamerica experienced could not have occurred at the time of the Savior's crucifixion.

There was a total eclipse on November 2, 12 A.D. that passed over Central America, after reaching the point of maximum eclipse over South America. There was another eclipse that passed over Nicaragua and Honduras on May 9 of the same year. In about the same region (Honduras / Nicaragua) there was an eclipse on Feb 26, 16 A.D. There was an eclipse around April 8, 23 A.D., that passed over northern Mexico. There was an eclipse on December 14, 38 A.D. that passed over the middle of Mexico and several other eclipses in Mesoamerica between the years of 42 and 52 A.D. These of course, occurred at times other than Jerusalem's Passover. None of the above eclipses correlate with events described in the Book of Mormon.

The historian Ixtlilxochitl assumes that "the first days of the year" when "the sun and the moon eclipsed" coincided with the first month of the ancient Hebrew calendar when the Pascal Lamb was slain. Like Veytia, Ixtlilxochitl sees in the native account, coincidence with the Savior's crucifixion. The ancient Mexican month Atemoztli, however, marked a beginning of the year which "corresponded to our month of February". (*A. A. R*, pg 82)

The legendary Mesoamerican eclipse does not match well with the three days of darkness described in the Book of Mormon.

## He Arrived Years Later

**Within a year of the crucifixion, the resurrected Lord descended from heaven, appearing to Nephites in the land Bountiful. Several years (as many as thirty years) after the great eclipse, a bearded white man arrived in Mexico / Central America and taught the people many things. He came from the north, by sea, in the company of several other bearded men, landing on a shore of the Gulf of Mexico.**

Some dramatic depictions have given Latter-day Saints the impression that the Savior appeared to the Nephites immediately following the three days of darkness. Nephite survivors actually had time in which to bury their dead, and to begin to put their lives back in order - before the Savior visited them.

It was in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, (3 Nephi 10:18-19) perhaps at a time when the faithful were expected to gather according to the Law, that the Messiah appeared to a great multitude of Nephites at the temple, in the land Bountiful.

The Lord gave a commission to his Nephite disciples to “minister unto this people” (3 Nephi 13:25-34), which could have included a commission to seek out and minister to communities of relatives that had departed from the chosen land, settling in distant regions of the Americas.

It’s understandable for Latter-day Saints to be excited about the legends of Quetzalcoatl or Cocolcan. A connection is immediately imagined between the appearance of the resurrected Savior to the Nephites and the visit of the bearded white man to the peoples of ancient Mesoamerica.

Don Veytia records the legend as follows:

“Several years after the great eclipse, in the year indicated with the hieroglyph of the Reed in the number one (which according to the tables seems to have been the year 63 of Jesus Christ), a white and bearded man of good stature came to these regions through the northern part, dressed in an ankle length tunic adorned with red crosses, barefoot, his head uncovered, and a staff in his hand, whom some call Quetzalcohuatl, others Cocolcan, and others Hueman.

“They say that he was just and holy, that he taught them a good law...He told them about a triune and one God...crossing the land of Anahuac and the settlements of the Olmecs, he stayed for a time in the city of Chollolan.

“Although they do not say the exact number of years that had gone by after the great eclipse until the appearance of this venerable man, they indicate the hieroglyph of the year, which was the Reed in the number 1, and in the supposition of its having been the eclipse that occurred at the death of Jesus Christ, which we have placed in the year 33 from the incarnation, the first one after it that is indicated with the Reed in the number 1 is that of 63 A.D., 30 years after the eclipse, as can be seen in the tables.” (A. A. R, pg 152)

Veytia assumes that the great eclipse occurred in 33 A.D., but the NASA Catalog of Solar Eclipses lists no eclipse over Central America within several years of this date. The total eclipse of 12 A.D. seems a possible match. This corrects Quetzalcohuatl's arrival to around 42 A.D – still many years after the Savior's appearance to the Nephites.

There are legends which have this bearded white man to be the founder of Chollolan and say “that he came from toward the north by the sea and landed at Pánuco with a company of new people who penetrated to Tollan...” (*A. A. R*, pg 154)

It was also reported to be part of a very ancient tradition surrounding a cross venerated by the natives, that it “was brought by a white, bearded man, dressed to the knuckles in a white, ankle-length tunic, that he brought other disciples with him, and that these disciples told their grandparents about the mysteries of the Trinity and the Virgin birth...” (*A. A. R*, pg 158)

Don Veytia relates an account given by Antonio Remesal in the History of his Province of Dominicos de San Vicenti de Chiapa, which goes as follows:

“...in Yucatan a principal Indian was found who said, when asked about his ancient religion and beliefs and that of his compatriots, that they believed that there was a Supreme God in Heaven, that although he was just one, there were three persons. They called the first one Izona, and attributed the creation of all things to him; they called the second Bacab, whom they say was the son of Izona, and had been born of a Virgin named Chibirias, who is with God in the heavens; and the third they call Echuah. Eupoco had Bacab whipped, put a crown of thorns on him, and finally, stretched out and tied to a wood, he took his life. He was dead three days, and then resurrected and rose to the heavens with his father. Afterwards Echuah came to the earth and filled it with whatever it needed. He also said that this doctrine was taught by the lords of his children, and that they had a tradition that it was taught by some men who came to those lands in very ancient times, twenty in number, of whom the main one was named Cocolcan; that they wore beards, long clothing, and sandals on their feet; and these same people taught them to confess and to fast.” (*A. A. R*, pg 164)

Note that in this account, there is no attempt to equate the bearded white man Cocolcan with Bacab the son of God, who died and was resurrected.

Veytia mentioned a tradition “that Quetzalcoatl, when meditating his return to the country from which he came, proceeded in an easterly direction, and arriving at Cozacacoalco, a province of New Spain which borders on the Atlantic Ocean, there embarked.” (*A. A. R*, pg 53)

Interpreted feathered serpent, quetzal cohuatl may connote god-like power over wind and water, over things above and things beneath. We may suppose that the title alludes to the brazen serpent which Moses raised up as a type of salvation. (Helaman 8:14) We may also consider that Jesus taught his disciples to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) Thus the title could be that of a disciple. Someone, perhaps, with attributes similar to those of the Nephite missionary Ammon: “being wise yet harmless...” and benevolently catching rulers “with guile.” (Alma 18:22-

23)

The fact is there is more than one legendary figure named Quetzalcohuatl. A leading disciple sent from northern America could have been bestowed the honorary title. This Quetzalcohuatl or Cocolcan arrived by sea and ministered in company with other bearded disciples.

Regarding the identity of the bearded white man, Don Veytia holds to the opinion:

“With the Indians indicating the coming of Quetzalcohuatl thirty years afterwards,” (presumably after the death and resurrection of the Savior) “it agrees well with this opinion, and all of the doctrine that he taught being in agreement with the new gospel law, we must believe that it was one of the holy apostles, and that not as a natural but rather as a miraculous act he walked throughout this new world, and he preached throughout, leaving many traces and signs that survive to our times...” (*A. A. R*, pg 155)

The writing of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl also states that Quetzalcohuatl’s visit to Middle America took place some years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After living among the peoples of Central America for a time, Quetzalcohuatl “returned through the same part from whence he had come”, by the east “through Coatzacoalco.” (*A. A. and the B of M*, pg 218)

Less discussed are legends of the Messiah’s personal ministry to native peoples of northern America:

“Today the name of Oklahoma, translated from the native language, means land of the Red Man. Here was a large Puant city, whose crests showed an interesting history, and to this metropolis came the Healer. Here He once more changed the temples, chose from the priesthood His twelve disciples, and lectured to all the people.

“Here He was asked by His priesthood to speak to them of His childhood, and in some of the legends we have some interesting comments.

“He told them that He was born across the ocean, in a land where all men were bearded. In this land He was born of a virgin on a night when a bright star came out of the heavens and stood over his city. Here, too, the heavens opened and down came winged beings singing chants of exquisite beauty.

“When the University of Oklahoma was digging in the Spiro Mound, much pottery was discovered which showed winged beings singing, and here was also the hand with the cross through the palm, about which the professors were deeply puzzled, and still have no explanation as they stare at these things in their museums. About the camp fires of the Ancients the tales of the Prophet are secret. For the benefit of their youth they chant the stories of long ages ago when they lived in cities, and of a sainted Healer who came and lived among them.

“To them, He was known as Chee-Zoos, the Dawn God, and they whisper of Him about the campfires on winter evenings...” (L. Taylor Hansen, *He Walked the Americas*, pp 48-49)

## Water on the West and on the East

**Connecting lands of the Book of Mormon, the “narrow pass” was situated by “the sea, on the west and on the east”. The 125 mile wide isthmus of Central America is situated between a north sea and a south sea. As one would expect, ancient peoples of Mexico and Central America discerned directions by the heavens.**

“Therefore Moroni sent an army, with their camp, to head the people of Morianton, to stop their flight into the land northward.

“And it came to pass that they did not head them until they had come to the borders of the land Desolation; and there they did head them, by the narrow pass which led by the sea into the land northward, yea, by the sea, on the west and on the east.” (Alma 50:33-34) Note: The 1830 version uses slightly different punctuation, but the meaning is unchanged.

We learn from this passage, that the narrow pass was by the borders of the land Desolation, and that the pass was situated between water on the east and on the west. In other words, the narrow pass ran through a body of water. This body of water is referred to in the Book of Mormon as “the sea”, and this sea is what divided the land northward from the land southward. (Ether 10:20-21)

Notice that Alma 50:34 (quoted above) does not use the term “sea east” or “east sea” named at other locations in Book of Mormon lands. The verse speaks of the “narrow pass” being located by “the sea” (singular). The Nephites saw the narrow pass, passing through a single body of water, such that the waters of this sea were found on the west and east of it. In other words, the narrow pass was small enough for the water on either side of it to be regarded as the same body of water.

A narrow land passage, having water on either side, can be described as “a narrow neck”, but it is not fitting to describe a broad isthmus, or a slight narrowing of a continent (from a hemispheric point of view), as a “narrow pass”. We are told specifically in Alma 50:34, that it was “the narrow pass” that “...led by the sea into the land northward”, that is “by the sea, on the west and on the east.” If the narrow pass was within a small or narrow neck of land, the pass nevertheless had the sea close by on either side.

There are other references to the “small” or “narrow neck”, “pass”, or “passage”. (Alma 22:32; 52:9; 63:5, Mormon 2:29; 3:5) All of these verses are geographically consistent with Alma 50:34 (quoted above). Mention of the “narrow pass” or “neck” is repeatedly accompanied with essentially the same description. From the point of view of Nephites occupying lands to the south, the geographic feature is described as “the narrow pass which led into the land northward...” or “the narrow neck which led into the land northward.” From the point of view of Nephites occupying lands to the north, we read of “the narrow passage which led into the land southward” or “the narrow pass which led into the land southward.”

The narrow neck is not the same as the “narrow strip of wilderness” that divided the land of Zarahemla from the land of Nephi. (Alma 22:27-28)

Trying to make “the narrow pass” fit at Tehuantepec (pronounced “Tay wan tay pec”), the authors of Ancient America and the Book of Mormon assert that:

“The region to the north was most accessible by way of a “narrow pass” running east and west along a seashore at the narrow neck of land.” (*A. A. and the B of M*, pp 182-183)

But this is not how the scripture reads. If the commentator Mormon wanted us to understand that the narrow pass ran east and west, he would have used words other than “...on the west and on the east” describing the sea. For instance, he would have used language similar to his description of the “narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west...” (Alma 22:27) The ancient commentator describes how “the land of Nephi did run...from the east sea to the west.” (Alma 50:8) But when Mormon tells of the sea being “... on the west and on the east” in Alma 50:34 he is clearly not saying that the narrow pass led from the east to the west into the land northward.

“...on the west and on the east”, describes the position of waters with respect to a location “by the narrow pass...” The verse is not using a global perspective involving west or east stretches of ocean.

The word translated “sea” from Hebrew scripture, is “yam”. “Yam” doesn’t have to mean ocean. Examples are: “yam kineret” (“the sea of Chinnereth”, Numbers 34:11, KJV); westerners call this sea “the Sea of Galilee.” There is also “yam melah” (“the salt sea”, Genesis 14:3, KJV); westerners call this sea “the Dead Sea.” These are inland bodies of water.

Just as we should not assume that everywhere the Bible mentions a “sea” or even “the sea”, it is referring to ocean, so we should not assume, as we read the Book of Mormon, that “the sea south”, “the sea north”, “the sea west”, “the sea east”, “the west sea, south” and “the place where the sea divides the land” all refer to oceanic bodies of water. (Helaman 3:8, Alma 53:8, Ether 10:20) The Book of Mormon, in no uncertain terms, gives us to understand that an inland body of water qualifies as a “sea”. (Ether 2:7) Ocean, in fact, is a Gentile term that does not appear in Hebrew Scripture or in the Book of Mormon. Distinguishing the ocean from other seas, both the Book of Mormon and the Bible speak of the “the great deep”. (Doctrine and Covenants 133:20, Genesis 7:11, Isaiah 51:10, 2 Nephi 4:20, Helaman 12:16, Ether 2:25; 7:27) Even “the great sea” (the Mediterranean) is really an inland body of water. (Ezekiel 47:19-20)

The Book of Mormon indicates that the narrow neck was precisely that - a narrow neck, with water immediately to the west and east of it. The narrow pass was not a pass somewhere within the 125 mile wide Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Central America. The Isthmus of Tehuantepec is barely narrower than the lands just beyond it. Relative to the breadth of Veracruz and Oaxaca on the west, and Tabasco and Chiapas on the immediate east, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec hardly qualifies as “narrow”. It is unlikely

that ancient peoples inhabiting Tehuantepec would have perceived the isthmus as a “small neck of land...” (Alma 22:32)

The Book of Mormon indicates that the narrow neck (or pass) was smaller in breadth than the land Desolation and the land Bountiful, because it was situated “by” the borders of these lands. (Alma 63:5, Mormon 3:5)

The land at the northern and southern ends of the narrow pass bore the name “Desolation”. We read in Ether 10:20, “...by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.” Notice that not only is “sea” singular in this verse but “land” is also singular. In other words, a sea divided the land of Desolation into northern and southern portions. These portions were connected by the narrow pass. Hence we read that the land of Desolation, bordering on Bountiful, “came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed...” The southern portion of Desolation “came into” the desolate land of the Jaredites by way of “a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.” (Alma 22:29-30, 32)

In the abridged book of Ether, Moroni describes the “great sea” of the Old World:

“...the Lord did bring Jared and his brethren forth to that great sea, which divideth the lands...” (Ether 2:13)

Describing the limits of the land of Israel, the LORD says:

“And as for the western border, ye shall even have the great sea for a border: this shall be your west border.” (Numbers 34:6, KJV)

The LORD refers to the Mediterranean Sea as “the great sea.” Mediterranean is Latin for “in the midst of lands.” Similarly, the Book of Ether describes a “great sea” as dividing “the lands” (plural). The American sea mentioned by Moroni in Ether 10:20, on the other hand, locally divided a single land (Desolation), and on a larger scale, divided “the land northward” from “the land southward”. (Mormon 2:29)

The city of Desolation was located by the narrow pass, on the northern side of the invading sea. When Lamanite armies came down from higher southern grounds, to attack the city of Desolation the narrow pass was not their only access. Canoe war parties may have massed along the shores. This explains why it was convenient for the Nephites defending Desolation, to cast the dead of the Lamanites into the sea. (Mormon 2:28-29; 3:5-8) Both the city Desolation and the narrow pass were near a body of water - the same body of water that divided that land.

The entrance to the narrow pass, near the Bountiful border, was such a localized feature that scripture describes it as a “point”. In addition to fortifying the land Bountiful this critical “point”, needed to be secured. (Alma 52:9) By comparison, the breadth of Bountiful is described as a “line”. (3 Nephi 3:23) We learn that “...it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea...” (Alma 22:32) Thus we see that the breadth of the narrow neck of land must have been smaller than the length of Bountiful and Desolation. In fact, we should expect that the width of the small neck was



considerably smaller than the breadth of these lands. Tehuantepec is as wide as Florida! The narrow neck, it seems, was small enough to be blocked by a poisonous serpent epidemic during a time of drought. (Ether 9:30-35; 10:19-20) Be aware, that the foremost Mesoamerican theory has the entire Desolation / Bountiful line within the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which it alleges is the small neck of land.

But Alma 63:5 tells us that:

“...Hagoth...went forth and built him an exceedingly large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck which led into the land northward.”

If the borders of Bountiful and Desolation lie within the narrow neck, it would seem more fitting for scripture to use the words “launched it...from the narrow neck...” Instead, the passage reads: “launched it...by the narrow neck...” This is consistent with a nearby narrow neck smaller than the borders of Bountiful and Desolation.

Phyllis Carol Olive, author of *The Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*, places the line Bountiful in northern America, near two of the Great Lakes. The line Bountiful perceived by Sister Olive, is seen on a map of western New York – one of the lands of the ancient mound builders. In fact there is a natural escarpment in the vicinity which justifies the use of the term “Line Bountiful” and fits perfectly the fact that the wilderness of Bountiful was at higher elevation than the land Desolation. (Alma 22:31) The breadth of Bountiful is approximately the thirty-three mile distance from Batavia, New York, to the coast of Lake Erie (the west sea near Buffalo); the “river Sidon” being the north to west flowing Buffalo Creek / River. Sister Olive’s proposed narrow neck of land (a moraine passing through ancient Lake Tonawanda) squares with scripture and the compass. Sister Olive has realized that the authentic lands of the Book of Mormon cannot be very distant from the place that scripture designates as Cumorah. (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20)

Don Veytia records that migrating Toltecs journeyed about six leagues (~18 miles) each day. (*A. A. R*, pg 196) Suppose that an agile Nephite could travel at double this rate (~36 miles / day) along the Desolation / Bountiful line. Even at this speed, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Central America seems far too wide to walk from the supposed “east” extreme (really north) to the “sea west” (really south) in a day and a half.

Scripture stresses that the Desolation / Bountiful line “was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite...” The verse does not say “...for a Nephite on horseback...” or “...for a Nephite by boat...” Evidently the commentator (Mormon) saw no need for additional clarification. The adverb “only” stresses that “the distance” across Bountiful was perceived as short by Nephite standards. Helaman 4:5-7 tells us that the Nephites had fortified a line north of the land of Zarahemla from the west sea to some eastern point that was a distance of “a day’s journey for a Nephite...” Again, there is no comment leading us to believe that an especially swift means of transportation was required to reach this eastern point in a day’s time. The commentator also does not say that the eastern point was the shore of the east sea.

(Though the 1830 edition prints, "...from the East to the West sea...", pg 288) Perhaps there were marshlands in the east like those of east Tonawanda, New York State.

Can someone actually walk and paddle across Tehuantepec in a day and a half? A tall, able and willing athlete might be found to undertake the challenge. Better yet, there should be a friendly competition: Let an athlete walk and paddle across Tehuantepec, while a healthy middle aged individual puts Sister Olive's Book of Mormon setting to the test.

Traveling from the south, the narrow neck of land led into the land northward. Tehuantepec theorists would have us believe that "the land northward" occupies southern Mexico, northwest of the large Isthmus. Lying between the Gulf and the Pacific Ocean, Southern Mexico is wide open to the northern continent. If one were to march from Tehuantepec to "the furthestmost parts of the land northward" how far north would that be? Put another way; from Tehuantepec, how far north is the "northernmost part of the land" - the Arctic? (3 Nephi 4:23; 7:12) Sister Olive points out, that there are formidable boundaries to the Book of Mormon "land northward" consisting of a "sea north" (Helaman 3:8, Georgian Bay), "large bodies of water" (Alma 50:29, Lake Simcoe etc.) and "the waters of Ripliancum" (Ether 15:8, 10-11, ancient Lake Iroquois / Ontario and the ST. Lawrence). The Hill Cumorah, or Ramah in fact is south of this body of water. These natural boundaries make sense of scriptural statements like, "the furthestmost parts of the land northward" and "northernmost part of the land". Compared to the "many waters" of the nearby Finger Lakes, Ripliancum is exceedingly large. (Ether 15:8, 10-11, Mormon 6:4) The "land northward" was bounded in such a way that a series of Nephite strongholds were able, for a time, to keep Lamanite armies from penetrating into the country. (Mormon 5:4)

There are obvious problems with trying to make the Tehuantepec isthmus fit the constraints of the Book of Mormon. There is the problem of its breadth (far too wide) and the problem of its orientation. But is it possible to sidestep the orientation problem using biblical directions? Direction standards are of course relative and culturally based, but the question needs to be asked and properly answered; how would a colony of devout Israelites have coordinated directions in the New World?

The Hebrew word "qedem" means "front" or "before", it is sometimes translated "east". The Hebrew word "ahor" means "back, after" or "hinder" and can, in some instances, be interpreted "west". (Y'shaYahu 9:11 in the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah 9:12 in the KJV) The Dead Sea is sometimes referred to as the "former sea" or "eastern sea", while the Mediterranean is sometimes called the "back sea", "hinder sea" or "western sea". (Zechariah 14:8) Relative to Jerusalem, the Mediterranean is west, as the sun sets, and the Dead Sea lies east - toward sunrise.

The LORD said to Joshua, "...unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." (Joshua 1:4) It makes sense in the land of Israel to equate seaward with "westward". (Genesis 13:14) The Hebrew dictionary in the LDS RESOURCE EDITION of THE SCRIPTURES notes that seaward, pronounced "yamah" is locally "westward". In other words, seaward is "westward" relative to the land of Israel. Interpreting seaward as west elsewhere risks taking things out of context.

The Israelite compass is actually based on the perceived movement of the heavenly quarters, and there are other terms in Hebrew scripture for east and west, and these terms directly relate to sunrise and sunset:

The Hebrew word “mizrah” literally means “sunrise” or “place of sunrise” and is translated “east”. (See for instance MIZRAH; SUN, *Encyclopedia Judaica*) For example: “mizrah” is translated “east” in Joshua 11:3 (KJV). In the same verse, “on the west” literally means “from the sea” (the Mediterranean). Psalm 113:3 reads, “From the rising of the sun (mi-mizrah) unto the going down of the same the LORD’S name is to be praised.” The English word east relates to the Greek word *eos* meaning dawn. The Hebrew word for west, “maarav” means “from evening” or “place of sunset”. (Isaiah 45:6; 59:19) This Hebrew word for west appropriately applies to places beyond the confines of the land of Israel, and would certainly have been used by Lehi and Nephi. (Psalm 103:12; 107:3, Isaiah 43:5) The English word west relates to the Latin *vesper*, and has much the same meaning as the Hebrew word. There is no sound reason for why the LORD would allow the meaning of west in the English translation of the Book of Mormon, to not remain true to its origin. Consider the following passage:

“Behold the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side of the city...”  
(Mosiah 22:6)

Notice that the above verse does not use west, i.e., “Behold the west pass...”, even though the word “ahor” meaning “back”, is sometimes interpreted as “west”. Of course, with respect to Jerusalem, facing sunrise, the “back sea” really is west - the place of sunset. In the land of Nephi, however, the “back pass...wall...side of the city” may not have been on the city’s west side (according to the heavenly compass), so the LORD did not let “west” substitute for “back” in the English translation of the verse. Similarly, the use of the word “forward” in the Nephite scripture, does not necessarily mean “east”. (Alma 58:26)

When “qedem” (“before”) is used to designate “east” in Hebrew scripture, it is understood to mean, standing before or facing sunrise. The divine decree that the “lights in the firmament of the heaven” should be “for signs, and for seasons...” relates their usefulness in marking direction as well as times. (Genesis 1:14) Referring to the Israelite Tabernacle, the LORD directed:

“And the breadth of the court on the east (qedemah, before) side eastward (mizrahah, towards sunrise) shall be fifty cubits” (Exodus 27:13)

The scriptural expression “qedemah mizrahah”, literally means “before sunrise” - “east”. There are other verses in Hebrew scripture such as Numbers 3:38 and Joshua 19:13, clearly showing that the reference frame for which before is interpreted as east is standing before the rising sun. This Promised Land reference frame results in one’s right hand directing south, one’s left hand directing north, and if there is a sea nearby, opposite the rising sun, with a coastline running north and south, then “yamah” (seaward) is west. In any event “ahor” (behind), the same as “maarav” (place of

sunset) appropriately names west.

In *Ancient America Rediscovered*, there are several references to Mesoamerican people observing the sun for a sense of direction. (pg 49 and pp 52-53) This shouldn't surprise us. By the sun, the ancient peoples of Anahuac would have perceived the region of Tehuantepec as situated between northern and southern seas. It does not help their confused argument when Tehuantepec theorists point out that both Mayans and Hebrews designated south "on the right hand" and north "on the left". As explained, the Hebrew reference frame results from standing facing east – sunrise! But those who question the idea that the Mesoamerican isthmus is the "small neck" on the basis that its shores lie north and south not east and west, are accused of naively imposing European coordinates - coordinates which happen to satisfy directions described in the Bible. One prominent Tehuantepec theorist would have us understand Israelite directions as follows:

"The Israelites of Palestine, in their most common mental framework, derived directions as though standing with backs to the sea, facing the desert. Yam ("sea") then meant "west," for the Mediterranean lay in that direction, while qedem ("fore") stood for "east." Then yamin ("right hand") meant "south," while semol ("left hand") denoted "north." [*Beth Mikra* 48(1971): 100-104. FN] In Palestine, this model coincided nicely with nature (the coast runs nearly north-south) and also proved neatly translatable to our European uses of the terms east, west, north, and south. (This was not the only model of directions in use among the Israelites, but it was the most fundamental, being deeply embedded in the language.)..." (John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting* for the Book of Mormon, pg 38)

Sorenson cites a single Hebrew reference; a short article by S. H. Weingarten published in *Beit Mikra* that proposes how the "Red Sea" got its name. The article associates various colors with directions (dwelling on the colors of horses). There is nothing substantial in this article justifying Sorenson's idea that migrating Israelites would have favored an inland orientation (from an arbitrary coastline) over sunrise in defining east. The article, in fact, makes repeated use of the Hebrew terms "mizrah" (sunrise, east) and "maarav" (sunset, west) which Sorenson does not mention. Sorenson continues:

"Suppose, for a moment, that you were with Lehi's party as it arrived on the Pacific coast of Central America. By western civilization's general present-day terminology, the shore would be oriented approximately northwest-southeast. When you said yamah, intending "westward," the term would mean literally "seaward," although the water would actually be "behind your back" to our southwest. Further, the first step you took inland, away from the sea, would be "eastward" ("to the fore," literally) in Hebrew; we today would say the motion had been northeastward. In the absence of a conscious group decision to shift the sense of their Hebrew direction terms by 45 degrees or more, the little group of colonists would have fallen into a new directional language pattern as their Semitic-language model encountered the new

setting.”

Peering through the academic haze and hand waving of Tehuantepec theorists, the fact remains, to insist that the seas north and south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec can somehow be seen as “east” and “west” respectively, is to ignore the heavens. To ignore the heavens for direction would be most uncharacteristic of a colony of devout Israelites. Hebrew scripture clearly shows that when Israelites refer to “the sea...on the east” (Joshua 12:3) their “east” (mizrah) faces sunrise. (Joel 2:20) Seasonal variations in the position of the rising sun cannot rescue the Tehuantepec theory from its egregious coordinates. ([Appendix: “Relative Directions in Scriptural Lands”](#))

We do not know if the Nephites ever used the terms “front sea” or “back sea” to designate New World bodies of water. But if they did use these terms, it would not make sense to translate them “sea east” and “sea west”, if these seas were not respectively east and west. The directions of these seas would have to agree (as in the land of Israel) with the west and east of the heavenly compass, or more correctly, with the earth’s rotation; “for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.” (Helaman 12:15)

In keeping the ordinances of Israel, the Nephites would never have abandoned the Israelite way of coordinating directions. (Leviticus 1:11) The orientation of the Temple was such that “east” (mizrah) meant sunrise. Sunrise is “east” in Hebrew scripture even if in the same verse, the word translated “west” (yamah) is seaward. (See 1 Chronicles 9:24, Zechariah 14:4, LDS Scripture Resource, Transliterated Hebrew / English; Hebrew Dictionary) Seaward is an acceptable substitute for “west” in Israel, because it is opposite sunrise. But it is sunrise in the Promised Land that sets the compass and not the sea. We need only look at what the LORD said to Moses:

“...lift up thine eyes westward (yamah, seaward), and northward, and southward (teman, on the right hand when the person faces east), and eastward (mizrah, towards sunrise)...” (Deuteronomy 3:27)

We find that Book of Mormon “eastward” in Arabia is consistent with Israelite east. (1 Nephi 17:1) Why should Nephi’s followers violate the Law of Moses and orient their altars differently in America? In Hebrew scripture, “from the sea” can also be interpreted to mean “from the south”; possibly referring to the Arabian Sea and not the Mediterranean. (Psalm 107:3) Outside of the Land of Israel, Lehi and Nephi were not constrained to think of seaward as west.

Directions in the Arabian wilderness account of 1 Nephi and in the Isaiah portions of the Book of Mormon follow Semitic coordinates. (e.g. 1 Nephi 16:13-14, 2 Nephi 12:6, Isaiah 2:6) These facts refute the specious argument that directions in the Book of Mormon were “distorted” by 90° as a result of Semitic minded Nephites writing with Egyptian characters. (William Hamblin, “Which Way Did He Go?” Some Notes on Book of Mormon Geography, unpublished manuscript in possession of John Sorenson; summarized in F.A.R.M.S. Update for May 1990) According to the Book of Mormon even Hebrew Scripture was engraved using Egyptian styled characters. (Mosiah 1:3-4)

It is evident that Hebrew directions were not skewed in the translation process.

The coordinate system of the Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people of northern America is defined in their creation story. Some Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs are similar to Egyptian and to characters copied from the Book of Mormon plates. The Mi'kmaq creation story tells us that:

“After the Mi'kmaq world was created and after the animals, birds and plants were placed on the surface, Gisoolg (the Great Spirit Creator) caused a bolt of lightning to hit the surface of Ootsitgamoo (the Earth). This bolt of lightning caused the formation of an image of a human body shaped out of sand. It was Glooscap who was first shaped out of the basic element of the Mi'kmaq world, sand.

“Gisoolg unleashed another bolt of lightning which gave life to Glooscap but yet he could not move. He was stuck to the ground only to watch the world go by and Nisgam (the Sun) travel across the sky every day. Glooscap watched the animals, the birds and the plants grow and pass around him. He asked Nisgam to give him freedom to move about the Mi'kmaq world.

“While Glooscap was still unable to move, he was lying on his back. His head was facing the direction of the rising sun, east, Oetjgoabaniag or Oetjibanoog. In Mi'kmaq these words mean "where the sun comes up " and "where the summer weather comes from" respectively. His feet were in the direction of the setting sun or Oetgatsenoog.

“Other Mi'kmaq words for the west are Oeloesenooq, "where the sun settles into a hollow" or Etgesnoog "where the cold winds come from". Glooscap's right hand was pointed in the direction of the north or Oatnoog. His left hand was in the direction of the south or Opgoetasnoog. So it was the third big blast of lightning that caused Glooscap to become free and to be able to stand on the surface of the earth.

“After Glooscap stood up on his feet, he turned around in a full circle seven times. He then looked toward the sky and gave thanks to Gisoolg for giving him life. He looked down to the earth or the ground and gave thanks to Ootsigamoo for offering its sand for Glooscap's creation. He looked within himself and gave thanks to Nisgam for giving him his soul and spirit.

“Glooscap then gave thanks to the four directions east, north, west and south. In all he gave his heartfelt thanks to the seven directions.”

The seven directions are east, west, north, and south, above, below and within. Like the directions of the Israelite compass, the coordinate system of the Mi'kmaq world has sacred significance:

“Glooscap instructed ... that seven, fourteen and twenty-one rocks would have to be heated over the Great Fire. These heated rocks will be placed inside a wigwam covered with hides of moose and caribou or with mud. The door must face the direction of the rising sun. There should be room for seven men to sit comfortably around a pit dug in the center, where up to twenty-one rocks could be placed. Seven alders, seven wild willows and seven beech saplings will be used to make the frame of the lodge.

This lodge should be covered with the hides of moose, caribou, deer or mud.

“Seven men representing the seven original families will enter into the lodge. They will give thanks and honor to the seven directions, the seven stages of creation and to continue to live in good health. The men will pour water over the rocks causing steam to rise in the lodge to become very hot. The men will begin to sweat, up to the point that it will become almost unbearable. Only those who believe in the spiritual strength will be able to withstand the heat. Then they will all come out of the lodge full of steam and shining like new born babies. This is the way they will clean their spirits ...” (Renown Mi’kmaq Legend, edited from an account given by Black Riverwolf, See also commentary by Stephen Augustine, noted Mi’kmaw Elder: [fourdirectionsteachings.com](http://fourdirectionsteachings.com))

Finally, let us consider word substitutions that are made when translating ancient scripture: “yam” which literally means, “sea of reeds” in Hebrew, is commonly translated “Red sea”. See for instance, the foot note to Exodus 15:4 in the LDS edition. The term “Red sea”, in fact, does not exist in Hebrew scripture. Not surprisingly we find “Red Sea” in the English translation of the Book of Mormon, even though Nephi son of Lehi undoubtedly spoke of “yam suf” – “Reed Sea”. (1 Nephi 2:5, 1 Kings 9:26)

The LORD suffered the English translation of the Book of Mormon to contain the substitution, “Red Sea” in the understanding that western readers would recognize the sea by this name. Readers of the King James Bible are, of course, familiar with the “Red sea”.

Now if Nephite “east” was really north or northeast, why wouldn’t the LORD have had it translated as such, avoiding confusion and misdirection? The LORD could certainly have expressed Book of Mormon directions in ways that latter-day readers could relate to. Consider how simple it would have been to correct “...the sea, on the west and on the east” to “...on the south and on the north” if this better communicated directions. Of course in the process of translation there would be some compound directions like northwest. There already is a “west sea, south”. (Alma 53:8)

It is evident that the Nephite scripture has been translated into dignified, yet plain English, and that the LORD intends for us to understand that “east” in the Book of Mormon means east and “west” means west, and all of the other directions are likewise to be plainly oriented in our minds using common definitions.

Of course this means that the wide, lateral Isthmus of Tehuantepec is an unlikely candidate for the “narrow neck” of the Book of Mormon. Still, many LDS settle for Tehuantepec, because they accept that the Book of Mormon land of Zarahemla lies in the vicinity of current day Guatemala. This makes their pick of isthmuses rather limited.

Those who accept the Tehuantepec theory also feel compelled to relocate the land of Cumorah thousands of miles southwest of the location defined in LDS scripture. Advocates of this theory have been undaunted despite opposition even from General Authorities of the Church.

To date, there is no archaeological evidence that conclusively links the lands and cities of the Book of Mormon with Guatemala or its neighboring countries. The impressive stone ruins that many Latter-day Saints were so sure belonged to cities of

the Book of Mormon, have upon patient investigation, proven otherwise.

Zealous members of the Church, after devoting themselves intensely for years to the pursuit of Book of Mormon cities in Mesoamerica, have wound up deeply disappointed and shaken. (Hampton Sides, "This is Not the Place!", *American: Dispatches from the New Frontier*, 2004)

*An Ancient American Setting* for the Book of Mormon, the renowned work of John L. Sorenson, is essentially a rework of earlier ideas, including the limited Mesoamerican geography set forth in Hunter's and Ferguson's *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*. The first Mexican / Mesoamerican setting to reject the scriptural location of Cumorah, was advanced by RLDS member Louis Edward Hills in 1917. (L. E. Hills, "Geography of Mexico and Central America from 2234 B.C. to 421 A.D.", Independence, MO) The RLDS church did not regard Joseph Smith's epistle (LDS Doctrine and Covenants 128) as doctrinally binding upon its members. The location of Cumorah was easier for RLDS to dismiss. Surprisingly, some LDS have followed.

Sorenson of course, realizes that the Guatemalan Zarahemla hypothesis dates back to an early Mormon newspaper article published October 1, 1842. This article tries to match Zarahemla with anachronistic ruins described in the popular *Incidents of Travel in Central America* (Stephens, 1841). The Mormon newspaper article mentions the "narrow neck of land", but strangely, the only isthmus named in the article is Panama's Isthmus of Darien. The article does not advocate a localized Central American setting. The writer(s) undoubtedly accepted the location of Cumorah revealed by Joseph Smith.

Who wrote the article? That's a good question. At the time the article was published, the official editor (Joseph Smith) was keeping a low public profile avoiding arrest. Joseph Smith had delegated responsibility for the newspaper to others. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:187-189) Even so, the "ZARAHEMLA" piece of October 1, 1842, helped inaugurate a romance that has focused the interests and imaginations of generations of Latter-day Saints, on lands thousands of miles away from the place the plates were found.

In *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Melchizedek Priesthood manual, 1957), in the appendix section titled "Looking for the Wrong Things", Hugh Nibley admonishes:

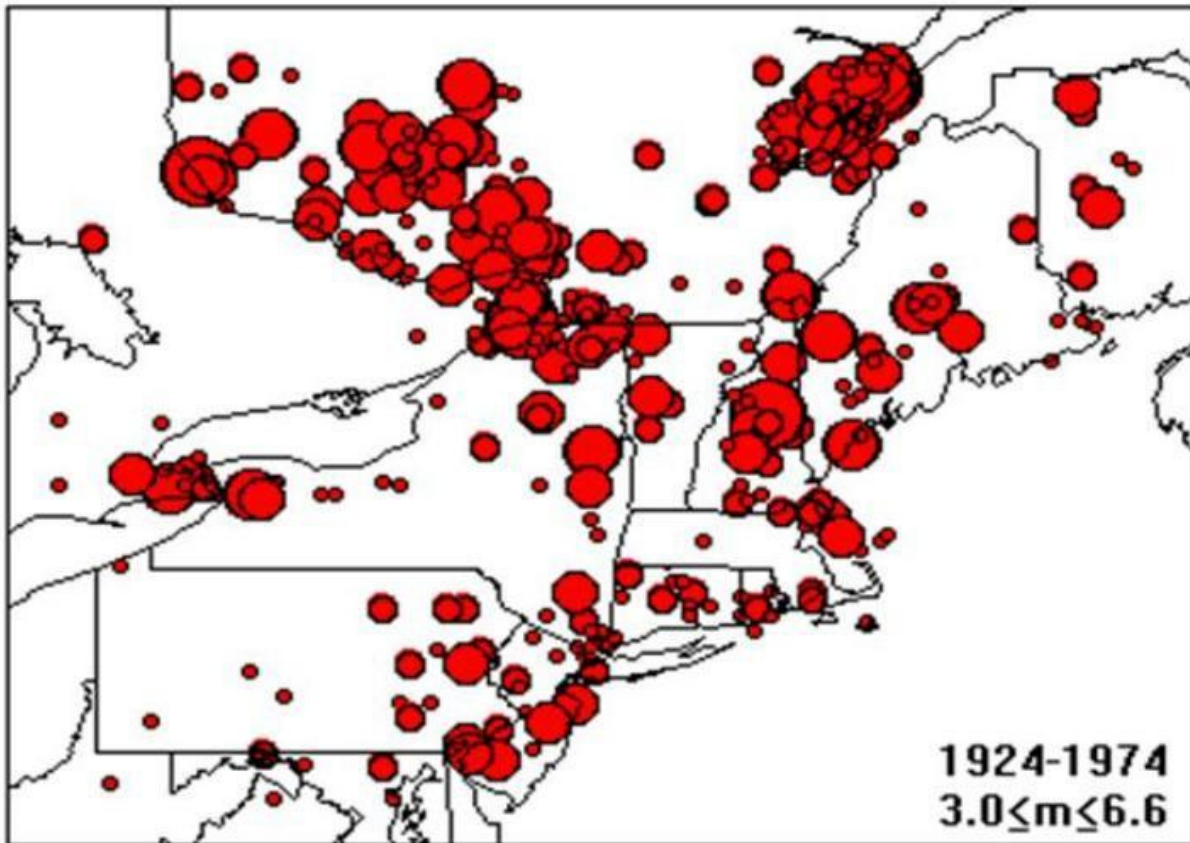
"Blinded by the gold of the pharaohs and the mighty ruins of Babylon, Book of Mormon students have declared themselves "not interested" in the drab and commonplace remains of our lowly Indians. But in all the Book of Mormon we look in vain for anything that promises majestic ruins." (*A. A. to the B. of M.*, pp 440-441)

Hugh Nibley observed:

"A closer approximation to the Book of Mormon picture of Nephite culture is seen in the earth and palisade structures of the Hopewell and Adena [Mound Builder] culture areas than in the later stately piles of stone in Mesoamerica..." (*The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, pp 272-273)



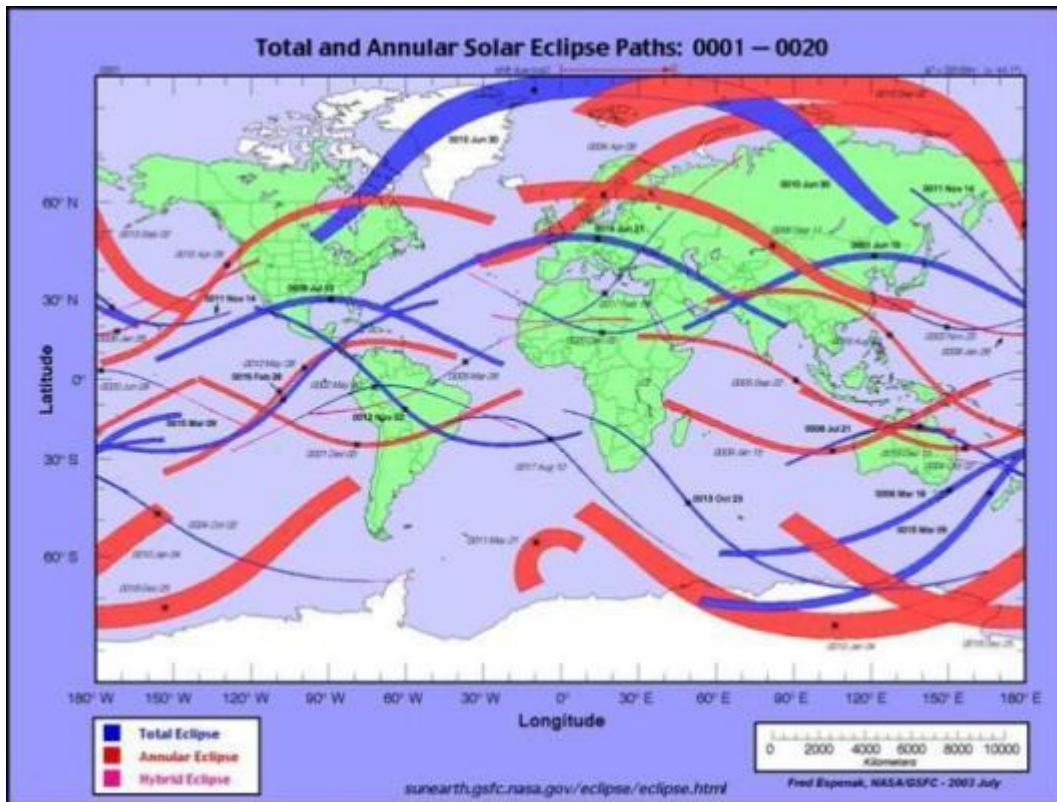
## Chapter One Charts, Pictures and Maps



***Seismic Activity in the Northeastern United States and Canada***

“And I looked and beheld the land of promise...and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent...and I saw the plains of the earth, that they were broken up...” (1 Nephi 12:4)

Although seismologists have not unanimously settled on an answer for why there are earthquakes east of the Great Lakes, the fact is this region is seismically active. Plotted above is U. S. Geological Survey data depicting magnitude 3.0 (smallest dot) to 6.6 (largest dot) quakes, spanning the years 1924 to 1974.

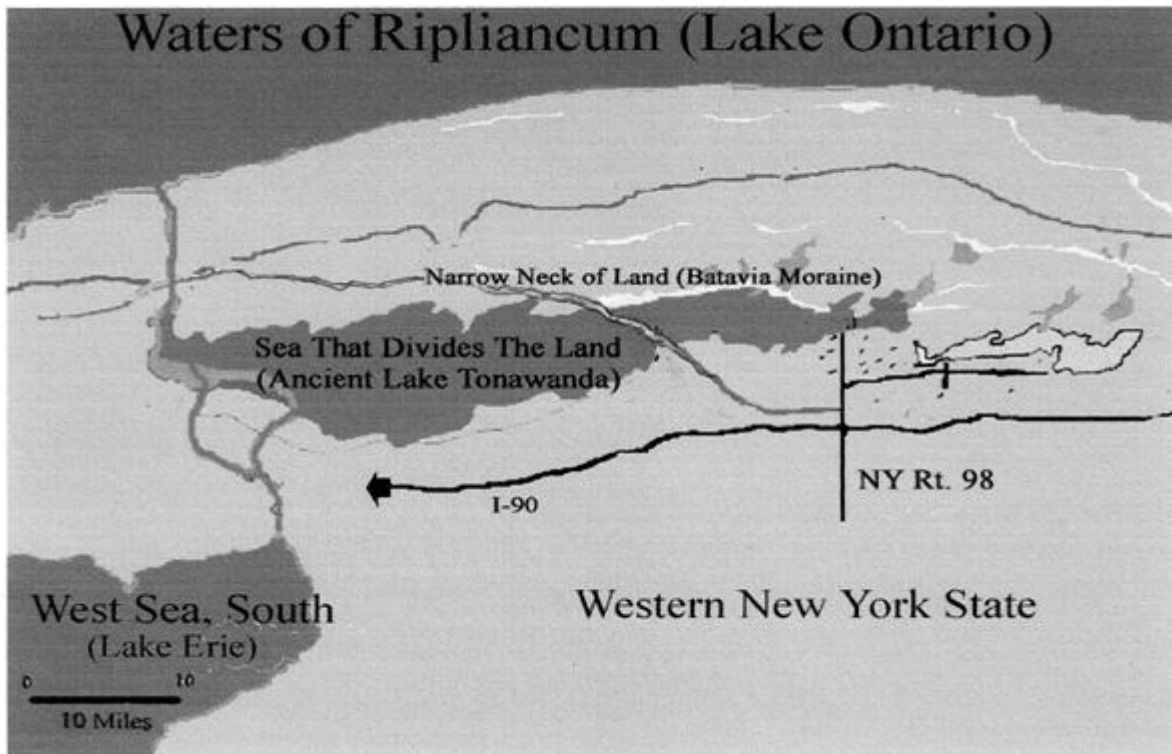


***Solar Eclipses Occurring between the Years 1 and 20 A.D., Featuring a Total Eclipse over South and Central America on November 2, 12 A.D. (Eclipse Map Courtesy of Fred Espenak, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center)***



***Image derived from Google Earth, © Copyright Google  
A Not So Narrow Neck of Land (The Isthmus of Tehuantepec)***

The 125 mile wide Mesoamerican isthmus is about six times wider than the isthmus between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. It is about eighteen times wider than the isthmus between Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake. These Finger Lakes, incidentally, are comparable in size to some biblical inland seas. The Tehuantepec isthmus is gargantuan compared to the narrow moraine that passed through the ancient waters of Tonawanda next to scriptural Cumorah.

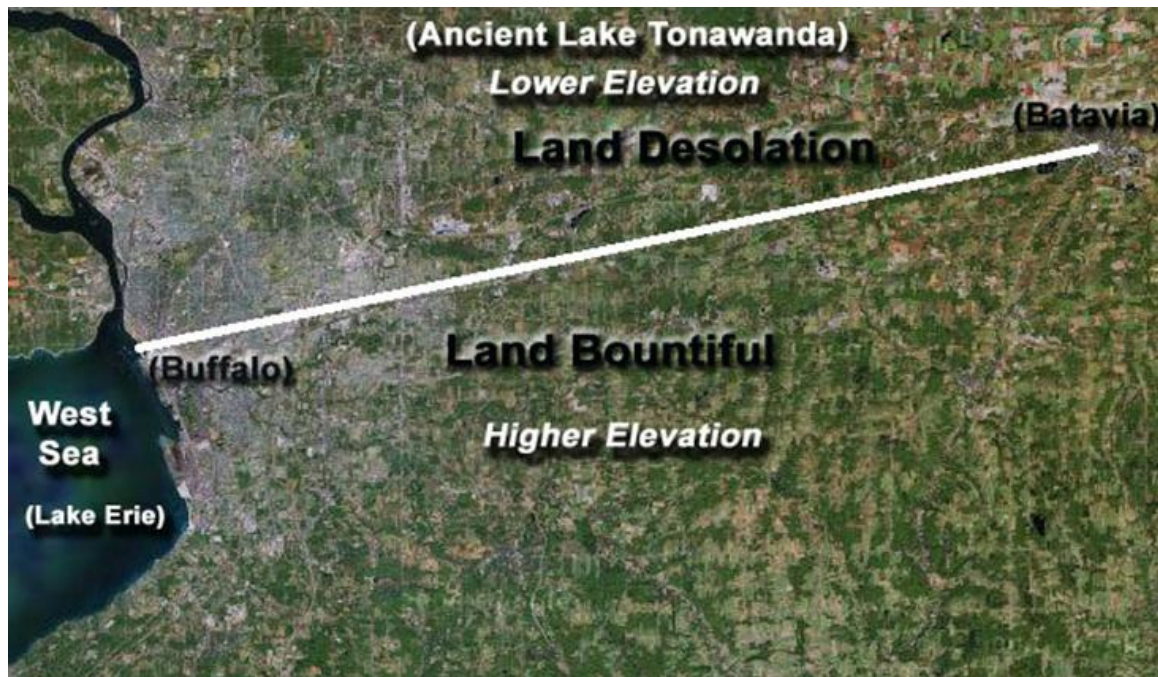


### ***A Small Neck of Land near Cumorah***

“...after the waters had receded from off the face of this land it became a choice land above all other lands...” (Ether 13:2)

Lake Tonawanda was located between the Niagara Escarpment to the north and the Onondaga Escarpment to the south in western New York. Geologists believe the lake formed ~10,000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age.

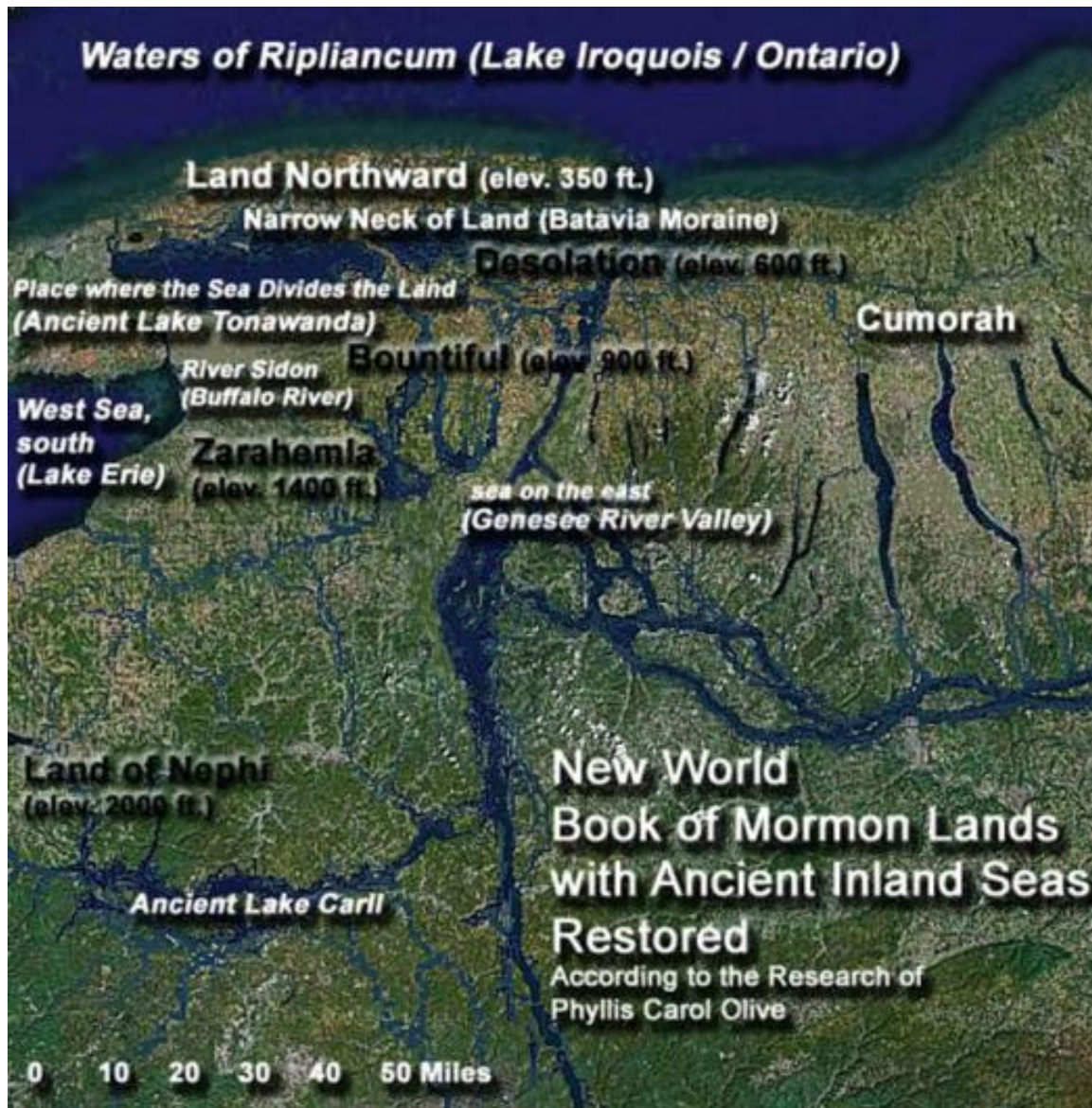
According to Phyllis Olive’s Book of Mormon setting, Lake Tonawanda was the Book of Mormon’s land-dividing sea. A narrow neck of land had formed (the Batavia Moraine) which divided Lake Tonawanda into western and eastern portions. Other receding bodies of water once covered the landscape.



***Image derived from Google Earth, © Copyright Google  
The ~ 35 Mile Bountiful Line and Land Desolation  
Based on P. C. Olive's Discovery of Lost Book of Mormon Lands  
(Western New York, ~100 miles from Cumorah)***

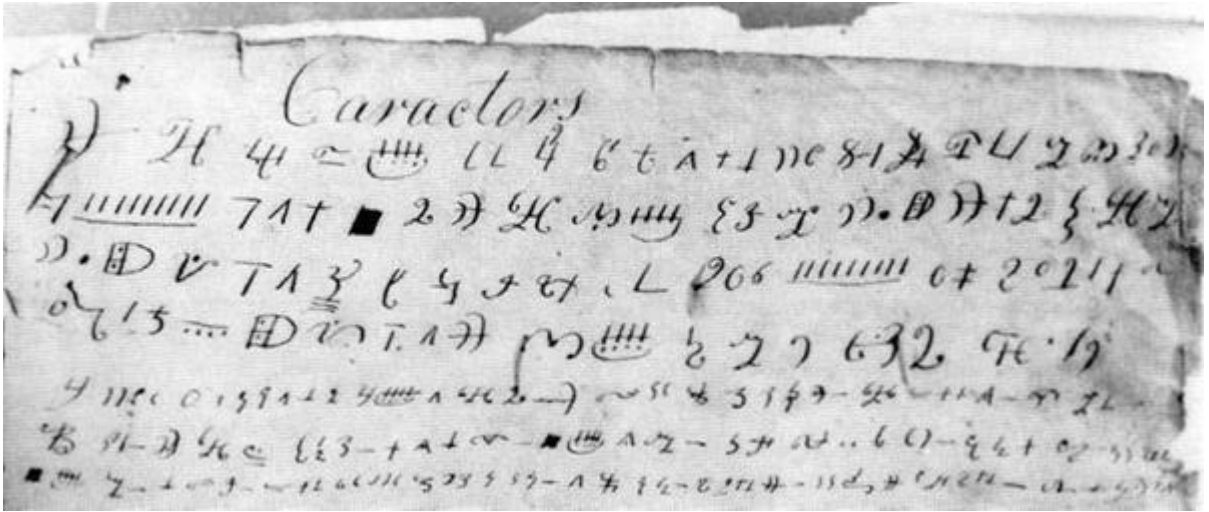
“And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea...” (Alma 22:32)

Scriptural expressions translated “days’ journey” imply treading, walking. (Genesis 30:36; 31:23, Numbers 10:33, Jonah 3:3-4) A “day” in scripture, is a period of daylight. (Alma 56:40)



***Image derived from Google Earth, © Copyright Google***

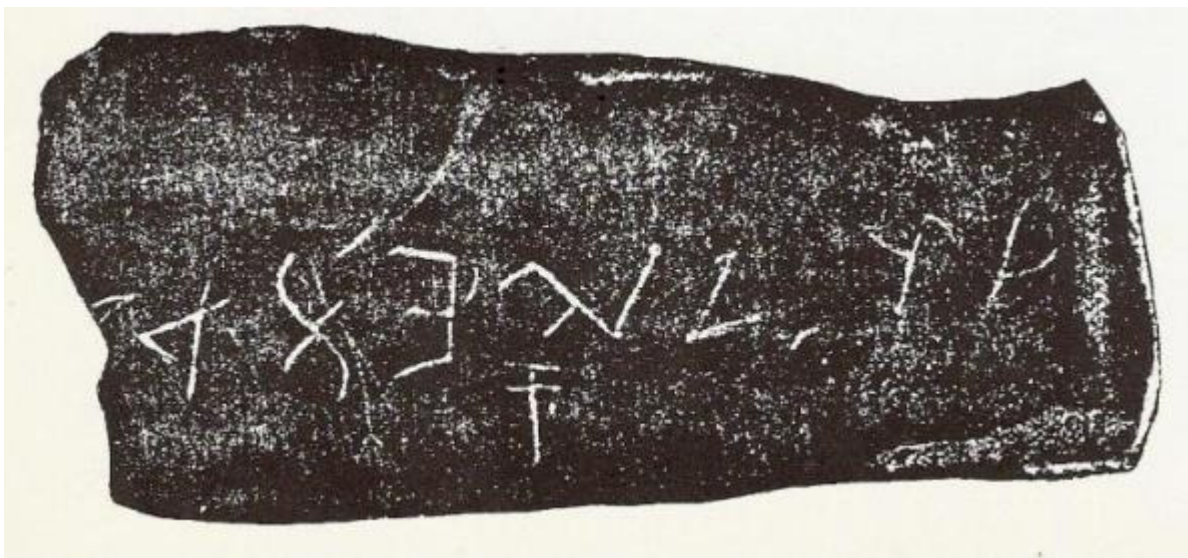
“...thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.” (Alma 22:32)



**Characters Copied from the Nephite Plates**



***“IYhud”, “to Judea” in Paleo Hebrew (Hebrew familiar to Jeremiah and Lehi)***



***Tennessee Mound Tablet with Paleo Hebrew Inscription***

“...we should take those provisions and send them to Judea, and our prisoners to the land of Zarahemla.” (Alma 57:11)

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN	MICMAC LANGUAGE
 good	 holy
 star	 heaven
 all	 all
 ascent high place ascend	 God

### ***Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphs Compared to Egyptian***

Moroni's comments in Mormon 9:32-34, give us to understand that the plates were inscribed with the peculiar written language of the Nephite People: "...in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech." Moroni further explains:

"And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew...and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

"But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written...and because that none other people knoweth our language...he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof."

Elsewhere Moroni tells us that the Nephites "could write but little" because of the awkwardness of their hands. (Ether 12:23-25) and Mormon tells us that "...there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write." (3 Nephi 5:18, See also 1 Nephi 3:19)

Aside from perishable documents (including special proclamations, missives, and banners) and sacred and historical literary treasures, there may not have been a great deal of writing in Nephite society. (Jacob 4:1-2, Mosiah 2:8, Alma 14:8, 14; 46:12, Mormon 6:6) In other words, we should probably not be too surprised at the shortage of artifacts bearing characters similar to those copied from the Book of Mormon plates. Jacob son of Lehi regarded engraving on metal plates as the only means of ultimately preserving his people's writing. (Jacob 4:1-2)



It has been claimed that the peoples of Mesoamerica were the only Native Americans in Book of Mormon times that possessed written languages. There are reasons to doubt the accuracy of this claim. Scholars have noted that some northern Americans may have possessed non-alphabetical forms of writing that were later witnessed and even adapted by Europeans:

“According to Mi'kmaq oral tradition: the [Mi'kmaq] hieroglyphs were developed...prior to the coming of Europeans...Although physical evidence for a pre-contact script has not yet been discovered, seventeenth-century reports by French missionaries testify to the existence of pictographic writing traditions among Eastern Algonquian-speaking peoples, a linguistic group of which Mi'kmaq is a member.” (*Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic Prayers, Readings in North Americas First Indigenous Script*, Edited and Translated by David L. Schmidt and Murdena Marshall, Introduction, pg 4)

Salvatore M. Trento notes that, "As American Settlers pushed west into New York State and into the Ohio River Valley, they actually did see evidence of an ancient civilization..." Though discounting visions and angels, Trento nevertheless concludes that young Joseph Smith probably did find buried metal "tablets engraved with weird markings". "Joseph Smith probably uncovered something from another time, another culture," writes Trento, "and it changed him." Trento does not attribute Joseph's find to some singular ancient individual traveling thousands of miles from Central or South America. Trento notes that in the Northeast "There are dozens of reports over the past two hundred years of farmers finding buried stones with inscriptions...intriguingly, in other parts of eastern American, some unknown group of people left slabs of stone etched with a script used in ancient Mediterranean countries." (Salvatore M. Trento, *Field Guide to Mysterious Places of Eastern North America*, pp 240-244)

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a stone tablet was reportedly recovered *in situ* from a burial mound in the eastern United States during a professional archaeological excavation. (Cyrus H. Thomas, *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*, 1890-91; "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1894) The inscription on the tablet was eventually identified as a form of Paleo Hebrew (the kind of Hebrew familiar to the Book of Mormon patriarch Lehi). (Cyrus, H. Gordon, *Before Columbus: Links Between the Old World and Ancient America*, pg 187) The inscription on the stone bears a biblical and American Book of Mormon place name – “Judea”. (Ezra 5:8 (KJV), Alma 57:11) There are therefore North American correlations for both Nephite “reformed Egyptian” and “altered” Hebrew.

					
nshinen Our Father	Wajok in heaven	ebin seated	tchiptook may	delwigin thy name	
					
meguidedemek be respected	Wajok in heaven	n'tellidanen to us	tchiptook may	Ignemwiek grant	ula thee.
					
nemulek to see	uledchinen. in staying.	Natel Thou	Wajok in heaven	deli as	chkedookk thou art obeyed
					
tchiptook may	deli so	be	chkedulek obeyed	makimiguek on earth	elmek where we are
					
Delamukubenigwa As thou hast given it to us	eehomieguel in the same manner	apeli also	neguech now	kielikook to-day	
					
delamookteeh give it	penegunnenwin our nourishment	nliäuen; to us;	deli abikehiktakachik we forgive those		
					
wegawinametok who have offended us	elp so	kel thou	niškam O God	abikehiktwin forgive	elweultiek our faults
					
mckeninzech hold us strong	winnebudi by the hand	mu not	k'tygalinen to fall	keginukamkel keep far from us	
					
winneliguél sufferings	twaktwin. evils.	N'djofetch, Amen.			

**Composed by Iron Thunderhorse "Graphical Writing Systems" Algonquian Confederacy  
The Lord's Prayer in Mi'kmaq**

## Chapter One Footnotes

**2** The ancient name “Yered”, anglicized Jared (Gen. 5:16, KJV), comes from the root yarad meaning go down, descend, be prostrated, sink (in water); hence the word play found in Ether 1:42; 2:1, 11; 3:6; 6:2, 19. “The brother of Jared” transliterates to a single title or name - “Ahyered”. The “h” in Ahyered, is pronounced “kh” or “ch” as in “Chanukah”. There is no English consonant that exactly matches this sound. The names Yered and Ahyered complement each other. Ahyered may also be interpreted to mean my brother descends. 1 Samuel 14:3 gives examples of similar name constructs. Semitic languages preserve many antediluvian names and expressions.

According to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Brother of Jared also went by the name Mahonri Moriancumer. Hence the place name in Ether 2:13. The name Ahyered is shorter, and “brother of Jared” is easier for English readers to pronounce.

**3** Some quotations have been underlined for emphasis.

# Chapter Two

## Statements by the Prophet, Recorded by Others

### From the Mounds of Illinois

Revealed knowledge of the general location of Nephite lands was one of the unexpected blessings of Zion's camp. Passing through Illinois, members of Zion's camp came upon several mounds thrown up by the ancient inhabitants. Stone "altars" and scattered bones were found atop one of the mounds. There the brethren disinterred the skeleton of an ancient warrior. Seven honorable brethren would later record their version of the event, and the revelation which Joseph obtained in connection with the man whose skeleton lay before them. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 2, pp 79-80)

Accounts tell that a vision of the past was opened to Joseph's understanding by the Spirit of the Almighty and that he learned the righteous man's name and something of his life. Years later, the *Times and Seasons* published the history of Joseph Smith, including an account of the revelation which Joseph received concerning the ancient warrior. The Mormon periodical chose to print a version based on a draft by Church historian Willard Richards, including, oddly enough, parts that had been crossed out. The account is written as if scribed on behalf of the Prophet, and includes the following:

"...and the vision of the past being opened to my understanding by the spirit [Spirit] of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton [we had seen] was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick-set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus [Onandagus (*variously spelled*)], who was known from the hill Cumorah, or eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was Zelph. The curse was taken from him, or at least in part; one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and the Nephites." (Jan 1, 1846, Vol. 6, No. 20, pg 1076)

In the above version the underlined words are dubious (having been crossed out) and perhaps should not have been printed. Thus the references to the hill Cumorah and the last great struggle between the Lamanites and Nephites are questionable.

Levi Hancock, one of the members of Zion's camp, recorded in his diary that Joseph told Sylvester Smith that the land (in Illinois) where the remains of the warrior were found "was called the land of desolation" (*Levi Hancock diary*, cited by Kenneth W. Godfrey in "The Zelph Story", *BYU Studies* 29/2 (1989): 31-56)

Like the New Testament Gospels, the different accounts of the revelation generally agree, but there are points of confusion and uncertainty. None of the

accounts of Joseph's statements regarding Zelph are firsthand, though Joseph did write a letter to his wife Emma at the time (June 4, 1834) which supports the event and the revelation. Joseph's personal letter (a firsthand statement) certifies the general location of some Nephite lands, and is quoted in chapter four of this book.

From the different accounts and Joseph's own written testimony, we may at least conclude that Zelph was a descendent of Book of Mormon people, and that he died in battle in northern America. His remains were interred atop one of the mounds made by ancient North American people. Joseph attributed some of these mounds to the Nephites. The revelation which Joseph received concerning Zelph was poignant enough to convince Joseph that Zion's camp had been traveling through Nephite territory, and that the remains they had handled were "proof" of the Book of Mormon's divine authenticity.

The "south countries", south of Lake Erie, referred to by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 75:8, 17, are likely the same as the Nephite "south countries". (Mormon 6:15; 8:2)

Perhaps the name Zelph is a masculine version of the Hebrew "zalaphah", meaning "Raging Heat" - a fitting name for a zealous warrior. (*Brown – Driver – Briggs – Gesenius Hebrew - Aramaic Lexicon*, 2152, pg 273)

The name of the great Onandagus (or Onendagus) mentioned by Joseph, sounds very similar to Onondaga, one of the five nations that composed the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Haudenosaunee means "the people of the long house". These native peoples of New York are known to have built houses of timber. (Alma 19:17-18; 26:28-29) Another people of the Haudenosaunee are the Oneida, which is strikingly similar to the Book of Mormon place name "Onidah". (Alma 32:4; 47:5) It is also likely no coincidence that the Lamanite title of deity, "Great Spirit" is a native North American appellation. (Alma 18:4-5)

## Manti in Missouri

According to information given during the trek of the 1838 Kirtland Camp (gathering of the Saints from Ohio to Missouri), the ancient City of Manti was located near Huntsville, Randolph County, Missouri:

“The camp passed through Huntsville, in Randolph County, which has been appointed as one of the stakes of Zion, and is the ancient site of the City of Manti...” (*Millennial Star*, “History of Joseph Smith,” May 13, 1854, Vol. 16, pg 296)

The September 25, 1838, journal entry of Samuel D. Tyler corroborates the above statement, with additional information:

“...We passed through Huntsville, Co. seat of Randolph Co. Pop. 450, and three miles further we bought 32 bu. of corn off one of the brethren who resides in this place. There are several of the brethren round about here and this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon and this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion...” (*Journal of Samuel D. Tyler*, September 25, 1838)

It is certain that Joseph believed and taught that Nephite lands were in northern America, but it is not known that he revealed the location of the identical Manti named in the Book of Mormon. (George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 2, pg 324, cites Andrew Jenson, *Hist. Rec.*, pg 601)

We learn from the Book of Mormon that “it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them...” (Alma 8:7) From whom did Brother Tyler get his information - from “the brethren” he mentions? If so, Brother Tyler certainly got the impression that “the brethren” were referring to “the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon...” Veytia’s history, however, shows that some migrating ancient Americans tended to name newly settled cities after cities they had left behind. (*A. A. R.*, pg 50) The Missouri “Manti” does not fit with “the land of desolation” allegedly ruled by King “Onedages”. (*Autobiography of Levi Hancock (1803-1882)*, pg 27) The Book of Mormon land of Desolation is north of Manti. (Alma 22:27, 29-32)

It wasn’t until October 2, 1838 that Joseph Smith personally went out to meet the Kirtland Camp near Far West, Missouri. This was several days after the entry mentioning “Manti” in Randolph County. (*Journal of Samuel D. Tyler*, October 2 and 4, 1838) The Kirtland camp’s journal kept by Judge Elias Smith, describes the Missouri site as “the place where the city of Manti is to be built” - future tense! (*History of the Church*, Vol. 3, pg 144)

There is a town named “Manti” in Sanpete County, Utah, several counties south of Salt Lake. Throughout the State there are Book of Mormon namesakes. There is a “Bountiful” north of Salt Lake City, as if the capital city were a kind of Zarahemla. Had

Utah's north flowing "Jordan River" wound further east, the Mormon town might have been called "Zarahemla". The Saints, in fact, were instructed to name a city on the Iowa side of the Mississippi, "Zarahemla". Was it because of the river on the east that the Lord wanted the Saints to memorialize their city, with the distinctive Book of Mormon name? (Doctrine and Covenants 125:3) The geographic analogy, of course is not perfect, for the mighty Mississippi flows in the opposite direction of the Book of Mormon's river Sidon.

Sidon's headwaters are southeast of Zarahemla. (Alma 16:7; 17:1; 22:27, 29; 50:8-11) A river's "head" is its source at higher elevation. Lehi in fact defines a river's "head" as the source from whence it comes. (1 Nephi 8:13-14) There is therefore no mention of the river Sidon flowing south of its "head".

The location of the Iowa town of Zarahemla not far from Nauvoo is about a hundred miles northeast of Manti (Stake of Zion) in Missouri. Scripture indicates that the land of Manti, being near the head of the river Sidon, was noticeably more elevated compared to Zarahemla and other Nephite lands just to the north. (Alma 16:6; 22:27, 29; 43:22) The wilderness south of Manti climbed to even greater heights. (Alma 43:32) Huntsville, Missouri is at an elevation of about 804 ft. not noticeably different (considering the distance) from the elevation of Nauvoo, Illinois (~ 670 ft).

Perhaps one of the reasons God inspired the early Saints to name their settlements after Book of Mormon cities was simply to bring up the topic of the Book of Mormon, when the origin of the curious names were inquired after.

Still, there could have been an ancient settlement named "Zarahemla" near the site of the Iowa town of "Zarahemla". There could have been a "Zarahemla" in Chiapas or one in Guatemala for that matter; named by peoples who migrated from Book of Mormon lands to Central America. There are two lands named "Bountiful" in the Book of Mormon. Migrating ancient Americans could have also carried this name to more places.

There are solid reasons to believe that Cumorah, revealed firsthand by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is in fact the Cumorah of the Book of Mormon. ([Appendix: "Joseph Smith, Josiah Priest and the Times and Seasons"](#)) The placing of "Manti" in America's Heartland isn't nearly as authoritative.

Manti of the Book of Mormon was not a great distance from either "the east sea" or "the west sea". We learn that Helaman marched with his two thousand stripling warriors to the land south of Zarahemla, by the west sea, also referred to as "the west sea, south". (Alma 53:8, 22) We also learn that Manti and Antipara were among the nearby cities that had been taken by the Lamanites before Helaman arrived. Antipara was not far from the west sea. (Alma 56:13-14, 31) Manti may have been no more than a day's journey from Helaman's position near the west sea. (Alma 58:13-14) Lamanites fleeing from Manti came over to attack the city of Nephihah. (Alma 59:5-8) Nephihah was near the shore of the east sea. (Alma 51:25-26) A Manti in the vicinity of the Great Lakes, near the head of a northward flowing river, fits the scriptural setting best.

It is worth considering that if the original site of Manti were within a thousand miles of Randolph County, the original site of Zarahemla still could not be in Central or South America, for the simple reason that Zarahemla is north of Manti. (Alma 53:8, 10,

22; 56:13-14, 22-25) The references to “Manti” in Missouri, merely demonstrate that some early Latter-day Saints placed principal Nephite lands in their own country.

## Hill of Cumorah

Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recalls her young son making the following remarks to his father, Joseph Smith Sr.:

“As I passed by the hill of Cumorah, where the plates are, the angel met me...”  
(*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith*, pg 100)

Notice that Joseph does not refer to the hill where Moroni deposited the plates as the Hill Cumorah. According to his mother, Joseph used the words “hill of Cumorah”. This is significant! Cumorah is the land in which the drumlin hill resides. The description “hill of Cumorah” means hill of the land Cumorah.

Joseph describes the hill where the plates were deposited as “a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood.” (Joseph Smith - History 1:51) But nowhere in his history does Joseph call this hill the Hill Cumorah. The “hill Cumorah” is a hill in “the land Cumorah”. The land Cumorah is either part of, or encompasses “a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains”. (Mormon 6:4-5) The Hebrew word translated “fountains” means “springs”. (Isaiah 41:18) The word can also mean a large issuing or sources of water like a cataract, or large body of water. (1 Nephi 2:9, Genesis 7:11) The Book of Mormon describes this region as “a land among many waters”. (Mosiah 8:8) This describes perfectly the region of the Finger Lakes, where the Smith family lived. When Joseph mentions “Cumorah” he is referring to the land Cumorah. (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20)

In the preliminary manuscript of Mother Smith’s history, Joseph’s mention of the hill of Cumorah is not recorded. Mother Smith’s own retelling of the messenger’s instruction to her son indicates that the title “hill of Cumorah” came from the angel:

“The record is on a side of the hill of Cumorah, three miles from this place. Remove the grass and moss, and you will find the record under it, lying on four pillars of cement.” (*The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith By His Mother*, Edited by Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, Bookcraft, 1996, pg 107 n. 14)

Book of Mormon witness, David Whitmer, recounts an incident in which he, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were riding in a wagon to the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, when an aged, heavyset man walked alongside the wagon. The man had a knapsack strapped over his shoulders with something square in it. When David invited the man to ride he replied, “I am going across to the hill Cumorah.” Joseph reportedly later told David Whitmer that they had seen one of the Nephite prophets. (*David Whitmer Interviews*, edited by Lyndon W. Cook, Grandin Book, Orem,



Utah, 1991, pp 13, 27)

In opposition to placing the Book of Mormon's setting in lands near the Finger Lakes (lands now occupied by the United States of America as clearly indicated in scripture: 1 Nephi 13:30, 2 Nephi 10:10-11, Doctrine and Covenants 10:48-51) it has been suggested by writer David Palmer, that a feature as significant as Niagara Falls, could not escape mention in the Book of Mormon had this been the area in which the civilizations described in it existed. (Review of *The Land of the Nephites* by Delbert W. Curtis, Reviewed by David A. Palmer, FARMS Review of Books, Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2 (1), 1990, pp 67–73)

In the limited Great Lakes setting proposed by Phyllis Olive, Niagara Falls situate on a watery northwestern extremity and would not have been encountered in the majority of situations detailed in the abridged Nephite narrative. The fact that western New York was inundated in antiquity fits the description found in Ether 13:2. Olive points out that there were several cataracts along the northern escarpment, resulting from the overflow of old Lake Tonawanda (believed to be the Book of Mormon's land-dividing sea, Ether 10:20). More than one of these may have rivaled the falls of Niagara. The land northward in Olive's Book of Mormon settings, certainly qualifies as a land of "many water, rivers and fountains" (Mormon 6:4). It may well be asked, why Niagara Falls should have received so much attention. Palmer's article notes upfront that his views do not represent the position of the Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

On April 6th, 1980 at the restored Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette, New York, President Spencer W. Kimball stated:

"From the soil of Cumorah's hill a few miles west of here, Joseph obtained from the angel Moroni the records of a people who anciently inhabited this land..." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History DVD Presentations for Youth and Adult Sunday School Gospel Doctrine Classes*, Lesson 9, "Organization of the Church", Copyright 2004)

President Kimball's expression "Cumorah's hill" suggests that the hill, from which Joseph obtained the records, belongs to the land Cumorah.

## Chapter Two Pictures





***One of Numerous Ohio Mounds (Jim Smith)***



***The “river Kishon” of Northern Israel***

This famous but to some unimpressive “river” is said to have swept away the dead of Sisera’s army. (Judges 5:21) The “brook Kishon” (1 Kings 18:40) flows northwest out to Israel’s west sea - the great inland Mediterranean.



***The “river Sidon” (Buffalo Creek / River, western New York), according to Phyllis Olive’s discovery of Book of Mormon lands in the region where the scripture came forth***

The “river Sidon” was shallow enough for armies to cross on foot at more than one location, yet possessed enough flow to carry away bloated bodies of warriors. (Alma 2:27, 34; 3:3; 16:6) Comparable to the “river Kishon” of northern Israel, Buffalo Creek flows north and west out to the great inland “west sea” – Lake Erie. The river is believed to have held more water anciently, fed from a source in the marshy Java Lake region.

“Sidon” or “Tzidon” is Hebrew for “catchery” or “fishery”. The fact that the “river Sidon” is the most notable river in the Book of Mormon, speaks to the small size of the setting surrounding Zarahemla. The river is, of course, never mentioned south of its “head” (in the southern highlands near Manti, Alma 16:6; 22:27; 43:22). It is therefore never mentioned in the elevated land of Nephi, further south. The river flows on the east of Zarahemla and is never mentioned in the northern lands of Bountiful and Desolation, possibly because it turns out to “sea” – as Buffalo River. (Alma 6:7)

# Chapter Three

## Unsigned Articles and a Popular Book

### Brethren Speculate

“The course that Lehi traveled from the city of Jerusalem to the place where he and his family took ship, they traveled nearly a south, southeast direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of north latitude, then nearly east to the Sea of Arabia then sailed in a southeast direction and landed on the continent of South America in Chili [Chile] thirty degrees south latitude.”

This popular but unreliable statement was penned by Frederick G. Williams sometime between 1836 and 1845. A similar version (also without attribution) exists in the handwriting of Bishop John M. Bernhisel. The statement is not clearly a geographic revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith, as some have alleged. It was never published in the lifetime of Joseph Smith as a revelation. The official position of the Church regarding the Williams document was issued in 1938 by George D. Pyper (asst. editor of *The Instructor*) and Frederick J. Pack, then Chairman of the Gospel Doctrine Committee of the Church. Concerning the alleged prophetic origin of the statement, Pack wrote:

“...Its authenticity, however, is subject to grave doubt, as witness the following:

“The only known source of authority upon which it rests is a single sheet of manuscript presented to the Church Historian’s Office, in 1864, by Ezra G. Williams, son of Frederick G. Williams, at one time counselor to Joseph Smith in the First Presidency.” (“ROUTE TRAVELED BY LEHI AND HIS COMPANY”, *The Instructor*, Vol. 73, No. 4, April 1938, pg 160)

Pack further explains that there is nothing on the original, attributing the statement to Joseph Smith, but there is “good evidence” that the statement was written in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams.

Following Pack’s summary, associate editor Pyper noted that President Joseph F. Smith declined to endorse an alleged “landing place of Lehi and his company” stating that “the Lord had not yet revealed it...”

B. H. Roberts critically examined the Williams document and concluded that the evidence in favor of it being “a revelation to Joseph, the Seer” is “very unsatisfactory”. (B. H. Roberts, *New Witness for God*, Vol. 3, 1895, pp 501-503)

Concerned that Book of Mormon geography might become quite divisive, George Q. Cannon counseled Latter-day Saints against circulating detailed maps professing to give the location of Nephite cities and settlements. (“BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY”, *The Instructor*, Vol. 73, No. 4, April 1938, pp 159-160 - reprinted from the *Juvenile Instructor*, January 1, 1890) President Cannon warned that if “our children

be permitted to conceive incorrect ideas concerning the location of lands inhabited by the Nephites ... it will be difficult to eradicate them [the erroneous ideas]”. It is ironic, therefore, that the editor had earlier published the following unsubstantiated claims:

“...it is understood that the Prophet Joseph communicated to some individual or individuals that it [the Book of Mormon river Sidon] was the stream now known as the River Magdalena [of Colombia]. It is also known that the landing place of Lehi and his family was near what is now known as the city of Valparaiso, in the Republic of Chili [Chile]”. (George Q. Cannon (editor), “Topics of the Times”, *Juvenile Instructor*, July 15, 1887, Vol. 22, No. 14, pg 221)

Elder B. H. Roberts observed that the geography put forth in the Williams document, and later unfairly attributed to Joseph Smith as a “revelation”, dominated for a while the thinking of church leaders on the subject of Book of Mormon geography. (B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, “IX. - The Geography of the Book”, Vol. 3, pp 499-503) The questionable South American “Sidon” and landing site were even inserted in the footnotes of the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon - removed from subsequent editions. Elder Roberts remarked:

“We need not follow our researches in any spirit of fear and trembling. We desire only to ascertain the truth; nothing but the truth will endure ... the proclamation of the truth in any given case, or upon any subject, will do no harm to the work of the Lord which is itself truth. Nor need we be surprised if now and then we find our predecessors, many of whom bear honored names and deserve our respect and gratitude for what they achieved in making clear the truth, as they conceived it to be—we need not be surprised if we sometimes find them mistaken in their conceptions and deductions; just as the generations who succeed us in unfolding in a larger way some of the yet unlearned truths of the Gospel, will find that we have had some misconceptions and made some wrong deductions in our day and time. The book of knowledge is never a sealed book. ...The generation which preceded us did not exhaust by their knowledge all the truth, so that nothing was left for us in its unfolding; no, not even in respect of the Book of Mormon; any more than we shall exhaust all discovery in relation to that book and leave nothing for the generation following us to develop.” (B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, “IX. - The Geography of the Book”, Vol. 3, pg 503)

Scripture does not say that Lehi’s family sailed a southeast direction to the Promised Land. 1 Nephi 17:1 states, “... we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth...” This verse describes direction and time journeying across the Arabian Desert. It was necessary for Lehi and Nephi to locate their company in a place suitable for building a ship, away from the settlements of potential adversaries. They were led to such a secluded and plentiful spot after traveling eastward across the grueling Arabian wilderness. (A map is given on page 112 of *Lehi in the Desert (The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley)*

depicting the “nearly eastward” journey across the Arabian Peninsula)

Sailing a fixed, nearly eastward course from the southern coast of Arabia will not land you and your family in the Americas. Lehi’s family did not sail a set direction to the Promised Land. They relied upon Liahona<sup>4</sup>. The sacred director revealed each course change; which they followed in a “straight course”. (Alma 37:44) When they were not collectively faithful, they lost course and “knew not whither they should steer the ship”. (1 Nephi 18:12-13, 21-22)

A south, southeast direction from the southern coast of Arabia (as the Williams document proposes) is an extreme way to bring ones family to America. You must cross the Arabian Sea and great stretches of two oceans! How will you get fresh water? You had better not count on rainfall to see you through.

Thirty souls, is a conservative estimate of Lehi’s party that “put forth into the sea...” Assuming half a gallon to be the average amount of water consumed per person per day, and assuming an optimistic average sailing speed of about four miles per hour across 17,000 miles of ocean, we may argue that a crew of thirty could survive on as little as 3,000 gallons of fresh water. Five thousand gallons might be a safer estimate. Suppose they refill their reserves near New Guinea or Australia and at various Pacific islands; this still leaves vast stretches of ocean to cross on reserves.

The Jaredites must have stored great quantities of fresh water aboard their vessels, for themselves and their livestock. (Ether 2:17) Being barges we might expect that the Jaredite baptismal boats moved more slowly than Nephi’s sailing ship. On the other hand, the Jaredite barges may have been driven more directly towards the Promised Land. (Ether 2:19, 23-25; 6:5, 8) In all likelihood, the company of Lehi spent most of their voyage near coastline.

Don Veytia mentions the account of “...Jews who had quitted Palestine, or the part of Arabia which is contiguous to the Red Sea, and had crossed the Atlantic to America...” (A. A. R, pg 53)

What is the preferred sea path to take from Arabia to America? Bravely round Africa’s horn (the Cape of Good Hope) and thereafter sail the shorter distance between the Old World and the New. On the way to the Promised Land, the LORD could have directed Lehi’s family to locations along the African and American coasts, where they could find much needed fresh water.

After sailing more than 2,400 miles from Arabia, one of the first places Lehi’s family could have re-supplied, is the isle of Grande Comore, 200 miles off the eastern shore of Africa. The capital port city of Grande Comore, incidentally, has a Semitic name – “Moroni”. Evidence shows that other groups of Israelites, leaving Jerusalem, sailed with the currents and seasonal winds from the southern coast of Arabia to the coast of Africa. (“Quest for the Lost Ark”, *History Channel documentary*, A&E Television Networks, 2007)

Former British naval officer Phillip Beale takes seriously the legend that ancient Phoenicians circumnavigated the Dark Continent. (“Return of the Ancient Mariner”, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, July / August 2008, pg 14)

We read that after the ship carrying Lehi’s company had sailed for “many days”, they encountered a “terrible tempest”. The storm was encountered “many days” before



arriving in the Promised Land. Dreadful seas and tempest aptly describe the African cape.

Apostle Orson Pratt essentially admitted in 1872, that the Chilean landing idea with its vast Pacific crossing was supposition, not revelation:

“They were commanded by the Almighty to build a vessel...On board this vessel they embarked... As near as we can judge from the description of the country contained in this record the first landing place was in Chili [Chile], not far from where the city of Valparaiso now stands.” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 14, pg 325)

The Chilean landing hypothesis seems to assume, that in order to accommodate seeds from the Middle East, Lehi would have landed as far south of the equator as Jerusalem is north – about thirty degrees latitude. This explains the coordinate penned by Fredrick G. Williams as well as Orson Pratt’s reference to Valparaiso. But, this line of reasoning is flawed. The temperate seasons of South America are six months out of phase with the seasons of Jerusalem. This would make it very difficult to perform the appropriate agricultural offerings at the right times in sync with the land of Israel. The Law of Moses requires that all Israel observe each festival in season. We know from scripture that the Nephite calendar was essentially in sync with the calendar at Jerusalem. This topic will be discussed in greater detail later. Suffice to say that both the Nephite and Jewish first month (the spring month of Passover) occurred at about the same time. (3 Nephi 8:5)

Jews all over the world observe the holidays in step with the calendar of Israel (as commanded), but since the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the seasonal priesthood offerings have ceased. Lehi’s people would have been expected to fully keep the Law of Moses (including seasonal temple offerings) on the coasts of their inheritance, and in the highlands. This would have been very difficult, if not impossible to coordinate in South America.

We learn that Lehi’s family had “gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.” (1 Nephi 8:1) These seeds could have grown “exceedingly” in the American land of promise at latitudes akin to Jerusalem’s. (1 Nephi 18:6, 8, 24) These seeds undoubtedly included “corn” or “bar”, a cereal grain (see “Corn”, LDS Bible Dictionary), “wheat” and “barley”. (Genesis 42:1-3, Mosiah 9:9) The seeds of fruits of course included grapes. (Mosiah 11:15, 2 Nephi 15:4, Isaiah 5:4, 3 Nephi 14:16) Such species of produce were essential for keeping the Law of Moses.

The Southern shore of Lake Erie is about ten degrees north of Jerusalem’s temperate latitude. The southern shore of Guatemala or El Salvador (Sorenson’s alleged tropical landing site for Lehi) is almost twenty degrees south of Jerusalem’s latitude. There is evidence that the climate near the Great Lakes in the woodland period (approximate period of the Nephite record) was milder than it is today. Olive cites New York Archaeologist William A. Ritchie on the subject of New York’s warmer climate in antiquity. (*The Archaeology of New York State*. pg 32) But even today, varieties of fruits and grains, named in the Nephite record, easily produce in the Great

Lakes region. This is not to suggest that the Great Lakes region was the first place that Lehi and his company set foot upon reaching the Promised Land.

Not willing to postpone certain ordinances of the Law, Lehi's family probably went "forth upon the land" and pitched their tents for a while at a site near Jerusalem's latitude. Following the latitude of Jerusalem over to the Western Hemisphere, we arrive in the United States. Here the seasons and constellations would again have been familiar to Lehi; and "all" their seeds from "the land of Jerusalem" planted in the earth, could have grown "exceedingly". (1 Nephi 18:24)

The LORD undoubtedly wanted Lehi's party to become familiar with what things there were in the great land of their inheritance. (2 Nephi 1:5-9) As they explored the wilderness, they found that the land accommodated the keeping of the Israelite commandments. They found, for instance, "the goat, and the wild goat..." (1 Nephi 18:25) Their journey in the wilderness of the Promised Land did not have to mean abandoning the ship at this point. They could have come ashore many time and set up tents. They could have explored their surroundings; and returned and reported the various things found to Lehi and Sariah before moving on. Eventually they settled near a freshwater west sea not many hundred miles from scriptural Cumorah - a place where they experienced "driven snow". (1 Nephi 11:8; 19:1-3)

We learn from scripture that "...the more idle part of the Lamanites lived in the wilderness, and dwelt in tents; and they were spread through the wilderness on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers' first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore." (Alma 22:28)

The fact that the land of first inheritance extends to and includes a place by the west sea, in no way proves that Lehi crossed the Indian and vast Pacific Ocean, as presumed in the Chilean landing hypothesis. The LORD could have guided Lehi's family up North American channels and across land near the Great Lakes to the shore of an inland west sea (Lake Erie). (1 Nephi 18:23, Mosiah 10:13) The LORD had a very special land in store for Lehi's seed – a place like a mother's womb. The purpose of Liahona wasn't to guide Lehi's family to just any coast of the Americas. Lehi and Sariah were "stricken in years"! They had been through a great deal! The west sea was probably not a great trek from where they finally disembarked.

In chapter four of *The Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*, Phyllis Olive describes several routes from the Atlantic that can be taken to arrive near Lake Erie. Whatever sea path Lehi's family took, they undoubtedly made landfall several times, for fresh water if nothing more.

In America, Jacob son of Lehi wrote:

"...the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea. But great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea; wherefore as it says isles, there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren." (2 Nephi 10:20-21)

Jacob here refers to "the isles of the sea" mentioned in Hebrew prophecy (e.g.

Isaiah 11:11; 24:15; 42:10). As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew word “iy” or “ee”, translated “isle”, does not have to mean an island in the sense of a small landmass completely surrounded by water. The Hebrew word means a “coast” or a “habitable spot”. (*Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, 339, pg 15)

Searching the words of Isaiah, we find that the prophet calls coastal countries “isles”. (Isaiah 23:2, 6) Thus, even the coast of Israel is an “isle” in the scriptural sense. (Isaiah 20:6) When Isaiah speaks of “isles”, he definitely has an eye on coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. (Genesis 10:4-5) The great inland sea of the Bible, with its many coasts, is not an Ocean, but communicates with the Atlantic by way of a narrow strait.

Jacob’s words, “...the Lord has made the sea our path...” is rich in Hebraic meaning. These words recall the verse: “Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters...” (Psalm 77:19, KJV)

The Hebrew word translated “path” is “sh’vil”. This word literally means a “track” or “passage-way” (as if flowing along). A related word, pronounced “sh’bolet” can mean “flowing stream”. (*Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, 7640, pg 987)

Jacob’s comment about the Lord making “the sea our path” could apply to Ocean currents, but it could also describe the experience of being divinely guided across the Gulf of Mexico and up the flowing channel of the Mighty Mississippi. Lehi’s company probably perceived their voyage up the American passage as a continuation of their sea crossing. (Mosiah 10:13) They may have viewed the mouth of the Mississippi as the Lord literally making the sea into a flowing “path”.

Mighty rivers are sometimes called seas in Hebrew scripture. (Isaiah 19:5; 21:1, 27:1, Jeremiah 51:36, Nahum 3:8, Ezekiel 32:2) The experience of being guided by “Liahona”, in a deliberate course across the Gulf of Mexico and up the strait and narrow waterway of the Mississippi, Ohio and Allegheny to their inheritance, may have so impressed the company of Lehi, that it reinforced the Nephite allegory of the Lord leading “the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf” to “land their souls, yea, their immortal souls at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven...” (Helaman 3:29-30)

The Jaredites and Mulekites likely navigated the St. Lawrence channel to the shores of Ripliancum (ancient Lake Iroquois / Ontario), in the general vicinity of scriptural Cumorah and the hill Ramah. Lake Ontario exceeds the size of any of the Finger Lakes to the south and was even larger anciently. (Ether 15:8, 10-11) Jaredite descendents could have migrated by land and boat to other lands including Mexico. This agrees perfectly with Joseph Smith’s understanding that the Jaredites, being led to a land “choice above all the lands of the earth”, arrived in “the lake country of America” (region of Lake Ontario), and why accounts of the Flood and the Confusion of Tongues are also found in Mexico. ([Joseph Smith \(editor\), “Traits of the Mosaic History Found Among the Azteca Nations”, \*Times and Seasons\*, June 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 16, pp 818-820; See Appendix](#))

The region referred to by Joseph Smith as “the lake country of America” where the Jaredites arrived, is commented on in *American Antiquities* by Josiah Priest, whose work Joseph Smith editorialized:

“As favoring this idea of their coming immediately from the region of the tower of Babel, their tradition goes on to inform us, that the tongues distributed...were infinitely various, and dispersed over the earth; but that it so happened that fifteen heads of families were permitted to speak the same language...These travelled till they came to a country which they called Aztalan, supposed to be in the regions of the now United States, according to Humboldt. As favoring this idea, we notice, the word Aztalan signifies in their language, water, or a country of much water. Now, no country on the earth better suits this appellation than the western country, on account of the vast number of lakes found there, and is even, by us, called the lake country.” (*American Antiquities*, “Traits of the Mosaic History found among the Azteca Nations”, pg 202)

## The Prophet Becomes Editor

January 28, 1842, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was instructed by revelation to “take in hand the Editorial department of the Times and Seasons”. The following February the paper was purchased by the Church. John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff were then appointed to take charge of the printing establishment. Though the Twelve had been commanded to take the editorial department in hand, it was not fully decided at that time whether Joseph Smith would be the editor instead of the Twelve. Regrettably, the February 15, 1842 edition of the paper was published in the Prophet’s name. (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Vol. 2, edited by Dean C. Jessee, pp 358, 362, 364; see also the apologetic notice “TO THE PUBLIC” in the March 15, 1842 edition of the *Times and Seasons*, pg 729)

Joseph Smith assumed editorial responsibility for the Church’s newspaper, March 15, 1842. The respectability of the periodical needed help, and who better to lift the reputation of the paper among the Saints. Joseph took up the duty even though his heart and mind were already engaged in greater concerns. To his subscribers, the Prophet wrote:

“This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforth. I am not responsible for the publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision, JOSEPH SMITH.”

Eight months later the Prophet officially resigned his editorial position having lifted the paper in the eyes of its patrons. The [November 15, 1842 edition](#) contained his statement of resignation:

“I beg leave to inform the subscribers of the Times and Seasons that it is impossible for me to fulfil [fulfill] the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer. The multiplicity of other business that daily devolves upon me, renders it impossible for me to do justice to a paper so widely circulated as the Times and

Seasons. I have appointed Elder John Taylor, who is less encumbered and fully competent to assume the responsibilities of that office, and I doubt not but that he will give satisfaction to the patrons of the paper. As this number commences a new volume, it also commences his editorial career. Joseph Smith.”

During the brief period that Joseph was editor the *Times and Seasons* featured several articles pertaining to Book of Mormon geography. One of these articles was published under the editorial heading AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES. The article appeared in the [July 15, 1842, issue](#). The article bears the editor’s stamp. Most of this article deals with northern American antiquities supporting the Book of Mormon. Book of Mormon passages are quoted, but not referenced by page number. The last paragraph makes reference to “Stephens and Catherwood’s researches in Central America”. The editor concludes the article by asserting that the Book of Mormon also unfolds the history of the people responsible for the ruins in Central America. There is nothing in the article insisting that Book of Mormon lands are to be found there.<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet had read non-member John Lloyd Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* several months before publishing the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial. The Prophet thought highly of Stephens’ two-volume book, but only made minor mention of Stephens’ and Catherwood’s research in the editorial.

In a letter to John M. Bernhisel dated November 16, 1841, in the handwriting of John Taylor, the Prophet praised Stephens’ book saying that it, “corresponds with & supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon; I have read the volumes with the greatest interest & pleasure & must say that of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most correct luminous & comprehensive.” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, compiled and edited by Dean C. Jessee, S.L.C, Deseret Book, 2002, pg 533)

Stephens’ bestseller does in fact elucidate on the history and “antiquities of this country” - northern America:

“...a new flood of light has poured upon the world, and the field of American antiquities has been opened.”

“...In our own country, the opening of forests and the discovery of tumuli or mounds and fortifications, extending in ranges from the lakes through the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi, mummies in a cave in Kentucky, the inscription on the rock at Dighton...the ruins of walls and a great city in Arkansas and Wisconsin Territory, had suggested...the strong belief that powerful and populous nations had occupied it and had passed away, whose histories are entirely unknown. The same evidences continue in Texas, and in Mexico they assume a still more definite form.” (*Incidents of Travel in Central America*, pp 97-98)

It is clear, from Joseph Smith’s 1842 AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article that Stephens’ book only served to confirm the Prophet’s conviction that Book of Mormon events took place in northern America.

## The EXTRACT Article

In the fall season, approaching the time when the overwhelmed Joseph resigned as editor, a series of sensational articles were published in the *Times and Seasons* featuring excerpts from Stephens' 1841 bestseller.

The first of these articles appeared September 15, (Vol. 3, No. 22, pp 911-915), under the banner, "TRUTH WILL PREVAIL" and the header EXTRACT. After an extract from Stephens' book describing Central American stone ruins, the following remarks were added by an unknown party with the intent of promoting faith in the Book of Mormon:

"...It affords great joy to have the world assist us to so much proof, that the most credulous cannot doubt. We are sorry that we could not...give the necessary cuts referred to in the original. Let us turn our subject, however, to the Book of Mormon, where these wonderful ruins of Palenque are among the mighty works of the Nephites:-and the mystery is solved."

The article then quotes page 72 of the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 5:13-16, in the current version) as if these verses somehow account for stone ruins in Central America. These verses of scripture actually state that Nephi taught his people how to work with metals and all manner of wood, and that Nephi built a temple in form like the temple built by Solomon.

Because Nephi was limited to certain materials, the temple "could not be built like unto Solomon's temple." But the "manner" (The Hebrew word "divrah" = "manner, order, style", Psalm 110:4) of the structure resembled the Jerusalem temple. There is no mention of stone masonry at all in these verses. In fact, there is no scriptural mention of any temple or synagogue built of stone in the New World. We know in fact that the Nephites used timber to construct their temples. (Helaman 3:9)

The temple built by Solomon was a magnificent timber and stone construction. According to scripture, it took seven years to build. Solomon employed 10,000 lumbermen in Lebanon, 70,000 bearers of burdens, 80,000 quarrymen and 3,300 (3,600?) supervisors. (1 Kings 5:8-18; 6:38, 2 Chronicles 2:17-18, KJV) Ignoring the supervisors and 20,000 lumbermen left at home, and assuming that Solomon had two thirds of the workforce engaged in other building projects, the effort gone into building the House of the LORD may be estimated at about 370,000 man-years.

Nephi had Zoram, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, his sisters and some others to help him build a temple in America. (2 Nephi 5:6) Let us generously suppose that in time, Nephi had hundreds of able bodied workers. With such a workforce, a timber and stone temple like the one at Jerusalem, would still have taken more than a lifetime to complete! Scripture indicates that the American temple was completed in Nephi's lifetime, possibly prior to the first war with the Lamanites. (2 Nephi 5:27-28, 34, consider also 1 Kings 5:3-5) Moreover, the temple was not the only Nephite building

project: “And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood...” (2 Nephi 5:15)

Nephi tells us that he “did build a temple...after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land...” Do “precious things” refer only to decorations? Concerning the House of the LORD, the Bible records, “...the

king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.” (1 Kings 5:17, KJV) The footnote in the LDS edition of the Bible refers to 2 Nephi 5:16. In other words, “costly stones” for the foundation were among the “precious things” omitted by Nephi in his construction. The Hebrew adjective translated “costly” has the root “yaqar” (“precious”, “prized”, “weighty”, “esteemed”). It seems that the precious and weighty things that Nephi did without in building, were not merely ornamental, they were the very foundations of massive stone structures. (1 Kings 7:9-11)

The only stone structures built by Nephites, mentioned in the Book of Mormon, are defensive stone walls, and there is no indication that these defenses were made of hewn stone:

“...Moroni on the other hand, had been preparing...

“Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land.” (Alma 48:7-8)

In contrast to the anonymous September 15, EXTRACT article on Stephens’ travels, the July 15, AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial (by Joseph Smith) cites northern American evidence supporting the Book of Mormon:

“...forts, tumuli, roads, wells, mounds, walls enclosing between one and two hundred, and even five hundred acres of land; some of them stone, and others of earth, twenty feet thick, and exceeding high...works requiring too much labor for Indians ever to have performed.” (Vol. 3, No. 18, pg 858)

In the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article, the editor Joseph Smith corroborates the account of Nephi teaching wood and metal working to his people, and the building of a temple, with archeological finds in northern America!

The unknown party that composed the EXTRACT article, on the other hand, concludes with this fallacious geographic assertion:

“Mr. Stephens’ great developments of antiquity are made bare to the eyes of all the people by reading the history of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. They lived about a narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America, with all the cities that can be found. Read the destruction of the cities at the crucifixion of Christ, pages 459-60. Who could have dreamed that twelve years would have developed such

incontrovertible testimony to the Book of Mormon? ...”

There is no “-ED” ending this commentary as there is with the editor’s AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article.

The EXTRACT article seems to be as quick and confident in concluding that the Nephites lived about a Central American narrow neck of land (endeavoring to solve the mystery put forth in the 1841 bestseller), as the Williams document is in asserting that Lehi landed in Chile – thousands of miles to the south. The geographic scale accommodating these opinions is too large - a fact that was not clear to the *Times and Seasons* committee. The comment, “...a narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America...” asserts that all of Central America is the narrow neck of land. The article exaggerates the scope of Book of Mormon geography to span both continents, joined by narrower Central America. The article asserts that the Nephites “...lived about a narrow neck of land... with all the cities that can be found.” The EXTRACT article goes so far as to claim every ancient American city as a city in Book of Mormon territory.

Today’s Mesoamerican setting proponents have scaled back. They assert that Central America embraces within it the narrow neck of land. If we turn our sights to Central America, must we conclude that the Book of Mormon’s narrow neck is the 125 mile wide Isthmus of Tehuantepec? This is the same isthmus which coastal archeological evidence shows is as problematically wide today as it was in Book of Mormon times - the same isthmus for which there is no geological evidence that it was oriented differently in the Nephite era!

No. If we insistent on ignoring the scriptural Finger Lakes region, then by far the Central American Isthmus that comes closest, to satisfying the descriptions of the narrow neck, is not the much publicized Tehuantepec, but the almost overlooked Isthmus of Rivas.

The Isthmus of Rivas runs between the western coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Here we find speculative ground for one more Mesoamerican setting. The land really does have highlands to the south (actually southeast), a realistic breadth to its Costa Rican “Bountiful”, and volcanoes in its inland sea (Lago de Nicaragua); that might hypothetically account for upheavals and days of darkness. Stephens reminds us that Columbus sailed passed the nearby shores of Honduras in search of a passage to India. (*Incidents of Travel in Central America*, Vol. I, pg 26)

The travels of John Lloyd Stephens, ESQ, took him right through the Isthmus of Rivas from Costa Rica to Nicaragua. Even so, the *Times and Seasons* makes no attempt to identify the Isthmus of Rivas as the narrow neck. In fact, both the Tehuantepec and Rivas narrow neck ideas are challenged by another *Times and Seasons* article.

## “FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS”

After the EXTRACT article, came the following write-up under the banner,



“FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS.” Like the EXTRACT article, it too is not signed:

“From an extract from “Stephens’ Incidents of Travel in Central America,” it will be seen that the proof of the Nephites and Lamanites dwelling on this continent, according to the account in the Book of Mormon, is developing itself in a more satisfactory way than the most sanguine believer in that revelation, could have anticipated. It certainly affords us a gratification that the world of mankind does not enjoy, to give publicity to such important developments of the remains and ruins of those mighty people.

“...Jared and his brother came on to this continent...and covered the whole continent from sea to sea...Lehi went down to the Red Sea to the great Southern Ocean, and crossed over to this land, and landed a little south of the Isthmus of Darien...It will be as it ever has been, the world will prove Joseph Smith a true prophet by circumstantial evidence, in experiments, as they did Moses and Elijah...” (September 15, 1842, Vol. 3, pp 921-922)

There is no “-ED” at the end of this piece.

The contributor probably had an appalling Pacific crossing in mind for Lehi’s family, inasmuch as the Isthmus of Darien (Eastern Panama) connects to the western side of South America. The statement, “...a little south of the Isthmus of Darien...” most likely refers to somewhere on the western coast of the Continent. How far south is “a little south”? The article isn’t more specific. Perhaps we are safe in assuming that several hundred miles south of the isthmus is too far.

Joseph Smith is mentioned in the third person in the article. Historians have contended that he was not the author. (“Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations”, by Matthew Roper, section titled “John Taylor’s View”, BYU Maxwell Institute, 2004) Notwithstanding this fact, the *Times and Seasons* article has found itself inserted among the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith’s assistants in the Historian’s Office of the Church. This has tended to give the article more prominence than it deserves. From this oversight, the anonymous article has ended up in more recent compilation. (*Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, edited by Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, Bookcraft 1997, pg 89)

The well meaning article comes across as confident as the Williams’ document on the subject of Lehi’s landing. But there is a discrepancy of thousands of miles between the two proposed landing sites - Chile versus “a little south of the Isthmus of Darien”.

The author of the “FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS”, article may have been convinced at the time, that the Isthmus of Darien (Isthmus of Panama) was the narrow neck of land mentioned in scripture. This conclusion is all too easily reached by those who cursorily study the Book of Mormon and then turn to maps of the Western Hemisphere.

But according to scripture, Zarahemla is south of the narrow neck of land. (Alma 22:30-34, Ether 9:31; 10:20-21) The Isthmus of Panama cannot be the narrow neck, if

Zarahemla is north of it. Did the author have all of Panama and Central America in mind as the narrow neck of land? Did he suppose that Zarahemla was in South America?

“FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS” doesn’t actually state that the Isthmus of Darien is the narrow neck of the Book of Mormon. “FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS” boldly alleges a location for Lehi’s landing. Let’s assume for the moment, that Lehi’s family landed a little south of Panama. What are we to conclude then about their land of first inheritance? Is it in South America, while the land of Zarahemla and the narrow neck are somewhere in Central America? Costa Rica with its Isthmus of Rivas, not to mention Tehuantepec, is many hundreds of miles from Panama’s border with Colombia! Following scripture we see that Nephi’s land of first inheritance cannot be many hundreds of miles south of Zarahemla.

A group including the very young and old, with flocks and belongings could journey through bewildering terrain, from the borders of the land of Lehi-Nephi to Zarahemla in under 21 days – only 12 – 8 = 4 days at a minimum. (Mosiah 23:3; 24:20, 25) Nephi and his followers did not remove themselves many hundreds of miles from the place of first inheritance. (Alma 22:28, 2 Nephi 5:7-8, Mosiah 9:1; 10:13) Are we to conclude from the “FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS” article, that after landing and going “forth upon the land”, aging Lehi and his family trudge a thousand or more miles, from South America through mosquito infested Panama to someplace in Central America before designating the place as their inheritance? (1 Nephi 18:23) Wouldn’t it have been better to land on a Central American coast in the first place?

It’s easy to see why some might think that placing Zarahemla in Central America is uninspired, and that the lands of the Book of Mormon are to be found in Panama and the Northwest coast of Colombia. This at least is consistent with the statement that Lehi landed south of the Isthmus of Darien. But the interesting excerpt from Stephens’ book featured in the “FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS” article, discusses the people of Central America:

“According to Fuentes, the chronicler of the kingdom of Guatimala [Guatemala], the kings of Quinche and Cachiquel were descended from the Toltecan Indians, who, when they came into this country, found it already inhabited by people of different nations. According to the manuscripts of Don Juan Torres, the grandson of the last king of the Quiches...the Toltecas themselves descended from the house of Israel, who were released by Moses from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and after crossing the Red Sea, fell into Idolatry. To avoid the reproofs of Moses, or from fear of his inflicting upon them some chastisement, they separated from him and his brethren, and under the guidance of Tanub, their chief, passed from one continent to the other, to a place which they called the seven caverns, a part of the kingdom of Mexico, where they founded the celebrated city of Tula.”

What does the Isthmus of Darien have to do with ancient Israelites of Mexico? Is there any conceivable way that Book of Mormon lands could span North and South America as many early Latter-day Saints imagined? Could Panama or Rivas, or

Tehuantepec, possibly be the narrow neck with Cumorah near Lake Ontario? The Book of Mormon itself raises serious objections to this gross geography. For instance, how could a search party mistake the Finger Lakes region where Cumorah resides, for a land that is south of Panama, Rivas, or Tehuantepec? (Helaman 8:7-10, 21:25-26, Mormon 6:4, 6, Ether 1:1; 15:8-11, Doctrine and Covenants 128:20)

The narrow neck and Zarahemla cannot be thousands of miles from Cumorah!

There is a problem with the generic “hourglass” shaped geography. It is commonly presumed that all seas bordering Book of Mormon lands are oceans. Generic maps (some accompanied by geographic disclaimers) show no other way through the wilderness to “a land of many waters” than through the small neck. How could Limhi’s search party have passed through the narrow neck without knowing it? How could they have thought they found Zarahemla when they were actually near Cumorah?

Some may argue that the “small neck of land” wasn’t noticeably small. But, the description “small neck” came through divine translation! It’s completely reasonable to believe that the small neck of land seemed “small” to the Nephites. (Alma 22:32)

The search party and narrow neck dilemma results from imagining all Book of Mormon lands constrained like an hourglass between oceans. A setting involving woodlands and ancient inland seas solves the problem, by allowing more than one route through wilderness to the land of many waters (the Finger Lakes region).

One way to the land of many waters was a route north of Zarahemla. There was also an obscure way from the land of Nephi in the south. This explains how a place not far from Cumorah could be confused for Zarahemla by the party from Nephi, without traveling through the narrow pass, north of Zarahemla. Scripture reminds us that the lands of Zarahemla and Nephi were almost entirely (but not completely) surrounded by water. (Alma 22:32) This “water” needn’t be saltwater.

It is absurd to think that the party sent by Limhi wandered thousands of miles, presumably marking their return path, not realizing that they had crossed through the small neck of land (north of Zarahemla), and then mistakenly think they had found Zarahemla in a temperate land far north.

No Central or South American setting is compatible with Cumorah’s location (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20), and even though it is scripturally untenable, Asia’s Malay Peninsula fits the simplistic hourglass representation of Book of Mormon lands better than Mexico / Central America. The anonymous *Times and Seasons* articles, enthralled with Stephens’ finds in Central America, are not carefully reconciled with scripture. The enthusiastic intent of these articles, however sincere, seems to have been to strap the Book of Mormon to the coattail of Stephens’ success.

## **The ZARAHEMLA Article**

A little more than a month before the Prophet resigned as editor, there appeared another article highlighting world traveler John Lloyd Stephens’ popular book. The article discourses upon (actually tries to set straight) the alleged connection to Book of

Mormon lands. October 1, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 23, pg 927, under the header ZARAHMLA, the article reads:

“Since our ‘Extract’ was published from Mr. Stephens’ ‘Incidents of Travel,’ &c., we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or Guatemala [Guatemala], is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south. The city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood upon this land as will be seen from the following words in the Book of Mormon:—‘And now it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite on the line Bountiful, and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.’ [See Book of Mormon 3d edition, page 280-81]”

The Nephites truly saw themselves as “upon an isle of the sea”, nearly surrounded by water. But what did they understand the word “isle” to mean? As explained earlier, the word “isle” which Jacob, son of Lehi, uses in describing his people’s new land of inheritance is undoubtedly the same Hebrew word translated “isle” in Isaiah, and elsewhere in scripture. Jacob in fact refers to the mention of “isles” in Hebrew scripture. The Hebrew word “ee” is rendered “isle” or “island” but more generally means “coast”, or “region”; hence Isaiah’s use of the word “isle” in connection with coastal countries which are not islands at all. (Isaiah 20:6; 23:1-6) Searching out the meaning of the term used by Isaiah, we become better informed as to Jacob’s meaning when he describes his county as “an isle of the sea”:

“...we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea.

“But great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea; wherefore as it says isles, there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren.”<sup>6</sup> (2 Nephi 10:20-21)

One of the choicest regions on earth is the vicinity of the Great Lakes of North America. Here Sister Olive has seen what the lands neighboring Cumorah would have looked like with ancient inland seas restored. She has found an inland “isle” (in the Hebrew sense), bordered by east and west, south and north bodies of water, a region accessible from the Atlantic. Are there other coasts inhabited by Jacob’s brethren? Of course!

We shouldn’t be so quick to correlate Book of Mormon lands with the first or even the third isthmus that catches our attention, even if these turn out to be inhabited by Jacob’s brethren.

The sensational *Times and Seasons* ZARAHMLA article continues:

“It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and veracity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them: and that a large stone with engravings upon it as Mosiah said; and a ‘large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,’ as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left resemblances of the, (to him,) lost and unknown...”<sup>7</sup>

The great city Zarahemla burned at the Savior’s death, as did other Nephite cities, because they were mainly built of timber - the most plentiful building material in the forested land of promise. (3 Nephi 9:3, Helaman 3:9-11, Ether 10:19, 14:17) When the Nephites rebuilt their cities, they again used timber. (Mormon 5:5) The article seems anxious to connect stone ruins in Mesoamerican jungles with the cities of the Book of Mormon.

No hewn stone is mentioned among Book of Mormon descriptions of towers, houses, synagogues, temples, or cities built in America. Even prisons were made of timber. (Helaman 5:44) Timber works a plenty are mentioned in the book, as are mighty earth works, heaps and trenches. When timber was scarce because of deforestation, Book of Mormon people lived in tents or built with some kind of cement. Ostensibly, this was the same kind of cement that held the sides of the stone box together in which rested the plates – the cemented box that was secreted in a New York hillside. (Joseph Smith - History: 52)

Moisture resistant Nephite cement may have required processing a ground limestone mixture at high temperature. (Leviticus 14:42, Isaiah 33:12) The ingredients are plentiful in the Great Lakes area. Are we to believe that Moroni packed the plates, the Urim and Thummim, the breastplate, and some Mesoamerican cement, thousands of miles, to the Finger Lakes region? Or are we to suppose that he set up a small cement making operation after finally arriving? Isn’t it more likely that he used cement already available and processed (not necessarily by himself) near his northern American homeland?

[See Appendix: “An Instance of Mormon Apocrypha”](#)

“Cement” at the time the Book of Mormon was first published meant “any substance applied in a soft or glutinous state to the surfaces of solid bodies to make them cohere firmly.” (Oxford Dictionary) Ancient northern American wattle and daub houses qualify as “houses of cement”. (Helaman 3:9) North American mound builder societies used a kind of plaster / cement in their constructions. (George Stuart, *Who Were the “Mound Builders”?*, *National Geographic*, Vol. 142, No. 6, December 1972, pg 789; see also Henry Clyde Shetrone, *The Mound-Builders*, pg 49)

The party that composed the ZARAHEMLA article came to realize that Central America is situated north of the Isthmus of Panama and that it embraces several hundred miles of territory from north to south. The fact that they sought to recognize this in the article’s opening paragraph, does not mean that they understood that Book of Mormon territory was quite localized. The committee only wished to announce their conclusion that Zarahemla was in Central America, based on publicized findings of stone ruins, one large carved stone in particular, and an interpretation of Alma 22:32,

which they did not elaborate on. The writer(s) may have also intended to tacitly apologize (to readers who noticed the problem) for the *Times and Seasons* earlier announcement about the narrow neck embracing Central America. If Zarahemla is in Central America, Panama cannot be the narrow neck, neither can all of Mesoamerica.

The ZARAHEMPLA article makes no attempt to suggest that Cumorah is anywhere near southern Mexico, and we can only speculate on what the writer(s) had in mind for the narrow neck - Tehuantepec? Or did they suppose that the Isthmus of Darien was the narrow neck after all, and just didn't realize that the narrow neck is north of Zarahemla. Had they confused the "narrow strip", south of Zarahemla, for the narrow neck? (Alma 22:27, 32) Is this why the only isthmus given any attention in the article is the Isthmus of Darien?

As for the large stone carved with hieroglyphics; indeed, a large stone with engravings on it was brought to Mosiah I; the only large engraved stone mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Are we expected to believe that because a large stone with engravings on it was found in Central America that the Book of Mormon Zarahemla must have stood there? Northern American peoples also engraved on large stones.

The party responsible for the *Times and Seasons* ZARAHEMPLA article brushes geography with a verse from Alma, leaps to the rocky conclusion that Zarahemla has been found in Central America, and then sees fit to attach this disclaimer:

"We are not going to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of the opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon...It will not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens' ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon..."

There is no name taking responsibility for the article. We should not presume that this omission implies the editor's full endorsement. Joseph had more pressing concerns than to micromanage the brethren and everything they published; especially at a time when he found it necessary to keep a low public profile. Joseph was in seclusion for much of the fall of 1842 when the unsigned commentaries came out. The ZARAHEMPLA article was published in the same October 1, issue as a signed epistle from the prophet in hiding, dated September 6. (Doctrine and Covenants 128)

It turns out that the ruins of Quirigua found by Stephens and Catherwood date to the eighth century A.D. They are definitely not the ruins of Zarahemla or any other city referred to in the Book of Mormon. Still, descendents of Book of Mormon peoples could have migrated from lands far to the north into Mexico and Central America and influenced the cultures there. (1 Nephi 12:21-23, Mormon 5:15, Moroni 9:9-10, 18-19) But how indeed do Stephens' ruined cities compare to the cities of the Nephites in the Promised Land, long ago destroyed – many of them burned to the ground?

"...whatsoever lands we had passed by, and the inhabitants thereof were not gathered in, were destroyed by the Lamanites, and their towns, and their villages, and

cities were burned with fire..." (Mormon 5:5)

Stephens found it impossible to write descriptions of the ruins which he came upon, without repeatedly using the word "stone". Look up any of the *Times and Seasons* extracts in which Stephens describes Mesoamerican ruins and you will find that he cannot leave the word "stone" alone. (e.g. "hewn stone" in "RUINS RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN YUCATAN MEXICO", *Times and Seasons*, November 15, 1842, Vol. 4, No. 1, pg 184 – 185, John Taylor editor; the same issue in which Joseph Smith formally announced his resignation as editor) Moreover, search for examples of stone used in buildings described in the Bible. What do you find? (See for example Leviticus 14:45, 1 Chronicles 14:1; 22:14-15, 2 Chronicles 16:6; 24:12; 34:11, 1 Kings 15:22, 2 Kings 22:6, Habakkuk 2:11, Ezekiel 26:12, Ezra 5:8, Haggai 1:8; 2:15, Zechariah 5:4)

Now search the entire volume of the Book of Mormon for the use of the word "stone" in connection with any building built in Book of Mormon lands. What do you find? Ask yourself why.

Finally, search the entire Book Mormon for the use of the words "timber" or "wood" in connection with building. Nephi knew how to work metals and wood (no mention of stone masonry) and this knowledge he passed on to his people.

Nephi did not have materials prepared and laid up in advance, as David did for Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:2-5), but Nephi's personal wood working skills were divinely endowed and disciplined. (1 Nephi 18:1-2, 4) Nephi's skills suited him particularly well as the founder of a mighty nation in a temperate, forested Promised Land. The LORD led Nephi to a land where his skills would be suited for erecting a temple!

Note especially, the building projects of King Noah about four centuries after Nephi first built the temple:

"And it came to pass that King Noah built many elegant and spacious buildings and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and all manner of precious things, of gold and of silver, and of iron, and of brass, and of ziff, and of copper;

"And he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof, all of which was of fine wood and was ornamented with gold and silver and with precious things." (Mosiah 11:8-9)

Like a North American Herod the Great, "...he [King Noah] also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work within the walls of the temple, of fine wood and of copper and of brass." There is no mention anywhere of stone masonry! (Mosiah 11:10) It was skill in metal and woodworking that crafted ostentatious and comfortable furniture for the king's cabinet of high priests. (Mosiah 11:11) Ironically "Noah" means "comfort".

One would think that the egocentric King Noah would have commissioned enduring works of stone, and that there would be some mention of this in scripture. But there is none. It appears that wood and metalworking were the primary trades of King Noah's workmen, afforded them by their heritage and the land.

We learn that the Jaredites had destroyed the forests and then themselves, and

that in the land northward, the Nephites suffered "...whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings." (Helaman 3:9)

Q: What can we conclude about the *Times and Seasons* articles on extracts from John Lloyd Stephens', *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*?

A: The articles are not consistent with themselves or scripture. Their authorship is unknown. Even though the official editor at the time was Joseph Smith, these sensational articles should not be regarded as canonical. There is absolutely no proof that these publications represent an evolving understanding in the mind of the Prophet. Their authority in matters of Book of Mormon geography does not deserve to be ranked any higher than questionable.

See [Appendix for a table of all \*Times and Seasons\* articles pertaining to Book of Mormon geography](#), published while Joseph Smith was editor.

## Tactfully Correcting the Error

The location of Cumorah was affirmed by the Prophet in the October 1, 1842, edition of the *Times and Seasons* (Doctrine and Covenants 128). The Prophet's published letter, on the heel of the ZARAHMLA piece, tacitly discounts the presumptuous Quirigua setting.

That Joseph's letter is to be regarded by Latter-day Saints as the word of the LORD is established by the Prophet's written statement of September 1, 1842:

"I will say to all the saints, that I desired with exceeding great desire, to have addressed them from the stand...But inasmuch as it is out of my power to do so, I will write the word of the Lord from time to time...and send it to you by mail..."

"...I subscribe myself your servant in the Lord, prophet and seer of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith" (Doctrine and Covenants 127:10, 12)

Revealing the location of Cumorah, among other sacred things, the epistle to follow clearly carries the authority mentioned in Joseph's previous letter:

"As I stated to you in my letter before I left my place, that I would write to you from time to time and give you information in relation to many subjects..." (Doctrine and Covenants 128:1)

Why didn't the LORD, by the Prophet Joseph Smith, do more to call attention to the fact that certain newspaper articles, printed in the fall of 1842, were overreaching and misguided? It may not have been expedient to reprimand the staff who did their best to carry on with the newspaper in the Prophet's public absence. It is likely that Joseph at some point expressed his appreciation to them. With the revealed location of Cumorah affirmed, the LORD has left it to those who diligently seek, to judge between



“gold” and “silver” and “dross”.

During the time that Joseph Smith held the title of official editor of the *Times and Seasons*; the newspaper was obliged to recognize his position by including at the end of each issue: “...edited, printed and published ...by JOSEPH SMITH”. This in no way means that Joseph was involved in every instance as acting editor, or that he supervised the publication of each article. There were times when Joseph delegated the publishing of the *Times and Seasons* to others, especially during episodes when he was in hiding (August, September and October 1842). The Diary of Wilford Woodruff (22 September, 2 October 1842) notes that others were given responsibility for publishing the *Times and Seasons*. (See also *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Vol. 2, pg 482, footnote) Those articles that bare Joseph’s “ED” came under his personal supervision; this certainly cannot be said for all of the *Times and Seasons* articles published during the fall of 1842. A slight difference in the attribution at the end of the newspaper may in fact be significant. Issues actively edited by Joseph Smith conclude as follows:

“The Times and Seasons, is Edited by Joseph Smith. Printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by Joseph Smith”

Other issues, including those featuring sensational unsigned commentary on Stephens’ book, and speculative South and Central American geographies for the Book of Mormon, end:

“The Times and Seasons, is edited, printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH”

Note the absence of the explicit remark: “Edited by Joseph Smith” (unlike previous editions). It was correct to say that the *Times and Seasons* was published “by Joseph Smith” during his public absence, in that he had commissioned others to act as his agents in his stead. (Doctrine and Covenants 127:1) The fact that Joseph’s name appears at the very end of several fall issues certainly does not mean that the unsigned contents were written by him.

We find that when John Taylor soon after became official editor of the *Times and Seasons*, issues explicitly ended with:

“The Times and Season, is edited by JOHN TAYLOR. Printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOHN TAYLOR & WILFORD WOODRUFF.”

During his public absence, there were times when the Prophet was secluded at his own home in Nauvoo. Joseph’s personal clerks kept journal entries on his whereabouts and daily business. There is no mention in Joseph’s journal of any of the unsigned fall articles treating Stephens’ bestseller. Joseph’s letter to the Church

(locating Cumorah in western New York), on the other hand, is recorded there. The Prophet's letter begins: "Journeying, Sepr. 6th 1842. To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Sendeth Greeting." The journal notes that, at Joseph's request, the letter was read "to the saints at the Grove near the Temple" on Sunday, September 11, 1842.

Unlike Joseph's canonical epistles, there is no evidence whatsoever that any of the unsigned newspaper articles were regarded as divinely inspired, or doctrinally authoritative. There is no evidence that these articles were intended to be recognized as anything more than provocative and interesting press.

While Joseph was secluded at his home, he met with Elder John Taylor of the Quorum of the Twelve on a couple of occasions. His Journal notes that on the evening of Wednesday September 21, 1842, Joseph talked to Elder Taylor about the removing of a printing press to Keokuk. There were prospects of Keokuk becoming a Mormon town, and Joseph wanted one of the printing presses moved there for publishing a political paper. John Taylor was evidently overseeing the presses at Nauvoo.

Still secluded at his home, Joseph was again visited by Elder Taylor on Friday, September 23, 1842. There is no indication that during these meetings, the upcoming October 1, ZARAHEMLA article was ever regarded as an item of sufficient importance to be discussed. Had it been important to recognize the article as divinely inspired or otherwise authoritative, its publication could easily have been postponed till there was no longer a need for the Prophet to keep a low profile. Had he felt inclined, the Prophet could have openly given his "ED" to the piece, as he had the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article, or signed his name to it, as he had his letter to the Church that featured in the very same issue as the provocative ZARAHEMLA piece.

According to Wilford Woodruff's November 12th, 1842 diary entry, Joseph had up till then, not really felt "secure to stay at home". It was on that date that the Nauvoo city council passed an ordinance "regulating the proceedings on writs of habeas corpus". (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pp 185-192)

The Prophet's journal records that he was sick with a sever pain in his left side on the morning of Sunday, October 1, 1842. This was the day the ZARAHEMLA article came out. The journal further records that the Prophet had asked that a notice be published in regards to his having examined Temple Committee financial accounts to his satisfaction (published October 15, 1842 in the *Times and Seasons*; the Prophet was again in hiding on this date), but no mention is made of the ZARAHEMLA piece.

There is no record of any visit by the Prophet to the Nauvoo printing office during the period of his public absence. Joseph's journal records that he came to call at the printing office on Saturday, December 3, 1842. By this time the Prophet had officially resigned as editor. According to his journal, Joseph visited the printing office multiple times prior to his public absence. ([See Appendix: "Joseph Smith, Josiah Priest and the Times and Seasons"](#))

## More from the Source of the ZARHEMLA Piece

Exactly one year after featuring the ZARHEMLA article, the *Times and Seasons*, with John Taylor now as official editor, published STEPHEN'S [STEPHENS'] WORKS ON CENTRAL AMERICA (October 1, 1843, Vol. 4, No. 22, pg 346). This piece is congruent to the ZARHEMLA article. In fact, the same author(s) may have been involved.

The article advertises that Stephens' book "has been read with great interest throughout this continent, and tens of thousands of copies have been sent to, and sold in Europe..." The article stresses that Stephens' work "ought to be in the hands of every Latter Day Saint; corroborating, as it does the history of the Book of Mormon. There is no stronger circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the latter book...than that contained in Mr. Stephens' works."

The article then overreaches, as in the ZARHEMLA piece, asserting that the Book of Mormon gives "accounts... of cities that bear a striking resemblance to those mentioned by Mr. Stephens, both in regards to magnificence and location..."

Though published while Joseph Smith was still alive, this in no way gives prophetic authority to the piece. We need only recall Joseph's public refusal to take responsibility for things not published under his supervision. ([Appendix: Times and Seasons, March 15, 1842](#))

On January 1, 1844 another article was published in the *Times and Seasons*, this time unmistakably by the editor. The editorial titled "ANCIENT RUINS" appeared with the following comments:

"Every day adds fresh testimony to the already accumulated evidence on the authenticity of the "Book of Mormon". At the time that book was translated there was very little known about the ruined cities and dilapidated buildings. The general presumption was, that no people possessing more intelligence than our present race of Indians had ever inhabited this continent, and the accounts given in the Book of Mormon concerning large cities and civilized people having inhabited this land, was generally disbelieved and pronounced a humbug. Priest, since then has thrown some light on this interesting subject. Stephens in his "Incidents of Travel in Central America," has thrown in a flood of testimony, and from the following statement it is evident that the Book of Mormon does not give a more extensive account of large and populous cities than those discoveries now demonstrate to be even in existence.-Ed"

The article, bearing the editors mark, then quotes from the October 11, 1843, *Texas Telegraph* on stone ruins found in Texas:

"...vestiges of ancient cities and ruined castles or temples on the Rio Peurco and on the Colorado of the west...huge blocks of limestone regularly hewn and laid in cement...there are similar ruins on the Colorado of the west, which empties into the California sea...Neither the Indians residing in the vicinity, nor the oldest Spanish

settlers of the nearest settlements, can give any account of the origin of these buildings. They merely know that they stood there from the earliest periods to which their traditions extend. The antiquarian who is desirous to trace the Aztec or Toltec races in their migrations from the northern regions of America, may find in these ancient edifices many subjects of curious speculation.”

The *Times and Seasons* article mentions Josiah Priest, whose work the previous editor (Joseph Smith) editorialized (AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES, July 15, 1842). Commenting on Priest, Joseph Smith had stressed the existence of advanced societies in northern America (mound builders), and related them to Book of Mormon peoples.

On the subject of stone ruins, the choice of words used in the 1844 article is interesting:

“...the Book of Mormon does not give a more extensive account of large and populous cities than those discoveries now demonstrate to be even in existence.”

The Book of Mormon in fact gives no account of ancient American edifices like those described in the 1843 *Texas Telegraph* article. The Book of Mormon’s use of the word “palace” (Alma 22:2) doesn’t have to mean a hewn stone edifice. King Noah’s “palace” was timber. (Mosiah 11:9) The word translated “palaces” in 2 Nephi 23:22 (Isaiah 13:22, KJV) relates to the Hebrew word “heykhal” which also means temple hall or nave. (Ezekiel 41:1) The word doesn’t have to mean a temple made of stone. The Hebrew word “armon”, translated “palace” (Isaiah 25:2, KJV) can also mean a “citadel”, “castle”, or “stronghold”. It is interesting to note that E.G. Squier, in his report on *Aboriginal Monuments of the State of New York*, refers to mound builder defensive earth and timberworks as “castles” (pg 82).

The January 1 1844 edition of the *Times and Seasons* makes it clear that the editor in charge at the time was John Taylor. Some have mistaken the publication date of the October 11, 1843, *Texas Telegraph* article, quoted in ANCIENT RUINS, for the publication date of the *Times and Seasons* article. (See for example *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, Edited by Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, Bookcraft 1997, pg 91, Footnote to entry 15) Some have also erroneously attributed the ANCIENT RUINS article to Joseph Smith. John L. Lund, for instance, misattributes the article to Joseph Smith. (*Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon is this the Place?*, pg 70) Lund cites Dahl and Cannon’s compilation rather than looking up the article directly in the *Times and Seasons*. Lund mistakenly attributes to Joseph Smith the ZARAHÉMLA piece and other articles published in the *Times and Seasons* during the Prophet’s autumn 1842 seclusion. Lund also omits the fact that the ANCIENT RUINS article makes reference to Josiah Priest. The *Texas Telegraph* article was presented again in “ANCIENT RUINS IN TEXAS” (*Times and Seasons*, August 15, 1844, Vol. 5, No. 15, pp 622-623, John Taylor, editor and proprietor).

The same writer(s), responsible for the ZARAHÉMLA piece (1842) and STEPHEN’S WORKS ON CENTRAL AMERICA (1843) could have influenced the

following remarks eulogizing the Prophet Joseph:

“...General Joseph Smith, one of the greatest men that ever lived on the earth; emphatically proved so, by being inspired by God to bring forth the Book of Mormon, which gives the true history of the natives of this continent; their ancient glory and cities:-which cities have been discovered by Mr. Stevens [Stephens] in Central America, exactly where the Book of Mormon left them.” (*Times and Seasons*, April 1, 1845, Vol. 6, No. 6, pg 855)

At this time and season in Church History, Stephens’ and Gatherwood’s works became a nail for some to hang their faith on. One convert wrote:

“As you enquire [inquire] after the reasons that operated to change my mind to the present faith, I only remark that Stevens’ [Stephens’] Travels had some influence, as an external evidence of the truth of the Book of Mormon.” (“LETTER OF ORSON SPENCER”, *Times and Seasons*, January 2, 1843, Vol. 4, No. 4, pg 51)

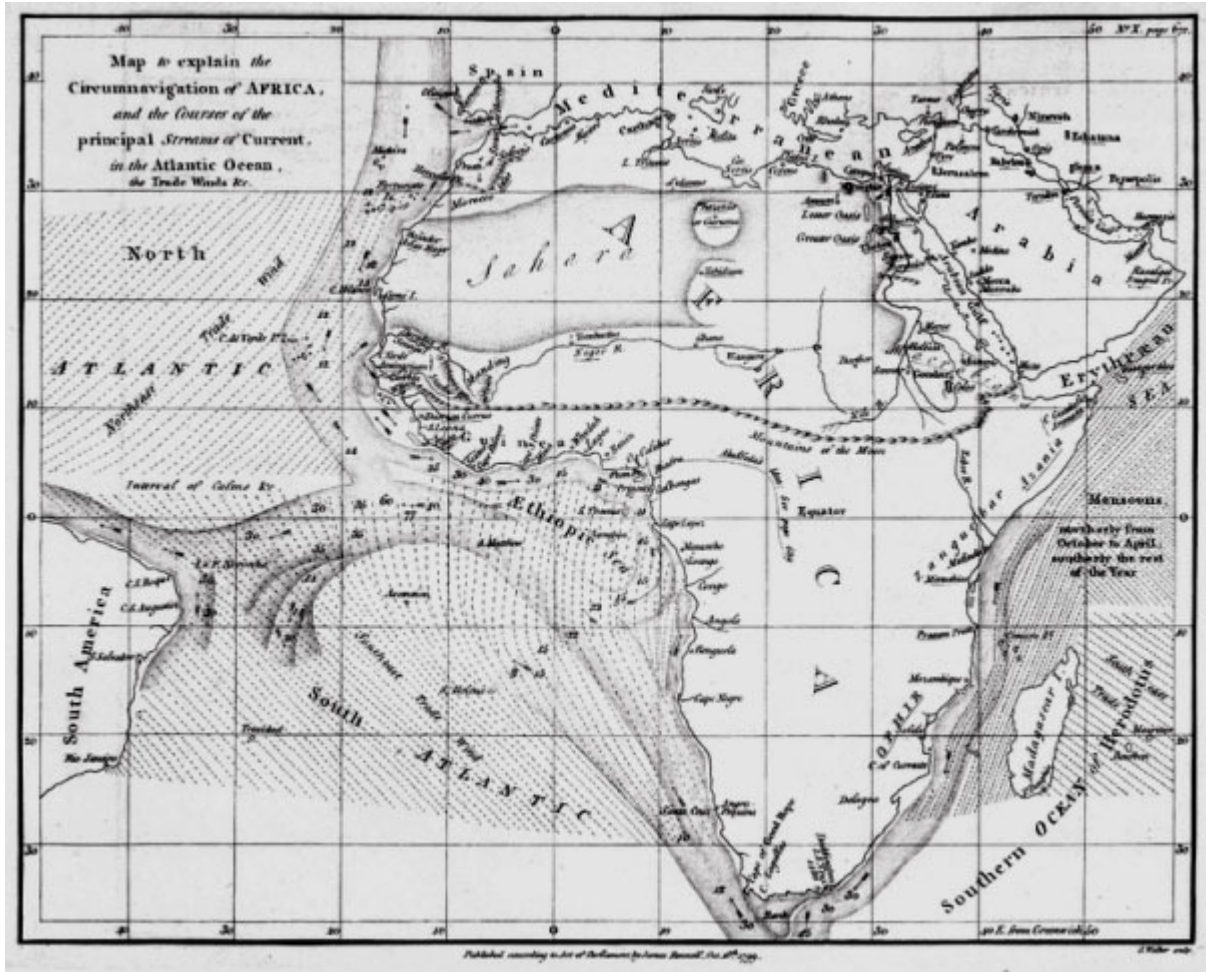
Until the Mayan ruins discovered in Yucatan and elsewhere in Central America were properly dated and found to be more recent than Book of Mormon times, Saints were inclined to suppose that these indeed were the ruins of Book of Mormon cities. Stephens’ own opinion that the Central American ruins he found were not of “great antiquity” seems to have gone unheeded. (*Incidents of Travel in Central America*, Volume II, chapter XXVI) Joseph Smith had read both volumes of the 1841 bestseller and chose to fortify his signed articles with extracts from Priest’s *American Antiquities*.

The writer of the 1843 article on Stephens’ works exuberantly announced that *Incidents of travel in Central America* afforded “the most indubitable testimony of the historical truth of that book [the Book of Mormon], which has been treated so lightly by the literati and would be philosophers of the present age.”

The Saints of course, were not entirely beyond treating the Book of Mormon lightly themselves as Doctrine and Covenants 84:54-57 attests.

Thus unsigned newspaper articles (not LDS scripture), became the sandy foundation on which Mesoamerican pseudo settings were built. No amount of glamour or erudition walled into these edifices of ideas is likely to improve their foundation. For a more detailed discussion (in question and answer format) see [Appendix: “Joseph Smith, Josiah Priest and the \*Times and Seasons\*”](#).

## Chapter Three Chart and Pictures



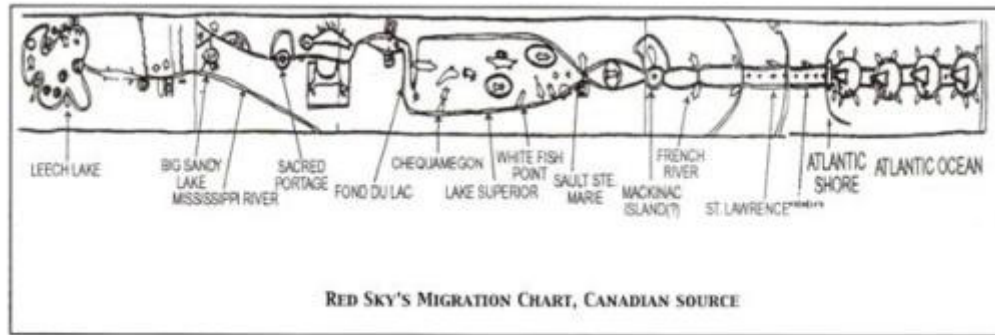
### ***The Most Feasible Voyage from the Arabian Peninsula to the New World***

The above map shows currents and winds that could have carried ancient voyagers across the Erythraean Sea (the northwest part of the Indian Ocean), along the coasts of Africa and then across the Atlantic Ocean – the shorter distance to the New World. Enough stored drinking water was required onboard for the comparatively short Atlantic crossing.

One may imagine something of a play on words between the Egyptian / Hebrew expression “Yore-ayin-t’hom” (“Irreantum”, 1 Nephi 17:5) and the ancient Gentile name of the northwestern Indian Ocean - “Erythra Thalassa”. The southern sea which Israelites called the “Reed Sea”, “Yam Suf” (1 Kings 9:26) is given the name “Erythra Thalassa” in the Septuagint. (Exodus XV.4) It is from this Greek name that western translations of the Bible get the familiar “Red Sea”.

In order to keep all of the statutes and commandments “in all things according to the Law of Moses”, Lehi was guided to the temperate Northern Hemisphere of America. (2 Nephi 5:10) His family may have been guided across the “gulf” in a “strait and narrow coarse” (Helaman 3:29-30) - up the Mississippi, Ohio and Allegheny rivers. At length they arrived at an “isle” or coast near an inland “west sea” (Lake Erie,

neighboring Cumorah, Alma 22:28, D&C 128:20). It was as if the Lord had turned the sea into a flowing “path”, leading to their inheritance. (2 Nephi 10:20)



***How the Algonquin say they arrived in North America  
(THIS LAND: They Came from the EAST, pg 220)***

The large Algonquian language group includes Mi'kmaq and the language spoken by the Algonquin (pronounced "Algonkin") tribe. According to their tradition; the ancestors of the Algonquin long ago crossed the "great water" (the Atlantic Ocean). They came from "the land of the rising sun". Their boats entered the ST. Lawrence and landed on the shores of "Turtle Island" (northern America) in the vicinity of the Great Lakes. In Red Sky's Migration chart above, notice the channel on the east and the representation of the Atlantic Ocean.





***Jaredite Barge - 8 ft model, W. Vincent Coon, 2010***

***Joseph Smith actually tells us where in America the Jaredites arrived. He describes the location as “the lake country of America” near Lake Ontario. ([See Appendix, Times and Seasons, June 15, 1842, pp 818 – 820](#))***

Mesoamerican setting theorists would have us believe that because the Olmec civilization dates to about the time period of the Book of Mormon Jaredites, that this proves that the lands of the Book of Mormon must be in Mexico and Central America. Less talked about are the Great Lakes copper working societies that existed at about the same time - if not earlier. Moreover, the respected Mexican historian Don Mariano Veytia, records that ancient peoples of Mexico and Central America migrated by land and water from northern America. Before that, they came from the Tower of Babel. (*Ancient America Rediscovered*, pp 40, 51, 138)

Modern mainstream archaeologists recognize that certain mound builders of North America built grand and impressive cities before the rise of Olmec civilization – “... 'doing Olmec' before the Olmecs” (Archeologist Robert Connelly, quoted in “Dirt Mounds Yield Clues to Antiquity”; Peter N. Spotts, Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 19, 1997)



***Native American “Cement” House,  
A Reproduction of a type made by the Mound Builders of North America  
(Photograph by H. Roe)***

“And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement...” (Helaman 3:9)

## Chapter Three Footnotes

4 “Hineh” in Hebrew means “lo, behold – look” or be “directed toward” something. (1 Nephi 16:26) “Liahona” is interpreted “compass” or “director”. (Alma 37:38) The description “compass” in 2 Nephi 5:12, however, could come from the Hebrew word “hoog” = “circle, vault” or “dome”. (E.g. Proverbs 8:27) The spiritual meaning of “Liahona” (L’Yaho-hineh) is inferred by Alma: “...look to God...” (Alma 37:38-47) Written in a circle, “hither to the LORD (Jehovah)” can also be read. (1 Nephi 10:19, Alma 37:12) “Liahona” may also be seen as L’Yahoenai, the alternate spelling of “Elioenai”, which literally means “to the LORD [Jehovah] my eyes”. (1 Chronicles 3:23-24, KJV)

ליהוועני

5 *History of the Church* inserts the following after the date June 25, 1842:

“The Work of Stephens and Catherwood.

Messrs. Stephens and Catherwood have succeeded in collecting in the interior of America a large amount of relics of the Nephites, or the ancient inhabitants of America treated of in the Book of Mormon, which relics have recently been landed in New York.” (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pg 44)

The above statement was not written or dictated by Joseph Smith. It is a more recent inclusion in a redacted compilation of church history. The Prophet’s journal entry for Saturday, June 25, 1842 (in the handwriting of Willard Richards, clerk) makes no mention of the work of Stephens and Catherwood, or of relics. (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Vol. 2, pg 391; see also “Introduction to Joseph Smith’s Journal”, pp xxii – xxv) Joseph Smith’s AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial, citing evidence that Book of Mormon events took place in northern America, was issued the following July.

Stephens brought to New York hundreds of artifacts from Mayan sites. Among these were sculptures and architectural remnants. Shortly after arriving in New York, these relics were lost when the building that housed them was destroyed by fire. (Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen, “Frederick Catherwood Architect”, Oxford University Press, 1950, pp 82-84)

It has been established that much of what Stephens discovered dates more recent than Book of Mormon times. Arguably, the artifacts Stephens removed could be tied to the “ancient inhabitants of America treated of in the Book of Mormon” in that immigrant descendents could have produced the relics. In any case, the insertion in *History of the Church* should not be construed as a statement by the Prophet placing Book of Mormon lands in Central America, or dating the relics mentioned to Book of Mormon times.

Having read, “with the greatest interest”, both volumes of Stephens’ work, it is not likely that Joseph Smith missed Stephens’ conclusion that “there are not sufficient

grounds for the belief in the great antiquity that has been ascribed to these ruins; that they are not the works of people who have passed away, and whose history has become unknown; but...they were constructed by the races who occupied the country at the time of the invasion by the Spaniards, or of some not very distant progenitors.” (*Incident of Travel in Central America*, Vol. II, Chapter XXVI, “COMPARATIVE MODERN DATE OF RUINS”, pp 442-443)

**6** The statement, “...the Lord has made the sea our path...” may relate to the meaning of “Irreantum”. Currents are like paths, water courses, or streams in the sea. (Psalm 8:8) The south and north equatorial currents will carry a vessel from the western coast of Africa directly to the Americas. There are currents which will assist a vessel to eastern North America from seas near the equator.

Nephi comments, “And we beheld the sea which we called Irreantum, which being interpreted, is many waters.” (1 Nephi 17:5) This verse does not say that “many waters” is an exact translation of “Irreantum”, only that it is interpreted as such. Similarly, when Lehi and Nephi say, “...a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4) they are not saying that “Messiah” literally means, “Savior of the world”. “Messiah” literally means “Anointed One”.

“Irreantum” may be an anglicized pronunciation of an Egyptian loanword, combined with a Hebrew expression for the ocean. “Yorim” means “water courses”. It can be translated “streams”. The word appears in Hebrew scripture. (Isaiah 33:21) The construct “water courses of ...” becomes “yore” (pronounced “yoray”; see Y’shaYahu (Isaiah) 7:18 in Hebrew). The expression “ayin t’hom” literally means “fountain of the deep”. “Fountains of the deep” is a scriptural expression describing the ancient abyss, sea or ocean. (Proverbs 8:28, Genesis 7:11) Nephi also refers to Irreantum as “the waters of the great deep.” (2 Nephi 4:20; see also Isaiah 51:10) “Yore-ayin-t’hom”, “Irreantum” therefore literally means “water courses of the fountain of the deep”.

## אֵי-עֵיִן-תְּהוֹם

For the sake of non-Hebrew speaking audiences, it is interpreted “many waters”. (In Hebrew, “many waters” is “mayim rabim”, Song of Songs 8:7)

It is appropriate that Israel’s blessing upon Joseph and his descendents mentions both “fountain” (“ayin” – translated “well” in the KJV) and “the deep” (“t’hom”). The blessing seems to imply that Joseph’s descendents would also be separated from their brethren – and though hated and attacked, Joseph would be blessed “unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills”. (Genesis 49:22-26)

**7** The *Times and Seasons* article is mistaken. It was Amaleki the son of Abinadom that wrote in the book of Omni about “a large stone” with “engravings on it” that was brought to Mosiah I (father of King Benjamin). It was not Mosiah speaking in the scriptural account.

# Chapter Four

## Joseph Smith's American Israelite Setting

### Tropical Jungles or Temperate Forests?

“...and behold, sleep had overpowered them because of their much fatigue, which was caused by the labors and heat of the day...thus ended the twenty and fifth year...” (Alma 51:33, 37; 52:1)

In all fairness, there is nothing in the expression “heat of the day” that suggests the winterless tropics. The biblical expression simply means the hottest part of a warm day. (Genesis 18:1, 1 Samuel 11:11, 2 Samuel 4:5) Attentive students of scripture will recognize this same expression in the Savior’s parable of the laborers in the vineyard:

“...These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.” (Matthew 20:12)

Vineyards in the land of Israel see winter and days of heat. (ST John 10:22, Isaiah 18:4-5) One has only to look under “Heat” in the LDS Topical Guide to the scriptures to find other instances in the context of temperate lands. The Book of Mormon verse mentioning “heat of the day” sits well with the distinct seasons of western New York - which include humid summers and an occasional heat index above 80°F in the spring. The heat index indicates how hot it feels in the shade, as a consequence of both temperature and relative humidity. At 60% relative humidity, 85°F feels like 90°F. With prolonged exposure and activity, a heat index of 80-90°F can bring about fatigue.

The men of Amalickiah were “fatigued” not only because of the “heat” but also because of their “labors”. It is worth noting that the verse does not say, “...heat of the season”. There is no indication that the first of the Nephite year was always hot. (Alma 51:33-37; 52:1)

According to the ancient Hebrew calendar, the first of the year commenced after the barley in the field had reached a critical stage of development called “aviv”. The King James Bible gives readers the impression that the first month was named “Abib”, (Exodus 12:2; 13:4) but this is not strictly correct. Hebrew scripture actually describes the first month as, “hodesh ha’aviv”, which means “month of the aviv”, meaning “month when the barley has reached the state of aviv”.

Prior to the Babylonian captivity, it was customary in Israel to refer to the months simply by their number. Thus “the first month”, “fourth month”, “ninth month”, “eleventh month” etc. (1 Chronicles 27:2-15) The Nephites did exactly the same. In fact, it wasn’t till sometime after Lehi left Jerusalem that the Jewish months were given their current names. The first month was then named “Nisan”. Before the Israelite months were named, they were associated with reoccurring natural phenomena such as the “Abib”

of barley (Exodus 23:15, Deuteronomy 16:1), “Zif” (splendor, flowering, the second month, 1 Kings 6:1), “Ethanin” (flowing rivers, for the seventh month, 1 Kings 8:2) and “Bul” (rain, the eighth month, 1 Kings 6:38). Besides being tied to lunar cycles, Israelite months coordinated with the seasons of the year. (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, pg 138)

The first month of the year begins with the first new moon after the barley has matured to “aviv”. This occurs in the spring in the Land of Israel. Fall planted barley may remain dormant during cold winter months (dormancy was understood by the Nephites, Alma 32:34), but barley that survives the winter in the U.S. will come up in the spring.

Scripture informs us that Jesus was crucified and resurrected in the Passover season (in the spring, the month of the aviv - the first of the ancient Israelite year). As to the exact day when Jesus was crucified, the Gospel according to John disagrees with the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), and the Book of Mormon admits the possibility of a "mistake" in the reckoning of events near this time. (Mark 14:12, ST John 19:14, 3 Nephi 8:5, Helaman 14:20, Leviticus 23:5-6) Still, the Book of Mormon and the Bible agree that the Savior gave up his life in the first month of the Israelite year. This simple fact shows that Lehi's ancient covenant land is in northern America not South America where the temperate seasons are out of phase with the seasons of Jerusalem. In Central America the limited tropical seasons are not conducive to keeping all the ordinances of the Mosaic Law.

The Promised Land of Israel resides in the Mediterranean temperate zone. Occasionally the words, "winter" and "summer" appear in English translations of Hebrew scripture. The word translated "winter" in the Hebrew Bible is "horef". This word can also mean “harvest-time”, “autumn”, or “beginning of winter”. Winters in the land of Israel are typically cool and rainy, whereas summers tend to be hot and dry. It is important to realize that when Israel sees winter and spring, Central America experiences a dry season. When Israel experiences summer and autumn, Mesoamerica typically sees lots of rain.

Though fall planted barley can survive the winter to “aviv” in the spring, near the Great Lakes, the most productive variety of barley crop is planted in the spring and harvested in the fall. The Book of Mormon in fact speaks of “the season of grain”. (Helaman 11:6, 13)

Western New York was visited with temperatures above 90°F in the spring of 1990. Amalickiah's last day, was simply the occasional warm and humid day near the close of the Nephite year.

Another verse misconstrued by Mexican / Mesoamerican Cumorah advocates is the following:

“And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land – but not so much so with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate-” (Alma 46:40)

Yes, people tended to get sick at certain times of the year in Book of Mormon lands, but does this prove that they lived in the tropics? The words, "...fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent...to which men were subject by the nature of the climate-" (Alma 46:40) actually implies that there were more distinct seasons in the covenant land of Lehi than two. (See also Mosiah 18:4) The kind of seasons referred to in the verse, are "seasons of the year" naturally distinguished by meteorological conditions, or "climate". In other words, seasons of the year characterized by weather.

Tropical lands in the vicinity of Guatemala and southern Mexico experience a wet and a dry season year round. In these tropical lands "some seasons" would have to mean all or both seasons – the wet and the dry season. But Alma 46:40 does not say "all seasons of the year". The scriptural statement "...at some seasons of the year..." clearly means that during at least two of the four seasons, people in the land of promise risked becoming ill with fevers. The climate of the covenant land of Lehi, like the climate of the land of Canaan, is obviously temperate, having several distinct seasons. (Genesis 8:22, Psalm 74:17, Zechariah 14:8)

In the New York area, deaths due to malaria and other fever associated illnesses have occurred in the past. Fevers are not unique to the tropics. One doesn't have to reside in the tropics to be subject to a "flu" or "cold season". But why is there no mention of snow or cold weather in the Book of Mormon? Actually, there is!

It was after Nephi arrived in the Promised Land, that he made plates of ore upon which he engraved the record of his people. He then made other plates to contain things of the ministry for the instruction of his people that should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes. (1 Nephi 19:1-5, 2 Nephi 5:28-33) It was Nephi's desire that sacred things be kept upon these plates for the knowledge of his people. Upon these plates, Nephi recorded the description of his previous vision of the Tree of Life:

"...And I looked and beheld a tree...and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow." (1 Nephi 11:8)

Nephi was addressing generations of his own people in the Promised Land. He used descriptions that were familiar to them. He knew that not only would they know snow they would understand in their language, "whiteness of the driven snow."

In describing the Tree of Life was Nephi borrowing an expression from Isaiah or some other Hebrew source? Isaiah says, "...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." (Isaiah 1:18) What the prophet literally says is, "kasheleg", which means "as (like) snow".

Where would the Jewish prophet have seen snow? It rarely snows in Jerusalem. (Proverbs 25:13) He would have seen the northern snow capped peak of Mount Hermon. See for instance, the white capped peak in the upper right of Map 1 included with the earlier LDS edition of the Bible. Isaiah undoubtedly saw the snow covered mountains of the L'vanon (Lebanon); which name, incidentally, derives from the word

“lavan” as in Laban, meaning “white”. (Jeremiah 18:14, Psalm 51:7)

But what did Nephi write? Nephi did not write “kashleg yal’binu”, “they shall be as white as snow”, Nephi wrote, “...the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.” In other words Nephi had experienced something like a blizzard – snow driven by the wind! This he may have experienced for the first time in the Promised Land, and he knew that generations of his people would understand his description.

It’s informative to compare Nephi’s Promised Land description of the Tree of Life, with Lehi’s description of its fruit. In the wilderness adjacent to the Red Sea, Lehi described the fruit of the Tree of Life to his family:

“Yea and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.” (1 Nephi 8:11)

Notice that Lehi, in the wilderness, did not use the expression, “whiteness of the driven snow.” This is an expression used by Nephi after arriving in the land of promise. If Nephi’s translated description (“driven snow”) is really just an added remark or insertion by Joseph Smith, why then didn’t Joseph insert the same kind of comparison to snow, when translating Lehi’s Old World description of the Tree of Life?

The Book of Mormon also mentions hail. (Mosiah 12:6, Helaman 5:12) Severe hail is far more likely to occur in temperate climates than in the tropics.

It is inappropriate for defenders of Mesoamerican settings, to make so much of the statement “...heat of the day”, and yet dismiss clear references to weather conditions that are practically calling cards for the mid-latitudes.

The LORD in his “fierce anger” warned the people living in the land of Nephi, that if they did not repent, he would “send forth hail...and it would smite them...” There is every reason to believe, that the threat was understood by the people. They understood the threat of hail, just as they understood the threat of being “smitten with the east wind” and of having “insects...pester their land...and devour their grain.” (Mosiah 12:1, 6)

The word translated “hail” in the King James Old Testament is “barad”. The meaning of this word is cold or become cold. (*Brown – Driver – Briggs – Gesenius Hebrew - Aramaic Lexicon*, 1259, pg 135) The LORD no doubt intended the people of Nephi to recall the extraordinary destructive hail brought upon the Egyptians. (Exodus 9:18, 24-25, Psalm 78:46-48; 105:32-34) But it is also likely that severe hail was an occasional weather condition impacting the lives of Book of Mormon peoples.

The foremost Mesoamerican setting, places the land of Nephi in the southern highlands of Guatemala, about fifteen degrees north of the equator. Even at elevations thousands of feet above sea level, and notwithstanding the fact that storms are more frequent in the tropics than in mid-latitudes, the atmospheric conditions needed to create severe hail are uncommon there.

Severe hail forms in thunderstorms with powerful updrafts (20 to 40 meters per second or more). Tropical oceanic storms tend to have weak updrafts. A good portion of the upper cloud layer needs to be below freezing. But the formation of hail is not a



simple matter of temperature and latitude. The highlands of Kenya receive hail capable of damaging tea crops, even though the hailstones are quite small, while many tropical highlands, including those in Central America have hardly any hail.

For hail pellets to accrete, and become threatening to man and beast, the ice needs to be kept aloft. In Guatemala, rain tends to fall on top of the updraft. This weakens the mechanism needed for hail to accrete. The low level jet streams in the U.S. and east of the Andes in South America also play an important role in the formation of severe hail storms. These factors make it unlikely for Guatemalan natives to experience wrathful hail.

Whirlwinds are also mentioned in the Book of Mormon. (2 Nephi 15:28 (Isaiah 5:28, KJV), Alma 26:6, Helaman 5:12, 3 Nephi 8:16) The Hebrew words translated “whirlwind” (“s’arah, sufah”) in the King James Bible can be translated “storm-wind” or “tempest”. A biblical “whirlwind” is not necessarily a tornado. This should be kept in mind when interpreting “whirlwind” in the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, the destructive effect of “whirlwinds” (plural) described in 3 Nephi 10:13-14 (also 2 Nephi 26:5), sounds suspiciously like the work of twisters. The atmospheric and topological conditions of northern America favor the creation of tornadoes more than anywhere else, and of course tornadoes have visited western New York. (Michael Allaby, *Tornadoes*, Revised Edition, 2004, pp 136-138)

Though the Book of Mormon mentions snow and hail, this does not mean that the climate of northern America was the same in Book of Mormon times as it is today. Author Phyllis Carol Olive cites New York Archaeologist William A. Ritchie on the subject of New York's warmer climate in antiquity. (*The Archaeology of New York State*. pg 32) There is evidence that winters were milder near the Great Lakes during Book of Mormon times. Climate change may have eliminated many of the species that previously “did grow exceedingly”, species which would have been especially productive along American coasts with climates similar to Jerusalem's. (1 Nephi 18:24) As Lehi's colony sailed American waterways, they undoubtedly visited such locations. There are places in the United States which will certainly accommodate all seven of the characteristic species with which the land of Israel is blessed.

The seven species of the Promised Land are listed in Deuteronomy 8:7-8. Scripture characterizes the covenant land as a good land of brooks, fountains, and depths, a land of wheat and barley, of grape vines, fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olives for oil and dates for honey. All of these can "grow exceedingly" if planted appropriately in the American Promised Land. Nephite scripture specifically notes five of the Promised Land species and it is implied that all seven varieties were among the seeds that Lehi's company planted in American soil. (1 Nephi 8:1; 16:11; 18:6, 24, Jacob 6:1, Mosiah 9:9, 3 Nephi 14:16)

On page 103 of *THIS LAND: Only One Cumorah*, Brother Wayne N. May includes a commentary on the Carolina parakeet, now believed to be extinct. This lovely warm weather creature once flourished from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and was a subject of mound builder art. Many species (including reptiles), found in more southern latitudes could have thrived farther north in Book of Mormon times. Barley and wheat planted in the fall would have endured less cold through the

winter months; and one would expect particularly dry winters in northern America during times of drought. (Ether 9:30-31)

Still, Book of Mormon lands were exposed to a cold season. One indication of this is found in the account of Alma and Amulek who were subjected to torture by the wicked rulers of Ammoniah:

“...And they did withhold food from them that they might hunger, and water that they might thirst; and they also did take from them their clothes that they were naked...” (Alma 14:22)

Was it only to humiliate Alma and Amulek that their clothes were removed? The very next verse tells us that, “...they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi)...” The tenth month of the Israelite calendar is a winter month. Alma and Amulek were confined indoors and made to suffer under these conditions "for many days" (perhaps nearly a week) without perishing.

It is not easy to tell what the temperatures were in their prison given the fact that they were indoors and the climate near the Great Lakes was somewhat warmer than it is today. Presently the winter months of western New York can see daytime highs in the 70°F range and lows well below freezing. It is important to recognize that Alma and Amulek were being kept alive. Just how long they might have been allowed to go without water, food and warmth is not easily determined.

The Book of Mormon describes Lamanite warriors wearing almost no clothing in the warmer months, following the first of the Nephite year. (Alma 43:4, 20; 44:18) When the Lamanites made a singular attack “in the eleventh month”, in winter, they wore “garments of skins, yea, very thick garments to cover their nakedness.” (Alma 49:1, 6) In at least one previous battle, Lamanites had worn some body armor and little else. (Alma 3:5) The wearing of thick skins had given the Nephites an obvious military advantage, but there is more to the story than that. (Alma 43:19) Thickly covered, the Lamanites sought to launch a winter attack in the eleventh month of the Nephites / Israelite calendar. There is not a single instance in the Book of Mormon of Lamanites going bare or being scantily clothed in months corresponding to wintertime of the Hebrew year.

## **Seasons in the Promised Land and the Festivals of Israel**

Scattered Israel has made a home in numerous lands, many with seasons very different from the land of Canaan. The ideal Promised Land, some might say, should be paradise year round. There are certainly places in Mexico, Central and South America that approach this ideal. But the settling of the covenant people does not make a place a Promised Land - even if it is a “paradise”.

The people of Israel in various lands have sought to coordinate their sacred observances with the calendar based in the land of Israel. Israel’s calendar was

essentially instituted by revelation to Moses and Aaron prior to the Exodus. (Exodus 12:1-2) The calendar of the Promised Land has primacy over other calendars. In former times messengers were sent out from the Holy Land to distant Jewish communities to help them synchronize their observance of sacred events. This is how important it was for all Israel to keep the feasts near the same appointed times. (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, pp 136-138)

Today, with better means of coordinating over distances, Jewish communities all over the world observe the holidays more or less in sync with the land of Israel. It is important to understand, however, that the holidays are not presently observed as they were long ago. Current Jewish festivals are not entirely representative of the way the commandments were kept in places where the priesthood was authorized to perform all the Mosaic rights and ordinances. Only at the temple could certain ordinances of the season be performed, hence the command:

“Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

“But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover...” (Deuteronomy 16:5-6)

Historically, the LORD placed his sacred name in more than one place. The portable temple which accompanied the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings came to be stationed at Shiloh many miles north of Jerusalem. (Joshua 18:1, Judges 19:9) Eventually Jerusalem’s Mount Moriah became the approved site of the LORD’s house. Though there have been more than one resting place for the house of the LORD, and more than one edifice reared to his holy name, it is clear that certain ordinances of the priesthood can only be performed at divinely approved locations, and not just anywhere.

The LORD said to Moses:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest.” (Leviticus 23:10, KJV)

This verse, which the Book of Mormon patriarch Lehi new well, refers to the spring harvested barley, that Israel was commanded to bring to the priesthood for a wave offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread – which feast involved the Passover (the Paschal Lamb).

The LORD also commanded:

“...thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 16:6, KJV)

“Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.” (Exodus 13:10)

The Hebrew word for seasons or appointed times of meeting is “moadim”. The festival seasons of Israel are tied agriculturally to the seasons of the year, as well as to the phases of the moon. (Genesis 1:14, Psalm 104:19) Just as dispersed Israel has sought to observe what commandments they can in phase with the calendar of their ancient homeland, so Lehi’s colony, far removed from Jerusalem, would have required a land with comparable seasons occurring at nearly the same time as seasons in the land of Israel. This was especially essential because temple rites were to be appropriately performed far removed from conquered Jerusalem. The LORD therefore chose for Lehi and his families, a land subject to the opposition of temperate seasons, in step with the seasons of Israel. In this chosen land it would be possible to keep the “ordinance in his season” as commanded. This land could not have been temperate South America which is seasonally out of phase with Israel, nor could it have been Central America which experiences a tropical dry season when Israel commemorates their springtime deliverance.

Recognizing the importance of keeping the LORD's Torah (the Law), with all its duties and celebrations, Nephi son of Lehi wrote:

“... I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise.”

“Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.” (1 Nephi 4:14-15)

Nephi then endured an extreme trial so that his people might have “the record of the Jews” including “the five books of Moses” which held the authentic Law of Moses. (1 Nephi 5:11) Thereafter, Nephi trusted fully that the LORD would point the way to a land where they could keep all the statutes, commandments and ordinances of Israel - not just any coast of the Americas, but a land of springtime and autumn, a land where they could grow wheat and grapes, a land supplied with goats and various cattle and all that the Torah required. (1 Nephi 18:25, Mosiah 9:9; 11:15, Leviticus 23:10-14)

Showing that the LORD did in fact lead them to such a land, Nephi later recorded:

“And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.” (2 Nephi 5:10)

The “statutes” which Nephi kept with exactness in America, included the “statute” feasts detailed in the books of Moses. (Leviticus 23:4-44)

The LORD approved kings and priests among the Nephites, after the order of Melchizedek, having the most sublime authority to administer in all ordinances of the Law. (Alma 6:1; 13:1, 13-14, Psalm 110:4) It was expedient for the people to keep the Law until it should be consummated in a new and messianic covenant. (Mosiah 13:27, Jeremiah 31:31-36; 33:15-16)

As Lehi and Nephi read Vayyiqra (Leviticus), they no doubt interpreted the words, “the land which I give unto you” to also mean their covenant land - to which they were led (2 Nephi 1:5); a land of summer and winter, a land of barley and wine, a land of liberty more choice to the LORD and to these Israelites than tropical paradise in other lands. (2 Nephi 10:11, 19)

We know from scripture that the start of the year, in Nephite territory, was marked at nearly the same time as the first of the year in the land of Jerusalem. (Leviticus 23:5-6, ST John 19:14, Helaman 14:20, 3 Nephi 8:5, 20) This of course is indicative of the seasons and festivals which the lands had in common.

The development of barley in the fields depends upon location and season and was crucial to the commencement of the Israelite year. Barley bears a token from the Sun. The Elohim said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and years:” (Genesis 1:14, KJV) These divine decrees did not mean that ancient Israel had to base their year on a complicated scheme involving the vernal equinox. Even in sabbatical years when the land was allowed to rest and produce volunteer crops, and even in times of drought, the barley in the Promised Land gave a “sign” sufficient to tell when the festival year should start. The barley would begin to brighten and turn from green to a more firm and brittle state - a state more easily damaged by hail. As mentioned before, this state was called “aviv”.

Exodus 9:31 (in Hebrew) explains that the barley in the fields of Egypt was damaged by hail because it was “aviv”. Unfortunately “aviv” is rendered, “in the ear” by the King James translators who did not fully glean the meaning of the Hebrew agricultural term. (LDS scriptures, CD ROM resource, Transliterated Hebrew / English of Exodus 9:31-32) After the sign of “aviv”, the first “new moon” was looked for. That is, following the spring time change of the barley, the reappearing of the moon as a slender crescent in the evening sky, signaled the start of the New Year. (Exodus 34:18)

The word translated “month”, “hodesh” is related to the Hebrew word for new. Each month lasted from new moon to new moon, but the first month of the year was counted from the “aviv” of barley. If the barley was not “aviv” before the new moon, then the next new moon was counted as the first of the year. Thus some Israelite years had thirteen months, but the Feast of Unleavened Bread, from the fifteenth to the twenty first day of the first month, was assured harvestable barley for an offering. This is how the New Year was marked, and the ordinances of that season fulfilled in the land of Israel and in the covenant inheritance of Lehi, “according to the law of Moses”.

In his renowned work *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services As They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, Alfred Edersheim discusses the need for keeping the Israelite calendar in step with seasonal priesthood ordinances:

“...As the year of the Hebrews was lunar, not solar, it consisted of only 344 days 8 hours 48 minutes and 38 seconds. This, distributed among twelve months, would in the course of years have completely disordered the months, so that the first month, or Nisan (corresponding to the end of March or the beginning of April), in the middle of

which the first ripe barley was to be presented to the Lord, might have fallen in the middle of winter. Accordingly, the Sanhedrin appointed a Committee of three, of which the chief of the Sanhedrin was always president, and which if not unanimous, might be increased to seven ... to determine which year was to be made a leap year by the insertion of a thirteenth month..." (pg 136)

Thus the lunar months were coordinated with Israel's temperate seasons and the temple rites performed in them. There is no mention of the spring equinox in scripture, though ancient peoples became aware of such events. Lehi and Nephi in their covenant land were required to obey Deuteronomy 16:1, which directs:

"Observe the month of Abib [HEB: the aviv], and keep the Passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib [the aviv] the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night." (Deuteronomy 16:1, KJV)

There are scriptural indications that Lehi departed Jerusalem in the spring, in the first month of the year. The season of Israel's deliverance may have had extra meaning for the Nephites. (3 Nephi 2:4-7, 1 Nephi 17:21-46)

It is likely that the Nephites also planted a variety of barley in the spring to be harvested in late summer or autumn. It is possible they had more than one variety of barley. According to specialists in Akkadian (an ancient Assyrian / Babylonian language) "sheum" was a word used at various times to refer to barley, grains generally, and even pine nuts. In Mosiah 9:9 "sheum" is listed with Nephite "seeds... of wheat, and of barley..." (Robert R. Bennett, "Barley and Wheat in the Book of Mormon", an article published by The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, updated August 2000)

In the same article Bennett summarizes a 1983 *Science* article on the discovery of barley cultivated in ancient North America and cites two archaeological papers. Bennett remarks:

"Barley samples dated to the Middle Woodland (early centuries A.D.) and late Woodland (A.D. 600-1050) cultural periods indicate that pre-Columbian barley was both known and cultivated over an extended period in the New World. "It is reasonable to conclude," states archaeologist Vorsila L. Bohrer, who directed the work associated with these discoveries, "that we are looking at a North American domesticated grain crop whose existence has not [previously] been suspected."

"What is now known", continues Bennett, "about pre-Columbian barley in the Americas should caution readers of the Book of Mormon not to quickly dismiss the reference to pre-Columbian wheat as anachronistic."

No evidence of pre-Columbian barley has been discovered in Mesoamerica.

Because the Israelite month followed the aviv, barley was always harvest ready by the day following the Sabbath during Passover. On this day the harvested standing corn (barley stock) was brought to the priesthood to be waved before the LORD.

(Leviticus 23:11-14)

Fifty days (seven Sabbaths and one day) from the day on which the barley was brought as a wave offering, Israel was expected to present another offering, this time of leavened bread made from the grain of new wheat, recently harvested in the land. The offering represented “the firstfruits unto the LORD” and was celebrated as a one day feast known as the Feast of Shavuot (Weeks), called Pentecost in the New Testament. (Exodus 34:22, Leviticus 23:15-17, Deuteronomy 16:9-12)

During autumn, in the seventh month, starting on the fifteenth day of the month, after Israel had “gathered in the fruit of the land”, the LORD required a joyous “feast of ingathering” lasting seven days. (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:39) The first day of this feast was to be a day of rest as also the eighth day, after the feast. The children of Israel were commanded to make temporary booths, tabernacles or lodges, “sukkot” to dwell in for the duration of the festival. For, said the LORD, “That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt...” (Leviticus 23:43, KJV)

The Book of Nehemiah informs us that the “booths” were made of the branches of various kinds of trees: “...olive tree branches, and pine [oil tree] branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick [leafy] trees...” (Nehemiah 8:15, KJV) This scripture helps explain the purpose of the different branches listed in Leviticus 23:40. Specifically listed are “the boughs of goodly trees [the fruit of a goodly fruit-tree], branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick [leaved] trees, and willows of the brook...”

Rabbinical tradition holds that these branches were used to make a bundle (lulav) for waving during the festival. Scripture does not clearly support this tradition. Jewish families today do not feel obligated to fashion their sukkot out of tree branches. It appears that anciently the lodges were constructed using branches from fruit trees (olive trees etc.), trees that grow along stream banks (willow, myrtle etc.), palms, and the leafy branches of shade trees. All of these types of trees, of course, may be found in northern America, but a question arises concerning palm branches:

From the Great Lakes region, it would seem that Nephites would have had to travel considerable distance to acquire palm branches. Though repeatedly mentioned in the Bible, palm trees are never once mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Were the Nephites allowed to fashion their sukkot without palm branches? Latter-day Saints have been allowed to use water instead of wine in the ordinance of the sacrament (Moroni 5:1-2, Doctrine and Covenants 27:2), and to wave white handkerchiefs instead of palms branches during temple dedications. (Doctrine and Covenants 109:76) Perhaps the LORD made similar, minor allowances for the Nephites. Then again, we should not underestimate the ability of these ancient people to acquire items of ceremonial importance.

It is interesting to consider the variety of branches used by Native Americans in constructing wigwams and sweat lodges. The sacred lodge of the Mik'maq was earlier described: “Seven alders, seven wild willows and seven beech saplings will be used to make the frame of the lodge.”

The joyous Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkot) required gathering at the temple.

This was an “end of the year” mandate to “appear before the Lord GOD [Jehovah].” (Exodus 23:16-17, KJV) The Feast of Tabernacles or of Ingathering in the seventh month marked an end to the festival year. With the year more than half over, the seventh to the last month was recognized by Israel as the ending of the year. The observance of Ingathering in the seventh month explains why “in the ending of the thirty and fourth year... a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful...” (3 Nephi 10:18; 11:1) Faithful to the Law, even after tribulation, the multitude appeared “before the Lord GOD” as they had dutifully done for generations - but what to their amazement, when “...the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth” appeared before them. (3 Nephi 11:8-14)

## **The Law versus “the tradition of the elders”**

Long before the books of the New Testament were written, a term was in use in Hebrew scripture, meaning “good tidings” – “b’sorah”. Today, we say “gospel”. (Compare for instance Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18) LDS Scripture informs us that the “Gospel” preceded the Law of Moses. (Galatians 3:8, Moses 5:58-59; 8:19, Abraham 2:10-11) What then distinguished the requirements of the ancient “Gospel” from the requirements of the Mosaic Law? The offering of the firstlings of the flock, and first fruits of the field was instigated before the Law of Moses. (Genesis 4:3-4) The identification of clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7:2), the prohibition against consuming blood (Genesis 9:4), the significance of wine and bread, the paying of tithes (Genesis 14:18-20), the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17:10), all existed before the written Law.

If such things as the covenant of circumcision came before the Law (St John 7:22), why then does the Apostle Paul for one, tie circumcision directly to the Law? (Romans 2:25, Galatians 5:3) The answer is that the Law assimilated previous commandments, reissuing them to Israel through the Lord’s servant Moses. Thus requirements of the ancient “Gospel” became part of the Law. (Mosiah 2:3) Things of the “Gospel” given to Adam and Abraham were circumscribed through Moses and added upon by divine decree.

Being “stiffnecked” did not mean the children of Israel (including the Nephites) were required to keep fewer commandments. On the contrary, they were expected to keep more. (Exodus 32:9, 2 Nephi 25:28-30, Mosiah 3:14-15; Jarom 1:5) The Law went forth among them as a disciplining and “preparatory gospel”. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:23-27) The Law of Moses included strict but purposeful prohibitions, and observances with daily, weekly and seasonal duties and obligations. (Mosiah 13:29-30, Galatians 3:24)

The written Law (Torah) is found in the five books of Moses - the Pentateuch. In the *Bible Dictionary* (LDS edition), Apostle Bruce R. McConkie defines the Law of Moses as “...the whole collection of written laws given by Moses to the house of Israel...”



After the Lord's resurrection, aspects of the Law were to be discontinued. This was not immediately clear to Jesus' followers. It was clear that some symbols of the Law had taken on new meaning and were to continue in the New Covenant or "new testament". (Matthew 26:28, Jeremiah 31:31-32) The ordinance of the sacrament of wine and bread, for instance superseded similar Mosaic ordinances. Baptisms and washings in the New Covenant were to be performed in place of previous purification rituals involving water. (Colossians 2:12, Hebrews 6:1-2) Divine revelation was required to sort out what commandments and symbolic ordinances of the Law were to be renovated and what were to be discontinued. (Acts 11:7-9; 21:18-26) It was not clear to many why Abraham's practice of circumcision (which literally draws blood) should be discontinued, while familiar ordinances involving bread, wine (now a symbol of Christ's consummating blood), and water, etc, should continue in new form.

It is true that various traditions had resulted from interpreting and debating the Law. But Jesus makes a distinction between the Law and the "tradition of the elders". (Matthew 15:2-6, 8-9, ST John 7:19) Jesus strictly advocated keeping every authentic detail of the Law in full; till all should be fulfilled – every "jot" ("yod" = "hand", the tenth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet) and "tittle" (a sharp mark - like a nail). He had little esteem for those who made excuses for not keeping exactly the Law. (Compare KJV Matthew 5:17-19 with *B'sorot Matti* 5:17-19, "Good News of Matthew", translated from a Hebrew Manuscript by James Scott Trimm; and JST Matthew 5:21)

Jesus understood the true parameters of the Law. He understood, for instance, what it meant to truly keep the Sabbath day holy and the purpose for which Shabbat was given. (Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28)

Though circumstantial modifications and traditions evolved from the Law, this did not excuse Israel from keeping the whole Law as laid down in the books of Moses. (Numbers 15:15, 22-24) Paul in fact teaches that one cannot be beholding to the Law and be justified in only keeping part of it. (Galatians 5:3) The "tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:3-7) is clearly not the same in all things, as the Law of Moses set forth in the books of Moses. (Matthew 8:4)

The Nephites had the five books of Moses. (1 Nephi 5:11) The Nephites probably did not observe all the dietary and hygiene traditions that later evolved from the Law's interpretation. The Nephites did not celebrate the festivals of Purim or Hanukah, instituted long after Lehi left Jerusalem. They did not celebrate a fall festival as New Year, but counted the "first month" just as the LORD had commanded Moses to do, in springtime of the Northern Hemisphere. (Exodus 12:1-2; 23:14-17; 34:18, 3 Nephi 8:5) Scripture tells us that the Nephites kept all of the "statutes" and "commandments" of the Law described in the books of Moses. (1 Nephi 4:14-15; 2 Nephi 5:10)

The Old Testament and the Book of Mormon together tell us more than many may realize about what ordinances and feasts the Nephites actually observed: The "statutes" which the Nephites kept "in all things, according to the law of Moses" included the festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. See 2 Nephi 5:10, and then read Leviticus 23:4-44. If the Nephites only kept the moral and ethical features of the Law, as some want to speculate, there would have been no need to build a temple like Solomon's – a temple patterned after the Levitical tabernacle of sacrifice. (2 Nephi

5:16) The Book of Mormon states that the Nephites and converted Lamanites strictly kept the “outward performances” and “ordinances” of the Law, including blood ordinances and “offerings”. (Alma 25:14-16; 30:3, Mosiah 2:3)

Nephi declared "the law hath become dead unto us." (2 Nephi 25:25) Nephi was simply saying what King Benjamin and Abinadi later reiterated; that eternal life was not afforded by the Law of Moses alone. (Mosiah 3:14-15; 13:28) Nephi's explanation of the “deadness” of the Law of Moses did not excuse the Nephites in the least degree, from keeping the Law. (2 Nephi 25:24-30, see also Alma 34:13-14) The Nephites understood from the beginning, that they were to keep the Law “in all things”. (2 Nephi 5:10) Nephi clearly explains that the Law was to be observed until fulfilled. (2 Nephi 25:24-27, 30) In speaking of the Law's “deadness”, Nephi was not discounting the divine command: “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 18:5)

Abinadi acknowledged the daily obligations of the Law of Moses. (Mosiah 13:30) Since the Nephites had the Pentateuch, including Numbers 28:24; 29:6, they knew, as did Paul that daily ordinances, including the daily sacrifice, were a requirement of the Law. (Hebrews 7:27; 10:11)

We can trust Nephi's words: “I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” (1 Nephi 3:7) We needn't question whether the LORD provided the means for Nephi to perform the daily and seasonal sacrifices required by the Law. Nephi built a temple for this purpose.

The Book of Mormon tells us that the Nephites had Priesthood, produce and animals, sufficient to keep such feasts as Passover, Pentecost and Ingathering. (1 Nephi 18:25, Jacob 6:2, Mosiah 9:9; 11:15) Nephi tells us that they kept “...the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.” (2 Nephi 5:10) We know therefore that the “statutes” which the Nephites observed included the statute feasts of Israel commanded in the books of Moses. (Leviticus 23:4-44) From scripture we learn that it would have been sin not to keep the seasonal feasts and daily ordinances, when the LORD had provided the way to do so. (Numbers 9:9-14; 15:22-24)

Nephi's brief but loaded statement in 2 Nephi 5:10, is his way of assuring the reader that the LORD did prepare a way and a place for he and his posterity, to keep all the commandments of the Law, and that Laban's death to secure the written Law was not in vain. (1 Nephi 4:13-16)

The exaggerated geography tradition that Elder McConkie and others have tried to reconcile, is fraught with unfortunate impossibilities relative to the Mosaic Law. Rather than dismissing the tradition, Elder McConkie and others chose to “suppose” that the Nephites didn't really keep the Law of Moses as their “Old World kinsmen” did. The Apostle, however, went on to acknowledge, though somewhat tacitly, that the "law of performances and of ordinances" mentioned by Abinadi in Mosiah 13:30, included the statute feasts of Israel. (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp 426-428; *The Millennial Messiah*, pg 206)

Elder McConkie taught that if a general authority of the Church teaches

something contrary to the Standard Works of the Church (the Scriptures), "...it is the scripture that prevails. This is one of the reasons we call our scriptures The Standard Works. They are the standard of judgment and the measuring rod against which all doctrines and views are weighed, and it does not make one particle of difference whose views are involved." (McConkie, "Honest Seekers of Truth", 1 July, 1980; See also STANDARD WORKS, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp 784-765; Dennis B. Horne, *Bruce R. McConkie Highlights From His Life & Teachings*, pp 143-144)

It was erring Nephites who did not fully keep the Law of Moses or who prematurely advocated its cessation. (Mosiah 12:29, 3 Nephi 1:24-25) Other Nephites, including Nephi himself, understood their obligation to "keep the law because of the commandment". (2 Nephi 25:25) They understood that every detail of the Law served a purpose and pointed to Messiah. Their strict observance of "the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ". (Mosiah 16:14-15, Alma 25:15-16; 30:3) We learn from the Book of Mormon that the Savior himself gave the Law, and not one detail of the Law was to be slighted or dismissed until all came to be fulfilled personally by him. (Alma 34:13, 3 Nephi 12:17-19)

Thus, the "whole collection of written laws given through Moses to the house of Israel" - Elder McConkie's *Bible Dictionary* definition, perfectly satisfies the Book of Mormon meaning of "the law of Moses". The Book of Mormon does not use an aberrant definition.

From scripture we learn that the Aaronic Priesthood, assigned to "outward ordinances" and "the letter of the gospel", is actually an appendage to the Melchizedek Priesthood which the Nephites possessed. Thus the greater priesthood circumscribes the lesser priesthood, "including the Levitical Priesthood". (Doctrine and Covenants 107:1, 4-6, 13-14, 20)

The Levitical Priesthood is comparable to moonlight, whereas the Melchizedek Priesthood is like sunlight. The moon is not its own light source. Moonlight is actually reflected sunlight. Likewise the Priesthood of God is one - a single source of authority with different allocations and divisions. Those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood may perform ordinances assigned to the Levitical Priesthood. In the absence of a Levitical Priest, the Melchizedek priesthood is expected to perform, not forgo, the requisite outward ordinances of the Gospel.

In short, the blessing of Melchizedek priesthood did not authorize the Nephites to cut corners in observing the Law of Moses prior to the Law's fulfillment. Before the Lord's appearance, the Nephites were no more excused from keeping the seasonal statutes of the Law, than are modern Saints excused from keeping the lesser law of tithing after receiving the greater covenant of consecration. The Lord, in his faithfulness, provided the Nephites with the right land, the seasons and all things needed to keep that which was required of all Israel.

## **The Extent of Lehi's Covenant Land of Liberty**

Because the descendants of Lehi first settled south of where the people of Mulek

settled (south that is of Zarahemla, Omni 1:15-16) the “land south was also called Lehi and the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah...” (Helaman 6:10) The writings of Jeremiah may in fact refer to this very son of Zedekiah. Translated directly from the Hebrew, YirmeYahu (Jeremiah) 38:6 reads:

“Then took they YirmeYahu and cast him into the pit of MalkiYahu son of the king [TsidqiYahu (Zedekiah)]...” (Direct Translation)

Whereas the King James translation reads:

“Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech...”

The Book of Mormon name “Mulek” is likely a discrete version of “MalkiYahu” which means “my King is Jehovah”. Unfortunately the King James Version obscures this verse by rendering the Hebrew “Hammelech” as if it were a proper noun or name, instead of translating it “the king”, which is what “ha-melekh” means.

Jeremiah 39:6 does not actually state that all the sons of Zedekiah were slain. The Book of Mormon informs us that Mulek and others escaped and were led to a northern shore of America. Lands as far west as Tarshish (possibly Spain) were known to the Jews. (Isaiah 23:1) Beyond Tarshish, Mulek’s company crossed the Atlantic (the great deep). The Gulf of St. Lawrence (across from Spain) with its northern seaway, leads to lands adjacent to Cumorah. These lands are north of lands that Lehi arrived at. Incidentally, there was also a “land of Lehi” in the northeastern borders of Nephite territory. This land was the environs of a Nephite city called “Lehi”. The city may have been named after the renowned Nephite warrior. (Alma 62:30; 50:15)

We frankly don’t know if Levites accompanied Mulek on his voyage to America. What we do know, is that the greater priesthood enabled the Nephites to obey all of “the statutes, and commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.” (2 Nephi 5:10) We know that faithful Nephites kept the Law “in all things” till it should be fulfilled. They understood the purpose for which the Law was given. (Alma 34:13-14)

When the colony of Lehi went forth upon the land and pitched their tents, they declared the land “the promised land.” (1 Nephi 18:23) This Promised Land is a land which the LORD God covenanted should be an everlasting inheritance for the seed of Lehi, and for others, including other Israelites.

This Promised Land is larger than the environs of the city of Lehi. Lehi’s land of inheritance extends beyond the land of Nephi or the place of “first inheritance” by the west sea (Lake Erie). (Alma 22:28, Mosiah 9:1) Lehi’s covenant land of liberty (the land of inheritance for his seed) includes lands named in the Book of Mormon and more. (1 Nephi 12:1; 13:14, Alma 46:17, Ether 2:7-9) In the words of Father Lehi:

“...notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with

me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also unto all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord...”

“Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever...”

“Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from other nations...” (2 Nephi 1:5, 7, 9)

Lehi’s remarks about “commandments which he [the Lord God] hath given” as well as his reference to “those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem” tells us that when Lehi uses the word “commandments”, he includes in the meaning the laws, ordinances, rituals, and seasonal observances incumbent upon ancient Israel. Nephi explains:

“And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.” (2 Nephi 25:24)

The seasons, as well as the animals and plant-life of the new Promised Land, were sufficient for a colony of devout Israelites to enjoin a covenant relationship (founded on the Hebrew testament) between themselves, and the LORD, and the land.

It is a scriptural fact, that lands occupied by the United States of America have the blessings of Book of Mormon lands upon them. In 1828, at a place not far from the Finger Lakes, the LORD instructed his young prophet Joseph Smith, concerning the faith and prayers of the righteous who anciently lived in the land:

“...-their faith in their prayers was that this gospel [upon the plates of Nephi] should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land;”

“And thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life;”

“Yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be.” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:49-51)

There is no reason to think that the land the LORD promised Lehi and his seed is limited to the territory described in the Nephite record. It is likely that God’s covenant with Lehi includes more land than his descendents were able to manage during the timeframe of the Nephite nation. On the other hand, scripture does not lead us to believe that Lehi’s covenant inheritance is so huge that it occupies the whole Western Hemisphere. There are criteria in scripture which give us a general idea of the extent of

Lehi's covenant land of liberty. These criteria are as follows:

- Upon the land, no kings will raise up to preside over the Gentiles. He that attempts to raise up a king against the LORD, shall perish. (2 Nephi 10:10-14)
- The land shall be fortified against all foreign governments. (1 Nephi 13:16-19, 2 Nephi 10:12, Ether 2:12)
- The land shall become a refuge to the oppressed, and upon the land, the Gentiles shall prosper and be lifted up by the power of God above all other nations. (1 Nephi 13:20, 30, 3 Nephi 20:27)
- It is a land of liberty involving lands occupied by the United States of America, and in particular, lands coincident with events of the restoration of the Gospel. (Doctrine and Covenants 10:46-52; 128:20)
- It must be a land with spring, summer, autumn, and winter suited to keeping the commandments of the LORD according to the ancient testament of Israel. (1 Nephi 4:13-16, 2 Nephi 5:10, Jarom 1:5, 11, Mosiah 2:3, Alma 30:3; 31:9, Helaman 13:1; 15:5)

These scriptural criteria should open our eyes to the fact that not every choice and wonderful land in the Americas qualifies as Lehi's covenant land of liberty. To the above criteria we may add the following:

It is upon the American land of promise that the city of Zion, the New Jerusalem shall be built. (Doctrine and Covenants 57:1-4)

The Savior said to a remnant of Israel gathered in the American Promised Land:

“And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you.” (3 Nephi 20:22)

Moroni recorded:

“Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.” (Ether 13:4)

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that, “The whole of America is Zion itself from north to south...it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be, and that it should be in the center of the lands.” (April Conference, 1844, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pg 362)

When the Prophet speaks of the “whole of America from north to south” is he referring to the United States of 1844 and the western Indian territories? Does “from north to south” mean from as far north as the Great Lakes to as far south as the Gulf coast? Some supposed Joseph was referring to North and South America, and whole traditions have come from this interpretation. The temple, however, is to be reared “in the center of the lands”. What “center” is the Prophet referring to? Somewhere out west relative to the Atlantic seaboard, somewhere between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico? Such a “center” happens to land near “Indian Territory” (of 1844) and western Missouri, at a place just a little higher, or further north than the latitude of Old World Jerusalem.

In 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith announced that:

“I received, by a heavenly vision, a commandment...to take my journey to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and there designate the very spot which was to be the central place for the commencement of the gathering together of those who embrace the fullness of the everlasting Gospel. Accordingly I...arrived in Jackson County, Missouri, and after viewing the country, seeking diligently at the hand of God, He...designated, to me and others. The very spot upon which he designed to commence the work of the gathering, and the upbuilding of an “holy city,” which should be called Zion...” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp 79-80)

We learn from scripture that the American city of Zion is also called the “New Jerusalem” and that the site of this city is located in Missouri. Thus, the site of the New Jerusalem of the Book of Mormon is located in what was a western border of the United States. (Doctrine and Covenants 28:9 42:9, 35, 62; 45:64-71; 84:2-3) The description of the location of the city of Zion “on the border by the Lamanites”, refers to American Indian territory out west. This of course is perfectly consistent with Lehi’s covenant land situated in northern America. (See map of *The United States in 1847*, or *THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT OF THE CHURCH* (Map 6) at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants)

Is the extent of Lehi’s covenant land of liberty one and the same as Zion (extended land of New Jerusalem) announced by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1844? The Savior did say, “this people will I establish in this land...it [the land and the city] shall be a New Jerusalem.” It is clear from the context of 3 Nephi 20:22, that the Savior’s use of the words “this land”, at least means the covenant land of Lehi. Frequent references to “the land of Zion” in the Doctrine and Covenants refer only to the local land or environs of the city of Zion in “the land of Missouri”. (Doctrine and Covenants 57:1-4, 14; 58:7, 50; 59:1,3; 61:16, 24; 62:2,4,6; 63:24-29, 36-48) The Prophet Joseph Smith clearly taught that “The City, of Zion...will be built upon the land of America...Zion...is in the State of Missouri” and “the land of America is a promised land” to “our western tribes of Indians”, who are descendents of Israel. (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Letter to N.C. Saxton, 4 January 1833, pp 297-298)

Jerusalem, or more correctly “Yerushalayim”, means city or foundation of peace. She is frequently referred to as a land (not just a city) by the authors of the Nephite

record. (1 Nephi 2:11, 2 Nephi 1:1, Jacob 2:25, Omni 1:6, Mosiah 1:11, Alma 7:10, 3 Nephi 5:20; 16:1; 20:29, 33, 46) Doctrine and Covenants 45:65-67 states, "And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge...and it shall be called Zion." The State of Israel refers to the United States as "Artsot haBrit" - literally, "Lands of the Covenant", in reference to the constitutional covenant that unites the lands.

What islands off the mainland of the United States were included in the covenant God made with Lehi? The scriptural criteria are general, and do not settle all questions about lands and borders. But the scriptural constraints are sufficient to let us know that certain lands of the Americas, unique in their own way, were not included in the covenant God made with Lehi. Lands for instance, that have supported the feet of emperors and despots, ruling over their European and indigenous peoples; lands with seasons shifted or very different from the seasons of Israel. Though Lehi's land of promise is limited to the Northern Hemisphere, as is the biblical Promised Land, descendents of Lehi could nevertheless have migrated to numerous places throughout the Americas and beyond. (See Q & A: [Hagoth Apocrypha](http://bookofmormonpromisedland.com), bookofmormonpromisedland.com)

Gathered in the American land of Bountiful, some wondered what Jesus intended concerning the Law of Moses. At first, they did not understand the Savior's remark that "Old things are done away, and all things are become new." (3 Nephi 12:47; 15:2) The Savior renewed the covenant with Lehi's descendents, concerning the land of their inheritance. He said, "...the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance...And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob..." (3 Nephi 20:14) The Savior further said, "For it is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land, and be set up a free people by the power of the Father, that these things [the Nephite record] might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with this people, O house of Israel." (3 Nephi 21:4)

Of course, the inheritance of Lehi needed to be in a land where the covenants and obligations of Israel could be fully carried out. (3 Nephi 1:25) With the Law of Moses fulfilled, the blessings and penalties of the New Covenant (the Gospel) could be extended to peoples of other lands, regardless of whether their lands were conducive to keeping the Law of Moses. In establishing the inheritance of Lehi's seed relative to the New Covenant, the Savior could have extended the blessings and penalties of the Promised Land to lands previously excluded by the requirements of the Law.

*History of the Church* 5:44 mentions Stephens and Catherwood "collecting in the interior of America a large amount of relics..." The expression "interior of America" is interesting. Stephens' preface actually reads, "...interior of Central America..." In any event, the comment regarding Stephens was not made by Joseph Smith, but is a later insertion. As noted, Joseph Smith was familiar with Stephens' volumes and with Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*. Though Joseph differs with more than one of Priest's conclusions, he nevertheless draws on Priest's evidence extensively to support a setting for the Book of Mormon in his own country. Whatever additional lands or territories are intended by Joseph Smith when he speaks of America or "the American



continent”, lands of the United States are definitely included. (10th Article of Faith) The Promised Land of Lehi (including lands of the Book of Mormon) definitely coincides with lands occupied by the United States of America.

The Almighty refers to the American land of Zion as “my holy land”, a “very choice piece of land”. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:59; 101:43-44) Though some lands are more choice to the LORD than others (2 Nephi 10:19-20), the Book of Mormon assures us that God is loving, just and generous to all peoples. (Alma 29:8) It should also be remembered that where much is given, much is required. Alma reminded the people of Ammonihah:

“And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have...it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them.”

“For behold, the promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, but they are not unto you if ye transgress; for has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?” (Alma 9:23-24)

The Book of Mormon issues a similar warning to the Gentiles who in time would inherit the land of liberty:

“For behold this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off...”

“And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God – that ye may repent...that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.” (Ether 2:10-11)

How are the Gentiles to know “the decrees of God” upon their land, if the location of the Book of Mormon’s Promised Land is thought to be a mystery?

## **The Book of Mormon, a Record of Ancient Northern Americans**

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated:

“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians...after having been hid up in the earth for the last fourteen hundred years, containing the word of God which was delivered unto them. By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendents from that Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them... (Signed) JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pg 17)

Nephi, in the land of promise stated:

“...the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered.” (1 Nephi 22:7)

Joseph’s expression “our western tribes of Indians” referred to Native American tribes who lived west, or were pushed west from the east coast by colonial expansion. (2 Nephi 1:10-11, Mormon 5:9, 19-20)

Missionaries were sent to these peoples in the early days of the Church. Latter-day scripture accurately refers to these peoples as “Lamanites”. (Doctrine and Covenants 28:8-9; 30:5-6; 54:8) We are informed that they are of Joseph and Jewish descent. (Doctrine and Covenants 19:27; 57:4, 2 Nephi 30:4) Their land, “this land” was blessed anciently to become free to all people. (Doctrine and Covenants 10:45-52, 1 Nephi 14:1-2) The land of their inheritance, even “this land” of the Book of Mormon, is the land of “New Jerusalem.” (3 Nephi 20:14, 22; 21:2-4, 22-23, Ether 13:2-8) As has been shown, the New Jerusalem, “the city of Zion” is to be built in northern America, in “the land of promise”. (Doctrine and Covenants 57:1-4; 84:2-3)

Brother Wayne N. May, editor of *Ancient American* and Author of *This Land* Volumes I – III, points out that Joseph’s statement about the Book of Mormon being “a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians...” should not be regarded as merely the Prophet’s opinion. The Prophet’s statement was part of a letter to newspaper editor N.C. Saxton dated January 4, 1833. The Prophet wrote a follow-up letter to Saxton (February 12, 1833) in which he states that his earlier letter was written “...by the commandment of God...” Joseph further stated that the contents of the letter are “important” and wished them to be published in their entirety. (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pp 299-300)

According to Joseph Smith, it was the same messenger sent from God to reveal the location of the gold plates, who also told Joseph that “the Indians were the literal descendents of Abraham...” (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Vol. 2, pg 70; *The Joseph Smith Papers* Vol. 1, 9 November 1835 - Monday, pg 88) Moroni’s reference to “the former inhabitants of this continent” was understood by Joseph to mean “the Indians” of northern America.

## **The Nephites Were Among the Mound Builders**

During the march of Zion’s Camp, Joseph wrote a letter to his beloved Emma. We have, in the Prophet’s own handwriting, the following statement (June 4, 1834):

“We arrived this morning on the banks of the Mississippi...we left the eastern part of the state of Ohio...The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally [occasionally] the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendor and the

goodness so indescribable.” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pp 344-346)

Thus the Prophet positively identifies certain of the ancient mound builders of northern America as the Nephites. Their plains were the very plains over which Zion’s camp journeyed.

It was the Prophet’s conviction that the remains associated with a hill near Col. Lyman Wight’s home in Missouri were that of “an old Nephitish Altar an[d] Tower”. (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Vol. 2, pg 244; *The Joseph Smith Papers* Vol. 1, 19 May 1838 - Saturday, pg 271; see also *History of the Church* Vol. 3, pp 34-35)

## **Aboriginal Inhabitants of This Country**

Under CHURCH HISTORY in the March 1, 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the Prophet published the following account (in the Wentworth letter) of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

“...I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation.

“I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, government, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people was made known to me: I was also told where there was deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgement of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent...After having received many visits from the angels of God unfolding the majesty, and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days...the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.

“These records were engraven on plates that had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving...

“In this important and interesting book the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the tower of Babel, at the confusion of the languages to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era. We are informed by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites and came directly from the tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed about the time that the Israelites came from

Jerusalem, who succeeded them in the inheritance of the country. The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country. This book also tells us that our Saviour [Savior] made his appearance upon this continent after his resurrection, that he planted the gospel here in all its fulness [fullness]...”

We learn from this account that young Joseph was not only instructed verbally, but that he was actually “shown” the country (geography), history, spiritual progress and fall of two great immigrant races that had inherited “the country.” We learn that before receiving the plates, Joseph was visited by angels (plural), who instructed him. In addition to revealing “the majesty, and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days”, the messengers undoubtedly furthered Joseph’s comprehension of things pertaining to the sacred record? Young Joseph was able to discourse in great detail on the places, customs and behaviors of Book of Mormon peoples. Joseph entertained his family with detailed recitals of his divine tutorials:

“During our evening conversations, Joseph, would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities and buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them.” (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith*, pg 83)

Joseph never claimed that the origins of all ancient peoples of the Americas were detailed in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon does not make this claim. Joseph writes of a second race of people who settled in America and says that they were “principally Israelites”. He tells us that the “principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century” and the “remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country”. His writings do not discount the possibility that there were others peoples in the Americas with whom the remnant of Jacob intermingled. The fact that many Latter-day Saints through the years have taught that the Lamanites are “the principal ancestors of the American Indians” only goes to show that Latter-day Saints, like other peoples, are prone to create and propagate oral tradition. Recently, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s introduction to the Book of Mormon has been amended to read:

“...After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.” (*Introduction to the Book of Mormon - Another Testament of Jesus Christ*)

The Prophet Joseph Smith should be looked to as the foremost mortal authority of this dispensation on the setting and history of the Book of Mormon. Have any others received instruction more sublime and authentic relative to the Nephite scripture? It is not possible to reconcile every comment that every Church leader has made about the

lands, treks and voyages of Book of Mormon people. The Scriptures and the Prophet Joseph Smith must take precedence. (Doctrine and Covenants 43:2-6)

What country is the Prophet referring to in his account? Where specifically is “here” when Joseph tells of the Savior appearing and planting the gospel “upon this continent...”? Joseph was informed concerning “the aboriginal inhabitants of this country...” The peoples that survived the fall of the Nephite nation are “the Indians that now inhabit this country.”

What country did Joseph have in mind as the setting for the Book of Mormon? Did the Prophet really know? Of course he knew, and he knew at an early age. Joseph at the very least knew that certain lands of the Book of Mormon were in his own country. Beyond this, he was willing to allow others to use their imaginations and to form divergent opinions, provided they agreed on key things that were revealed, like the general location of Cumorah. (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20) Joseph commonly allowed the Saints to express themselves verbally and in print. As matters were revealed, Joseph gave scripture containing more than is generally appreciated.

Joseph’s mother informs us that her son had such detailed knowledge of the ancient land, that he even knew something about the animals upon which the ancient inhabitants rode.

We read that Book of Mormon peoples had horses and chariots. (Alma 11:9-10, 12; 20:26, 3 Nephi 3:22) The Nephites were familiar with the wheel. (2 Nephi 15:28, Isaiah 5:28; 28:28, Jarom 1:8) The Hebrew word often translated “wheel” is “galgal” or “gilgal”. The word can also refer to a whirlwind or sacred circle of stones – like a “medicine wheel”. There is a connection between a place called “Gilgal” mentioned in the Bible, and the statement, “...I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you...” (Joshua 5:9, See LDS Bible Map “Israel’s Entry into Canaan”)

“Gilgal” is also a warrior leader, a city, and a valley named in the Book of Mormon. (Mormon 6:14, 3 Nephi 9:6, Ether 13:27-30) Mound builder cultures were familiar with wheel-like rolling elements. (Timothy R. Pauketat, “America’s First Pastime – Did rolling stones spread Mississippian culture across North America?”, *Archaeology*, Sept. 2009) Their royalty rode on litters. (Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Native Americans Before 1492 - The Moundbuilding Centers of the Eastern Woodlands*, plate 28) No ancient American wheeled chariots, however, have been found. Hebrew terms translated “chariot” simply mean “riding thing”. Horses and animal drawn wheeled carriages, however, feature in the “Mound-Builder” literary genre in which the Book of Mormon is classed. (E.g. Cornelius Matthews, *Behemoth: A Legend of the Mound-Builders*, 1839, pp 34, 41-42, 99-100, 102, 108-109, 191)

Mound builders constructed long, wide highways connecting important cultural centers. (*Searching for the Great Hopewell Road*, Pangea Productions Ltd, 1998)

The Book of Mormon names animals like “...horses, and asses ...elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.” (Ether 9:19)

Most of the species named in the English Book of Mormon are named in the King James translation of the Bible. Curious exceptions are “elephants” and the unidentified ancient species “cureloms and cumoms”. These species only appear in the abridged

portion of the Book of Mormon's most ancient record. There is no mention of elephants in the Nephite (American Israelite) portion of the scripture. This does not mean, of course, that the Nephites did not have some knowledge of these creatures. The Hebrew expression translated "ivory" in 1 Kings 10:22 (2 Chronicles 9:21, KJV) is "shen-habim", literally "tusk" or "tooth of elephants". The Nephites certainly had a term from Hebrew scripture for "elephants" – "habim".

According to the Book of Mormon, varieties of cattle, goats and sheep could be found in ancient America. Without these the Nephites could not have kept the Law of Moses, as directed. Bighorn sheep and mountain "goats" are native to North America. Some Hebrew terms rendered "lamb" or "sheep" in the King James Bible may also apply to goats. References to "the goat, and the wild goat", "lamb-skin", "suckling lamb" and "sheep" should be taken as literally as Biblical references to these animals. (1 Nephi 18:25, Mosiah 2:3, 3 Nephi 4:7; 28:22)

There is no mention of Camels in the Book of Mormon. The similarities between Llamas and Camels would not have been missed by Nephi. Llamas, like Camels, are recognized as unclean animals by Torah standard, and would not have been sanctioned as burnt offerings to the LORD. (Deuteronomy 14:6-7) Being Israelite, Nephi would have been keen to things like hooves and how an animal chews its food. It is unlikely that Nephi would have mistaken some other animal for a horse, for instance. (Leviticus 11:1-7, 2 Nephi 18:25) Though some animals are inaccurately identified in the language of the King James Bible, horses are not misidentified.

The argument put forth by Mesoamerican setting advocates that many animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon are entirely different creatures, is not taken seriously by mainstream scholars. American historian and journalist Hampton Sides, for instance cites Michael Coe, a respected anthropologist who has worked with Latter-day Saints:

"Yale's Michael Coe likes to talk about what he calls "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness," the tendency among Mormon theorists like Sorenson to keep the discussion trained on all sorts of extraneous subtopics... while avoiding what is most obvious: that Joseph Smith probably meant "horse" when he wrote down the word "horse," ..." (Hampton Sides, "This is Not the Place!", *Double Take Magazine*, Vol. 5, No 2; Also included in his work *American: Dispatches from the New Frontier*, 2004)

Enos tells us that the Nephites raised "flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind..." (Enos 1:21) The use of the word "flocks" in connection with "cattle" is appropriate. The Hebrew word "miqneh" translated "cattle", means any of a variety of domesticated animals that may be bought or sold. There is some evidence that ancient Native Americans successfully domesticated deer, and possibly varieties of fowl. (Matthew Roper, "Deer as "Goat" and Pre-Columbian Domesticate", *Insights*, Vol. 26, Prove, Utah: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship)

It has been suggested that North American peccaries or "wild pigs" might be the "swine" of the Jaredites. (Phyllis Carol Olive, *Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*, pg 83) We read that the non-Israelite Jaredites saw "swine" as "useful for the food of man." (Ether 9:18) Captured peccaries held in captivity for food, and or for trade, could

explain there being listed with Jaredite varieties of cattle. The Book of Mormon does not specifically say the “swine” were domesticated. Prehistoric peccary remains have been found in New York State. (William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*, pg 10) The “sow” mentioned in 3 Nephi 7:8 could possibly relate to the adult female of this species. In 2 Peter 2:22 (KJV), “sow” can be translated “hog”, “boar” or “swine”.

All varieties of fowl mentioned in the Book of Mormon: “dove”, “vultures”, “hen”, “chickens” can be matched to species extant in the Great Lakes region of Book of Mormon times. (2 Nephi 31:8, Mosiah 12:2, Alma 2:38, 3 Nephi 10:4-5; see also Matthew 23:37 in which “chickens” can be translated “brood”, as in Luke 13:34) Millennia old remains of the passenger pigeon and turkey have been found in New York. (William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*, pg 56)

Authors McGavin and Bean cite letters of the early North American explorer Samuel de Champlain (1562-1635) who described, “...a herd of wild cows which were passing at their ease in great state. Five or six hundred are seen sometimes in these regions in one drove.” (McGavin and Bean, *Book of Mormon Geography*, pg 8) Evidently there were animals present in North America which Champlain recognized as “wild cows”.

The animal referred to by the Hebrew name “hamor” is translated “ass” in the English Bible. “Hamor” is tied to a verb which means “be red”. A similarly named animal, the “yahmur” is a variety of deer, translated “followdeer” in the KJV. (Deuteronomy 14:5, 1 Kings 4:23) In the New World, Nephi may have called a reddish-brown horse like creature by the name “hamor” (later translated “ass”, KJV style). This animal had apparently descended from a species familiar to the Jaredites.

The Book Mormon admits that its lists of animals are incomplete. (1 Nephi 18:25, Ether 9:18)

Horses and elephants (mastodons, mammoths) were native to northern America in prehistoric times. There is mounting evidence that horses and elephants as well as large, less familiar mammals were hunted, perhaps nearly to extinction. (Sharon Levy, “Mammoth Mystery, Did Climate Changes Wipe Out North America’s Giant Mammals, Or Did Our Stone Age Ancestors Hunt Them To Extinction?”, *Onearth*, winter 2006, pp 15-19)

Though there is presently no unequivocal proof of their presence in America during Book of Mormon times, many wonder if some of these species could have endured thousands of years longer than available fossil evidence suggests. These animals may have survived the last Ice Age and the massive floods that broke upon the land – baptizing and rewashing it to become “a chosen land of the Lord”. (Moses 7:34, Ether 13:2, 1 Nephi 18:25) Prehistoric remains of horses have been uncovered in New York State as well as an astonishing number of Mastodon and Mammoth remains. (William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*, pp 9-11)

Fossilized remains of ancient life are the exception rather than the rule. Fossilization is the result of a special set of circumstances. The decomposing bodies of most creatures do not become fossilized. Even so, an abundance of ancient elephant remains have been found throughout New York State. One of the richest sites for

mastodon related artifacts is in swampland contiguous to what was ancient Lake Tonawanda. Excavations have been ongoing in the western part of New York State since 1983. (*Mastodon, Current Excavations*, Wikipedia; see also “New Mastodon Discovery in Western New York”, *Paleontological Research Institute*)

A CNN.com article on nature story page, describes the discovery of two well preserved woolly mammoth skeletons found in Watkins Glen, Upstate New York. Apparently an adult mammoth and a youngster got stuck in a bog there, long ago and perished. (Correspondent Ann Kellan, “Discover plans to sell mammoth skeletons over Internet”, CNN.com, nature story page, October 12, 1999) Mastodon teeth have been found in Cattaraugus County New York. (Irving Tesmer, *Geology of Cattaraugus County*, New York, pg 19) Scholars have pointed out that the honey locust tree, with its honey-rich seed pods and foot-long protective spikes, is a silent surviving witness to the fact that megafauna, like the mastodon, mammoth and giant sloth, once roamed the New York country side. (Sharon Levy, “Mammoth Mystery”, *Onearth*, winter 2006, pg 19) The Tonawanda excavations are near the Finger Lakes location which Joseph Smith identifies as Cumorah.

It has been claimed that some fragments of an elephant (mastodon) were exhumed from a mound in Wisconsin by a representative (Norris) of the Bureau of American Ethnology. (N. H. Winchell, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 9, No. 2, April–June, 1907, pp 358–361) Earliest mound builder cultures date to the time period of the Jaredites. In *The Mound Builders, Their Works and Relics*, author Stephen Dennison Peet cites instances of exhumed mastodon remains and arguments given for why the remains were believed to be contemporary with mound builders. Controversial elephant effigy pipes, of the characteristic mound builder platform style, have been reported as archaeological finds in Iowa, and many have readily identified the animal depicted in the shape of the Wisconsin “elephant mound”, though others are reluctant to agree that this in fact is the animal represented. (Stephen Dennison Peet, *The Mound Builders*, pp 11-14, 38-44; also Charles E. Putnam, President of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences, *Elephant Pipes and Inscribed Tablets in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Davenport Iowa*, 1885, pp 19-20; M.C. Read, *Archaeology of Ohio*, pp 116-117; and *U.S. Ethnology Bureau*, Vol. 2., 1880-81, 153) Others contend that this evidence is either fraudulent or misinterpreted. (McKusick, Marshall, “The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited”, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991)

In *The Gospel of the Great Spirit* (pp 420-230), Joshua Moses Bennett cites Delaware and other Indian legends of what he believes to be “the mastodon”. (Richard C. Adams, *Legends of the Delaware Indians and Picture Writing*, pp 70-71, 1905; also Johanna R. M. Lyback, *Indian Legends of Eastern America*, pp 155-159, 1925; see also H. C. Mercer, *The Indian and the Mammoth*, 1885)

Mastodons and mammoths feature in the 19th century literary genre treating the mysterious mound builders. The American setting belonging to this genre is the original and academically accepted setting for the Book of Mormon. (Robert Silverberg, “...and the mound-builders vanished from the earth”, *American Heritage Magazine*, June 1969, Vol. 20, Issue 4; Cornelius Matthews, *Behemoth: A Legend of the Mound-*



*Builders*, 1839) In his 1908 work, *Ohio Mound Builders*, E. O. Randal (Secretary of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society) set forth the “unique theory” suggested by Dr. Frederick Larkin in his *Ancient Man in America*:

“...the mastodon, the bones of which are found in Ohio and elsewhere, contemporaneously with those of the Mound Builder, was a “favorite animal and used as a beast of burden” by them. Mr. Larkin then seriously declares it is not difficult for him to believe that those ancient people “tamed the monster of the forest and made him a willing slave to their superior intellectual power,” Such being the case he adds: “We can imagine that tremendous teams have been driven to and fro in the vicinity of their great works ...” (*Ohio Mound Builders*, pg 123)

The Book of Mormon states that the “elephants and cureloms and cumoms” were especially “useful unto man”. (Ether 9:19) If “elephants” are not really the creatures indicated, why wasn’t a more ambiguous biblical term like “behemoth” used instead? (Job 40:15)

It is worth considering that the curious comment, “...and there were elephants...which were useful unto man...” may simply be a Nephite commentary inserted in the Jaredite abridgement. Living in western New York with its abundance of prehistoric elephant remains, ancient peoples of the Nephite time period could have discovered and exhumed some of these remains, along with evidence of the animal’s utilization by prehistoric man. Having proof that there were ancient peoples and “elephants” in the land, the Nephites may have simply supposed that the Jaredites could have been the ones who utilized the “elephants”.

As for the more definite statement “they [the Jaredites]... had horses”, it is worth considering that long after the prehistoric species had become extinct, a variety of horse could have been introduced to ancient America in limited numbers. This animal may have been decimated before the more recent arrival of Europeans and their livestock. (3 Nephi 4:4) No archaeological record is ever complete enough to tell us everything that was.

The Book of Mormon mentions “animals of the forest” and lists various “beasts of the forests” (Ether 10:19, 1 Nephi 18:25), but the word jungle is nowhere in the English translation. (Enos 1:3) There is no mention of any kind of identifiable animal in Nephite or Jaredite scripture that is out of place in a temperate climate. This includes “lions” (cougars). (Mosiah 20:10, Alma 14:29) Unlike “lions”, “leopard” is only found in quotations from Isaiah 11:6 (2 Nephi 21:6; 30:12). There is no recorded instance of “leopard” being used to describe an animal in the American land of promise. This is not to say that the Nephites could not have drawn a parallel with the spotted bobcat. It is worth pointing out that several references to “leopard” are found in Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Central America*.

Beekeeping in ancient America is not asserted by the Book of Mormon. The abridged book of Ether does not actually state that the Jaredites carried their swarms of “deseret” to America. (Ether 2:3) That is to say, the honeybee is not specifically mentioned among the “flocks and herds”, “beast”, “animal or fowl that they should carry

with them” across the great deep. (Ether 6:4)

The Hebrew, and possibly Nephite word for “bee” (2 Nephi 17:18) is “devorah”. Being a feminine Hebrew word, one would think that its plural form would feature the feminine plural ending “ot”, hence “devorot”. But the plural traditionally uses the masculine ending “im” as in “Cherubim” (really pronounced “Keruvim”), meaning more than one Cherub.

“Devash” is translated “honey” in the scriptures, but it can mean date-honey, or honey (syrup) made from fruits as well as from bees. The “honey” listed as an article of trade in Ezekiel 27:17 may in fact be grape syrup. (*Brown – Driver – Briggs – Gesenius Hebrew - Aramaic Lexicon*, 1706, pg 185)

Jacob son of Lehi’s statement about buying “wine and milk without money and without price” (2 Nephi 9:50) may be equivalent to his older brother Nephi’s statement about buying “milk and honey, without money and without price.” One kind of honey among the Nephites may have been a condensed or evaporated wine - syrup made from grapes. Grapes are known to have grown anciently in the New York area. (William A. Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*, Preface pg xxiv) It is reasonable to assume that the Nephites understood perfectly the Savior’s reference to “grapes”, and that “wine” mentioned in the Book of Mormon is the same “wine” of the fruit of the vine essential to the ordinances of Israel, and not some other fermented liquid as postulated by Mesoamerican setting proponents. (3 Nephi 14:16, Leviticus 23:13)

Though wild honey was among the provisions of Lehi’s company (1 Nephi 17:5; 18:6) there is no clear indication that honeybees were present in the American Promised Land prior to recent European colonization.

The Book of Mormon mentions “silk”, but the Hebrew word “shesh” translated “silk” in Proverbs 31:22 (KJV) is a fine fabric made from plant fiber. The fine fabric obtained from silk worms isn’t necessarily implied. The Book of Mormon may simply be telling us that there was more than one fine grade of fabric made from plant fiber. (1 Nephi 13:7, Alma 1:29; 4:6, Helaman 6: 13, Ether 9:17; 10:24) Ancient peoples of New York are known to have had woven cloth or textiles. (Ritchie, *The Archaeology of New York State*, pp 259, 261)

If the setting for the Book of Mormon were tropical, we might expect at least one mention of a species that is distinctly tropical. Monkeys and palm trees abound in Central America. Stephens makes more than one reference to palm-trees and repeated mention of monkeys. But, there is no mention in the Book of Mormon of monkeys and palm trees even though there are words for these in Hebrew scripture.

The Hebrew word “qof” means monkey. The plural form of this word is translated “apes” in the King James Bible. (1 Kings 10:22, 2 Chronicles 9:21) Monkeys are not common to the land of Israel. They are mentioned in the Bible only because they were among the exotic animals King Solomon collected. The Hebrews may have seen little distinction between apes and monkeys. (*Septuagint*, II Chronicles. IX.21) Scholars believe that “qof” is an Egyptian loanword. Lehi, and therefore Nephi, would certainly have known this word. The Hebrew letter “quf” פ may, in fact, have evolved from a

pictogram of a monkey with its tail.

The Hebrew / Aramaic word “tamar” means palm tree. (Deuteronomy 34:3) Why does the Bible mention palm trees? The answer of course, is because there are palm trees in the lands surrounding Jerusalem. Why is there no mention in Nephite and Jaredite scripture, of monkeys (qofim) and palm trees (t’marim)?

The Book of Mormon speaks of “dragons”! In fact, “dragons” are always mentioned in the Book of Mormon in the context of terrible battle:

“...Put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord...Art thou not he that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?” (2 Nephi 8:9, Isaiah 51:9)

The Hebrew verse (Masoretic text) more literally reads “...Clothe with strength, O Arm (Seed) of the LORD (the Eternal)...Art thou not she [arm of the LORD, is feminine]...” In Hebrew, one’s arm is usually referred to in the feminine, but the Nephite version of the verse renders it in the masculine, consistent with the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 51:5. The Hebrew word translated “dragon” is “tannin”. In the above verse, “tannin” can be translated “sea monster” or “crocodile”. Depending on the context, “tannin” can be a whale, a serpent or even a jackal. (Genesis 1:21, Deuteronomy 32:33, Lamentation 4:3)

The Nephites envisioned “tanninim” (dragons) as real animals engaged in fierce combat. Hence, “...like dragons did they fight.” (Mosiah 20:11) “...yea, they did fight like dragons, and many of the Nephites were slain by their hands...” (Alma 43:44) What could possibly have inspired this imagery among ancient peoples of northern America?

*National Geographic* (December 2005) may hold an answer. Under the heading UNKTEHILA, MONSTERS IN NATIVE AMERICA (pg 74) is the following account:

“...Kevin Locke, a Lakota Sioux story teller from Standing Rock Reservation...sings a Lakota prayer used at the springtime Thunder Feast...Wakinyan are the Thunder Beings, forces with power, like the Thunder Birds. They come with the big cumulus clouds in the spring to the prairies. The Wakinyan bring the rain, hail, thunder, and lightning-all the things that renew life after the winter. But in long ago days, before humans, the Wakinyan also used these things in a big battle. And that battle was with the evil water monsters, the Unktehila.”

“There were many different kinds of Unktehila...but most were like huge reptiles with scaly skin and horns; some were like giant lizards, and others were like serpents; some slithered on their bellies, and some had feet. They ate each other and every other living thing, and so the Thunder Beings were given a divine mission to kill Unktehila. That’s when the Thunder Birds came with their thunder and lightning. They struck the water monsters with lightning bolts and boiled their lakes and streams until they dried up. After that most of the Unktehila died or were very diminished in size, so that all we have left today are some small snakes and lizards. But we know the giant Unktehila lived because our people found their bones in the Badlands and along the Missouri River.”

“Indeed, long before paleontologists arrived to excavate the fossils of marine reptiles, Native American peoples were carrying away their bones that lay exposed on the surface. For the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Kiowa (as well as other tribes), the bones held special powers and could be used for healing or other rituals. And, as Locke explained, the bones were also “the physical manifestations of the evil forces the Unktehila represented.”

“And, Locke added, mosasaur-like creatures with toothy jaws and horns were often painted on the tepee covers of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Blackfeet. Some Native Americans had carved images of such creatures into the rocks above the Missouri River, and others had made one out of stones along the river’s banks. “Everyone who sees these knows they’re Unktehila.”

“...Some people still fear large bodies of water, and they’ll say prayers to protect themselves from Unktehila when crossing the Missouri River.” (See Doctrine and Covenants Section 61)

“But, he went on, the power of Unktehila lies more in what they symbolize than in any hard reality. “They were the negative force and had to be destroyed. That’s what the Thunder Birds did for the world. And that’s why it’s important for us to keep those stories alive. Because there are still negative forces-many that are even more powerful than water monsters...”

It is also possible that like their Israelite fathers in the Old World, the Nephites may have simply called a variety of aggressive, venomous snake a “tannin” translated “dragon”. (Psalm 91:13)

## **Book of Mormon Implements, Fortifications and Wars in Northern America**

As has been told, not long after the Prophet shouldered the *Times and Seasons* newspaper and became for a short time the editor, the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial was published (July 15, 1842). Unlike the dubious, unsigned fall articles, taken with Stephens’ bestseller, readers can be certain that the July 15th AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article represents the editor’s understanding. It carries his “-ED”! ([Vol. 3, No. 18, pp 858-860](#))

Joseph Smith’s AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial deserves more attention. Those who study it are better informed to evaluate the unsigned fall articles.

The bulk of the editor’s article details archaeological finds in northern America - examples noted in Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities*. Priest sees in northern America “arts known to the builders of Babel” and knowledge of metal working passed on by Noah to his descendents and brought from the plains of Shinar “to this country very soon after the dispersion...” Priest mentions articles of iron, copper, silver and gold - all smith works of the ancients found in northern America. Ancient northern Americans did in fact have articles of iron and gold, though copper seems to have been far more common among them. Particularly striking is the mention of plated metal

artifacts:

“Silver very well plated on copper, has been found in several mounds, besides those of Circleville and Marietta.”

The Hebrew word for metal plating or overlaying (as with silver) is “zifui”. (Exodus 38:17, 19) The verb for plating with metal is “zafah”. Is this not the root of the Nephite term “ziff”?

Mosiah 11:3 lists various metals, from the most to the least precious:

“...gold...silver...ziff...copper...brass...iron...”

Not all of the metals listed are elemental. If ziff is silver plated copper, its placement in the list between silver and copper makes sense. In another listing, ziff is again mentioned before (paired with) copper. (Mosiah 11:8)

We know that the ancients of this country were prodigious metal workers and “cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore...” (Ether 10:23)

There is evidence of a more diverse and cosmopolitan ancient America than many members of the Church have supposed. Lehi said:

“...the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me...and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.” (2 Nephi 1:5)

We understand that other ancient peoples developed civilizations in the Americas besides those specifically named in the Book of Mormon.<sup>8</sup> We should not be surprised if peoples named in the Book of Mormon intermingled with others not specifically named, or with others referred to only as “lost tribes”. Like Lehi, these others were “brought by the hand of the Lord” to the New World. (2 Nephi 1:6) Lehi’s son Jacob reminds us that:

“...the Lord God has led away from time to time from the house of Israel, according to his will and pleasure. And now behold, the Lord remembereth all them who have been broken off, wherefore he remembereth us also.” (2 Nephi 10:22)

Joseph Smith quotes the following statement by Priest:

“On the shores of the Mississippi, some miles below Lake Pepin, on a fine plain, exists an artificial elevation of about four feet high, extending a full mile, in somewhat of a circular form. It is sufficiently capacious to have covered 5000 men. Every angle of the breast work is yet traceable, though much defaced by time. Here, it is likely, conflicting realms as great as those of the ancient Greeks and Persians, decided the fate of ambitious Monarchs, of the Chinese, Mongol descent.”

The editor continues to quote:

“Weapons of brass have been found in many parts of America, as in Canada, Florida, &c., with curiously sculptured stones, all of which go to prove that this country was once peopled with civilized, industrious nations,-now traversed the greater part by savage hunters.-Priests American Antiquities.”

It is here that Joseph Smith relates the various ancient northern American constructions and metal artifacts cited in *American Antiquities*, with Nephi’s metal and wood working skills, and with Nephi’s building a temple in form like the temple of Solomon.

In response to Josiah Priest’s conclusion that great wars were waged by ancient people in northern America, Joseph quotes from the Book of Ether the account of the Jaredites gathering to the army of Coriantumr, and to the army of Shiz; and the terrible struggle that followed.

The editor concludes:

“If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.-were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book. They would find their conjectures more than realized-that a great and mighty people had inhabited this continent-that the arts sciences and religion, had prevailed to a very great extent, and that there was as great and mighty cities on this continent as on the continent of Asia.”

The editor is clearly convinced that the Book of Mormon accounts for ancient bulwarks and implements found in northern America. Priest supposes some of these to be the work of oriental peoples. Stephens relates the position that some ancient Americans could have been Israelites or “some remnant of the antediluvian inhabitants of the earth, who survived the deluge...” Priest does not discount these possibilities, though he includes critical remarks about the Book of Mormon in his work. It is understandable that Joseph would favor Stephens’ historical notes and assessments as “the most correct”, especially in light of the kind of remarks made by Stephens concerning “the field of American antiquities”:

“...In our own country, the opening of forests and the discovery of tumuli or mounds and fortifications, extending in ranges from the lakes through the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi, mummies in a cave in Kentucky, the inscription on the rock at Dighton, supposed to be in Phoenician characters, and the ruins of walls and a great city in Arkansas and Wisconsin Territory, had suggested wild and wandering ideas in regard to the first peopling of this country, and the strong belief that powerful and populous nations had occupied it and had passed away...” (Stephens, *Incidents of*

Paleo Hebrew letters, incidentally, are essentially Phoenician in appearance. As much as Joseph favors Stephens' treatment of the subject, it is Priest's *American Antiquities* which Joseph quotes extensively for material support of the Book of Mormon.

Only as a final example of a "great and mighty people" inhabiting the Americas, does the editor mention the magnificent ruins of Central America, and here at last he mentions "Stephens and Catherwood's researches" as showing prime examples of "sculpture", "architectural design, and more imperishable ruins". No mention is made of these being imperishable works described in the Book of Mormon. Indeed the stone ruins of Central America are more imperishable than the timber works of the Jaredites and Nephites, whose civilizations were swept off the face of the land choice above all other lands.

The editor states that "the ruins of Guatamala [Guatemala], and other cities...show that a great and mighty people...inhabited this continent. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormen [Mormon] unfolds their history. —ED"

Joseph is telling us that the peoples of Central America are historically tied to the peoples of northern America. Their common history unfolds in the Book of Mormon. Joseph never says, however, that Book of Mormon cities are to be found in Central America.

Months before Joseph Smith was presented with a copy of *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, the *Times and Seasons* carried an article on the ruins discovered by Stephens and Catherwood. The article quotes the New York Weekly Herald adding a brief introduction under the title, "AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES—MORE PROOFS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON" (June 15, 1841, Vol. 2, pg 440). Don Carlos Smith was editor of the newspaper at the time. The article sites the discoveries of the "two eminent travelers" to prove that "on this vast continent, once flourished a mighty people, skilled in the arts and sciences, and whose splendor would not be eclipsed by any of the nations of Antiquity—a people once high and exalted in the scale of intelligence, but now like their ancient buildings, fallen into ruins."

Because Book of Mormon details about distances were not fully analyzed, Latter-day Saints in the early days of the Church inclined to exaggerated Book of Mormon geographies spanning thousands of miles. This explains why so many members of the Church failed to see a conflict between these far flung scenarios and statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith placing Book of Mormon lands in northern America.

But key New World Book of Mormon lands cannot possibly be spread over thousands of miles. Limhi's search party "traveled in a land among many waters", not far from Cumorah, and mistakenly thought they had found the land of Zarahemla. Cumorah and Zarahemla cannot be thousands of miles apart!

The lands Desolation, Bountiful, Zarahemla, and Nephi occupied a small enough region that traveling south from the land northward meant consistently going up in elevation. (Alma 22:30-31; Mormon 4:1, 19, Mosiah 7:1)

Flocks of the Jaredites in the land northward fled from poisonous serpents "to the

land southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla.” (Ether 9:3, 31-33) The flocks did not flee from the lake country of North America all the way to Central or South America.

The Jaredites occupied enough of a localized region in the land northward, that the nauseating scent of their dead permeated “all the face of the land...” (Ether 14:22-23)

The gathering of the people in the land Zarahemla and Bountiful was so localized that they could be surrounded and besieged. (3 Nephi 3:23-24; 4:16-23, Alma 22:28-29)

It was possible for the Nephite people to assemble themselves together in a short amount of time “throughout all the land...in separate bodies” to debate and vote on important matters. (Alma 2:5-7) An “exceedingly great number” of people could gather to the land Bountiful in a single night. (3 Nephi 19:3)

The southern city of Mulek in the land of Nephi (Alma 53:6), was so near to the northern land of Bountiful, that the distance between the two lands could be covered in a single night, or in less than a day’s march. (Alma 52:18-31)

The minimum distance on foot, between the environs of the southern land of Lehi-Nephi and the northern land of Zarahemla computes to  $12 - 8 = 4$  days, give or take a day. (Mosiah 22:8, 11, 16; 23:4, 19, 30, 35; 20, 25) The minimum distance is likely more accurate than the maximum estimate of 20 to 21 days travel, in as much as Limhi’s refugees did not initially set out in the direction of Zarahemla, but “bent their course” in the wilderness. You see, Limhi’s people likely intended to misdirect the pursuing Lamanites. Limhi’s people changed course, and the Lamanites, who initially pursued them from that land of Nephi, lost track of them. While trying to find their way back to the land of Nephi, these same Lamanites came upon the land of Helam, where Alma’s people settled. Evidently, the land of Helam was not in the direction of the land of Zarahemla (from the land of Nephi), but in another direction - possibly even in the opposite direction. As the above scripture indicates, it was only an eight day journey (for encumbered civilians) from the environs of the land of Nephi to the land of Helam. It was only a twelve day journey from the vicinity of the land of Helam to the land of Zarahemla. This gives us the  $12 - 8 = 4$  day journey between the land of Nephi in the south, and Zarahemla in the north. It is evident that hemispheric geography traditions are egregiously unfaithful to the scale of Book of Mormon lands.

Scripture does not lead us to believe that Moroni journeyed thousands of miles from Central or South America, before depositing the plates. Scripture suggests that, after the battle at Cumorah, Moroni escaped with his father and others “into the country southward”. All were eventually killed by Lamanites except Moroni. Many years passed. Moroni worked on the plates while in the land of his fallen people. At the time he was without ore and in enemy held territory. Even if he had ore, it would not have been a good idea to stoke a high temperature fire to smelt metal or to manufacture moisture resistant cement for encasing the plates. (Mormon 8:1-8, Joseph Smith - History 1:52) It is reasonable to suppose that Moroni made due with materials left him, or that he could procure inconspicuously.

Moroni was in the Jaredite North Country, possibly at or near Cumorah, while



abridging the record of Ether. (Ether 1:1) He was still in Lamanite held territory when he completed the abridgement. (Moroni 1:1-4) His written intentions were to complete the record as commanded, and hide it up. After that, it didn't matter where he went. (Mormon 8:3-4) There is no mention of a special mission to carry the plates to a distant land. There is no scriptural basis for believing that Moroni, unlike Ether, hid the record in a place other than the land of his fallen people. (Ether 15:33)

It was not only the command of Mormon but also the will of the Lord that Moroni should write upon the plates and hide them up. We read of this in Moroni's commentary in the course of his abridgement. (Ether 4:3-5) Moroni was not only commanded to seal up the plates, he was also commanded to seal up the means of interpreting their sacred content. Moroni inserts: "wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord." (Ether 4:5) Ether chapter five begins: "And now, I Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up..." Ether chapter six continues: "And now I, Moroni, proceed to give the record of Jared and his brother."

It appears that God commanded Moroni to seal up the interpreters before completing his abridgement? The records of the Jaredites had already been translated into the Nephite language. (Mosiah 28:11, Alma 37:25-26, 29) Moroni did not need the interpreters to complete his abridgement. Scripture indicates that he had not finished commenting before he sealed up the interpreters.

Latter-day Saints understand interpreters, or seer stones to be equivalent to what Jewish Scripture calls "Urim v'Tumim" (Urim and Thummim, Hebrew for "Lights and Perfections", Doctrine and Covenants 17:1, Deuteronomy 33:8). The first and last letters of the Hebrew aleph-bet, aleph א and tav ט are the initials for Urim v'Tumim. (See 3 Nephi 9:18 and Yesha'Yahu (Isaiah) 41:4) It is clear that Moroni was still in the "north country" in or near the land of Cumorah, completing his abridgement, when the sacred Urim and Thummim were sealed up, as commanded.

Moroni did not doubt that he would live to "write and hide up the record in the earth..." He had doubts about whether or not the Lamanites would kill him afterward! "...the whole face of this land is one continual round of murder and bloodshed..." writes Moroni, "and there are none save it be the Lamanites and robbers that do exist upon the face of the land."

Because he would hide up the record in the land of his people, and thereafter wander without "wither to go", he couldn't be certain that he wouldn't be slain by warring Lamanites. After hiding up the plates in the ground of his conquered homeland (not thousands of miles distant), there was no telling how long the LORD would suffer him to live. (Mormon 8:3-9, Moroni 1:1-3; 9:22-24)

Moroni finished abridging the record of the Jaredites, and being still alive, he wrote a little more upon the plates for the benefit of his brethren the Lamanites at some future day. Nearby the Lamanites were still at war among themselves.

Having already sealed up the interpreters, he would finally seal up the plates. "...I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words..." Moroni writes at the end.

(Moroni 10:2) Moroni was now elderly. The LORD had lengthened his days in the land for many years. Soon Moroni would rest with his father. (Moroni 10:34)

When Moroni engraved the comments of Mormon 8:6-9, sixteen years had passed since the calamity of Cumorah. It is evident that Moroni was in the land of his fallen people. After twenty more years, Moroni wrote for the last time upon the plates and sealed up the records. (Moroni 10:1-2)

We are reminded again by Moroni, that his final written remarks are directed to future descendents of the Lamanites - the very people at war in his homeland. What did Moroni do for twenty years prior to sealing up the sacred records – aside, that is, from completing his written work? The first chapter of Moroni tells us that he wandered wherever he could for personal safety, not making himself known to the Lamanites.

## Out of the Ground

Nephi prophesied along with Isaiah “concerning the last days...” when the LORD would bring forth the record of the Nephites unto the children of men. Nephi states that after his people and those of his brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief “...and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles”, even after they shall be besieged “with a mount” (“muzav” = “palisade” or “entrenchment”), and “forts” raised against them; “and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet...those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust.” (2 Nephi 26:14-16, Isaiah 29:3-4)

Isaiah’s prophecy has been fulfilled more than once. The prophecy in Isaiah 29 pertains to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, “the city where David dwelt” is referred to in the prophecy as “Ariel”. “Ari-El” means “Altar (Hearth) of God” or perhaps even “Lioness of God”. (Isaiah 29:1) “David” means “beloved”. Nephi’s parallel prophecy pertains to his children and his “beloved brethren”. (2 Nephi 26:1) The Prophet Joseph calls the Nephites “that once beloved people of the Lord”.

The prophecies in Isaiah 29 and 2 Nephi 26-27, begin with “heaviness and sorrow”. The references to forts and fenced entrenchments describes not only besieged Jerusalem and the battlements of Book of Mormon peoples, but also the encroachment of Gentile camps and forts upon native Americans in latter-days – upon those who “shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles”. But there is also a prophetic message of comfort; for “all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten.” The dead will speak from the dust, for the written “words of the righteous” will arise as a voice from the dust. (2 Nephi 26:15) Moroni urges:

“Search the prophecies of Isaiah...behold I say unto you, that those saints who have gone before me, who have possessed this land, shall cry, yea, even from the

dust will they cry unto the Lord; and as the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant which he hath made with them...”

“And behold, their prayers were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things forth.”

“...for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord...and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.” (Mormon 8:23, 25-26)

Out of what ground would the dead effectively speak? Out of ground thousands of miles removed from the place the plates were laid - thousands of miles from where Joseph voiced the translation? No. The book and its words have come forth from the ground - the ground of the book’s ancient dead, the very land they “possessed” in life!

From the dust of the covenant land, a cry of repentance has gone forth to the fruit of the loins of Joseph. The words of the book call to remembrance the covenant which God made with their fathers. (2 Nephi 3:19-21)

## Chapter Four Pictures



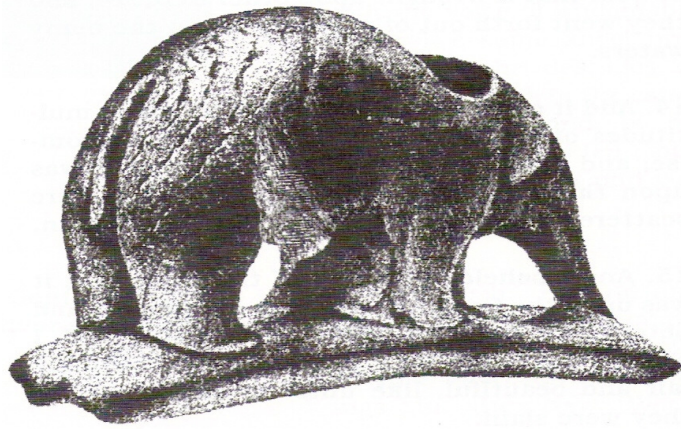
***“Paroquet” Effigy Platform Pipe  
(H. C. Shetrone’s THE MOUND-BUILDERS, pg 161)***

“...he doth prosper his people...in all manner of precious things of every kind and art...” (Helaman 12:2)



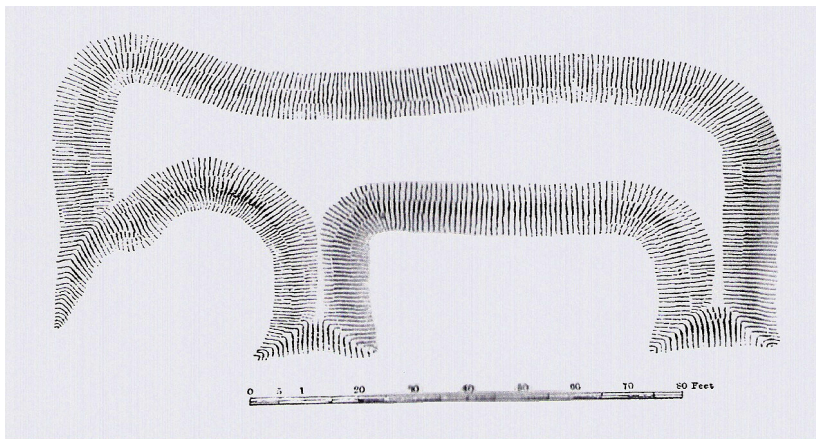
***The Honey-Locust Tree is a Silent Reminder that Elephants Once Roamed New York State***

The fruits of the Honey Locust were designed to lure giant herbivores to the tree, where they would consume the foot-long honey-rich seed pods. The pods were designed to pass through the gut of mammoths, mastodons and other large extinct mammals. This was one way the tree's seeds were dispersed. The six inch hazardous thorns deterred the animals from damaging the rest of the tree.



***Controversial Elephant Platform Pipe Recovered from a Mound near Davenport,  
Iowa***

“...and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.” (Ether 9:19)



***Elephant Effigy Mound, Grant County, Wisconsin  
(U.S. Ethnology Bureau, Vol. 2, 1880-81, pg 153)***

Some ancient mounds of northern America are shaped like animals. Though the Wisconsin mound illustrated above, has been an object of controversy, the animal form featured by the mound is recognizable to many.

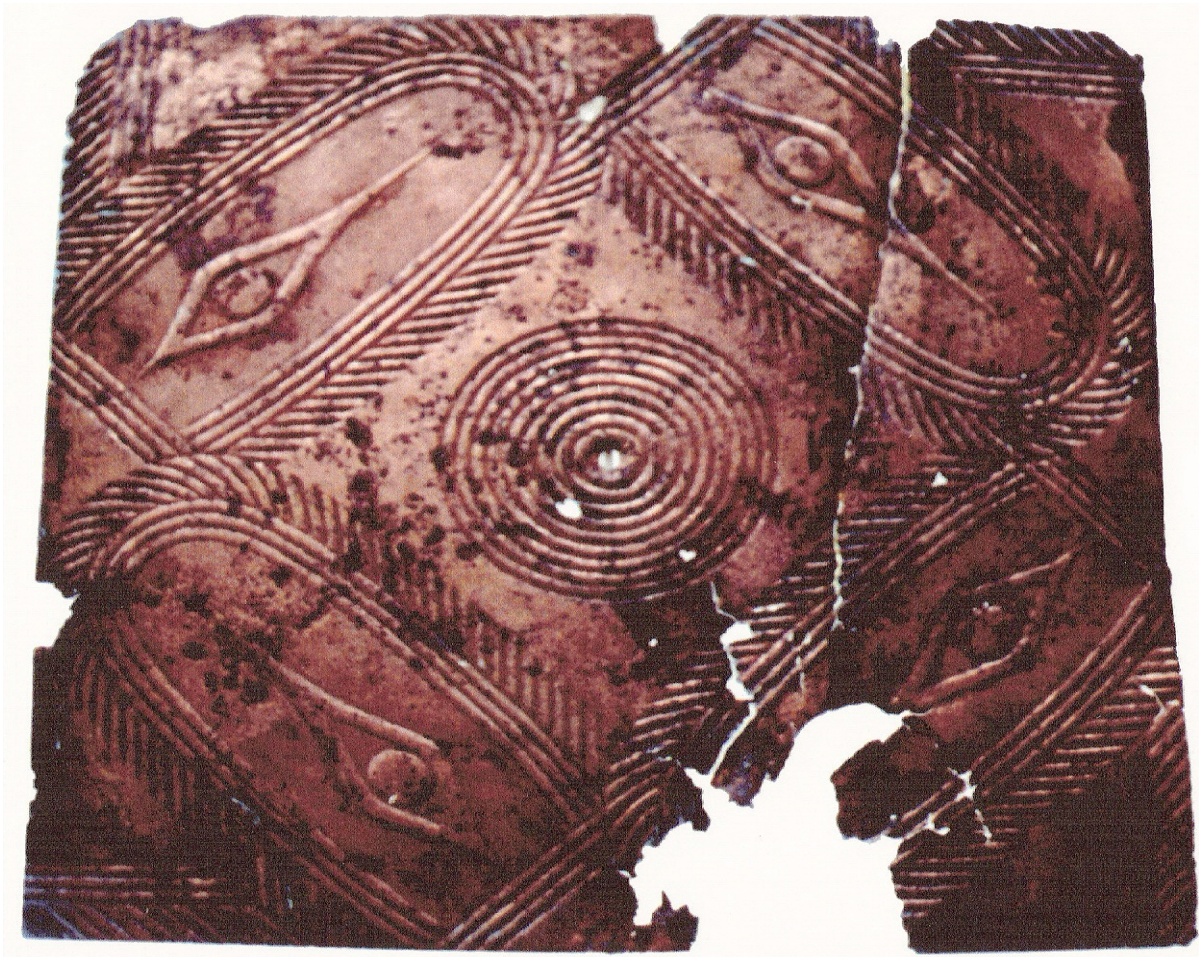


***Mosasaur Skull***  
***(Oxford University Museum of Natural History)***

“...like dragons did they fight.” (Mosiah 20:11)

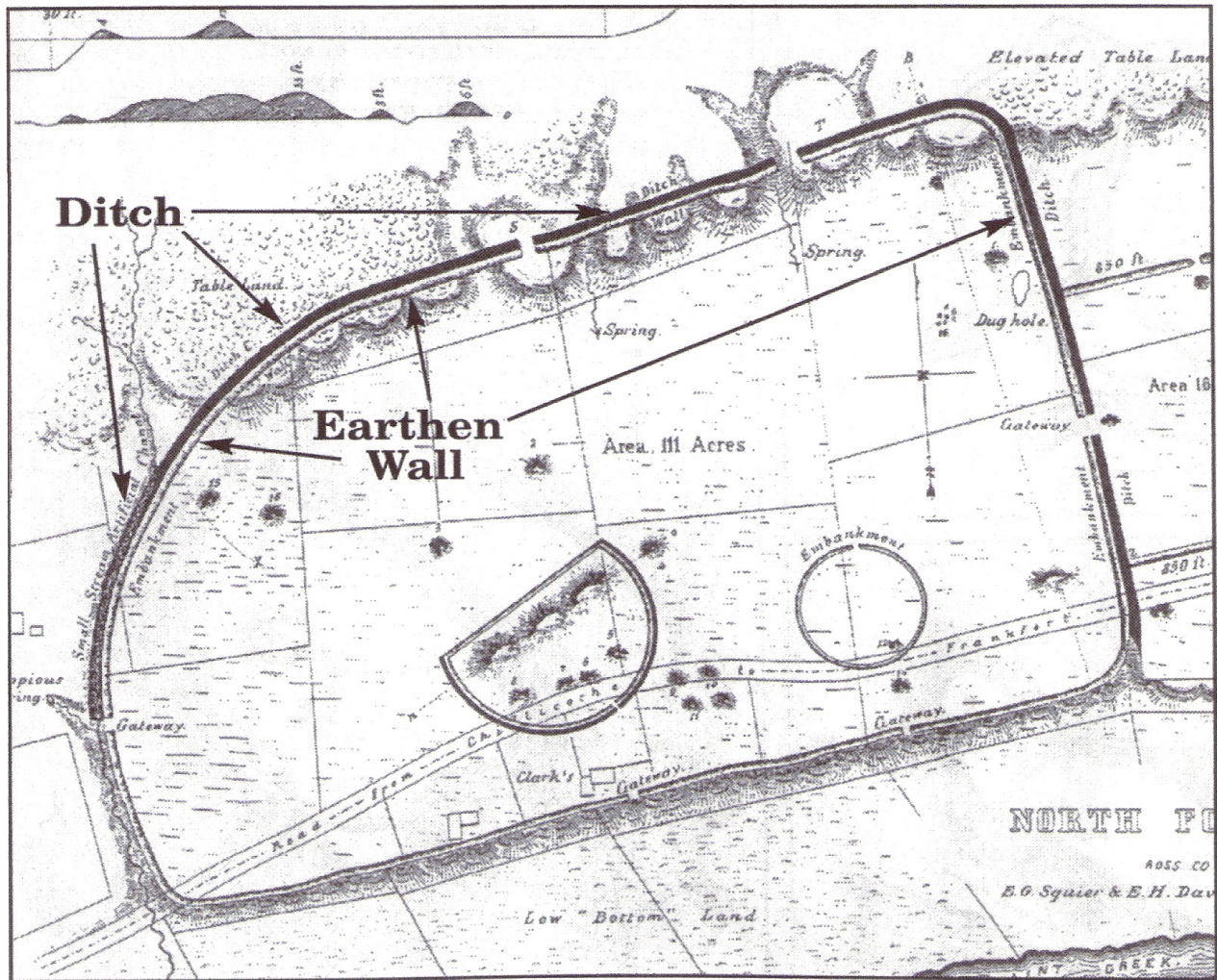
Native peoples of northern America discovered fossil remains of prehistoric marine reptiles, like the Mosasaur. These fossils may have contributed to the legend of the battle between the “Unktehila” (terrible water dragons) and the “thunder beings”.





***Example of Mound Builder Copper Work  
(Provided by Wayne N. May, Editor of Ancient American)***

“...all manner of fine work...of copper...” (Mosiah 11:10)



**North Fork, an Example of Numerous Ancient Earth Works in Northern America (Ross County Ohio, Squier and Davis's Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley)**

“...the Nephites had dug up a ridge of earth round about...” (Alma 49:4)



***Plains near Batavia, western New York***

The “plains of the Nephites”, mentioned by Joseph Smith during the trek of Zion’s camp, are in what scripture calls “the south country” or “south countries”, south and southwest of Lake Erie. (Doctrine and Covenants 75:8; 17, Mormon 6:16; 8:2) The plains of the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon are in the north near the city of Bountiful and the marshlands that once held the body of water called the “east sea”. (Alma 50:13; 51:26; 52:13, 20; 62:18-19) In time, both the Nephites and Lamanites spread upon all the face of the land, both in the north and in the south. (Helaman 6:7-8)

## Chapter Four Footnote

8 It is possible that some of the “lost tribes”, referred to in the Book of Mormon, also inhabited the Americas. These peoples could have eventually come in contact with Book of Mormon peoples. Consider 2 Nephi 10:21-22; 29: 13, 3 Nephi 16:1-3. In prophesying of destructions to come upon “the United States...this Land...” the Prophet Joseph Smith mentions “the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country...” Could some of these tribes be Native American? (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Letter to N.C. Saxton, 4 January 1833, pg 298)

# Chapter Five

## Christopher Columbus, John Cabot, Leif Ericsson, St. Brendon!

Nephi beheld in vision many waters; and they divided the Gentiles from the seed of his brethren. The wrath of God was upon the seed of Nephi's brethren. And Nephi looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of his brethren by the many waters; and Nephi beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon this man; and the man went forth upon the many waters unto the seed of Nephi's brethren, who were in the Promised Land. (1 Nephi 13:10-12)

We see from Nephi's account that the expression "many waters" involves the Atlantic Ocean. We read that the man among the Gentiles crossed "the many waters" to the Promised Land. The "many waters" crossed by Lehi's family to the Promised Land likely included the same ocean which Nephi had previously beheld in vision. (1 Nephi 17:5) The LORD literally and symbolically guided Lehi's colony across a gulf and up northern American straits, to a place near the shore of an inland west sea - a shore south and west of the land Cumorah. (Helaman 3:29)

The names of several significant persons, whom Nephi beheld in vision, are named in the Book of Mormon. But there is no name given for the man among the Gentiles who went forth upon the many waters. Christopher Columbus typically comes to mind, and this has become a common Latter-day Saint interpretation. But there is no footnote or index reference in the Church published Standard Works, requiring us to interpret "the man among the Gentiles" as Columbus.

In the same vision, Nephi beheld a book proceeding forth from the mouth of a Jew. (1 Nephi 13:23) Some have likewise asked who this unnamed Jew is. Is he Ezra the scribe, John the Lord's disciple or the Lord himself? The book, we are told, is "the book of the Lamb of God" and contained the fullness of the Gospel. Latter-day Saints see "the book" embodied in the Bible. But the Bible did not proceed from the mouth of any one Jew. What are we to make of Nephi's description?

We are to understand that the Jew out of whose mouth proceeded the "record of the Jews" represents of the LORD'S "ancient covenant people" whose labors and pains and diligence have brought forth the Bible and Salvation to the Gentiles. (2 Nephi 29:4-5) He is a simplification, a figure, a representation. Yes he could be John - he is also the Lamb of God himself. Hence we read:

"And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

"Wherefore these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God." (1 Nephi 13:24-25)

Notice that the book proceeding forth from the mouth of a Jew (singular) correlates with the gospel going forth from the Jews (plural).

While in Troas, across the Aegean Sea from Macedonia, the Apostle Paul one night beheld a vision: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." (Acts 16:9) From this vision Paul ascertained that he and his companion were called to go into Macedonia and "preach the gospel unto them." (Acts 16:10) Are we justified in supposing that Paul actually found the man of Macedonia who petitioned him in vision? There doesn't appear to be any scriptural account of this. It is more likely that the man of Macedonia in Paul's vision was a representation of the Macedonian people prepared to hear the gospel.

Who then is the unnamed man among the Gentiles - the man who crossed the many waters to the seed of Nephi's brethren in the Promised Land?

The Book of Mormon clearly states that the Promised Land would become a land of Liberty to the Gentiles – here they would be delivered from captivity and from all other nations. (1 Nephi 13:13-19) Northern America became such a haven to those coming to her shores seeking freedom from the oppressive powers of the Old World. Here indeed, the power of God has lifted up the liberated Gentiles above all other nations.

Europeans had many motives for sailing to the Americas. Freedom from captivity is definitely part of northern American history. This is precisely the motive which Nephi describes relative to the Gentiles coming to inhabit the covenant land of his people. (1 Nephi 13:30)

Does Nephi's "man among the Gentiles" have to depict only one historical figure? The unnamed man among the Gentiles could represent those first few explorers from among the nations who, some time after the fall of the Nephite nation, were moved upon by the Spirit of God and sailed across the Atlantic to the shores of America. Their sagas, the accounts of their voyages, their legendary reports would eventually motivate others to attempt the crossing in greater numbers. Like the "Jew" Nephi saw in vision, and like Paul's "man of Macedonia" the "man among the Gentiles", may be a simplification, a figure, a representation.

Legends of the 6th century sea faring Irish monk, Saint Brendan, the Navigator may be based on fact. According to the old accounts, Saint Brendan and fellow monks sailed the North Atlantic in search of the "Promised Land of the Saints". Brendan may have actually succeeded in reaching the shores of America and in contacting native peoples. In 1976, explorer Tim Severin constructed a boat similar to that described in the legends of the Navigator saint. Severin successfully sailed his vessel to North America along the route believed to have been taken by Saint Brendan and his crew. Legendary accounts of Brendan the Navigator became well known in Europe.

John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto, 1461-1498) sailed across the Atlantic to North America in 1497 (1494, according to some sources), planting the banners of England, Ireland and France in the New World, and opening the way to European colonization. Truly a man among the nations (goyim, Gentiles), Cabot's first known attempt to cross the Atlantic was in 1491 (before Columbus voyaged to the Bahamas). John Cabot is less popularized than Columbus, but no less known to God.

According to Supreme Court justice Joseph Story (1812 – 1845), the legal claim to the discovery of the New World rests upon the discovery of John Cabot, not Christopher Columbus. (Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States*, pg 5) Cabot's discovery alone was sufficient to initiate European colonization of North America. (Rodney Broome, *Terra Incognita – The True Story of How America Got Its Name*, 2001)

Unlike John Cabot, Christopher Columbus did not step ashore in northern America. How then does Columbus qualify as one crossing the many waters unto the seed of Nephi's brethren in the Promised Land?

In 1493, during his second voyage, Columbus discovered the Island of Puerto Rico. Before the Spanish arrived, the Island was inhabited by the Arawak Indians. Hardship, disease and Spanish reprisals eventually eliminated the Arawak. Today Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. Did Puerto Rico's former inhabitants regard their island as a land of promise? After the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, the blessings of the Promised Land may have been extended to other places.

“And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands...” (1 Nephi 17:38)

Columbus may have been encouraged by the accounts of others who had sailed far to the west and found new land. Columbus was obviously not the first to discover America, neither was he first among the Gentiles to be brought by the hand of the Lord into the Promised Land, for “...none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.” (2 Nephi 1:6) There were those who had been guided to the shores of America centuries before Columbus. Their accounts became inspiring sagas.

Leif, son of Eric the Red, was probably born in Iceland. He spent his youth in Greenland and near the turn of the Millennium A.D. he visited Norway where he converted to Christianity. He was sent on a mission by King Olaf I of Norway, to carry the faith back to his people in Greenland.

By one account, Leif Ericsson set sail, not with the motive of finding new trade routes, acquiring gold, riches, notoriety, and subjugating native peoples, but with a simple commission to teach Christianity to his people. According to a Hauksbok saga, it was on the return from Norway to Greenland in the year 1000 A.D. that a powerful wind diverted Leif Ericsson. His ship was brought far to the west. According to another account it was Bjarni Herjolfsson who was driven far off course by a storm and who sighted green, forested land to the west. Bjarni related his experience to Leif who was so inspired upon hearing the account, that he assembled a crew of 35 men and mounted an expedition from Greenland.

In Hebrew, the word for wind and spirit is the same, “ruah”. (Genesis 1:1, Ezekiel 37:9, 13-14) “Ruah Elohim”, “Spirit of GOD” also implies “Wind of GOD”. Much of the richness of Semitic meaning is lost in translation. When Nephi states “...I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land”, Nephi is not only referring to that which moved upon the soul of the man, he is also expressing the means by which the LORD physically brought the man to the shores of

the Promised Land.

It is recorded that upon the unknown land, Leif found grapes and self-sown wheat. (See “Leif Ericsson”, *The New Columbia Encyclopedia*) This is noteworthy since the Promised Land of Lehi is also a land of wheat and wine. (Mosiah 9:9; 11:15, Deuteronomy 33:28, Leviticus 23:13) Today, the New England region is celebrated wine country.

Leif Ericsson returned to Greenland where he was successful in introducing Christianity among his people. Other accounts record that the Norse voyaged again to “VINLAND” - the western grape bearing land. The brother of Leif, Thorvald Ericsson, organized a second expedition to the new land, and was killed in a violent clash with natives.

Scholars are not certain of all of the parts of northern America that the Norse visited, but there is significant evidence that the Norse contacted and attempted to colonize northern America, centuries before other Europeans. A few years after Leif Ericsson’s discovery, the Norseman Thorfinn Karlsefni, set out to colonize the land of grapes. According to the sagas, the Norse had confrontations with the native peoples of the new lands.

The Mi’kmaq (Micmac) people are believed by scholars to be the first Native American society to encounter Europeans (A.D.). After John Cabot reached northern America in 1497, more Europeans visited the Mi’kmaq territories of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

“Mi’kmaq” is actually plural and is related to the singular adjective “Mi’kmaw”. The name of this people may derive from their word “Ni’kmaq”. In light of Nephi’s relation to the native inhabitants of the Promised Land visited by the man (men) from across the sea, the meaning of Ni’kmaq is fitting: “my kin-friends” or simply “my brethren”. (1 Nephi 13:12)



## Chapter Five Picture



***John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto)***

The explorer is generally accepted by historians as the first known European to voyage to North America since the Vikings. The notion that Christopher Columbus was first to discover North America is a myth.

## Chapter Six

# Helmets or Head-plates?

“Book of Mormon” scenes have been depicted with skill and imagination. From these, many get their first impressions of what the Book of Mormon is about. It is hoped that the art and drama will encourage people to actually read the book. Whether or not these portrayals are faithful to scripture and the geographic counsel of Joseph Smith probably doesn’t matter to a great many.

Still there are those who ask questions like: Shouldn’t there be more depictions involving earth and timber works – the kind of structures that we know the Nephites built? Why so often stone buildings? One depiction features the pyramid of Kukulcan in the background, ostensibly posing as the Bountiful temple. The Mayan pyramid at Chichen Itza was actually built more than a thousand years after Christ visited the Nephites in the land Bountiful. Those who look into the subject find that Chichen Itza was a place of untold acts of human sacrifice. Perhaps the painting can be interpreted to represent a visit by Quetzalcoatl to the Yucatan peninsula in the 12th century A.D. or later, but a scene from the Book of Mormon it cannot be.

Why jungles and palms in “Book of Mormon” art? Why large spotted cats and jaguar skins? Why scenes involving Mayan type glyphs when the symbols of the “Caractors” transcript (characters from the plates) don’t look at all like Mayan? Characters from the plates, in fact, resemble Mi’kmaq in style! And where in scripture do we learn that Nephite warriors wore Roman like helmets?

More members of the Church are trying to study the scriptures faithfully. Those who have already been keeping this commandment may develop sensitivities to scriptural details. They may notice and come to understand lots of little things in the scriptures. They may come to ask questions in this life that others may not think to ask. It isn’t that they are brilliant, their perception and understanding have simply been affected by searching the scriptures consistently for many years. Line upon line, they start to see things as they really are!

As more people faithfully make the Book of Mormon a part of their every day lives, and as we come to understand more details about the ancient peoples described in the book, artistic depictions of the book may also improve.

Here is an example of a detail that could have been studied a little more carefully before it was put into costume and paint: The Authorized King James Version of the Bible uses the word “helmet” in both the Old and New Testaments. The KJV contains at least two instances of the singular “helmet”, and eight instances of “helmets”. In all cases, the Hebrew or Greek suggests something that domes or surrounds the head.

The Book of Mormon contains more than six references to “head-plate” or “head-plates”. There is not a single occurrence of the word helmet in the English translation of the Book of Mormon. Why is that – especially in light of the fact that the LORD has suffered so much of the language of the English Book of Mormon to parallel the King James Bible? The Book of Mormon uses the peculiar expressions, “head-plates” or

“shields to defend their heads”, but no helmets! Why?

The answer is straightforward: even though helmet is a familiar, even scriptural term, it does not accurately describe the head protection worn by Book of Mormon peoples.

Warriors among the ancient North American mound builders wore bonnet-like headdresses upon which a curved strip of copper was attached. Some examples feature wing-like plates of copper for protecting the sides of the head and face.

There is no reason why talented researchers and artists cannot compose inspiring expressions of Book of Mormon history which better agree with scripture, the statements of Joseph Smith and the patiently waiting artifacts of North America’s mound builder societies.

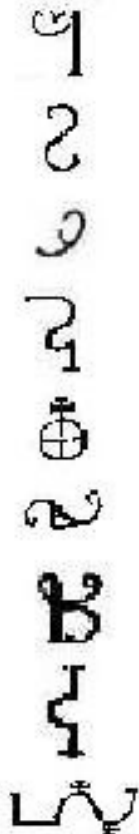
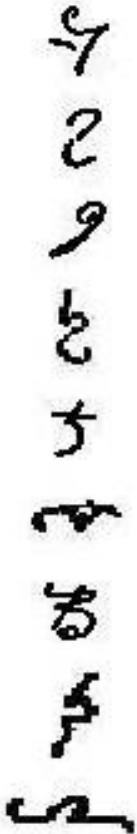
## Chapter Six Chart and Pictures



***A Mound Builder City of Earth, Timber and Plaster-like Cement  
(Artwork of Herb Roe)***

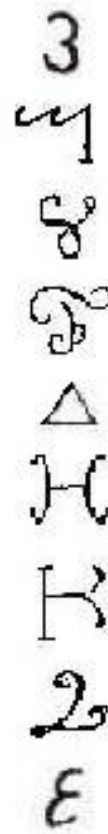
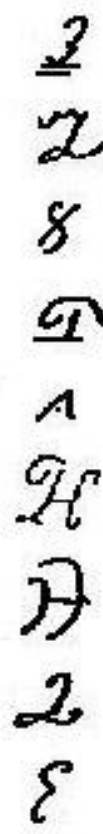
Nephite

Mi 'kmaq



Nephite

Mi 'kmaq

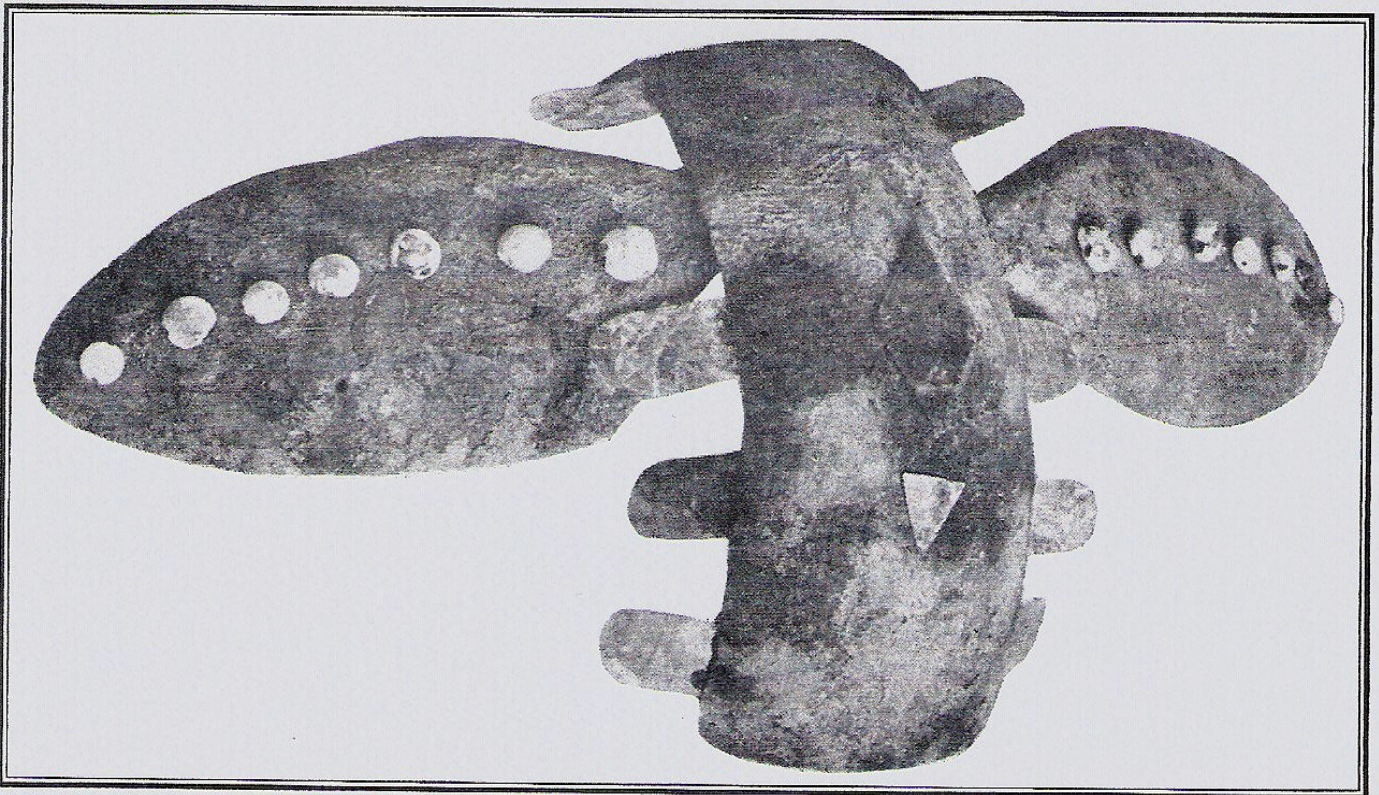


The above Nephite symbols come from the “Caractors” transcript (early Mormon transcript of characters copied from the Book of Mormon Plates). Though the spoken language of the Mi’kmaq people of northern America is certainly not the same as Nephite, the style of Nephite writing resembles Mi’kmaq hieroglyphs. In both Nephite and Mi’kmaq, symbols represent entire words. This explains why Nephite “reformed Egyptian” is even more compressed than Nephite “altered... Hebrew” (Mormon 9:33)



***Mound Builder Copper Headdress  
(By Permission of the Chicago Field Museum)  
~Note the freshwater pearls~***

“...all manner of fine pearls...” (4 Nephi 1:24)



*Hopewell copper headplate and cheek guards excavated in Ohio. The curved portion was designed to fit the contour of the head, while the wing like appendages dropped along the sides of the face. The headdress had been sewed to a bonnet-like appurtenance which covered the head and fell to the shoulders at the rear. "The Mound Builders" by Henry Clyde Shetrone, page 115, published by D. Appleton-Century Company New York & London, 1936.*

**Head-plate**  
**(H. C. Shetrone's THE MOUND-BUILDERS, pg 115)**

“...the more vital parts of the body being shielded from the strokes of the Lamanites, by their breastplates, and their armshields, and their head-plates...” (Alma 43:38)



*Hopewell headplate with cheek guards and grommets for attaching the cloth or leather covering. Prehistoric American, Volume 35, Number 5.*

**(Artifact Image Provided by Wayne N. May, Editor of Ancient American)**

“...and also shields to defend their heads...” (Alma 43:19)





***Copper Breastplate***

***(See THE MOUND-BUILDERS, pg 113, Artifact Image Provided by Wayne N. May)***

“...Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates...” (Alma 43:19)



**Hardened Copper (Biblical Steel) Spear Points, “...cankered with rust [oxidized] ...”**  
**(Mosiah 8:11; Artifact Image Provided by Wayne N. May, Editor of Ancient American)**

A key to translating the English Book of Mormon into appropriate biblical Hebrew is found in its terminology from the King James Bible. Seek out the original Hebrew terms behind the Gentile translation: The Hebrew terms translated “steel” in Psalm 18:34 and Jeremiah 15:12 are “naḥuṣha” and “naḥošet” respectively. These actually refer to hardened copper, not hardened iron. In fact, these Hebrew terms are related to the Hebrew “naḥašh” meaning serpent, as in “brazen serpent...” (Helaman 8:14)

David exclaimed, “He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.” (Psalm 18:34) The biblical verses mentioning “steel” strongly correlate with the mention of “steel” in 1 Nephi 16:18: “...I Nephi...did break my bow, which was made of fine steel...” The same is true for Laban’s “steel” bladed sword which was also of Old World manufacture. (1 Nephi 4:9) Further evidence that “steel” of the Book of Mormon is hardened copper is indicated by the order in which it is listed: “And I did teach my people...to work in all manner... of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel...” Notice that “steel” is listed after “copper” and “brass” and not immediately after “iron”. (2 Nephi 5:15; see also Jarom 1:8)



***Hardened Copper (Biblical Steel) Objects, Found in the Regions of Wisconsin  
and Michigan***

***Artifact Image Provided by Wayne N. May, Editor of Ancient American)***

***~Note the controversial curved blade~***

“...and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax...” (Enos 1:20)



***The Central American Pyramid of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza on the Yucatan Peninsula, built centuries after Christ's North American appearance to the Nephites***

The Lord commanded his people Israel: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me... in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar..." (Exodus 20:24 - 26)

# Chapter Seven

## “ARISE, shine”

### The Blessing of Genuine Maps

In recent years Latter-day Saints have been blessed with the new LDS edition of the scriptures. This marvelous accomplishment includes attractive and useful maps of the Bible. These maps are a helpful resource to those desiring to know the Old and New Testaments better. Our Heavenly Father has seen fit to give us these maps, even though they rely, to some extent on scholarly opinions and conjectures.

The Church’s Bible maps are subject to updating and improvement. Ur of the Chaldees, for instance, may have been farther north and west of the “Ur” located in south-eastern Iraq. There was an Ensign article on this topic.<sup>9</sup> The location of Mt. Sinai is also dubious, as is the “Traditional route of the Exodus”. Scholars still debate the layout of Herod’s temple on the temple mount. The map titled “Jerusalem in Jesus’ Time” judiciously depicts the temple mount according to Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889). More recent LDS editions of the Bible include map improvements and corrections.

All maps that attempt to reconstruct the lands and history of the Bible are prone to some errors. Nevertheless, maps are valuable to those seeking to devote themselves to the scriptures. Our Heavenly Father has therefore directed the Church to include genuine geographic maps as scriptural resources for the study of the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants and Church History. What about the Book of Mormon?

It has been many generations since the first publication of the Book of Mormon. In earlier days of the Church there was a proposed map of Book of Mormon lands which featured all of South America as the “land southward”, and North America as the “land northward”. Colombia’s Magdalena River was proposed as “the river Sidon” and Lehi’s landing was placed far to the south in temperate Chile. (1879 edition of the Book of Mormon with speculative footnotes by Orson Pratt) It is easy to understand how this map was arrived at, but the fact is, it is inconsistent with the much more limited territory detailed in scripture. The Church has not approved the hemispheric map to represent Book of Mormon lands in the current edition of the scripture.

Have Latter-day Saints in general, not devoted themselves enough to the Book of Mormon over the decades, to be granted inspired and truly geographic maps of its covenant land? The following verses are sobering to consider:

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things which you have received-

“Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.

“And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon...” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:54-57)

Would complementing the Book of Mormon with inspired geographic maps conflict with the need for faith? Possessing maps of Bible lands does not eliminate this need. History and the sciences seldom remove the need for faith. Saints are commanded to pursue these subjects. (Doctrine and Covenants 88:78-80) These disciplines, honed to the truth, can enrich spiritual understandings and encourage an objective interest in scripture. Having true geographic maps of Book of Mormon lands would be a blessing to many!

For centuries the Jewish people have been dispersed throughout the nations, but they have never lost track of their covenant land. After so many generations, perhaps Latter-day Saints should feel a little dissatisfied at not being able to tell for certain whether the battle at Cumorah, and other Book of Mormon events, took place in North or South America or on an isle visited by Columbus. We know that Book of Mormon events occurred somewhere in the Americas, but scripture beckons us to know more than this. The LORD has suffered geographic detail to be placed within the sacred pages evidently for a reason.

The general description of the covenant land may not be the most important details in the book, but this information is not unimportant either, or it would not be in the book. Geographic commentaries such as Alma 22:27-34, were painstakingly engraved in the ancient record.

The Father liberally gives, and does not upbraid in providing geographic maps of the Bible. There are those who have for decades faithfully studied the Standard Works of the Church; who have made use of the scriptural resources afforded them. If they seek, will they not be guided to the general whereabouts of the Book of Mormon Promised Land?

Indeed, a wise and generous Father has already provided in the current Standard Works, for those whose eyes and ears are opened after searching, believing and holding fast to the scriptures. Hear then the words of the Seer:

“And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the prophets – the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James and John in the wilderness of Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fullness of times!

“And again, the voice of God in the chambers of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in diverse places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints!...” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20-21)

Now look at the map entitled The New York-Ohio Area,<sup>10</sup> provided at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants. Review Doctrine and Covenants 128:20-21, and notice

that every location mentioned in these verses fits somewhere on this map. The Susquehanna River is depicted there. Harmony is there, Colesville is there, Fayette is there. Where is the place from which the book was revealed? It is there – a drumlin hill convenient to Manchester, south of Lake Ontario in the region of the Finger Lakes. What is the place? Cumorah, the scripture says! We may know its location as assuredly as we know the location of Carmel (Hebrew for Garden-land) mentioned in the previous verse. See for instance, Jeremiah 46:18, and Map 1, B2, Mt. Carmel (LDS edition of the Bible).<sup>11</sup>

Archeology, may never show that “all Israel” was called to gathered at Mount Carmel, or prove that “Elijah came unto all the people” with power. (1 Kings 19-21) Nevertheless, Mount Carmel is on the map! Matching the scriptures to the land, the faithful are at liberty to accept the location of scriptural places simply because they correlate with scripture. There is little archaeological proof that Solomon’s temple actually stood on Jerusalem’s mount Moriah, yet here is where the Bible says it stood. (2 Chronicles 3:1) Imagine if another “mount Moriah” was alleged to exist in Egypt, and funds obtained to go search for the foundations of the Israelite temple among the ample and impressive ruins there. Those advocating this specious setting might even succeed in finding an Egyptian analog to the Ark of the Covenant, but would this justify their efforts? Even if a public sensation was created making guided tours an attractive prospect, devoted Bible scholars would still reject the whole endeavor as unfounded. The same is true for placing Elijah’s Carmel anywhere other than on the coast of Israel and Cumorah anywhere other the Finger Lakes region of America.

The Prophet’s mention of “the dews of Carmel”, in verse 19, of section 128, is not a quote from the Bible. The “dews of Carmel” bear witness to the inspiration of the verse. Heavy dews do in fact distill upon the fertile slopes of Carmel – God’s Garden-land. Those who live there know this!

Verse 19 of Section 128, also blends its inspired words with a verse from Isaiah:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings...”  
(Doctrine and Covenants 128:19, Mosiah 12:21-24, 3 Nephi 20:40, Isaiah 52:7-10)

Verses 19 and 20 draw a parallel between the Garden-land of Carmel and the land of Cumorah; between Mt. Carmel of Elijah, and Moroni’s lonely hill. The drumlin hill which concealed a sacred record was situated in the Nephite land called Cumorah, hence “Cumorah’s lonely hill” (“An Angel from on High”, *LDS Hymn* 13. Text: Parley P. Pratt):

“And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents round about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains...”

“And when three hundred and eighty and four years had passed away, we had gathered in all the remainder of our people unto the land Cumorah.” (Mormon 6:4-5)

Look again at the map of The New York-Ohio Area, provided in our scriptures.

No other place in the Americas better qualifies for “a land of many waters, rivers and fountains”, a land of “large bodies of water” (Alma 50:29) than does the Finger Lakes, Great Lakes region of America. Here, adjacent to the Finger Lakes, must be the lands of the Book of Mormon. The rest of Book of Mormon lands cannot be thousands of miles distant from the land of Cumorah.

We have been given a map of Book of Mormon lands for those with eyes to see. You may do as Sister Olive did, and fill in the missing waters of yore - since dissipated or withered to marshlands. You may find that Jacob’s “isle” appears between Lake Erie on the west and southwest and Lake Ontario to the north. Sister Olive sees that the narrow neck passed through the seabed of ancient Lake Tonawanda. Other waters to the east (Genesee River valley, once swollen and lake-like) and to the south (ancient Lake Carll), formed a homeland that was “nearly surrounded by water”. (Alma 22:32)

Situated in an eastern corner of the United States and Canada, in lands of the ancient mound builders, is a setting for the Book of Mormon in which a “considerable distance” means a days’ march in the wilderness. (Alma 56:36-38) An “exceeding great distance” (Helaman 3:4) as estimated by Nephite families - old and young afoot, could amount to a few hundred miles. The same goes for a distance of “many days” estimated by a lost party of forty-three who set out in search of Zarahemla and ended up too far north and east. By an unknown route, they arrived near the Finger Lakes region, “a land among many waters”. They mistook the desolation of the Jaredites as the destruction of the land of Zarahemla, and may have traveled for days in search of inhabitants and answers. They found the complete record of Ether and not a single living Jaredite! (Mosiah 8:8; 21:25-26)

It is not too surprising that Limhi’s search party mistook the desolate land of the Jaredites for Zarahemla. As the party found themselves “in a land among many waters” they may have taken these for waters in the vicinity of Zarahemla.

Traveling eastward from the place where the Nephites would be destroyed, the deposed Jaredite king Omer came to a body of water. (Ether 9:3) An “eastward” direction does not have to mean due east, and “sea” does not have to mean Ocean. There is no difficulty accounting for an “eastward...seashore” with Cumorah at the Finger Lakes. Scripture tells of a particularly large body of water near Ramah (the hill Cumorah). (Ether 15:8-11)

To visit the lands of the Book of Mormon, the US and Canadian citizen doesn’t have to take a tour of Central or South America. A visit to genuine Book of Mormon lands doesn’t require cautiously exploring Mesoamerican or Colombian jungles. Lands of the Book of Mormon are in a land choice above all other lands, governed by a people above all other nations - a land of liberty, a land on which rests the choicest blessings and the most terrible curse. (Alma 45:16; 46:16-17, Ether 10:28; 11:6)

In judgment, the LORD is no respecter of persons, (Deuteronomy 10:17) “and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female...all are alike unto God...” (2 Nephi 26:33) Nevertheless some lands are more choice to the LORD than others. (2 Nephi 10:19) It is also true that poorer lands have sometimes rewarded the LORD’S care with better yields. (Jacob 5:21-25, 43)

The 128th Section, which identifies the Finger Lakes location of Cumorah, is an



inspired epistle, written and signed by the Prophet Joseph Smith, dated September 6, 1842. It is significant that this scripture came forth in the very season as those impetuous, unsigned *Times and Seasons* articles so taken with Stephens' accounts of stone ruins. We are obligated to seriously consider the scripture (Section 128). The anonymous newspaper commentaries should mean little to us.

The first verse of Section 128, reminds us that the fall of 1842 was an adverse season for the Prophet. He was "pursued by his enemies" who trumped charges and sought his arrest. Joseph found it necessary to go into hiding. (Doctrine and Covenants 127:1) He remained secluded at home or abroad much of that fall. His epistle to the Church, published in the October 1 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, became the 128th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. This letter, written while the Prophet was in hiding, tacitly repudiates the sensational ZARAHMLA piece by indicating the location of Cumorah.

On the subject of a Mesoamerican Cumorah, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith said:

"...This modernist theory of necessity, in order to be consistent, must place the waters of Ripliancum and the Hill Cumorah some place within the restricted territory of Central America, notwithstanding the teachings of the Church to the contrary for upwards of 100 years...

"It is known that the Hill Cumorah where the Nephites were destroyed is the hill where the Jaredites were also destroyed. This hill was known to the Jaredites as Ramah. It was approximately near to the waters of Ripliancum, which the Book of Ether says, 'by interpretation, is large or to exceed all.'...It must be conceded that this description fits perfectly the land of Cumorah in New York...for the hill is in the proximity of the Great Lakes, and also in the land of many rivers and fountains..." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 3, pp 233-234)

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, who was also aware of the Mesoamerican Cumorah theory, stated that:

"Both the Nephite and the Jaredite civilizations fought their final great wars of extinction at and near the Hill Cumorah (or Ramah as the Jaredites termed it)...Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and many early brethren, who were familiar with the circumstances attending the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in this dispensation, have left us pointed testimony as to the identity and location of Cumorah or Ramah." (CUMORAH, *Mormon Doctrine*, pg 175)

In April Conference, Mark E. Petersen of the Quorum of the Twelve stated:

"I do not believe that there were two Hill Cumorahs, one in Central America and the other one up in New York, for the convenience of the Prophet Joseph Smith, so that the poor boy would not have to walk clear to Central America to get the gold plates.

“I do not believe we can be good Latter-day Saints and question the integrity of Joseph Smith.” (123rd Annual Conference of the Church, April 4-6 1953, *General Conference Report*, pp 83-84; or *Improvement Era*, June 1953, pg 423)

It should be noted that while Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith astutely defended the scriptural location of Cumorah, he also supported an exaggerated setting for the Book of Mormon. The Prophet’s April 1844 proclamation that “The whole of America is Zion itself from north to south...” came to be interpreted to mean that the whole Western Hemisphere (North and South America) is Zion. But the Prophet Joseph Smith goes on to remark that “...it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be, and that it should be in the center of the land.” Independence Missouri “is the center place” (site of the New Jerusalem’s mountain of the Lord, Doctrine and Covenants 57:1-3). Independence is not in the “center” of the Western Hemisphere. It is near the center of the United States and Indian Territory of 1844 - the “America” that Joseph Smith was likely referring to.

Doctrine and Covenants 133:24 states that “the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.” Even if we extrapolate from “the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion” the continents of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, this does not establish that the Promised Land of Lehi occupies the entire land mass of the Western Hemisphere, any more than it establishes that the entire land mass of the Eastern Hemisphere is the Promised Land of Canaan.

In America, how big can a land be wherein only one major river is named? (Alma 2:15) How far would souls have to flee to escape a poisonous serpent epidemic? (Ether 9:30-33) Travel times, and other facts described within the pages of the Book of Mormon, require that its starring New World territory be quite localized - not exceeding a few hundred miles by a few hundred miles. Once we come to terms with this fact, preferably from our own study of the scripture, and once we see that scripture plainly places Cumorah in northern America near the Finger Lakes, the folly of other settings becomes apparent. With understanding, we may steer the bow of our testimony against the flood of books, art, videos, dramatizations, forums, travel advertisements, all portraying Book of Mormon life and times in Central or else South America. We don’t have to drift with currents that would require us to discount the plain voice of scripture and statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

It may be argued that Mexican / Mesoamerican Cumorah theory is a Caliban born of the widespread “condemnation” which the LORD said members of the Church were under for having “treated lightly...the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon...” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:54-57) The new covenant includes correct knowledge of covenant lands. Elder McConkie explains that “All covenants between God and man are part of the new and everlasting covenant.” (NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT, *Mormon Doctrine*, pg 530) It seems that the LORD has allowed members of the Church to wander for years in a wilderness of speculation and geographic mirages, until they should at last devote themselves enough to scripture to realize the Promised Land.

The covenant land of Lehi is in a land choice above all other lands, a land of liberty - a land on which the LORD has raised up a mighty nation above all other nations. (1 Nephi 13:16-19, 30) No kings have risen up unto the Gentiles upon the land of Lehi. (2 Nephi 10:10-12, 19) Descendants of Book of Mormon peoples, who keep the commandments of the LORD, are entitled to inherit this land and to prosper. Righteous Gentiles are invited to be numbered among them. (3 Nephi 21:14-24) The wicked that persist in their wickedness are severely warned to repent or be utterly destroyed. Make no mistake; the Book of Mormon issues the severest warning to inhabitants of the United States. (2 Nephi 1:7-11, Alma 37:28, 31, Ether 2:11-12)

## Covenant Records and Promised Lands

The seed of Nephi and his brethren are “descendants of the Jews.” (2 Nephi 30:4; 33:8) They are descendants of Manasseh son of Asenath and Joseph. (Alma 10:3) Manasseh and his brother Ephraim were adopted by Jacob their grandfather, to be his heirs. Thus Ephraim and Manasseh are recognized as tribes of Israel, as if Israel (Jacob) were their immediate father. (Genesis 48:3-5, 12-20) Though he was the younger, Ephraim received the birthright. (1 Chronicles 5:2) “Efrayim” means double fruit. (*Hill of double fruit*, Ether 7:9) Some of Lehi’s ancestors were undoubtedly among those of Manasseh who humbled themselves, came to Jerusalem, and joined with the house of Judah in keeping the commandments of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 30:1, 10-12)

Were peoples of the Book of Mormon also descendants of Ephraim? The Patriarchal blessing given to Joseph and his posterity mentions “a fruitful son” (translated “fruitful bough”, Genesis 49:22, KJV). The reference to this “fruitful son upon a fountain” (“fruitful bough by a well”, KJV), whose “daughters” (translated “branches”, KJV) go over a wall, is easily seen to represent daughters or branches of the tribes of Joseph (notably Ephraim) separated from their brethren, and receiving an inheritance in a distant land. (2 Nephi 3:5; 9:53; 10:1, JST Genesis 50:25) Apostle Erastus Snow is reported to have made the following statement:

“...The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi, was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgement is given us in the first Book of Nephi, which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael [Lehi’s contemporary] was of the lineage of Ephraim, and that his sons married into Lehi’s family, and Lehi’s sons married Ishmael’s daughters, thus fulfilling the words of Jacob upon Ephraim and Manasseh in the 48th chapter of Genesis, which says: “And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the land.” Thus these descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim grew together upon this American continent, with a sprinkling from the house of Judah, from Mulek descended, who left Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi, and founded the colony afterwards known as Zarahemla and found by

Mosiah—thus making a combination, an intermixture of Ephraim and Manasseh with the remnants of Judah, and for aught we know, the remnants of some other tribes that might have accompanied Mulek. And such have grown up on the American continent.” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 23, pp 184-185)

The Book of Mormon is associated with “the record of the stick of Ephraim” or record of the “stick of Joseph” which “is in the hand of Ephraim” and tribes of Israel affiliated with him. (Doctrine and Covenants 27:5, Ezekiel 37:19)

The Savior wants the remnant of Israel in America to understand that their inheritance in the land is “unto the fulfilling of the covenant” which he made with their father Jacob. (3 Nephi 20:22) It makes reason stare to think that the LORD would not provide a way for his people Israel to identify the lands of their inheritance. There are geographic keys in the record of the stick of Joseph, and in the teachings of that highly esteemed Seer, Joseph Smith. (2 Nephi 3:7) These scriptural keys are sufficient to identify the general location of covenant lands. All Israel need do is seek, and believe! For instance, when the Doctrine and Covenant tells us of “Glad tidings from Cumorah...-the book to be revealed”, the descendents of Jacob need only believe that the Nephite record, containing the fullness of the Gospel, really has come forth from Cumorah. If we accept that God is not a God of confusion, and that the Cumorah of the Doctrine and Covenants is the Cumorah of the Book of Mormon, we can be sure that the original lands of Zarahemla and Nephi are not thousands of miles distant from the Finger Lakes. We can be sure that Lehi’s covenant land of liberty is superposed by the mightiest of all Gentile nations. It’s really that simple.

If you are an heir to a covenant land and its attendant blessings and responsibilities, and you devote yourself to the teachings of the scriptures, you are entitled to know the covenant land of your fathers. You are entitled to know the ground on which you stand. You needn’t be blind to these things. (Ether 12:35)

The word translated “stick” in Ezekiel 37 (KJV) is “ets”. The word “ets” means “wood”, as in “plank”, “tablet” or “article of wood”. The footnote for “stick” from Ezekiel 37:16 in the LDS edition reads:

“HEB wood. Wooden writing tablets were in common use in Babylon in Ezekiel’s day. Num. 17:2 (1-10).”

Such wooden tablets, joined together like a book, were inlaid with clay, wax or thin leaves of metal, and were used for writing contracts or covenants. In fact ancient cultures around the world made similar records.

The LORD explains by his priest and prophet Ezekiel, who was also a contemporary of Lehi, that the joining of the “stick of Joseph” with the “stick of Judah” symbolizes the uniting of the “two nations” in “the everlasting covenant”, no more to be “divided into two kingdoms”. Along with this uniting of the two nations, the LORD says that the scattered peoples of Israel will be gathered to “their own land”. They are to be “one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel...And they shall dwell in the land that I have given Jacob my servant...” (Ezekiel 37:20-25) The Savior explains that the

covenant made with Jacob includes the American Promised Land. (3 Nephi 20:22) This covenant land is referred in the Hebrew Bible as “the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills”. (Genesis 49:26)

Ezekiel prophesies that Joseph and Judah, and the tribes of Israel that affiliate with them, shall be united under the beloved Messiah “David”, their “one king” and “one shepherd”. (Ezekiel 37:24-26)

Noting the exact wording of Section 27 verse 5, we may see that “the record of the stick of Ephraim” means record of the covenants made with Joseph and with the tribes of Israel associated with him. This record is “in the hand of Ephraim”. Covenants made with the seed of Joseph are found in the record Latter-day Saints call the Book of Mormon. The covenant “stick” in the hand of Ephraim is to be joined with the covenant “stick” of Judah. Prophetic covenants God made with Judah are recorded in the Bible. Judah, or more correctly “Yehudah”, “prevailed above his brethren”. His name means praised. (Genesis 29:35)

The word “ets” also means tree as in “ets ha’hayim”, “the tree of life”. (Genesis 2:9, 1 Nephi 11:25) The word “hayim”, like the Hebrew words for GOD(s) and heaven(s) is singular and plural at the same time. Just as the “stick” in God’s hand is “one” yet more than one, “hayim” literally means “lives”, but can be translated “life”. Thus eternal life is also eternal lives. Understanding that “ets” means tree as well as wood, brings out the Hebraic significance of Lehi’s words to his son Joseph:

“Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.” (2 Nephi 3:12)

The word “ets” also means pole on which, as the Lexicon puts it, “bodies of slain (criminals and others) were exposed.” Thus the joined wood, the “one stick” of the “everlasting covenant”, may also be seen to sublimely reference the crucifixion of Messiah. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23, Galatians 3:13) His atonement is central to the everlasting covenant.

It is no coincidence that the word “ets” is close to the Hebrew word “etsem” meaning bone. In fact, the joining of the sticks described in Ezekiel chapter 37, parallels Ezekiel’s vision of the joining together of the dry bones and the resurrection of the “whole house of Israel”. (Ezekiel 37:1-14, Isaiah 26:17-21)

The restoration of the fullness of the Gospel, and the resurrection of the living covenant body of Israel (the true Church), are inseparably connected. By the power of the LORD’S Spirit each scattered, separate and distinct part - each individual is gathered, joined together and given life. They collectively, like the distinct records of the covenant in the LORD’S hand, become one. This compound or composite unity is presided over by the Messiah. (Ezekiel 37, 2 Nephi 2:11; 29:14)

But Israel has lamented, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut

off...” But the LORD asked Ezekiel, “...Son of man, can these bones live?” Ezekiel answered, “O Lord GOD, thou knowest.” Then said the LORD, “...I have opened your graves, O my people...And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land...” (Ezekiel 37:3, 13-14)

The connections between the joining of God’s covenant records of scripture and the gathering of his people to their lands of inheritance resound in the Book of Mormon:

“Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? ...And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also...”

“And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show...that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever.” (2 Nephi 29:8, 14)

Many who begin to read and ponder the Book of Mormon do so because of an interest in their own salvation. Some even say they do not want to be troubled with subjects that do not seem pertinent to their personal salvation. But as they fervently and prayerfully devote themselves to the scriptures, like Enos son of Jacob son of Lehi, they find that their concern broadens to include more than themselves. Ultimately, those devoted to the teachings of the Book of Mormon find themselves caring about things of a greater scope - things that the LORD cares very much about. They begin to have an interest and “an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long disperse covenant people of the Lord.” (Mormon 8:15) They begin to “care for the house of Israel...and know from whence their blessings come” and they begin to share with Jesus, his “sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel...” and to sense his exquisite love for her. (Mormon 5:10-11, 3 Nephi 22:5-8)

That the LORD has an interest in, and wants us to have an interest in covenant lands, as soon as our minds can bear it, is evident in the scriptures:

“And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;”

“And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.”

“And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away.”

“But, verily I say unto you that in time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you.”

“Wherefore hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay

my hand?” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:18-21)

God told the seed of Lehi, that upon the land of their inheritance “the Gentiles shall be blessed”. That “this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentile, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.” But God has also said that “...I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the Gentiles; nevertheless, I will soften the hearts of the Gentiles, that they shall be like unto a father to them; wherefore, the Gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel. Wherefore I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, and them who shall be numbered among thy seed, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands, wherefore I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God.” (2 Nephi 10:10-11, 18-19)

The Savior explains that those Gentiles who repent and enter into the covenant of baptism will be “numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel.” (3 Nephi 30:2; 21:6, 20-24; 16:13. See also 2 Nephi 30:1-2) The Father warns the Gentiles, that after they have been blessed and prospered upon the land, and after they have been made “mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel.”, that is, after the Gentiles have been a “scourge unto the people of this land”, then if the Gentiles “harden their hearts”, the Father “will return their iniquities upon their own heads...” (3 Nephi 20:27-28)

In particular we see that the Father’s warning is directed to the Gentiles inhabiting the United States of America:

“...At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth...then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel...that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance.” (3 Nephi 16:10-16)

Thus the promise that there shall be “no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles...” is a blessing relative to the Gentiles. Relative to the remnant of Israel and those numbered among them in the covenant, who shall be persecuted, oppressed and scattered by the Gentiles, the land will be free of mortal “rulers” only when Messiah reigns. Then shall the land be a land of liberty unto Israel in the fullest sense. Then shall they truly have no king but the LORD, and no laws but his. (Doctrine and Covenants 41:4; 43:29; 101:76-77)

## **In Ramah**

By another priestly contemporary of Lehi (perhaps even his close friend) the LORD spoke:

“...A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel

weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

“Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

“And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.” (Jeremiah 31:15-17)

The word of the LORD by the mouth of his Hebrew prophets can be like a Bach fugue or a higher order equation. A fugue is a polyphonic form of music in which more than one musical theme is played together, and a higher order equation can have more than one solution. The Hebrew Scriptures can help us better appreciate (as we study, ponder and pray) the mind of the LORD. In other words, it's okay for scripture to have more than one meaning.

“Ramah” means “height”. The Hebrew / Aramaic word “ram” means, “high, lifted up, exalted”. “Avram” (Abram) means “exalted father”. The term “rum” is a variant, meaning “loftiness” or “haughtiness”, the perilous sin of pride is implied. (Isaiah 2:11) The Book of Mormon term “Rameumpton” also comes to mind. (Alma 31:21) Pride came before the fall of great nations at Ramah.

According to Matthew, Herod's slaughter of the innocents was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15. (Matthew 2:16-18) At Ramat–Rahel (Heights of Rachel) in Bethlehem, Rachel is said to have mourned. Herod's wicked edict most certainly caused the wailing of Leah to be greatly heard as well - the agonized voices of numerous Jewish mothers. Though great was the mourning at Bethlehem, greater is Rachel's mourning over the slain multitudes of her descendents who died in their sins – slain near the height called Ramah. Jeremiah 31 makes clear reference to Israel scattered upon the distant coasts of the earth, and offers comfort to a bemoaning mother (grandmother) of Ephraim, by promising a return of the birthright people:

“For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.

“For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

“Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications, will I lead them: I will cause them to go by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.” (Jeremiah 31:6-9)

In the same chapter this priestly prophet assures that the LORD will bring about “brit hadashah”, “a new covenant” with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; in which he will put his Torah (Law which proceeds forth) in their midst, and



write it in the hearts of his people. New Testament (Covenant) is therefore a term and promise found in Hebrew Scripture - the Old Testament. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

“Testament” means “covenant”! Latter-day Saints have been commanded to repent and remember this “new covenant” which permeates the narrative of the Book of Mormon. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:57)

Some recognize that “geography” could help readers better understand the testament of the Book of Mormon much as it does the Bible, but how many appreciate that promised lands are part of the covenant (testament) itself? (3 Nephi 5:24-26)

Like Jeremiah’s “book of the purchase”, showing forth his entitlement, his redemptive right to a piece of land; which book contained written evidences both “sealed” and “open”, which was subscribed and witnessed by witnesses and hid in an earthen vessel “that they may continue many days”, so also is the book of the LORD’S new covenant, the Book of Mormon. It is his written right of redemption, his entitlement and promise to his people and the land. (Jeremiah 32, 2 Nephi 1: 5-7; 10:10, 15, 19, 3 Nephi 20:14, 22)

Considering that the testament of the Book of Mormon was engraved, it is fitting that Jeremiah prophesied that “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond...” Upon the plates of the Nephite record is also engraved the tender mercies and promises of the LORD towards Judah. (Jeremiah 17:1, 2 Nephi 10:7-9; 29:1-5; 33:8-9, Jacob 4:17-18, 3 Nephi 20:29, 33, 46; 29:8)

Possessing the entitlements of the “firstborn” (Deuteronomy 21:17), Ephraim receives double portions of lands of inheritance – even “the precious things of the lasting hills”. To make amends for his part in stubbornly breaking up the kingdom, Ephraim, in the last days, is given the opportunity to “push the people together” by way of the new covenant. (Deuteronomy 33:13-17, Doctrine and Covenants 58:44-45)

Like a higher order equation, there is more than one fulfillment to Jeremiah 31:15. There is more than one height, or place called Ramah cited in the scriptures. There was a place called Ramah north of the land of Judah, in the land of Benjamin on the border of Ephraim (Hosea 5:8-9), a Ramah that was the site of many conflicts between the northern and southern kingdoms. (1 Kings 15:17) There was a Ramah in the land of Asher near the sea (Joshua 19:29), and a northern Ramah where Joram (Yo-ram = Jehovah is exalted) king of Israel was wounded in battle. (2 Kings 8:29) The most immediate interpretation of Ramah in Jeremiah 31:15 is the place where the children of Judah (including Benjamin) were collected before they were taken captive into Babylon. (Jeremiah 40:1)

Likewise, there is certainly more than one height (Ramah) in the Americas, where ancient peoples collided in terrible pitched battle and where their trampled (ramas), decayed (ramam) bodies fell prey to the worm (rimah). (1 Nephi 12:20-21) But the Book of Mormon tells us of one Ramah in particular, one hill Cumorah, situated in a northern land of many waters, rivers and fountains.

Just before the final gathering at Ramah, nearly two million of Coriantumr’s people - men, women and children had been slain. (Ether 15:2, 7-11) Assuming that a comparable number of Jaredites on the opposing sides had been killed, we may estimate the total Jaredite population in the days of Ether to be about four million.

The majority of the Jaredites may have settled along the southern coast of Lake Iroquois / Ontario, many miles inland and in the northwestern lands adjacent to Lake Iroquois - a combined region of perhaps 8,000 square miles. (Helaman 3:4-5) These estimates yield an average population density of about 500 people per square mile. This would mean a body every 236 feet, in various stages of decay, if the dead had been evenly spaced throughout the land. (Ether 14:21) Is there any wonder that "...the scent thereof went forth upon the face of the land, even upon all the face of the land; wherefore the people became troubled by day and by night, because of the scent thereof." (Ether 14:23)

Phyllis Olive concludes that most of the Jaredite battles took place within the western plains south of Lake Iroquois. From southern high ground, Ether would have had a panoramic view of his people's struggles. (Ether 13:13-14, 15:13)

In the region of the Hill Cumorah, south of the Great Lake Ripiancum, about 230,000 Nephites perished. (Mormon 6:10-15, Ether 15:8, 10-12) We may assume that comparable numbers of the enemy also fell there. Centuries before, the Jaredites who there joined the soil, may have also numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The Jaredite gathering to Ramah took four years, the same amount of time as the Nephite gathering to Cumorah. (Ether 15:14, Mormon 6:5-6; 7:2-5) From these considerations, it may be estimated that about a million bodies fertilize the ground of Cumorah.

Apostle and Scientist James E. Talmage consulted with Ohio State Archaeologist Williams C. Mills regarding parallels between the assailing and defending mound builder societies of the eastern United States and "the Book of Mormon account". Though professionally reticent towards the subject, Professor Mills nevertheless was "impressed by the agreement" as pointed out by Dr. Talmage. It was Elder Talmage's opinion that the agreement between "the Book of Mormon story" and Professor Mill's deductions relative to the mound builders was "remarkable". (*James E. Talmage Journal*, 20 May, 1917)

It is reported that Elder Talmage conducted a soil survey of the Cumorah region and found higher concentrations of calcium and phosphorous compounds. This added to his testimony that Cumorah, south of Lake Ontario, is indeed the place of the fall of Book of Mormon peoples. The results of Talmage's soil survey are mentioned in a 1954 letter by a Brother J. Golden Jensen. (*Ancient American*, Issue: "Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon Lands", pg 13)

In an effort to investigate this account, future soil surveys could be performed on samples from the Finger Lakes region. Comparatively higher concentrations of calcium, phosphorous, iron and other metals could be looked for.

We must be careful of what we expect to find when we go looking for ancient battlefields. Not finding an abundance of bones and armor doesn't mean no horrific war was there. The dust itself may whisper of the presence of the ancient dead. (Mormon 6:15) The ravages of nature, scavenging and demolition have all taken their toll on northern American sites. Nephi and Isaiah write:

"...the multitude of their terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away..." (2 Nephi 26:18, Isaiah 29:5)

At the decline of the Nephite nation, there was widespread disappearance of property; gold, silver, tools and weapons. The “curse” impoverished the Nephite people. Organized bands of robbers methodically looted the land. (Helaman 6:11; 12:18-19; 13:17-23, 31-36, Mormon 1:18; 2:10)

According to the Bible, objects of silver were as common as stones in Jerusalem in the days of King Solomon, and there was a wealth of gold. (1 Kings 10) Where is the archaeological evidence of Solomon’s abundance? It has undergone a fate similar to Nephite possessions.

In the appendix of *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (under the section titled “Vanished Worlds”); Hugh Nibley discourses on the loss of monuments of the past and of antiquities:

“Northern Germany was rich in megalithic monuments at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but now they have vanished. In every civilized country societies were founded in the nineteenth century to stem the tide of destruction that swept away monuments of the past with the increase of population, the opening of new lands to cultivation by new methods, the ceaseless depredations of treasure and souvenir hunters. But the antiquities went right on disappearing. [Carl Schuchardt, *Alteuropa* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935)]

“The same thing happened in America. We too easily forget what a wealth of imposing ruins of the Heroic type once dotted the eastern part of the country. “Not content with having almost entirely exterminated the natives of this continent,” an observer wrote at the beginning of this century, “unsatisfied with the tremendous fact that we have violated covenant engagements and treaty pledges with the Indians a hundred times over, we seem to be intent on erasing the last vestige of aboriginal occupation of our land.” [Warren K. Morehead, *Fort Ancient* (Cincinnati: Clark, 1890), pg 107] This was written in an appeal to save some of the great mounds of Ohio: “There are a number of structures of earth and stone scattered throughout our state...All such earthworks are, of course, placed on summits of high hills, or on plateaus overlooking river valleys.” At fort Miami, “it seems as if blockhouses or bastions of wood had been burned down when once protecting the gateway.” [Ibid, pp 102-103] This is not only an excellent description of Book of Mormon strong places, but it also suits exactly the picture of the standard fortified places of the Old World. Hundreds of such hill forts have been located all over Europe and the British Isles, where they seem to represent the normal life of the people over, long periods of time.” (*A. A. to the B. of M*, pp 438–439)

Brother Nibley summarizes the archaeological problem:

“...Book of Mormon archaeologists have often been disappointed in the past because they have consistently looked for the wrong things. We should not be surprised at the lack of ruins in America in general. Actually the scarcity of identifiable remains in the Old World is even more impressive. In view of the nature of their

civilization one should not be puzzled if the Nephites had left us no ruins at all. People underestimate the capacity of things to disappear, and do not realize that the ancients almost never built of stone. Many a great civilization which has left a notable mark in history and literature has left behind not a single recognizable trace of itself. We must stop looking for the wrong things.” (*A. A. to the B. of M.*, pg 431)

By the standards and expectations of archaeology and anthropology, advocates of Central American settings face a major population crisis. Yes, there were a lot of people in ancient Mesoamerica, but there is no evidence that a large population matching Nephite society ever existed there. This doesn't mean that some Nephite minorities couldn't have migrated to the tropics. Contact between Native Americans of the Great Lakes region and ancient peoples of Central and South American is possible, though at present no trace has been found of the haplogroup X genetic marker among Central or South American natives. This ancient European / Mediterranean ancestral marker is present in Native peoples of the Great Lakes regions. (Pat Morgan, “Mitochondrial DNA Studies of North American Indians”, *Ancient American*, No. 79 – 80, pg 31)

There is historical evidence that immigrants came to settle in Central America by way of northern America, though no large Mesoamerican population fits Nephite civilization. Simply put; Mesoamerican settings are not more favorable towards the Book of Mormon demographically, than Joseph Smith's American Israelite setting among the mound builders.

Of course the Bible lacks archaeological support for many of its claims. This has not prevented the imaginative mapping of events like the Exodus, or a proposed location for “Mt. Sinai”. But we should recognize that the Book of Mormon, with its northern American setting, likewise deserves to be treated as scripture independent of secular support. LDS scripture and the statements of Joseph Smith, show that at least some lands of the Book of Mormon are in the neighborhood of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the Finger Lakes (Cumorah in its land of many waters). The emphasis placed here on LDS scripture and statements of Joseph Smith should not be taken to mean that no archaeological correlation has ever been found in the region of the Finger Lakes:

“The museums in New York State are filled with the instruments of warfare that had been fashioned by the red men and so freely used in that historic era. The opinion is expressed in those relic halls that western New York was the site of an ancient battlefield. There is more evidence of a well planned defensive warfare in that locality than there is in any other region on the American continent.” (McGavin & Bean, *Book of Mormon Geography*, quoting I.H. Smith, *History of Dutchess County*, pg 13)

Prior to their demolition, the remains of numerous earth and timber fortresses could be found throughout the counties of New York State. Ephraim George Squier, commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution, documented this fact.

In 1848, E. G. Squier devoted eight weeks to searching out these remains. He had no exact means of dating the various earth and timber works which he surveyed.

He erroneously proposed that the irregular shape of the earth-works (compared to more geometric earth-works of the Mississippi Valley) suggested that the New York earth-works were of “the period succeeding the commencement of European intercourse.” (*Aboriginal Monuments of the State of New York*, by E.G. Squier, pg 10)

Upon concluding his report, however, Squier states:

“By whom were the aboriginal monuments of Western New York erected, and to what era may they be ascribed? The consideration of these questions has given rise to a vast amount of speculation... If the results arrived at have been erroneous, unsatisfactory, or extravagant, it may be ascribed to the circumstance that the facts heretofore collected have been too few in number and too poorly authenticated to admit of correct conclusions...”

“In respect to date nothing positive can be affirmed. Many of them [old fortified towns and citadels] are now covered with forests... I have seen trees from one to three feet in diameter standing upon the embankments and in the trenches; which would certainly carry back the date of their construction several hundred years, perhaps beyond the period of the discovery in the fifteenth century...” (*A. M. of the S. of N. Y.*, pp 81-82)

Certainly some of the fortifications Squier visited were constructed in more recent centuries. Evidently native peoples of New York continued to build earth and timber fortresses long after Book of Mormon times. Their entrenchments, banks of earth and timber palisades have more in common with constructions described in the Book of Mormon than any Central or South America stonework. Squier points out that the ancient stockades of western New York are not unlike structures build by the natives of Australia, the British Islands, Mexico, Peru, the Pacific Islands, and the Steppes of Russia, and that the general nature of such defenses is not endemic.

Opposed to the theory that the Mound builders were an advanced race not related to “the Indians”, Squier contends that the ancient fortresses of western New York were constructed entirely by ancestors of indigenous people. The Book of Mormon does not disagree. Squier, however, seems incredulous towards the idea that natives of New York might have some connection to peoples of the Middle East. Squier is willing to concede that some of the earth-works could be very old, as long as no credence is given to the idea of a lost race:

“...if the earth-works of Western New York are of remote ancient date, they were not only secondarily but generally occupied by the Iroquois or neighboring and contemporary nations...” (*A. M. of the S. of N. Y.*, pg 82)

According to Squier, nearly all of the earth and timber works served as defenses:

“...Their positions, general close proximity to water, and other circumstances no less conclusive, imply a defensive origin. The unequivocal traces of long occupation found within many of them, would further imply that they were fortified towns and

villages, and were permanently occupied. Some of the smaller ones, on the other hand, seem rather designed for temporary protection, -the citadels in which the builders sought safety for their old men, women, and children in case of alarm or attack.” (*A. M. of the S. of N. Y.*, pg 81)

As for the number of ancient works in New York State, Squier informs us that:

“In the short period of eight weeks devoted to the search, I was enabled to ascertain the localities of no less than one hundred ancient works, [including works in Seneca, Wayne, Niagara and Wyoming counties, pg 11] and to visit and make surveys of half that number. From the facts which have fallen under my notice, I feel warranted in estimating the number which originally existed in the State at from two hundred to two hundred and fifty. Probably one half of these have been obliterated by the plough, or so much encroached upon as to be no longer satisfactorily traced.” (*A. M. of the S. of N. Y.*, pp 11-12)

Squier surveyed works which enclosed areas ranging from less than an acre to over twenty acres. He notes burial pits and mounds containing numerous human skeletons. He mentions artifacts of silver, copper and brass found at various New York sites.

“Probably no county in the State had originally a greater number of aboriginal monuments within its boundaries, than the county of Onondaga”, remarks E. G. Squier. Onondaga County is named after the local native people. The similarity to the name “Onandagus”, revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith during Zion’s Camp, is noteworthy. Squier realized that much evidence of New York’s ancient civilization had already vanished. In his own words, Onondaga County had “been so long settled, and so generally brought under cultivation, that nearly all vestiges of its ancient remains have disappeared. The sites of many are, however, still remembered; but even these will soon be forgotten.” (*A. M. of the S. of N. Y.*, pg 27)

Unfortunately, Squier was right about ancient sites being forgotten. Among Latter-day Saints, this absence (really loss) of evidence is now spun to promote Mexican / Mesoamerican Cumorah theory to a new generation. “There is no evidence” in New York, some say, but they are mistaken. There still is evidence which favors the scriptural location of Cumorah!

Those who have truly sought for evidence, after first believing the scriptures and Joseph, have found it. But the salient thing for other Latter-day Saints to reflect upon is this: There has been no divine revelation so correcting, nor secular argument so compelling, that the Saints are excused for dismissing the geographic counsel of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

There is a painting, owned by the Church, depicting the sun rising above a hill. The scene is Cumorah, by Alfred Lambourne (1893). This painting is especially appropriate in light of a possible meaning of the name. A Nephite, in love with the poetry of his ancestors, may have borrowed an utterance from that prophet so often quoted by Nephi and Jacob. In his own language, somewhat altered from the Hebrew

of long ago, he gave to the land and one rise in particular a new name - a title perhaps evoking hope - perhaps to counter a mournful past:

Isaiah cries, “קוּמִי אֲרִי” , “CUMI, ori”, “ARISE, shine”:

“ARISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

“Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

“Then thou shalt see, and be radiant, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee...for in wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.” (Isaiah 60:1-5, 10)<sup>12</sup>

“And blessed is he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea it shall be brought out of the earth, [CUMI] and it shall shine forth out of darkness, [ori] and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God.” (Mormon 8:16)

Just, as the prophet predicted, the darkness of apostasy has covered the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people, but the LORD has personally shown himself, and his glory has indeed been seen. The sacred grove of Joseph’s first vision resides in the Book of Mormon land called Cumorah.

## Search These Things Diligently

Late in 1835, the brethren of the Church hired Joshua Seixas to instruct them in the basics of the Hebrew language. A revelation to the Church had emphasized the importance of learning languages. (Doctrine and Covenants 90:9-15) The 1836 Hebrew classes taught by Mr. Seixas were well attended. Seixas complimented the brethren by saying that they were, “the most forward of any class” he had ever taught. Seixas called Joseph an “indefatigable” student. Joseph’s love for the subject was evident.

Knowledge of Hebrew gave Joseph additional insight into scripture. For one thing, the meaning of many scriptural names and terms became clear to him. The ability to read Isaiah 52:7 in Hebrew, added “Nauvoo” נֹוּבּוּ to the Latter-day Saint vocabulary. “Nauvoo”, with its third person plural ending, literally means, “they are beautiful (comely)” referring to “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings...” – the feet that have known “vavehem”, the “nails” נֵי.

(Mosiah 15:18-19)

Knowledge of Hebrew allowed the Prophet to comment on several terms in the Book of Abraham and to scripturally defend the unified plurality of GOD (Elohim) so central to Latter-day Saint theology.

The Standard English translation of the scriptures contains anglicized versions of ancient names. The familiar English pronunciations of these names, which rely on English spellings, are usually not authentic. Saying scriptural names authentically can be a little more challenging. But in taking up the challenge, we may find our hearts as well as our understanding turning more to the fathers.

Hebrew is an “atomic” language! Hebrew words can be broken down into “particles” of meaning. In western cultures, names are used all the time without people ever knowing or even thinking to ask what the names mean – if they mean anything. Hebrew names mean something!

Our Heavenly Father has provided a wonderful resource for those who are interested in gaining deeper insight into scripture. THE LDS SCRIPTURES, AUTHORIZED VERSION INCLUDING OFFICIAL STUDY AIDS (CD-ROM RESOURCE EDITION) can help one get better acquainted with the meaning and more accurate pronunciation of scriptural names and terms. The Church’s CD-ROM resource does more than translate scriptural names (as in the King James Version of the Bible); the resource transliterates scriptural names so that the reader may get an idea of how the names are actually pronounced. You don’t have to be a language specialist to get started.

When the Savior says, “...a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1) is he saying more than English words convey? The prophet’s name, Yesha’Yahu (Isaiah) can be interpreted to mean “Salvation (Jesus) is the Eternal (Jehovah)” In saying “...great are the words of Yesha’Yahu (Jesus [is] Jehovah)” the Savior is saying “great are my words by this prophet.”

In Hebrew “Jesus” is pronounced “Yeshua” or “Yehoshua”. His very name means “Salvation” or “the Eternal (Jehovah) is Salvation”. The second “Y” is here capitalized in “Yesha’Yahu” out of respect, and to identify the title of deity present in the prophet’s name. The name “Israel” is actually pronounced “Yisra’El”. This name also includes a title of deity – “El”. And so it is with so very many biblical names.

Many Book of Mormon names derive from Hebrew. The meaning and origin of some of these is clearer than others. “Moroni” מוראני may be Hebrew for “bitterness is my sorrow”. (Ruth 1:20, Genesis 35:18, Jeremiah 31:15 in Hebrew) This may seem a rather morose name for a loving father to have given his child. However, we should consider that not only is this the name of a heroic Nephite warrior, who Mormon admired, but the name may have carried a prophetic message. (Mormon 2:15, 19, 27; 6:18-20) The meaning of Isaiah (Yesha’Yahu) is prophetic as are the names of his sons. (Isaiah 7:3; 8:3-4, 18) The meaning of “M’oroni” מוראני, with the benefit of an aleph א, becomes “light is my might (vigor, abundance)”. (Psalm 90:8, Gen. 49:3 in Hebrew)



## Maps Pertaining to Doctrine and Covenants 128:19-20

To many Latter-day Saints, the name “Cumorah” stirs images of a green hill crowned with a monument built by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To them, Cumorah is the hill where the golden plates lay hidden. Some forget Cumorah is larger than a single hill. Cumorah is a land, possibly with many hills, “in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains”. (Mormon 6:4-5) When the Prophet asks in the beginning of verse 20 of section 128, “...what do we hear?” and answers “Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the prophets – the book to be revealed”, we should remember the angel’s visit to young Joseph. We should remember where it was that the messenger told Joseph of a book “giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.” There the messenger recited prophecies of various Jewish prophets and declared their near fulfillment. We are to understand that these events took place at Cumorah, for this was the very land on which the Smith family settled. (Joseph Smith - History 1:3, 34-41, 51)

The lines that follow in section 128 verse 20, may be telling us that “Glad tidings from Cumorah...” means more than the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. “Glad tidings” or “good news” is what Gospel means. The New Testament expression actually resides in Jewish scripture. (Isaiah 61: 1, Luke 4:17-18; “good tidings” = “b’sorah” in Hebrew) The Book of Mormon doctrinally contains “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews...” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:8-9) But the restored Law of the Gospel involves many elements; such as the ones listed in Doctrine and Covenants 128:20. These elements described in the context of events that occurred near a land of many waters, are as follows:

The book of the New Covenant (i.e., the Nephite record revealed from a large drumlin hill near the Finger Lakes. See also Joseph Smith - History 1:51)

The voice of the Lord in the wilderness declaring special witnesses (e.g. the calling of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon in a wilderness near the Finger Lakes. See also Doctrine and Covenants 17)

The detection and casting out of evil and falsehood (e.g., Michael or Adam detecting the adversary by a river south of the Finger Lakes. See also Doctrine and Covenants 27:11; 128:21)

The revelation of the priesthood by true messengers (e.g., the visitation of the Sons of Thunder possessing the keys of the kingdom and the dispensation of the fullness of times, southwest of the Finger Lakes. See also Doctrine and Covenants 27:12-13)

When the scripture speaks of the Gospel from Cumorah, the verse could refer to all of the above; for Cumorah is more than the green hill where the golden plates lay hidden. Cumorah is a precious land, in a covenant land choice above all other lands, a

land where sacred events occurred, relevant to the restoration of the Gospel in these latter-days.



***Image derived from Google Earth, © Copyright Google***

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth... How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things...As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them!” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:19)



***Image derived from Google Earth, © Copyright Google  
SCRIPTURAL LAND of CUMORAH  
and LAND of MANY WATERS***

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! (1)...A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette (2),...The voice of Michael on the banks of Susquehanna (3), ...The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony (4) , Susquehanna county, and Colesville (5), Broome county, on the Susquehanna river..." (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20)



**“Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! ...” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:23)**

## Chapter Seven Footnotes

**9** Paul Y. Hoskisson, Ensign, “Where Was the Ur of Abraham?”, July 1991, pp 62-63

**10** “THE NEW YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, AND OHIO AREA OF THE USA (MAP 3)” in more recent editions of LDS scripture. Recent editions include several improved maps of the Finger Lakes region. PALMYRA-MANCHESTER, 1820-31 (MAP 2), location 5 is labeled “Hill Cumorah”. From scripture, we know at least that this drumlin hill resides in the land Cumorah. Based on scripture alone, we are allowed to refer to this hill as hill of Cumorah. Section 128:20 does not specifically state that the Hill Cumorah was the mount from which the Book of Mormon was revealed. Verse 20 begins by announcing “Glad tidings from Cumorah...-the book to be revealed...” Verses 20-21 then list several revelatory events in Church History, all of which took place in the vicinity of the Finger Lakes - “land of many water, rivers and fountains”. In other words, these events pertaining to the restoration of the Gospel, took place in the general vicinity of Cumorah – the land Cumorah.

**11** MAP 1, B3 in more recent editions. Mt. Carmel is also sited on other maps.

**12** “Arise and see” is another interpretation of Cumorah.

# Appendix

## Book of Mormon Lands and the Times and Seasons Newspaper – Table and Articles

The *Times and Seasons* published many articles relating to the topic of Book of Mormon covenant lands. Of particular interest are those articles published during the brief period when the Prophet was official editor of the newspaper (March 15, to November 15, 1842). The title of official editor should not be taken to mean, that Joseph was always acting editor during this period.

Included in this appendix is a table of the articles, pertaining to Book of Mormon lands, from this important period. Significant articles are also provided in their entirety. Please note that there are many more relevant articles besides the ones commonly cited. These include important editorials by the Prophet Joseph Smith. We can readily identify Joseph's editorials because they end with his "ED". The *Times and Seasons* articles that many celebrate, in order to defend a Mesoamerican Book of Mormon setting, are of uncertain origin. We do not know for certain who wrote these articles, they do not end with Joseph's "ED". These are sensational pieces which extrapolate on John Lloyd Stephens' 1841 bestseller, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*. These articles were published in the fall of 1842 when the official editor of the Newspaper (Joseph Smith) was in seclusion. In his absence, Joseph appointed various business responsibilities to others. (Doctrine and Covenants 127:1; 128:1)

The first of these unsigned articles is titled EXTRACT From Stephens' "Incidents of Travel in Central America." The commentary asserts that the narrow neck of land, mentioned in the Book of Mormon, "embraces Central America". The word embraces means includes in this case. The same use of the word embrace occurs in the unsigned ZARAHMLA article of October 1, 1842, which reads: "Central America, or Guatemala [Guatemala]...once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south." Some early members of the Church imagined the Book of Mormon "land southward" to be South America, "the land northward" to be North America and the "narrow neck of land" to be Panama or even all of Central America. The EXTRACT article asserting its exaggerated, erroneous geography, made the front page of the September 15, 1842 issue. The article also alleges that the mysterious and wonderful ruins of Palenque discovered by Stephens "are among the mighty works of the Nephites". Subsequent research has shown these ruins to be more recent than Book of Mormon times.

After the EXTRACT article came the "FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS" article. Joseph Smith is mentioned in the third person in this piece. The unknown author asserts that Lehi "landed a little south of the Isthmus of Darien". This does not fit with the final unsigned article which alleges that Zarahemla is in Central America - many hundreds of miles north of Panama. It is absurd to suppose that elderly Lehi and Sariah landed a little south of Panama and then trudged over 1,500 miles, packing



their belongings through mosquito infested jungles, to finally inherit a southern coast of Guatemala.

The ZARAHEMLA article asserts (and then adds a disclaimer) that the ruins of Quirigua are the very ruins of Zarahemla. The context of the article with its disclaimer can be openly interpreted to mean that the ruins of Quirigua, found by Stephens, are the ruins of the city of Zarahemla or some other Book of Mormon city.

Some choose to regard the unsigned ZARAHEMLA article (October 1, 1842) as the *Times and Seasons'* climactic statement on Book of Mormon geography. This is a mistake. The most inspired articles are not always front page eye-catchers. Following the ZARAHEMLA article is a LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH which plainly places the land of Cumorah, the land which the Book of Mormon describes as occupying "a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains" (Mormon 6:4), in the Finger Lakes region of North America.

It must be conceded that the ZARAHEMLA article does not deserve to be canonized. The inspired LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH, which tells us where Cumorah is, has become Section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The ZARAHEMLA article mentions the Book of Mormon's "small neck of land" but strangely, the only Isthmus named in the article is Panama's "Isthmus of Darien". The Mesoamerican Isthmus of Tehuantepec is never mentioned. It is as if the writer(s) of the article confused the "small neck of land" north of Zarahemla with the "narrow strip of wilderness" south of Zarahemla, and thus thought the "Isthmus of Darien", far to the south, could qualify as the "small neck of land". (Alma 22:27, 32) In any event the article clearly blunders in attributing to King Mosiah the description of "a large stone with engravings upon it" when in fact it was Amaleki the son of Abinadom who wrote in the book of Omni about "a large stone" with "engravings on it"; a stone that was brought to Mosiah I (father of King Benjamin).

In November 1842, the Prophet resigned as editor of the *Times and Seasons* having improved its reputation as a newspaper. In his own words:

"I beg leave to inform the subscribers of the *Times and Seasons* that it is impossible for me to fulfil [fulfill] the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer. The multiplicity of other business that daily devolves upon me, renders it impossible for me to do justice to a paper so widely circulated as the *Times and Seasons*." (Vol. 4, No. 1, November 15, 1842)

Yes, Joseph was responsible for the newspaper, but we should not assume that the absence of a responsible signature implies Joseph's full endorsement. We can only conclude the Prophet's opinion from what we know he authored!

Joseph Smith's AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial deserves attention. The full commentary by Joseph Smith plainly shows that the Prophet had a North American Book of Mormon setting in mind which he supports with quotes from the book *American Antiquities* by Josiah Priest. Joseph's editorial shows that he had come to believe that the peoples of Central America were also tied historically to the Book of Mormon.

At the end of the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article Joseph briefly refers to “Stephens and Catherwood’s researches in Central America” as showing examples of “perfect sculpture”, “architectural designs” and “imperishable ruins”. According to Joseph, ancient peoples who migrated to Central America are historically tied to Book of Mormon peoples of northern America, but Joseph never says that Book of Mormon cities are in Central America.

It is important to realize that Joseph had read Stephens’ publications several months before writing the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES editorial. We know this from Joseph’s personal letter to John Bernhisel (November 16, 1841, in the handwriting of John Taylor). As much as Joseph approved of Stephens’ work, he only made minor mention of it in the AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES article of July 15, 1842. Evidently Stephens’ book did not change the Prophet’s conviction about Book of Mormon lands residing in northern America, hence AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES (Vol. 3, No. 18, pp 858-860).

Other relevant *Times and Seasons* articles published in 1842:

Shortly before the Prophet became editor, the *Times and Seasons* published EVIDENCES IN PROOF OF THE BOOK OF MORMON, excerpting a book by member Charles Blancher Thompson (Vol. 3, No. 5, January 1, 1842, pg 640). The article describes ancient northern American fortifications in defense of the Book of Mormon: A treacherous mountain stronghold and Moroniesque defenses; deep ditches, walls of earth and rows of pickets are cited from Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities*, the same work later editorialized by Joseph Smith.

In the same issue that Joseph Smith officially resigned as editor, the *Times and Seasons* published an article titled RUINS RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN YUCATAN MEXICO. The article describes the stone ruins of “Chi-Chen” but does not speculate on their origin. The article concludes:

“The subject is one that should excite the deepest interest in the minds of Americans. It is as yet wrapped in profound mystery, which will doubtless require many years of laborious research to unfold.” (Vol. 4, No. 1, November 15, 1842, pg 15)

This article is more careful than the unsigned *Times and Seasons* articles dotting on Stephens’ publications. There is no written attempt to connect the Yucatan ruins with cities described in the Book of Mormon.

## SUMMARY

The Prophet Joseph Smith’s letter (published October 1, 1842, in the *Times and Seasons*) is scripture. This epistle is the *Times and Seasons* peremptory word on the location of the land Cumorah, and therefore on the general location of Book of Mormon lands. Whether or not it was fully appreciated at the time, this divinely inspired epistle corrects the previous ZARAHEMLA article. The true lands of the Book of Mormon

cannot be thousands of miles distant from the land scripture designates as Cumorah. Ironically, the ZARAHEMPLA article seems to correct the previous two unsigned extrapolations on Stephens' 1841 bestseller:

If Zarahemla is in Guatemala then Lehi did not settle on the western coast of Colombia – “a little south of the Isthmus of Darien”. The land of “first inheritance” is not that far away from the land of Zarahemla. If Zarahemla is in Guatemala then it cannot be that the narrow neck of land “embraces Central America” with its “several hundred miles of territory from north to south.” The narrow neck of land is north of Zarahemla. But archaeological research has shown that the ruins of Quirigua (alleged to be Zarahemla or some other Book of Mormon city) are more recent than Book of Mormon times. Thus, all three unsigned articles are exuberant blunders. It would be a shame to base our understanding of Book of Mormon lands on these, and not scripture (D&C 128:19-21).

It has taken this writer, years to find a convincing setting for the Book of Mormon. Daily scripture study has actually made it more difficult for me to go along with the much publicized Mesoamerican setting. Some years ago I read Phyllis Carol Olive's book *Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*. As my wife and I have reread the Book of Mormon, we have put Sister Olive's map to the test. It is a delight to study the Book of Mormon with family, having a geographic map that makes detailed scriptural sense - at last!

The American soil, out of which the voice of the Nephite dead effectively spoke as Joseph translated the plates, is the same ground the saints of the Book of Mormon possessed in life. (Mormon 8:23-26) More than a decade after the first publication of the Book of Mormon came the unsigned *Times and Seasons* articles featuring extracts from John Lloyd Stephens' 1841 bestseller. These articles encouraged a romance that has directed the attention of generations of Latter-day Saints to locations thousands of miles away from where Joseph obtained the plates. It is my experience that many who come to see this misadventure for what it is, are not inclined to bring railing accusations against those who think differently. Here is an opportunity to practice, patience, tolerance and love. Because the subject of covenant lands matters, the opportunity is real.

## Times and Seasons Articles Pertaining To Book Of Mormon Lands, Published While Joseph Smith Was Editor

<p><i>Times and Seasons</i> Article Title</p> <p>(Vol., No, Date, pg):</p>	<p>Who wrote the LDS commentary?</p>	<p>Where did the evidence come from that is cited in support of the Book of Mormon?</p> <p>Article subject matter and opinion.</p>
<p>A CATACOMB OF MUMMIES FOUND IN KENTUCKY</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 13, May 2, 1842, pg 781)</p>	<p>ED (Joseph Smith).</p>	<p>Northern America.</p>
<p>From Priest's American Antiquities</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 15, June 1, 1842, pg 813)</p>	<p>There is no LDS commentary.</p>	<p>Northern America.</p>
<p>Traits of the Mosaic History, Found Among the Azteca Nations</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 16, June 15, 1842, pg 818)</p>	<p>ED (Joseph Smith).</p>	<p>Mexico and Ontario County N.Y.</p> <p>Mexican and Great Lakes Flood legends. Ancient peoples settled in "the lake country of America... choice above all... the earth".</p>

<p>AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 18, July 15, 1842, pg 858)</p>	<p>ED (Joseph Smith).</p>	<p>Northern and Central America.</p> <p>Nephite works, and Jaredite wars fought in mound builder country - northern America. Central American peoples are also connected historically with the Book of Mormon.</p>
<p>EXTRACT From Stephen's "Incidents of Travel in Central America"</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 22, Sept 15, 1842, pg 911)</p>	<p>Author(s) Unknown.</p> <p>(The Prophet was in seclusion at the time. John Taylor may have acted as editor)</p>	<p>Central America alleged as the "narrow neck of land". The editorial mentions "We...", possibly implying joint authorship.</p>
<p>"FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS."</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 22, Sept 15, 1842, pg 922)</p>	<p>Author(s) Unknown.</p> <p>(The Prophet was in seclusion at the time. John Taylor may have acted as editor.)</p>	<p>Central America; Lehi alleged to have landed south of Panama. Joseph Smith mentioned in the third person.</p>
<p>ZARHEMLA</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 23, Oct 1, 1842, pg 927)</p>	<p>Author(s) Unknown.</p> <p>(The Prophet was in seclusion at the time. John Taylor may have acted as editor.)</p>	<p>Central America: Quingua tentatively alleged as the site of Zarhemla. The editorial mentions "we...", possibly implying joint authorship.</p>
<p>LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH</p> <p>(Vol. 3, No 23, Oct 1, 1842, pg 935)</p>	<p>JOSEPH SMITH.</p>	<p>Revelation.</p> <p>Cumcorah located in the Finger Lakes region of North America, D&amp;C 128:20.</p>

TIMES AND SEASONS.  
"TRUTH WILL PREVAIL."  
Vol. 3. No. 5.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. JAN. 1, 1842 .  
[Whole No. 41...

EVIDENCES IN PROOF OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

We have laying before us, a neat little work of 256 pages, 32 mo. entitled "Evidences in proof of the Book of Mormon" &c. By Charles Thompson, minister of the gospel; published at Batavia, N. Y. We are much pleased with the spirit manifested by the writer, and feel to commend him in his laudable undertaking.

We make the following extracts, commencing on the 97th page.

I will next introduce the description of some of these ancient fortifications and military works of defence [defense], as recorded in the American Antiquities, by Josiah Priest, and also introduce a history of the building of these fortifications and works of defence [defense], as recorded in the Book of Mormon; and I will here remark, that the Book of Mormon was published in A. D. 1830, and the American Antiquities, by Josiah Priest, was not published until A. D. 1833, three years after. Antiquities, page 158 and 159, "Near Newark in the county of Licking, Ohio, is situated one of the immense works or fortifications of the ancient nations of America. It embraces in the whole, a circumference [circumference] of about six hundred rods, or nearly two miles; a wall of earth about four hundred rods, is raised on the sides of this fort next to the small creek which comes down along its sides from the west and east. It would seem that the people who made this settlement, undertook to encompass, with a wall, as much land as would support its inhabitants, and also sufficient to build their dwellings on, with several fortifications arranged in a proper manner for its defence [defense]. There are within its ranges four of these forts, of different dimensions; one contains forty acres, with a wall of about ten feet high; another containing twenty-two acres, also walled, but in this fort is an elevated observatory, of sufficient height to overlook the whole country; a third fort, containing about twenty-six acres, having a wall around it thrown out of a deep ditch on the inside of the wall. This wall is now from twenty-five to thirty feet in height. A fourth fortification encloses twenty acres with a wall of about ten feet high."

Book of Mormon, page 378, 2nd Ed., "Now it came to pass that while Amalickiah had thus been obtaining power by fraud and deceit, Moroni on the other hand, had been preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God, yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts or places of resort, throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them round about their cities and the borders of their lands."

Antiquities, page 160, "A second fort situated [situated] southwesterly from the great works on the Licking, encloses about forty acres; its wall is entirely of stone (page 640)

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Antiquities, page 163, "At Circleville, Ohio, there is a circular fort surrounded by two walls with a deep ditch between them; also, a square foot about eighteen rods in circumference enclosed by a wall with a ditch."

Book of Mormon, page 382, "Now behold, the Lamanites could not get into their forts of security by any other way save by the entrance, because of the highness of the bank which had been thrown up and the depth of the ditch which had been dug round about, save it was by the entrance."

Antiquities, page 165, "Near the round fort at Circleville is another fort ninety feet high, and was doubtless erected to overlook the whole works of that enormous military establishment. That it was a military establishment is the decided opinion of the President of the Western Antiquarian Society, Mr. Atwater. He says the round fort was picketed in, if we are to judge from the appearance of the ground on and about the walls. Half way up the outside of the inner wall, is a place distinctly to be seen, where a row of pickets once stood, and where it was placed when this work of defence [defense] was originally erected. These works have been examined by the first military men now living in the United States, and they have uniformly declared their opinion to be, that they were military works of defence [defense]."

Book of Mormon, page 383, 2nd Ed., "And now it came to pass that Moroni did not stop making preparation for war, or to defend his people against the Lamanites, for he caused that his armies should commence in the commencement of the twentieth year of the reign of the Judges, that they should commence in digging up heaps of earth round about all the cities throughout all the land which was possessed by the Nephites; and upon the top of the ridges of earth, he caused that there should be timbers, yea, works of timbers built up to the height of a man, round about the cities. And he caused that upon those works of timbers there should be a frame of pickets built upon the timbers, round about, and they were strong and high; and he caused towers to be erected that overlooked those works of pickets. And he caused places of security to be built upon those towers, that the stones and arrows of the Lamanites could not hurt them; and they were prepared, that they could cast stones from the top thereof, according to their pleasure and their strength, and slay him who should attempt to approach near the walls of the city. Thus Moroni did prepare strong holds against the coming of their enemies, round about every city in all the land.

The foregoing is but a few of the corresponding accounts of fortifications and works of defence [defense] there are to be found in the Book of Mormon and American Antiquities, but these are sufficient to show to the public that the people whose history is contained in the Book of Mormon, are the authors of these works.-But again; as we trace the history of this people down through succeeding generations, we find that one Gadianon, a robber, rose up and organized a band to rob and plunder. These robbers prepared strong holds and secret places in the mountains, to which they could flee, and be secure when the armies of the Nephites pursued them. Some of these strong holds and secret places were discovered in 1832--two years after the Book of Mormon was published-by a Mr. Furguson, and communicated to the editor of the Christian Advocate and Journal. This account is recorded on page 169 of the American

Antiquities. Mr. Furguson describes this discovery as follows:

"On a mountain called the Lookout Mountain, belonging to the vast Alleghany [Allegheny] chain, running between the Tennessee and Coos rivers, rising about one thousand feet above the level of the surrounding valley. The top of the mountain is mostly level, but presents to the eye [eye?] an almost barren waste. On this range, notwithstanding its height [height], a river has its source and after traversing it for about seventy miles, plunges over a precipice. The rock from which the water falls, is circular, and juts over considerably. Immediately below the fall, on each side of the river, are bluffs, which rise about two hundred feet. Around one of these bluffs the river makes a bend which gives it the form of a peninsula. On the top of this are the remains of what is esteemed fortifications, which consist of a stone wall built on the very brow of this tremendous ledge. The whole length of the wall, following the very course of the brink of this precipice, is thirty seven rods and eight feet,  
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including about two acres of ground. The only descent from this place is between two rocks, for about thirty feet, when a bench of the ledge presents itself from two to five feet in width and ninety feet long. This bench is the only road or path up from the water's edge to the summit. But just at the foot of the two rocks where they reach this path and within thirty feet of the top of the rock, are five rooms, which have been formed by dint of labor. The entrance to these rooms is very small, but when within, they are found to communicate with each other by doors or apertures [apertures]."

Mr. Furguson thinks them to have been constructed during some dreadful war, and those who constructed them, to have acted on the defensive; and believes that twenty men could have withstood the whole army of Xerxes, as it was impossible for more than one to pass at a time, and might by the slightest push, be hurled at least an hundred and fifty feet down the rocks.

Book of Mormon, page 479, 2nd Ed., "And it came to pass that the ninety and third year (of the reign of the Judges over the people of Nephi) did also pass away in peace, save it was for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the Mountains, who did infest the land; for so strong were their holds and their secret places, that the people could not overpower them; therefore they did commit many murders, and did so much slaughter among the people." Again; Book of Mormon, page 481, "And it came to pass in the commencement of the fourteenth year, (from [from] the time the sign was given of the birth of Christ,) the war between the robbers and the people of Nephi did continue, and did become exceeding sore; nevertheless the people of Nephi did gain some advantage of the robbers, insomuch [inasmuch] that they did drive them back out of their land into the mountains and into their secret places." Again; Book of Mormon, page 485, 2nd Ed., "But it came to pass that in the latter end of the eighteenth year, those armies of robbers had prepared for battle and began to come down and to sally forth from the hills, and out of the mountains and the wilderness, and their strong holds and their secret places, and began to take possession of the lands." And on the 487 and 488 pages, we are informed how these robbers were finally destroyed; it was by a stratagem. A part of the Nephite armies getting between the robbers and their secret



places and strong holds, by which they were cut off in their retreat. This again, is evidence that the Book of Mormon is true, and that this band of robbers were the constructors of this strong hold and these secret rooms which Mr. Furguson has described; for mark! this discovery was not made until [until] two years after the Book of Mormon was published, consequently the writer of the Book of Mormon could not have written this tale concerning the robbers, to account for the construction of those caverns, for it was not known that there was such a place in existence, until after the book was written and published. And thus we have abundance of proof from recent discoveries, American Antiquities and prophecy, that the history contained in the Book of Mormon is true.

Again; this history informs us that about four hundred years after Christ, this nation of Nephites were brought down and destroyed by the Lamanites; and this because they became proud and lifted up, practising [practicing] all manner of wickedness and abominations, and they refused to repent and turn again unto God; therefore because they were more wicked than the Lamanites, God stirred up the Lamanites to camp against them round about, and to raise forts against them with a mount, and thus they were brought down. But just before their final overthrow, a man by the names of Mormon took their record containing their history and sacred writings, from the time they left Jerusalem, (the city where David dwelt,) unto his days, and made an abridgement [abridgment] therefrom, and engraved it upon plates which he made out of ore. These plates, after Mormon's death, fell into the hands of Moroni, his son, who survived the entire destruction of the Nephites, finished the record, and deposited it in a stone box in the earth, that it might not be destroyed; to come forth in due time for a sign to Israel, that the time of their redemption had come. And also, in connection with the Bible, to be set up as an ensign for the nations; and thus, this nation of Nephites possessing the light of God's revelation, which constituted them Ariel, or Lion of God, and being "of the city  
(page 642)

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where David dwelt," (that is, having come out from Jerusalem,) was brought down and their words having been written and hid up in the earth and come forth again out of the earth, they "speak out of the ground and their voice whispers out of the dust."

This account also agrees with the Indian traditions which I have quoted in a former part of this work. It says, that their forefathers were once in possession of a sacred Book, which was handed down from generation to generation, and at last hid in the earth; but these oracles are to be restored to them again and then they shall triumph over their enemies and regain their ancient country.

But again, when this Book was taken from the place of its deposite [deposit], the words thereof were delivered to the learned Dr. Mitchel of New York, with a request that he should read them, but he could not; thus fulfilling the 11th verse of the 29th chapter of Isaiah, which says, the words of a book which is sealed men deliver to one that is learned, saying, read this I pray thee; and he saith I cannot for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying read this I pray thee; and he saith I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people, (the people

of this generation,) draw near me with their mouths, and with their lips do honor me; but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts [precepts] of men; therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and [and] the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. And this he has done-

First; by inspiring the unlearned Joseph Smith, and giving him wisdom and power from on high, with the means which were before prepared, to read and translate the Book of Mormon, the words of which the learned Dr. Mitchel could not read; thus the wisdom of the wise has perished and the understanding of the prudent is hid.

Secondly.-By raising up and inspiring illiterate and unlearned men, and sending them forth with the Book of Mormon in connection with the Bible, as an ensign for the nations, to preach the fulness [fullness] of the gospel, and to build up the kingdom of God on the earth, in direct opposition to all the jarring systems of modern sectarianism, and giving them knowledge and wisdom from on high, insomuch [inasmuch] that they have been enabled to confound, astonish and bring to shame, confusion, and disgrace, every wise and learned man who has dared to oppose them by fair arguments or candid investigation.

Thirdly.-It is a marvel and a wonder to this generation that this work has spread so rapidly under the following circumstances: First, the men who were engaged in preaching this doctrine were men of no influence, being the poor, illiterate, and despised ones of the earth. Second,-they had not the advantages of education which the most of the preachers of the different denominations have. Third,-the advantages of that mighty engine, the press, which all the Christian world are so highly blessed with, they were almost wholly destitute of, while at the same time its power was put in requisition against them in all parts of the land. It is true, they undertook, and did publish a monthly periodical at different [different] times and places, but its circulation was very limited, and their office, press and type have been three times entirely [entirely] destroyed by mobs and incendiaries. Fourth,-they had to sustain the shock of an overwhelming religious influence opposed to them by the combined powers of every sect in America-they had to contend with the prejudices of the ignorant and the pen of the learned, together with all the lying slanders and misrepresentations which the devil and all his emissaries on earth could invent; while at the same time the combined powers of earth and hell were hurling a storm of persecution unparalleled [unparalleled] in the history of the world. They were insulted by mobs, their houses torn down or burned, their goods destroyed and fields of grain laid waste, some of them were cast into dungeons and there kept for months loaded with chains. Yea more-some of them were shot; others had their brains dashed out; others were whipped to death; others were cut in pieces with swords knives, corn-cutters, &c., while the whole society, at one time amounting to about 12 000 souls, were banished from the State of Missouri and driven two hundred miles from their lands, houses, homes and property, in the winter season, and this by the order of

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the Executive of Missouri, one of the free and independent states of this boasted republic. And the blood of many of these people now stains the soil of Missouri because of their religious principles, in this their native land; the land of boasted liberty and equal rights, whose officers, both of the state and nation, have been deaf to the voice of innocence, imploring at their feet for justice and protection in the enjoyment of their rights as American citizens. And no doubt many of the instruments of these diabolical proceedings verily thought they were doing God service, being inspired by the press and pulpit, and encouraged by the officers of state; or what is still worse, by the personal example of both officers of state and professed preachers of the gospel, who were actually the leaders and abettors of all the above horrible deeds. But under all these conflicting circumstances, this work has spread and has penetrated every state in the Union from Maine to Missouri as well as the Canadies [Canada's?]. It has reacheed [reached] the islands of the sea-it has spread nearly all over England, and is now preached in Ireland, Scotland and Wales-all this in the short space of ten years. Churches are organized and conferences are held in all these regions, and the number of disciples who have already embraced this work is from an hundred to an hundred and twenty thousand. What but the arm of the Omnipotent could have moved it forward thus! Under the conflicting circumstances referred to above, surely it is a marvelous work and a wonder, causing the wisdom of the wise to perish and the understanding of the prudent to be hid. But again, another feature about this work which constitutes it marvelous and wonderful among the people of this generation is, these preachers profess no authority from antiquity to administer the gospel ordinances, but say that an angel has come down from the midst of heaven, and conferred on them the priesthood and authority to preach and administer the everlasting gospel unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, sayiug [saying] with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgement [judgment] is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters. (See Revelations 14th chap. 6th and 7th verses.) And they profess to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, all inspired by the Holy Ghost, just like the ancient officers of the church and kingdom of God-(See Ephesions [Ephesians] 4th chap. 11th 12th and 13th verses.) Also the believers in this Book of Mormon, being baptized for the remission of sins and receiving the laying on of hands by these apostles and prophets, they speak with new tongues and prophesy, cast out devils, and sometimes lay hands on the sick and they recover, and thus one has given him by the Holy Ghost the word of wisdom, and another the word of knowledge, and another faith, and another the gifts of healing, and another the working of miracles, and another prophecy, and another the diserning [discerning] of spirits, and another divers kinds of tongues, and another the interpretation of tongues-just as was anciently given to the church of Christ. (See 1st Cor. 12th chap.) And in consequence of these gifts the blind are made to see, the deaf to hear, the meek increase and their joy is in the Lord, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Also, they that erred in spirit come to understanding, and they that murmured learn doctrine. All these things are marvelous to this generation because their fear towards God is taught by the precepts of men, and they know nothing of inspiration or the power of God, therefore they have a form of

godliness but deny the power thereof. From such says Paul turn away. (See 2nd Timothy iii: 1-9.)

TIMES AND SEASONS.  
CITY OF NAUVOO,  
TUESDAY, MARCH, 15, 1842.

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision. JOSEPH SMITH.

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The Times and Seasons, IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith. Printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH.

Times and Seasons  
"Truth will prevail"  
Vol. III. No. 13.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL.,. MAY 2, 1842 [Whole No. 49

...

### A CATACOMB OF MUMMIES FOUND IN KENTUCKY

Lexington, in Kentucky, stands nearly on the site of an ancient town, which was of great extent and magnificence, as is amply evinced by the wide range of its circumvallatory works, and the quantity of ground it once occupied.

There was connected with the antiquities of this place, a catacomb, formed in the bowels of the limestone rock, about fifteen feet below the surface of the earth, adjacent to the town of Lexington. This grand object, so novel and extraordinary in this country, was discovered in 1775, by some of the first settlers, whose curiosity was excited by something remarkable in the character of the stones which covered the entrance to the cavern within. They removed these stones, and came to others of singular appearance for stones in a natural state; the removal of which laid open the mouth a cave, deep, gloomy, and terrific, as they supposed.

With augmented numbers, and provided with light, they descended and entered, without obstruction, a spacious apartment; the sides and extreme ends were formed into niches and compartments, and occupied by figures representing men. When alarm subsided, and the sentiment of dismay and surprise permitted further research and

inquiry, the figures were found to be mummies, preserved by the art of embalming, to as great a state of perfection as was known among the ancient Egyptians, eighteen hundred years before the Christian era; which was about the time that the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, when this art was in its perfection. \* \* \* \* \* On this subject Mr. Ash has the following reflections: "How these bodies were embalmed, how long preserved, by what nations, and from what people descended, no opinion made, but what must result from speculative fancy and wild conjecture. For my part, I am lost in the deepest ignorance. My reading affords me no knowledge, my travels no light. I have neither read nor known of any of the North American Indians who formed catacombs for their dead, or who were acquainted with the art of preservation by embalming.

Had Mr. Ash in his researches consulted the Book of Mormon his problem would have been solved, and he would have found no difficulty in accounting for the mummies being found in the above mentioned case. The Book of Mormon gives an account of a number of the descendants of Israel coming to this continent; and it is well known that the art of embalming was known among the Hebrews, as well as among the Egyptians, although perhaps not so generally among the former, as among the latter people; and their method of embalming also might be different from that of the Egyptians.

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Jacob and Joseph were no doubt, embalmed in the manner of the Egyptians, as they died in that country, Gen. 1, 2, 3, 26. When our Saviour [Savior] was crucified his hasty burial obliged them only to wrap his body in linen with a hundred pounds of myrrh, aloes, and similar spices, (part of the ingredients of embalming.) given by Nicodemus for that purpose: but Mary and other holy women had prepared ointment and spices for embalming it, Matt. xxviii. 59: Luke xxiii. 56: John xxx. 39-40.

This art was no doubt transmitted from Jerusalem to this continent, by the before mentioned emigrants, which accounts for the finding of the mummies, and at the same time is another strong evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.-[ED.

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Times and Seasons  
"Truth will prevail."

Vol. III. No. 15.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. JUNE 1, 1842. [Whole No. 51

...

From Priest's American Antiquities

If such may have been the fact, that a part of the Ten Tribes came over to America, in the way we have supposed, leaving the cold regions of Assareth behind

in quest of a milder climate, it would be natural to look for tokens of the presence of Jews of some sort, along countries adjacent to the Atlantic. In order to this, we shall here make an extract from an able work: written exclusively on the subject of the Ten Tribes having come from Asia by the way of Bherings Strait, by the Rev. Ethan Smith, Pultney, Vt., who relates as follows: "Joseph Merrick, Esq., a highly respectable character in the church at Pittsfield, gave the following account: That in 1815, he was leveling some ground under and near an old wood shed, standing on a place of his, situated on Indian Hill.

He ploughed [plowed] and conveyed away old chips and earth to some depth. After the work was done, walking over the place, he discovered, near where the earth had been dug the deepest, a black strap as it appeared, about six inches in length, and one and a half in breadth, and about the thickness of a leather trace to a harness.

He perceived it had at each end a loop of some hard substance, probably for the purpose of carrying it. He conveyed it to his house, and threw it into an old tool box. He afterwards found it thrown out of doors, and he again conveyed it to the box. After some time he thought he would examine it; but in attempting to cut it found it as hard as a bone, he succeeded, however in getting it open, and found it was formed of two pieces of thick raw hide, sewed and made water tight with the sinews of some animal; and in the fold was contained four folded pieces of parchment. They were of a dark yellow hue, and contained some kind of writing. The neighbors coming in to see the strange discovery, tore one of the pieces to atoms, in the true Hun and Vandal style. The other three pieces Mr. Merrick saved, and sent them to Cambridge,-where they were examined, and discovered to have been written with a pen in Hebrew, plain and legible.

The writing on the three remaining pieces of parchment, was quotation from the Old Testament. See Deut. vi. chap. from the 4th to the 9th verse, inclusive-also, xi. chap. 13-21, and Exodus, chap. 13-13-11,-16 inclusive, to which the reader can refer, if he has the curiosity to read this most interesting discovery. These passages as quoted above, were found in the strap of raw hide; which unquestionably had been written on the very pieces of parchment now in the possession of the Antiquarian Society, before Israel left the land of Syria, more than 2,500 years ago.

Dr. West of Stockbridge, relates that an old Indian informed him, that his fathers in this country had not long since, been in the possession of a book, which they had for a long time, carried with them, but having lost the knowledge of reading it, they buried it with an Indian chief-View of the Hebrews, Pg 223.

It had been handed down from family to family, or from chief to chief as a most precious relic, if not as an amulet, charm, or talisman, for it is not to be supposed, that a distinct knowledge of what was contained in the strap could have long continued among them, in their wandering condition, amid woods and forests.

"It is said by Calmet, that the above texts are the very passages of Scripture, which the Jews used to write on the leaves of their phylacteries. These phylacteries

were little rolls of parchment whereon were written certain words of the law. These they wore upon their forehead, and upon the wrist of the left arm."-Smith's view of the Hebrews). Pg 220.

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Times and Seasons  
"Truth will prevail."

Vol. III. No. 16.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. JUNE 15, 1842. [Whole No. 52

...

Traits of the Mosaic History,  
Found Among the Azteca Nations.

The tradition commences with an account of the deluge, as they had preserved it in books made from the buffalo and deer skin, in which account there is more certainty than if it had been preserved by mere oral tradition, handed down from father to son.

They begin by painting, or as we would say by telling us that Noah, whom they call Tezpi, saved himself with his wife, whom they call Xochiquetzal, on a raft or canoe. Is not this the ark? The raft or canoe rested on or at the foot of a mountain, which they call Colhuacan. Is not this Ararat? The men born after this deluge were born dumb. Is not this the confusion of language at Babel? A dove from the top of a tree distributes [distributes] languages to them in the form of an olive leaf. Is not this the dove of Noah, which returned with that leaf in her mouth, as related in Genisis [Genesis]? They say that on this raft, besides Tezpi and his wife, were several children, and animals, with grain, the preservation of which was of importance to mankind. Is not this in almost exact accordance with what was saved in the ark with Noah, as stated in Genisis [Genesis]?

When the Great Spirit, Tezcatlipoca, ordered the waters to withdraw, Tezpi sent out from his raft a vulture, which never returned, on account of the great quantities of dead carcasses [carcasses] which it found to feed upon.. Is not this the raven of Noah, which did not return when it was sent out the second time, for the very reason here assigned by the Mexicans? Tezpi sent other birds one of which was the humming bird; this bird alone returned, holding in its beak a branch covered with leaves. Is not this the dove?-Tezpi, seeing that fresh verdure now clothed the earth, quitted his raft near the mountain of Colhuacan. Is not this an allusion to Ararat of Asia? They say the tongues which the dove gave to mankind, were infinitely varied; which when received, they immediately dispersed.-But among them were 15 heads or chiefs of families, which were permitted to speak the same language, and these were the Taltecs, the Aculhucans and Azteca nations who embodied themselves together, which was very natural, and traveled they knew not where, but at length arrived in the country of

The plates or engraving presented here is a surprising representation of the deluge of Noah; and of the confusion of the ancient language at the building of the tower of Babel, as related in the Book of Genesis [Genesis]. (see chap. vii and xi.

We have derived the subject of this plate from Baron Humbolt's volume of *Researches in Mexico*, who found it painted on a manuscript book, made of the leaves of some kind of tree, suitable for the purpose, after the manner of ancient nations of the sultry parts of Asia around the Mediterranean.

The plate, however here presented shows no more than a picture of the flood, with Noah afloat on a raft, or as the traditions of some of the nations say on a tree, a canoe, and some say in a vessel of huge dimensions. It also [It also] shows by the group of men approaching the bird, a somewhat obscure history of the confusion of the ancient language at the building of Babel, by representing them as being born dumb, who receive the gift of speech from a dove, which flutters in the branches of the tree, while she presents the languages to the mute throng, by bestowing upon each individual a leaf of the tree, which is shown in the form of small commas suspended from its beak.

Among the different nations, according to Humboldt, who inhabited Mexico, were found paintings which represented the deluge, or flood [or flood] of Tezpi.

The painting of which the plate is the representation, shows Tezpi, of Noah, in the midst of the waters laying on his back. The mountain, the summit of which is crowned by a tree and rises above the waters is the peak of Colhucan, the Ararat of the Mexicans. At the foot of the mountain on each side appear the heads of Noah and his wife. The woman is known by the two points extending up from her forehead, which is the universal designation of the female sex among the Mexicans.; The horn at the left hand of the tree with a human hand pointing to it, is the character representing a mountain and the head of a bird placed above the head of Tezpi or Noah, shows the vulture which the Mexicans say Tezpi sent out of his acalli or boat to see if the waters had subsided.

In the figure of the bird with the leaves of a tree in his beak, is shown the circumstance of the dove's return to the ark, when it had been sent out the second time bringing a branch of the olive in its mouth; but in their tradition it had become misplaced, and is made the author of the languages. That birds have a language was believed by the nations of the old world. Some of those nations retain a surprising traditional account of the deluge; who say that Noah embarked in a spacious acalli or boat, with his wife, his children, several animals, and grain, the preservation of which was of great importance to mankind. When the Great Spirit, Tezcatlipoca, ordered the waters to withdraw, Tezpi or Noah sent out from his boat a vulture. But the bird's natural food was that of dead carcasses [carcasses], it did not return on account of the great number of dead carcasses with which the earth now dried in some places abounded.

Tezpi sent out other birds one of which was humming bird; this bird alone



returned again to the boat, holding in his beak a branch covered with leaves. Tezpi now knowing that the earth was dry, being clothed with fresh verdure, quitted his bark near the mountain Colhucan or Ararat. A tradition of the same fact, the deluge, is also found among the Indians of the Northwest. I received, says a late traveller [traveler], the following account from a Chief of one of the tribes in his own words, in the English. "An old man live great while ago, he wery [very] good man, he have three sons. The great spirit tell him go make a raft-build wigwam on top; for he make it rain wery [very] much.-When this done, Great spirit say, put into of all the creatures, then take sun moon-all the stars, put them in-get in himself with his Equa (wife) children, shut door, all dark outside.-Then it rain much, hard many days. When they stay there long time-Great Spirit say, old man go out. So he take, diving [living] animal. sao [say] gy [go] see if find the earth; so he went, come back, not find any thing. Then he wait few days-send out mushquash see what he find. When he come back, brought some mud in he paw; old man wery [very] glad; he tell mushquash he wery [very] good, long this world stand be plenty mush-quash, no man ever kill you all. Then few days more he take wary [very] pretty bird send him out see what it find; that bird no come back; so he sent out one white bird that come back, have grass in he mouth. So old know water going down. The great Spirit say, old man, let sun, moon, stars go out, old man too. He go out, raft on much big mountain when he see pretty bird he sent out first, eating dead things-he say, bird you do no right, when me send you out no come back, you must be black, you no prety [pretty] bird any more-you always eat bad things. So it was black."

There are many things contained in the above that go to support the testimony of the Book of Mormon, as well as that of the Mosaic history. The Mexican records agree so well with the word of the book of Ether (found by the people of Limhi, which is contained in the Book of Mormon) in relation to the confounding of languages, that we insert the following:

#### BOOK OF ETHER-CHAP. I.

\* \* \* Which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and swear in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of this earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered. And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man, and being a man highly favored of the Lord; for Jared his brother said unto him, cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us that we may not understand our words. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded. Then Jared said unto his brother, cry again unto the Lord, and it maybe that he will turn away his anger

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from them who are our friends, that he confound not their language. And it came

pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their families also, that they were not confounded. And it came to pass that Jared spoke again unto his brother, saying, go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land, cry unto him whither we shall go.-And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth. And if it so be, let us be faithful unto the Lord, that we may receive it for our inheritance.

And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord according to that which had been spoken by the mouth of Jared. And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared, and had compassion upon him and said unto him, go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind, and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families. And when thou hast done this, thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley that is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the land of the earth. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the earth. And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation.-And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed; upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.

Here, then, we have two records found upon this continent, that go to support the words of eternal truth-the Bible; and whilst these records, both of them, sanction the testimony of the scriptures in regard to the flood, the tower of Babel, and the confusion of languages; the tradition and hieroglyphics [hieroglyphics] of the Zaltees, the Colhuacans, and the Azteca nations, in regard to the confusion of languages and their travels to this land, is so like that contained in the Book of Mormon, that the striking analogy must be seen by every superficial observer.

In regard to the confusion of languages it is said of the above nations, that there were "fifteen heads, or chiefs of families, that were permitted to speak the same language." The Book of Mormon, concerning the same event, says: "And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord; and the Lord had compassion on Jared, therefore he did not confound the language of Jared"-and it further states that Jared's brother's language was not confounded; and they then prayed for their families and friends also, and the Lord heard them in their behalf; and their language was not confounded. These accounts, then, precisely agree, one of which was found in Ontario county, N. Y., and the other in Mexico.

Again, those nations, of families, embodied themselves together and traveled they know not where, but at length arrived in the country of Aztalan, of the lake country of America. The Book of Mormon says, that the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord, that he would give them another land; the Lord heard him, and told him to go to a certain place, "and there I will meet thee and go before thee into a land which is choice above all the land of the earth." This it further speaks is the land of America. The coincidence is so striking that further comment is unnecessary.-ED.

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## TIMES AND SEASONS.

"Truth will prevail."

Vol. III. No. 18.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. JULY 15, 1842. [Whole No. 54

## AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES.

Some have supposed that all the great works of the west, of which we have been treating, belong to our present race of Indians; but from continued wars with each other, have driven themselves from agricultural pursuits, and thinned away their numbers, to that degree, that the wild animals and fishes of the rivers, and wild fruit of the forests, were found sufficient to give them abundant support: on which account, they were reduced to savagism.

But this is answered by the Antiquarian Society, as follows: "Have our present race of Indians ever buried their dead in mounds by thousands? Were they acquainted with the uses of silver or copper? These metals curiously wrought have been found. Did the ancients of our Indians burn the bodies of distinguished chiefs, on funeral piles, and then raise a lofty tumulus over the urn containing their ashes? Did the Indians erect any thing like the "walled towns," on Paint Creek? Did they ever dig such wells as are found at Marietta, Portsmouth, and above all, such as those in Paint Creek? Did they manufacture vessels from calcareous breccia equal to any now made in Italy?

To this we respond, they never have: no, not even their traditions afford a glimpse of the existence of such things, as forts, tumuli, roads, wells, mounds, walls enclosing between one and two hundred, and even five hundred acres of land; some of them of stone, and others of earth, twenty feet in thickness, and exceeding high, are works requiring too much labor for Indians ever to have performed.

An idol found in a tumulus near Nashville, Tennessee, and now in the Museum of Mr. Clifford, of Lexington, is made of clay, peculiar for its fineness. With this clay was mixed a small portion of gypsum or plaster of Paris. This Idol was made to represent a man, in a state of nudity or nakedness, whose arms had been cut off close to the body, and whose nose and chin have been mutilated, with a fillet and cake upon its head.

Some years since a clay vessel was discovered, about twenty feet below the surface, in alluvial earth, in digging a well near Nashville, Tennessee, and was found standing on a rock, from whence a spring of water issued. This vessel was taken to Peale's Museum, at Philadelphia. It contains about one gallon; was circular in its shape, with a flat bottom, from which it rises in a somewhat globose form, terminating at the summit with the figure of a female head; the place where the water was introduced, or poured out, was on the one side of it, nearly at the top of the globose part.

Another idol was, a few years since, dug up in Natchez, on the Mississippi, on a piece of ground where, according to tradition, long before Europeans visited this country, stood an Indian temple.-This idol is of stone, and is nineteen inches in height, nine inches in width, and seven inches thick [thick] at the extremities.-On its breast, as represented on the plate of the idol, were five marks, which were evidently characters

of some kind, resembling as supposed, the Persian; probably expressing, in the language of its authors, the name and supposed [supposed] attributes of the senseless god of stone.

One of the arts known to the builders of Babel, was that of brick making; this art was also known to the people who built the works in the west. The knowledge

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of copper was known to the people of the plains of Shinar, for Noah must have communicated it, as he lived an hundred and fifty years among them after the flood; also, copper was known to the antediluvians. Copper was also known to the authors of the western monuments. Iron was known to the antediluvians; it was also known to the ancients of the west; however, it is evident that very little iron was among them, as very few instances of its discovery in their works have occurred; and for this very reason we draw a conclusion that they came to this country very soon after the dispersion, and brought with them such few articles of iron as have been found in their works in an oxydized [oxidized] state.

Copper ore is very abundant in many places of the west; and therefore, as they had a knowledge of it, when they first came here they knew how to work it, and form it into tools and ornaments. This is the reason why so many articles of this metal are found in their works; and even if they had a knowledge of iron ore, and knew how to work it, all articles made of it must have become oxydized [oxidized] as appears from what few specimens have been found, while those of copper are more imperishable. Gold ornaments are said to have been found in several tumuli. Silver very well plated on copper, has been found in several mounds, besides those at Circleville and Marietta. An ornament of copper was found in a stone mound near Chilicothe; it was a bracelet for the ancle [ankle] or wrist.

The ancients of Asia, immediately after the dispersion, were acquainted with ornaments made of the various metals; for in the family of Terah, who was the father of Abraham and Nahor, we find these ornaments in use for the beautifying of females. See the servant of Abraham, at the well of Bethuel [Bethel] in the country of "Ur of the Chaldeans," or Mesopotamia, which is not very far from the place where Babel stood-putting a jewell [jewel] of gold upon the face or forehead of Rebecca, weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists, or arms. Bracelets for the same use have been found in the west; all of which circumstances go to establish the acquaintance of those who made those ornaments of silver and copper found in the mounds of the west, equal with those of Ur in Chaldea. The families of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Nahor, who were the immediate progenitors of Abraham, lived at an era but little after the flood; and yet we find them in the possession of ornaments of this kind; from which we conclude a knowledge both of the metals, and how to make ornaments, as above described, was brought by Noah and his family from beyond the flood.

On the shores of the Mississippi, some miles below Lake Pepin, on a fine plain, exists an artificial elevation of about four feet high, extending a full mile, in somewhat of a circular form. It is sufficiently capacious to have covered 5000 men. Every angle of the breast work is yet traceable, though much defaced by time. Here, it is likely,

conflicting realms as great as those of the ancient Greeks and Persians, decided the fate of ambitious Monarchs, of the Chinese, Mongol descent.

Weapons of brass have been found in many parts of America, as in the Canadas, Florida, &c., with curiously sculptured stones, all of which go to prove that this country was once peopled with civilized, industrious nations,-now traversed the greater part by savage hunters.-Priests American Antiquities.

The Book of Mormon speaks of ores, swords, cities, armies, &c., and we extract the following:--

And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass, and the horse, and the goat, and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore, that I might engraven npon [upon] them the record of my people. \* \* \*

And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land. And I, Nephi, did take the sword of Laban, and after the manner of it did make many swords, lest by any means the people who were now called Lamanites, should come upon us and destroy us: for I knew their hatred towards me and my children, and those who were called my people. And I did teach my people to build buildings; and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of

(page 859)

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gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in abundance. And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon, save it were not built of so many precious things: for they were not to be found upon the land; wherefore it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine.

In regard to there being great wars, the following will shew [show]:-

And it came to pass when Coriantumr had recovered of his wounds, he began to remember the words which Ether had spoken unto him...he saw that there had been slain by the sword already nearly two millions of his people, and he began to sorrow in his heart; yea, there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children. He began to repent of the evil which he had done; he began to remember the words which had been spoken by the mouth of all the prophets, and he saw them that they were fulfilled, thus far, every whit; and his soul mourned, and refused to be comforted. . . . .

And it came to pass that they did gather together all the people, upon all the face of the land, who had not been slain, save it was Ether. And it came to pass [pass] that Ether did behold all the doings of the people; and he beheld that the people who were for Coriantumr, were gathered together for the army of Coriantumr; and the people who were for Shiz, were gathered together to the army of Shiz; wherefore they were for the

space of four years gathering together the people, that they might get all who were upon the face of the land, and that they might receive all the strength which it was profitable that they could receive. And it came to pass that when they were all gathering together, every one to the army which he would with their wives and their children; both men, women, and children being armed with weapons of war, having shields and breast plates, and head plates, and being clothed after the manner of war, they did march forth one against another, to battle; and they fought all that day, and conquered not. And it came to pass that when it was night they were weary, and retired to their camps; and after they had retired to their camps, they took up a howling and a lamentation for the loss of the slain of their people; and so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations, that it did rend the air exceedingly.

If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.-were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book. They would find their conjectures were more than realized-that a great and a mighty people had inhabited this continent-that the arts sciences and religion, had prevailed to a very great extent, and that there was as great and mighty cities on this continent as on the continent of Asia. Babylon, Ninevah, nor any of the ruins of the Levant could boast of more perfect sculpture, better architectural designs, and more imperishable ruins, than what are found on this continent. Stephens and Catherwood's researches in Central America abundantly testify of this thing. The stupendous ruins, the elegant sculpture, and the magnificence of the ruins of Guatamala [Guatemala], and other cities, corroborate this statement, and show that a great and mighty people-men of great minds, clear intellect, bright genius, and comprehensive designs inhabited this continent. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormen [Mormon] unfolds their history.-ED.

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The Times and Seasons, Is edited, printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH

TIMES AND SEASONS.  
CITY OF NAUVOO,  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1842.

VALEDICTORY.

I beg leave to inform the subscribers of the Times and Seasons that it is impossible for me to fulfil [fulfill] the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer. The multiplicity of other business that daily devolves upon me, renders it impossible for me to do justice to a paper so widely circulated as the Times and Seasons. I have appointed Elder John Taylor, who is less encumbered and fully competent to assume the responsibilities of that office, and I doubt not but that he will give satisfaction to the patrons of the paper. As this number commences a new volume, it also commences his editorial career. Joseph Smith.

The patrons of the Times and Seasons will unquestionably be painfully disappointed on reading the above announcement. We know of no one so competent as President Joseph Smith to fill the editorial chair, of which the papers that have been issued since he has been editor are sufficient evidence.

We do not profess to be able to tread in the steps, nor to meet the expectation of the subscribers of this paper so fully as our able, learned and talented prophet, who is now retiring from the field; but as he has promised to us the priviledge [privilege] of referring to his writings, books, &c., together with his valuable counsel, when needed, and also to contribute to its columns with his pen when at leisure, we are in hopes that with his assistance[assistance], and other resources that we have at our command, that the Times and Seasons will continue to be a valuable periodical, and interesting to its numerous readers. JOHN TAYLOR

...

#### RUINS RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN YUCATAN MEXICO.

The ruins of Chi-Chen are situated upon a plain of many miles in circumference, nearly in the centre [center] of the province, about a hundred miles from the sea, and away from all water communication. Those which are now in the most perfect state of preservation are remarkable for their immense size and peculiarity of construction. They comprise temples, castles and pyramids, and measure around their sides from two hundred to a thousand feet, Their altitudes are from twenty to one hundred and twenty feet: a succession of terraces, constructed of small pieces of stone imbedded in mortar, held together by a finished wall of large hewn stone, symmetrically proportioned and skilfully [skillfully] laid in the same material, which is as hard and apparently as durable as the stone itself. The sides of these walls invariably face the cardinal points, and the principal part is always to the east. The exterior walls of the buildings are formed of a fine concrete limestone, cut in pareallelopipedes of nearly twelve inches in length and about four inches in breadth; the interstices filled up with



the same materials which are found in the terraces. The height of the buildings erected upon these terraces never exceeds thirty feet. They are limited to one long and narrow story, without windows. The rooms are confined to a double range, those of the rear receiving no other light than by the door-ways. The roof of the interior is an acute angle arch, formed by the edges of the square flat stone of which it is composed: and being bevelled [beveled], terminates by a layer of the like material. This arch supports a level roof, finished [finished] with a hard composition and surrounded with a balustrade forming an angular projection, and at the top presenting a beautiful finish. The floors are covered in like manner with the composition before mentioned, and show marks of war. The exterior walls rise perpendicularly, generally to one half the height, where there are entablatures. Above these, and in some instances beneath them, are compartments filled with hieroglyphics, figures and sculptured work in bas-relief, over a diamonded [diamond] lattice [lattice] groundwork, interspersed with chaste and unique borders of the most skilful [skillful] and elaborate workmanship.

'The door ways are nearly a square of about seven feet, somewhat resembling the Egyptian style in their proportions. The sides consist of large pieces of hewn stone. In some instances the lintels are composed of the same, with hieroglyphics and lines carved upon them. Stone rings and holes at the side of the door-ways render it evident that doors once swung upon them. Zuportiwood was used for lintels and thwartbeams, some of which are still in good preservation, with lines of carving upon their surfaces. The walls show no marks of plaster; the inner surface however has a coat of stucco,

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upon which colors are laid in fresco, of which sky-blue and light green are the most prominent. Figures of Indian characters can also be faintly traced upon the walls. columns, capitals and plinths, with many other evidences of large and splendid edifices, are found scattered over the immense plain. Portions of two pillars now remain at the eastern end of an edifice which occupies a space of ground nearly as large as that of Trinity Church-yard. Speculation upon the origin of these ruins I leave to others. The subject is one that should excite the deepest interest in the minds of Americans It is as yet wrapped in profound mystery, which it will doubtless require many years of laborious research to unfold.'

...

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## TIMES AND SEASONS

"Truth will prevail"

Vol. V No. 1.] CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. JANUARY 1, 1844. [Whole No. 85

### ANCIENT RUINS.

Every day adds fresh testimony to the already accumulated evidence on the authenticity of the "Book of Mormon." At the time that book was translated there was very little known about ruined cities and dilapidated buildings. The general presumption was, that no people possessing more intelligence than our present race of Indians had ever inhabited this continent, and the accounts given in the Book of Mormon concerning large cities and civilized people having inhabited this land, was generally disbelieved and pronounced a humbug. Priest, since then has thrown some light on this interesting subject. Stephens in his "Incidents of Travels in Central America," has thrown in a flood of testimony, and from the following statements it is evident that the Book of Mormon does not give a more extensive account of large and populous cities than those discoveries now demonstrate to be even in existence.-Ed.

(From the Texas Telegraph, Oct. 11.)

We have been informed by a gentleman who has traversed a large portion of the Indian country of Northern Texas, and the country lying between Santa Fe and the Pacific, that there are vestiges of ancient cities and ruined castles or temples on the Rio Puerco and on the Colorado of the west. He says that one of the branches of the Rio Puerco, a few days travel from Santa Fe, there is an immense pile of ruins that appear to belong to an ancient temple. Portions of the walls are still standing, consisting of huge blocks of limestone regularly hewn, and laid in cement. The building occupies an extent of more than an acre. It is two or three stories high, has no roof, but contains

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many rooms generally of a square form, without windows, and the lower rooms are so dark and gloomy that they resemble caverns rather than apartments of an edifice built for a human habitation.-Our informant did not give the style of architecture, but he believes it could not be erected by Spaniards or Europeans, as the stones are much worn by the rains, and indicate that the building has stood several hundred years. From his description we are induced to believe that it resembled the ruins of Palenque or Otulun. He says there are many similar ruins on the Colorado of the west, which empties into the California sea. In one of the valleys of the Cordileras traversed by this river, and about four hundred miles from its mouth, there is a large temple still standing, its walls and spires presenting scarcely any trace of dilapidation, and were it not for the want of a roof it might still be rendered habitable. Near it, scattered along the declivity of a mountain, are the ruins of what must have been once a large city. The traces of a large aqueduct, part of which is however in the solid rock, are still visible. Neither the Indians residing in the vicinity, nor the oldest Spanish settlers of the nearest settlements, can give any account of the origin of these buildings. They merely

know that they have stood there from the earliest periods to which their traditions extend. The antiquarian who is desirous to trace the Aztec or Toltec races in their migrations from the northern regions of America, may find in these ancient edifices many subjects of curious speculation.

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## An Instance of Mormon Apocrypha

**A curious journal entry quoting a sermon which may not have been based entirely on things Joseph Smith said:**

The diary of LDS Church member Charles Lowell Walker contains the following entry for “Wend 26th Jan. 1881...” summarizing remarks made on that date by Patriarch William McBride of Richfield Utah. Patriarch McBride, a contemporary of Joseph Smith, spoke at a prayer meeting in St. George Utah nearly 37 years after the Martyrdom of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum. Walker records:

“Father McBride...Spoke of the time when the Prophet Joseph spoke to the Nauvoo Legion ...Br McBride also related that Joseph marked with his cane in the sand the track the saints would take to the Rocky Mountains. Says Joseph, will you establish the kingdom there? No, but it will be set up and the saints will live their covenants, meaning the Marriage covenant. Said we should travel on thro the mountains; described the Valley of Great Salt Lake just as tho he had lived there, designating where the soldiers camp would be and the burying ground. <sup>14</sup>”

There is a footnote at this point in the published Walker diary stating: 14 “Brother McBride here makes it appear that Joseph Smith marked the route that the Saints would take to the Rocky Mountains at the time he last addressed the legion...although this seeming error could be attributed to C. L. Walker's hasty recording of McBride's remark.”

It is not certain whether what follows in the Walker diary, is McBride quoting Joseph, or Walker quoting McBride only, or McBride embellishing with his own opinions remarks made by Joseph Smith:

“Said we should make stations and build up settlements all the way to new, and old Mexico Until we crossed the Isthmus and get back to the place where the Covenant was broke [i.e. the United Order]<sup>15</sup> by the old Nephites.”

Foot note 15 indicates Walker's reference to the “United Order”. Again, it is not clear that Joseph Smith is being quoted:

“Spoke of the Great Temple in Central America unfinished, showing marks of the work being stopped while in the Course of erection; that pillars and other curiously worked stones were found in the Quarry quite a distance from the Temple exactly corresponding with those already fitted and placed in the grand massive structure, Showing plainly that some unexpected event transpired causing a stoppage in the work. This temple was situated by the River Copan anciently called the River of Nephi.”

McBride's remarks enlarge on details described in Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. Artist Frederick Catherwood, who

accompanied Stephens on his expedition, provided a detailed drawing of the “Plan of Copan” showing the “River Copan” flowing by the complex of ruins. The ruins discovered and described by Stephens are now understood to date more recent than Book of Mormon times. There is not a single reference in the Book of Mormon to any building of hewn stone erected in ancient America. Nephi specifies wood and metal working. (2 Nephi 5:15-16, See also 1 Kings 5:17 and LDS edition footnote) By comparison, there are numerous references to hewn stone buildings in the Bible.

Walker continues to record McBride as saying:

“Told of the US government trying to prove Joseph a false prophet and the Book of Mormon also false by sending out Stevens and Catherwood to explore the Ancient Ruins and monuments, works &c, &c. but all they did only proved the Book of Mormon to be an authentic Record of the ancient People of this vast continent of North and South America, and they (Stevens and Catherwood) admit that the Continent was once inhabited by vast and mighty People who were acquainted with and understood the Arts of Agricu[l]ture, Manufacture, sculpture, Quarrying, stone cutting, masonry, painting, engraving, writing, Shipping and Commerce, and war as the implements of war and industry exhibited when exhumed from the Ruins which are all over the Land.”

The remark about the Book of Mormon being an “authentic Record of the ancient People of this vast continent of North and South America...” probably indicates that McBride had in mind, as did others, an exaggerated geography for the Book of Mormon. McBride would have seen no problem placing some Book of Mormon lands in Central America and the Book of Mormon land Cumorah thousands of miles to the northeast in mound builder territory. This view is consistent with the last recorded remarks made by McBride:

“Spoke of the Route the old Nephites took traveling to Cumorah from the South and south west; of having to bury their tr[e]asure as they journeyed and finally burying the Records and precious things in the Hill Cumorah; of Moroni dedicating the Temple site of what we now call St. George, Nauvoo, Jackson Co., Kirtland and others we know not of as yet.” (*Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, Vol. III, edited by A. Karl Larson & Katharine Miles Larson, Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah, Copyright 1980, pp 524-526)

Clearly McBride had left off quoting Joseph Smith at some point before the end of his sermon. It is unlikely that Joseph Smith named the town of St. George, Utah.

McBride seems to distinguish between “Cumorah” (the land) and “the Hill Cumorah”. His reference to “Nephites” (plural) and “burying the Records” (plural) indicate that he was referring to events described in the Book of Mormon previous to the destruction of the Nephite nation, that is, before their annihilation at Cumorah (western NY). (Mormon 6:1-6)

Concerning a find related to Walker's diary account of McBride's sermon, the late

BYU Church History professor H. Donl Peterson discovered two apocryphal maps which he concluded were drawn by the “same hand”. (Peterson, *The B. of M.: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, Moroni, the Last of the Nephite Prophets*, pg 247) Peterson describes his find as follows:

“Several years ago, I came across two copies of a map in the Archives Division of the Historical Department of the Church relative to Moroni’s North American journeys (see Figures 1 and 2). On the back of the map in Figure 1 is written the following:

A chart, and description of Moroni's travels through this country. Got it from Br. Robert Dickson. He got it from Patriarch Wm. McBride at Richfield in the Sevier and also from Andrew M. Hamilton of the same place. And they got it from Joseph Smith the Prophet.” (Peterson, *The B. of M.: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, Moroni, the Last of the Nephite Prophets*, pg 245)

Only the third or fourth party comment on the back of the map attributes the map to Joseph Smith. There is no explanation given as to how this conclusion was reached. Did McBride and Hamilton actually attribute the map(s) to Joseph Smith or is this a conclusion that a second or third party reached based on hearsay, or an interpretation of remarks from a source like the Walker diary?

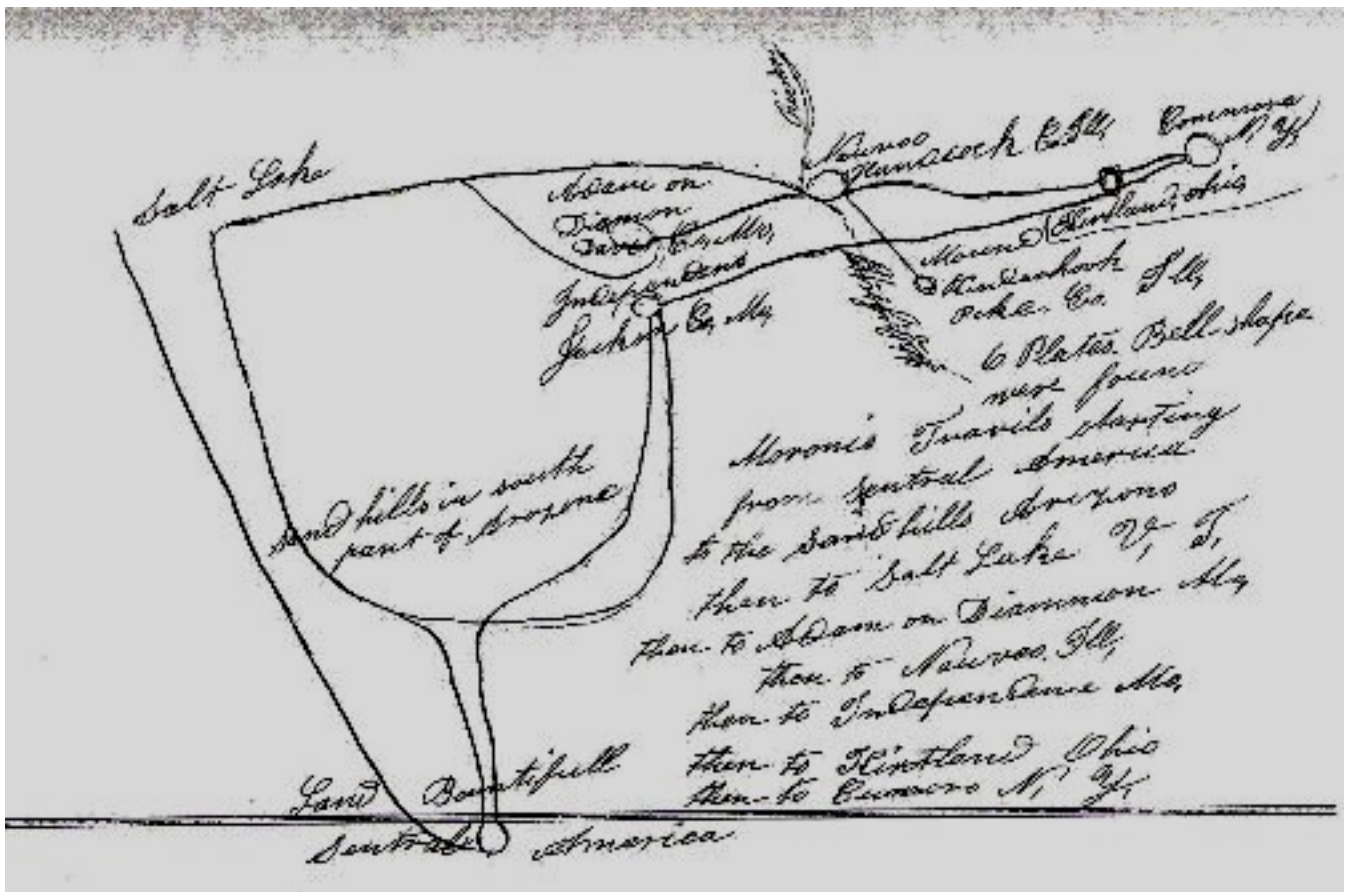


Figure 1.

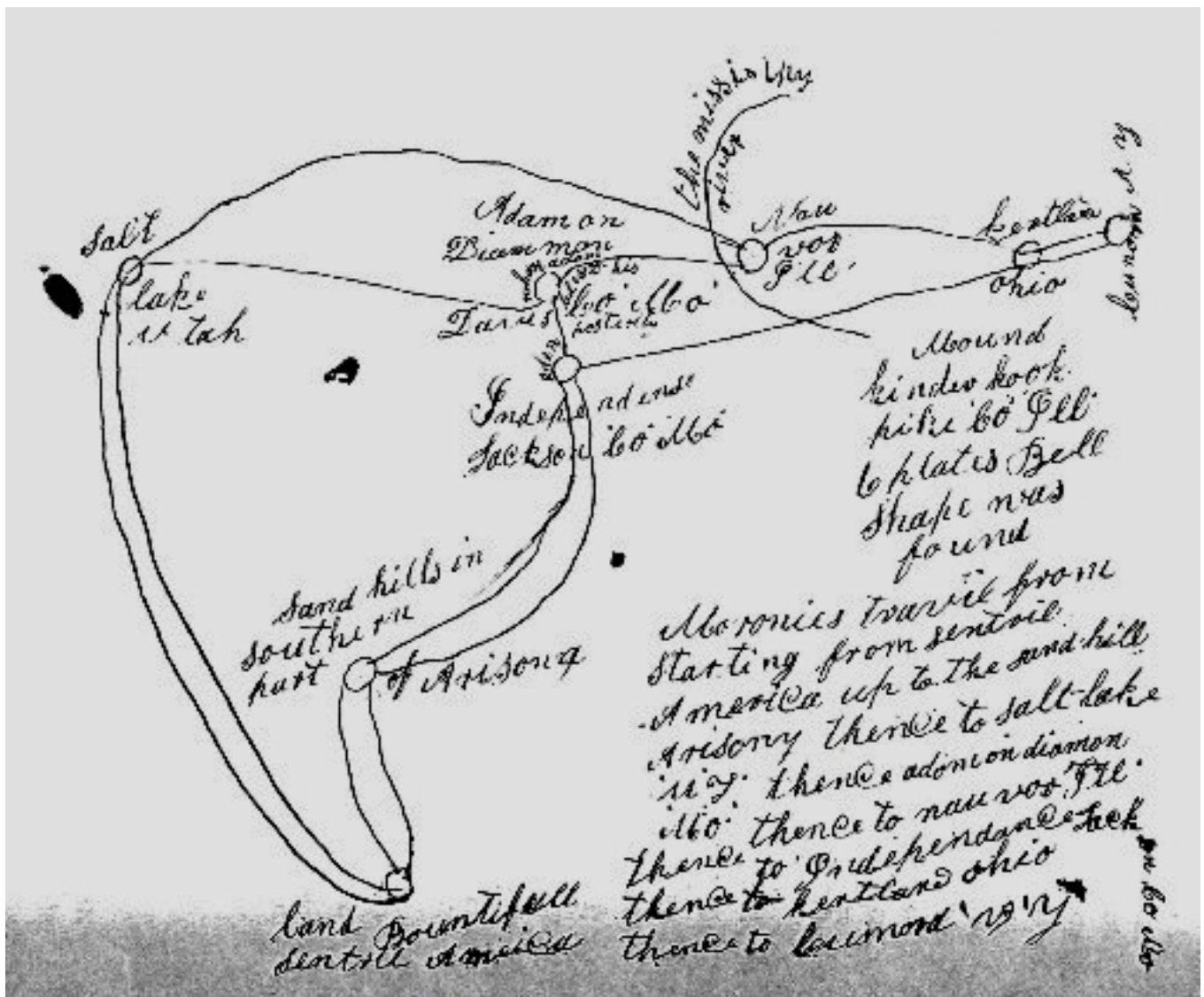


Figure 2.

The maps portray a five to six thousand mile overland, journey for Moroni and his sacred cargo - an indirect journey from Central America to the Great Lakes region. There is every reason to believe that the maps intend to represent Moroni's journey in parallel with the mass exodus of his nation, "the old Nephites". "Why Moroni took the route he did [alleged by the maps] is still without answers", writes Peterson. (Peterson, *The B. of M.: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, Moroni, the Last of the Nephite Prophets*, pg 247)

Had the Nephite nation been destroyed in Central America before Moroni's alleged journey, it would seem a better plan for the aging Moroni to have secured a boat in which to cross the Gulf of Mexico. He could then have rowed up the Mississippi, Ohio and Allegheny rivers to arrive in the neighborhood of western New York where the plates were deposited. After depositing the heavy record and other sacred articles, Moroni could then have visited future temple sites less encumbered.

It is interesting that the Walker account of McBride's sermon does not explicitly

mention the Temple at Manti, Utah. There is no known firsthand statement by Brigham Young claiming that Moroni dedicated the Manti Temple spot previous to its official dedication (April 25, 1877). The popular legend can be traced back to a statement written by the first official Manti Temple recorder, Moses F. Farnsworth. Brother Farnsworth wrote that on the same day that Brigham Young dedicated the Manti Temple site, that he (Brigham Young) went with Brother Warren S. Snow of Manti to the site and said, "Here is the spot where the prophet Moroni stood and dedicated this piece of land for a Temple site..." There is nothing in Brother Farnsworth's statement that tells us the direction Moroni supposedly came from to visit Manti. We do not know for certain what was said by Brigham Young about Moroni at Manti. (*Manti Temple Historical Record*, pp 36-38)

Brigham Young allegedly said that the St. George Temple site was "dedicated by the Nephites." (Statement by David H. Cannon, Jr., 14 October 1942, quoted in Kirk M. Curtis, "History of the St George Temple", Masters Thesis, BYU, 1942, pp 24-25)

Note that both apocryphal maps (Figures 1 and 2) mention the six bell-shaped Kinderhook plates. Evidently the author of the maps intended to enhance his work by tying in the now highly questioned Kinderhook plates.



## Hagoth's Lost Ships

**Latter-day Saints have proven to be as good at creating and propagating cherished apocrypha as Jewish and early Christian storytellers. Among curious examples are tales of how the Pacific Isles came to be inhabited by passengers from Hagoth's lost ships.**

Though not officially accepted as Church doctrine, one of the most authoritative, if not the most authoritative statement on the subject, was reportedly made in 1913, by President Joseph F. Smith to a group of Polynesian Saints:

"I would like to say to you brethren and sisters from New Zealand, you *are* some of Hagoth's people, and there is NO PERHAPS about it!" (William A. Cole and Elwin W. Jensen, *Israel in the Pacific*, 1961, pg 388)

Does the Book of Mormon actually say that Hagoth's ships sailed out into the Pacific Ocean? No, it does not. Some ancient waterways in the region of Cumorah (western New York) communicated with the Atlantic. Ancient American peoples sailed along the eastern seaboard or down the Mississippi River out into the Gulf of Mexico. In time, descendents of Book of Mormon peoples, including Hagoth's people (the Nephites) could have migrated by land and boat to many places in the Americas and beyond. This does not mean that Hagoth personally accompanied these migrations. It is important to pay attention to what the 63rd chapter of Alma actually says, and what it does not say about Hagoth and the ships he built. Let's carefully examine the verses:

Verse 4 tells us that exploration and occupation of "the land northward" started before Hagoth built his ships. The Book of Mormon does not say that the purpose of the ships was to voyage to uncharted lands.

Verse 5 describes Hagoth as an "exceedingly curious man". The English word "curious" comes from the Latin words "curiosus" and "cura" meaning "careful" and "care". This word is commonly taken to mean "interesting" or "inquisitive", "singular" or "odd". An old use of the word, however, means "accomplished with skill and ingenuity". This is closer to the meaning of the word translated from ancient scripture. (Psalm 139:15, Exodus 35:32) The Hebrew terms in the biblical expressions, "curious work" and "curiously wrought" relate to words for "weave" and "embroider". The processes of "thinking", "contriving", "planning", and "fabricating", are implied. Interpreting "curious" to mean "accomplished with skill and ingenuity" is consistent with how the word is used throughout the Book of Mormon. (1 Nephi 16:10; 18:1, Alma 37:39, Helaman 6:11, and Ether 10:27)

Being "an exceedingly curious man, therefore he went forth and built him an exceedingly large ship..." describes Hagoth's engineering genius. He, like Nephi of old, must have worked "timbers of curious workmanship". (1 Nephi 18:1, see also Helaman 6:11) The Book of Mormon nowhere says that Hagoth was an explorer of strange new lands or the leader of a group of immigrants.

Verse 5 of Alma 63 tells us where Hagoth launched, and likely first tested his curious craft. We should not presume that this was the identical location from which families embarked for the land northward. Most importantly, we are not told that the “west sea” is an ocean. The scriptural location of Cumorah never supported the geographic traditions that presumed the “west sea” to be the Pacific.

Verse 6 does not say that Hagoth captained or was even onboard the vessel that sailed northward.

Verse 7 can be interpreted to mean that Hagoth, the entrepreneur ship builder, stayed ashore designing and building more ships. It is also possible that he traveled to other locations and built ships there. Perhaps the Nephites could sail aboard a ship to the land northward, commute over land and take another ship (also built by Hagoth) out to the Ocean.

Verse 8 does not say that the first ship which was boarded was the same ship which presumably sank. The occupants may have boarded yet another vessel once they arrived in the land northward before presumably drowning “in the depths of the sea.”

The expression “depths of the sea” doesn't necessarily mean ocean deep. The expression implies a sea deep enough to drown in. Nephi tells us that his brothers intended to “throw him into the depths of the sea...”, but that was from the shore. (1 Nephi 17:48) The Book of Mormon also tells of coastal cities that were “sunk in the depths of the sea”. (3 Nephi 8:9) While on “the lake of Gennesaret” (the Sea of Galilee), the Savior said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep...” (Luke 5:1, 4) We know that the Sea of Galilee is not an ocean.

In summary: The Book of Mormon does not equate the “west sea” with the Pacific Ocean. The Book of Mormon does not tell us that Hagoth was onboard any of the ships that were lost. Scripture does not say that he captained a vessel or that he was an explorer or an adventurer, or that he led people. For all we can tell, the skilled Hagoth's main objective was to profit from the shipping industry.

It is conceivable that peoples in various places could be related to Hagoth's people (the Nephites) without Hagoth personally making an ocean voyage. Parties from colonies, once associated with Nephite shipping, could have built more vessels and traveled very far in time.

It is important to consider that the ancestral peoples of the Pacific Islands may have come from more than one direction. Some of them may have navigated coasts, and island hopped from a far away land with a narrow neck – Malaysia! Scholars have concluded that the sweet potato arrived in Polynesia from South America several centuries AD, that is, long after the days of Hagoth, and long after Asiatic peoples had settled the Pacific Islands. (*Oceania – a regional study*, Edited by Frederica M. Bunge and Melinda W. Cook, The American University, Washington, D.C. 20016, pg 15)



### ***Island Hopping in the Pacific***

Arriving at New Zealand from an easterly direction doesn't necessarily mean the Islands' first inhabitants came from South America.

## Relative Directions in Scriptural Lands

The “four quarters of the earth” is an expression used repeatedly in the Book of Mormon and in other scripture. (1 Nephi 19:16; 22:25, 3 Nephi 5:24, 26; 16:5, Ether 13:11) The expression appears in the King James Bible. (Revelation 20:8) In New Testament Greek, it means “the four corners (or angles) of the earth”. The “four quarters of the earth” correspond with the “four quarters of heaven”. The heavenly quarters entail four winds, each issuing from a cardinal direction. (YirmeYahu (Jeremiah) 49:36, Divre Hayyamim Aleph (1 Chronicles) 9:24, Hebrew / Greek interlinear English, *LDS Scriptures Advanced Study Guide*) The expression “four winds...of heaven” appears in Matthew 24:31, while “four quarters of the earth” occurs in Joseph Smith - Matthew 1:27

The Israelite compass or coordinate system is fundamentally based on the perceived movement of the heavenly quarters. It is well established that Israelite east faces the general direction of sunrise. (MIZRAH; SUN, *Encyclopedia Judaica*) Old and New World lands of inheritance were divided into quarters utilizing directions set by the apparent movement of the heavens. (Numbers 34:3, Joshua 15:5, Mosiah 27:6)

Mesoamerican settings run into difficulty coordinating the New World seas mentioned in the Book of Mormon. A literal interpretation of the Book of Mormon rejects the notion that some of its seas are only allegorical. A correct understanding of Israelite directions reveals how spurious the popular argument is that Nephite “west” is really south; an argument that many Mesoamerican models depend on.

Inland bodies of water are called seas in Hebrew scripture. (Joshua 12:3; 15:5, Ether 2:7) The term “lake” is never used in the Book of Mormon to describe a body of water. The expression translated, “the whole earth” can mean the full extent of a local land or region. The ancient expression doesn't have to mean global or planet-wide. (Exodus 10:14-15, Alma 38:7) These facts greatly clarify the following passage:

“And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.” (Helaman 3:8)

Demographic spreading is mentioned twice in this verse. The first mention of spreading states that “...they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward...” This first spreading refers to multiplying and spreading in “the land southward”, followed by migrations to “the land northward”. The second mention of spreading, or rather beginning to spread, states that the people “...did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth...” This refers to the start of a widespread occupation of “the land northward”. The rest of the verse then deals entirely with “the land northward”. The expression, “face of the whole earth” means the full extend of “the land northward”. This land is bounded by seas in four directions (following the directions given in the heavens).

Is there a location in the vicinity of the Great Lakes, adjacent to scriptural Cumorah (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20) that is bounded by seas in the cardinal directions? Indeed, there is a land that matches the requirements exactly. We read that this northern land had a somewhat distinct blessing and curse upon it. (Helaman 6:10; 3 Nephi 3:24, Alma 46:17) This “land northward” resides in what is today Ontario, Canada. (See also Phyllis Carol Olive, *The Western New York Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Chapter 10, pg 77; see also the satellite image featured at the end of this article)

We read that “the whole face of the land was changed” in the land northward, as a consequence of “the great and terrible destruction” at the time of the crucifixion. (3 Nephi 8:12; 11:1) Some may suppose that the greatest change was caused primarily by earthquake. At certain locations, geological upheavals were dramatic; but of all the devastating influences that changed the “whole face of the land...”, “quaking of the whole earth” is listed last, after “tempest”, “whirlwinds” and the “lightnings” causing widespread fires. Wind and fire extensively changed the “face of the land” especially in the land northward. Important landmarks like the “narrow pass” and the general southward rise in elevation persisted. (Alma 22: 27-32; 50:34, Mormon 2:29; 3:5, 7-8, 10, 14, 16; 4:1)

Directions are relative in the Book of Mormon. Up, down, north, south, east, west all require a reference frame. The expressions “sea south”, “sea north”, “sea west”, “sea east”, tell us the directions of bodies of water relative to someplace. From a location in “the land northward”, “sea west” simply means the sea that is west from that location. The expression “sea west” does not name the body of water. The Bible mentions more than one “sea ... on the east”, but only one (a lake) is actually called “the east sea” – one of the names of the “salt sea”. (Joshua 12:3, Ezekiel 47:18)

Even though there are seas to the north and south of Book of Mormon sites, we find no mention in the record of any bodies of water actually named the north sea or the south sea. We should understand that the expressions “sea south”, “sea north”, “sea west”, “sea east” tell us the directions of bodies of water from reference frames given in scripture.

The proper nouns “west sea” and “east sea”, on the other hand, actually name bodies of water. Prime examples are the seas flanking the lands of Zarahemla and Nephi. (Alma 22:32; 50:8) Similar names (“east sea” and “west sea”) describe seas in the general directions of sunrise and sunset relative to Old World Jerusalem. (Yo’El (Joel) 2:20)

“east sea” is not capitalized in the King James Bible or in the current English edition of the Book of Mormon. There is no “upper-case” in Hebrew, and the adjective follows the noun. The translated title “the east sea” (Joel 2:20, KJV) comes from the Hebrew “hayam haqadmoni” - literally “the sea the east”, but the meaning is the same as “the East Sea”.

The original publication of the Book of Mormon distinguishes “the East Sea” and “the West Sea” as names by capitalizing them. “sea east” and “sea west” are not capitalized. (See 1830 edition, pp 363, 364, 375, 406 and compare with pp 412, 437)

The expression “sea...on the east” (Joshua 12:3, KJV) is literally

“yam...mizrahah” or “sea...east (sunrise)”. The 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon (pg 287) inserts a comma between “sea” and “east” where the expression currently reads “...sea east...” (Alma 22:27)

Phyllis Olive’s insightful layout of Book of Mormon lands has the “east sea” and “west sea” truly east and west, as the sun rises and sets over the lands of Zarahemla and Nephi. In scripture, “sea east” is equivalent to saying “sea on the east”. (Alma 22:27) The same is true for “sea west”, “sea north”, and “sea south”. In other words, “sea west” is just another way of saying “sea on the west”. The expression is telling us the direction of a sea given some location. The “sea east” and “sea west” relative to the borders of Zarahemla and Nephi are the same bodies of water named “the east sea” and “the west sea” respectively. “west sea, south” combines the proper noun “west sea” with the correction “south”, Alma 53:8, 22; this expression is rendered “West Sea, south” in the 1830 edition, pg 375.

Because “sea west” and “sea east” etc are relative terms, we cannot conclude that the “sea west” and “sea east” reckoned from “the land northward” refer to the same bodies of water that flank southern Book of Mormon lands. A similar biblical expression is “the sea southward”. (Joshua 18:14, KJV) The Hebrew literally reads, “yam negbah” meaning, “sea south”. In this instance the word translated “south” or “southward” literally means “in the direction of the desert”. Relative to the land of Israel, “negbah” (“desert-ward”) is an appropriate substitute for “south”, much as “yamah” (“seaward”, towards the Mediterranean) can substitute for “west”. The “sea southward” (Joshua 18:14, KJV) is elsewhere named “the east sea”. Other Hebrew terms for west and south are independent of the local sea and desert.

Removed from the land of Israel, Nephites and Mulekites were not inclined to define “west” in the arbitrary directions of their ancestor’s landings, or “south” in the arbitrary direction of an arid land. For Israelites, the perceived movement of the heavenly quarters is sufficient for finding the four directions. Direction is one of the ordinary but beneficial “signs” bestowed by the greater and lesser lights of heaven. (Genesis 1:14)

Carefully, distinguishing between the names of seas (e.g. “west sea” and “east sea”), and the relative expressions “sea west”, “sea east”, “sea south” etc, we find consistent matches for the various bodies of water mentioned in the Book of Mormon: We find that from points of view in western New York, Lake Erie is an excellent match for “the west sea”. The “sea on the east” of Lamanite lands is, according to Olive, the ancient lake that filled the Genesee river valley. (Alma 22:27) The sea specifically named the “east sea”, on the eastern borders between Lamanite and Nephite territories is likely the lake that occupied the marshlands near Java Lake and the headwaters of Buffalo Creek. (Alma 50:8-9, 11)

Realizing that the Book of Mormon “east sea” is a lake, as is Jerusalem’s “east sea” (Joel 2:20), Olive sees an obvious solution to the city of Mulek controversy. The Book of Mormon specifically states that “the city of Mulek” was in the southern “land of Nephi”. (Alma 53:6) Traveling south from Bountiful one could reach “the city of Gid” and then “the city of Mulek”. (Helaman 5:14-15) Both these cities were near “the east sea”. (Alma 50:13; 51:22, 26) Yet Amalickiah’s chain of conquests (marching from the

land of Nephi) lists “the city of Gid” before “the city of Mulek”. (Alma 51:26-28)

The solution becomes obvious, when we realize that “the east sea” is a lake, and that Amalickiah with his force simply went around to the other side of the lake to sack the city of Mulek, before continuing his march northward to the borders of the land Bountiful.

That the “east sea” is a lake is consistent with the fact that it resides near the southeastern highlands, up near “the head of the river Sidon”. (Alma 16:6; 22:27, 29; 50:11) Manti, near the head of the river Sidon was not a great distance from cities near the “east sea”. (Alma 51:25-26; 59:5-6)

From a location in the land northward, the “sea west” (meaning “sea on the west”) directs to Lake Huron. The “sea east”, points to Lake Ontario. From this same location in “the land northward”, Lake Erie is south (hence “sea south” – not its name), and Georgian Bay is north (“sea north”). Heeding scriptural reference frames, the relative locations of the seas fit remarkably into place.

But there is more to establishing the correct setting for the Book of Mormon than orienting its bodies of water using the Semitic compass – the same sense of direction relied on in Bible lands. The correct setting must also manifest the appropriate elevation changes. In other words, the correct setting needs to match the scriptural layout of the land topographically - in more than two dimensions. The third dimension provides an additional witness to the validity of the setting. Phyllis Olive’s geographic discoveries, in the region of Cumorah, meet this requirement as well.

“Up north”, and “down south”, are common modern expressions not found in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon’s use of “up” and “down” consistently describe elevation changes. From the land of Zarahemla, one always goes “up” to the southern land of Nephi. (Mosiah 7:1-2, Alma 26:9; 23) Heading northward from the land of Nephi, one consistently goes down to the land of Zarahemla. (Omni 1:13, Alma 51:11; 53:10) We find the more northern land of “Desolation” at even lower elevation. (Alma 22:30-31) Similar usage of “up” and “down” occurs in the Bible. For instance, one reads of going “up...unto Jerusalem” for the Holy City is literally in the mountains, or going “down from Jerusalem” to the southern desert. (1 Nephi 4:1, Zechariah 14:17, Acts 8:26)

In America, journeying south from the shore of Lake Ontario, the general elevation rises as one would expect in genuine Book of Mormon country.



*Derived from [veimages.gsfc.nasa.gov](http://veimages.gsfc.nasa.gov).*

***The more distant “land northward” bordered in each of the cardinal directions by “large bodies of water” called seas. (Helaman 3:3-4, 8)***

The Hebrew direction “mizrah” is often translated “east”, but it literally means towards “sunrise”. Directions in the Book of Mormon match the coordinate system of the Bible.

The lands of Bountiful, Zarahemla and Nephi, as also the Book of Mormon “south countries” (Doctrine and Covenants 75:8; 17, Mormon 6:16; 8:2) reside entirely in lands that would be occupied by a “nation” free from “all other nations under heaven” (Alma 46:17, Ether 2:12) – a land whereon “no kings...shall raise up unto the Gentiles”. (2 Nephi 10:11) Nothing in scripture, however, indicates that the same would be true for the more distant “land northward”.

Ontario, Canada is truly a land of “large bodies of water and many rivers”. Regions in this northern land are described in the Book of Mormon as at “an exceedingly great distance” from the land of Zarahemla. (Helaman 3:4) The distance could easily mean hundreds of miles from the eastern coast of Lake Erie. In the Old World, King Hezekiah of Judah regarded Babylon as “a far country” (2 Kings 20:14), even though modern perspectives place it (Iraq) next door to Jordan and Israel.



## Joseph Smith, Josiah Priest, and the Times and Seasons

**Straightforward answers to questions about signed and controversial unsigned newspaper articles on the topic of “Book of Mormon geography” - Joseph Smith’s signed editorials are shown to draw substantially from Josiah Priest’s work on the mound builders, not from John Lloyd Stephens’ bestseller.**

*Did early Latter-day Saints pay much attention to Book of Mormon details about covenant lands?*

**No, they did not.**

Mesoamerican setting apologist John L. Sorenson agrees that early Mormons did not pay a lot of attention to Book of Mormon details.

Sorenson first cites “revelations to Joseph Smith (e.g., Doctrine and Covenants 28:8; 32:2; 49:24; and 54:8)” which clearly identify native North American peoples as Book of Mormon “Lamanites”. Sorenson states that these revelations were “given to the Church members “after the manner of their language” and understanding (D. & C. 1:24).” What the verse cited by Sorenson actually says is that the revelations and divine commandments were given by God “after the manner of their [the Saint’s] language, that they might come to understanding” - not misunderstanding. Sorenson then admits:

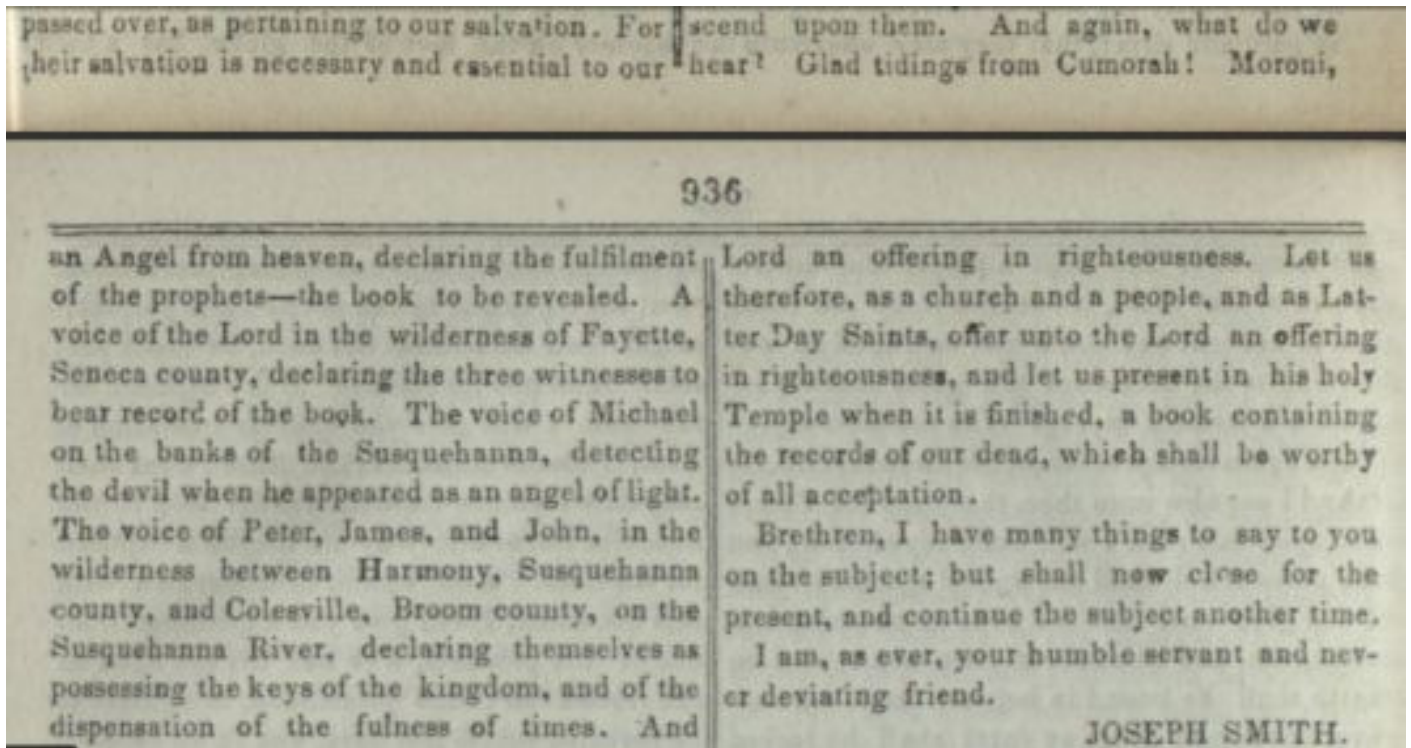
“We must also realize that the Book of Mormon was not an object of careful study in the early days of the Church, in fact it was referred to surprisingly little. (see Grant Underwood, “Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology,” *Dialogue* 17 (3, Autumn 1984): 35-74). The scripture anchored faith and clarified aspects of theology, but it was not studied systematically, let alone critically, as history or geography.” <sup>[1]</sup>

The Lord warned the Saints not to persist in treating the Book of Mormon lightly otherwise a condemnation would settle upon “the whole church ... even all”. (LDS D&C 84:54-57)

The Book of Mormon clearly describes a localized geography for its principal American lands comparable to the biblical Promised Land. This fact apparently went unnoticed by the vast majority of early church members.

Today, some want to make the term “limited geography” synonymous with limited Mesoamerican geography, but the fact is there is no such things as a completely limited Mesoamerican geography proposed for the Book of Mormon. All Central or South American scenarios have the Nephite prophet Moroni traveling thousands of miles to the Finger Lakes region of western New York to hide up the record of his people. At best these geographies are quasi-limited. The scenarios are not clearly compatible with details found in scripture. For instance, Moroni is found hiding out in his homeland many years after the destruction of his people. (Mormon 8:1-9, Moroni 1:1-3)

He had already sealed up the means of interpreting the record in the north country of his homeland, before finally sealing up the abridged record. (Ether 1:1; 4:5; 5:1) When the record was finally translated by Joseph Smith, it was likened to Book of Mormon peoples, who had “possessed” the land, speaking from the ground. (Mormon 8:23-26) This was not ground thousands of miles away from where Joseph translated the book! (2 Nephi 26:15-16)



*Did early members of the Church agree on the geography of Book of Mormon events?*

**Yes and No! They agreed on the general location of the land Cumorah, “in a land of many water, rivers, and fountains”. The general Finger Lakes location had been revealed (i.e. LDS D&C 128:20). They disagreed on the whereabouts and scale of Book of Mormon lands south of Cumorah.**

W. W. Phelps speculated that the vast prairies of North America were the Book of Mormon land of Desolation. <sup>[2]</sup>

Some early Saints placed the southern most Nephite land and city of Manti within the heartland of the United States. This implied a U.S. location for the Book of Mormon land of Zarahemla – in “Mound-builder” territory. <sup>[3]</sup> Early Latter-day Saints definitely saw North American mound builder artifacts as evidence in support of their scripture.

January 1, 1842, saw “EVIDENCES IN PROOF OF THE BOOK OF MORMON” published in the *Times and Seasons* (pg 640). The article draws attention to a book by Charles Blancher Thompson, published at Batavia, New York. The article describes ancient American fortifications: A treacherous mountain stronghold, Moroniesque defenses: deep ditches, walls of earth and rows of pickets. The author draws on Josiah

Priest's *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, the same work later editorialized by Joseph Smith.

Apostle John E. Page sought to connect Book of Mormon cities with the wonderful but anachronistic ruins portrayed in John Lloyd Stephens' 1841 bestseller, *Incidents of travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*. Elder Page's evolving geographies sought to place Zarahemla in Central America. <sup>[4]</sup> Undoubtedly Elder Page also accepted the scriptural location of Cumorah in western New York. (LDS D&C 128:20) The early apostle evidently wished to blend this revealed fact with Stephens' popular discoveries. Attentive to some Book of Mormon details about distances, Elder Page did not spread Book of Mormon lands and events over North and South American as some of his colleagues conjectured.

Apostle Orson Pratt proposed a South American landing site for the Book of Mormon patriarch Lehi – on the coast of Chile. Elder Pratt appears to have overlooked the fact that temperate South American is out of phase with the seasons of Israel. The ordinances of the Law of Moses, observed in full by faithful Nephites and Lamanites (2 Nephi 5:10, Helaman 13:1), were inextricably tied to the revealed Israelite Calendar. Scripture indicates that the Nephite first month coincided in time and season with the mandatory Israelite first month in the temperate Northern Hemisphere. (Helaman 14:20, 3 Nephi 8:2, 5, Exodus 12:1-2; 13:10, Joel 2:23)

Pratt's exaggerated hemispheric geography placed Zarahemla in South America. Elder Pratt essentially admitted that his proposed landing site was speculation, not revelation. <sup>[5]</sup> Though previously excommunicated and reinstated (as was church leader Frederick G. Williams), Orson Pratt's influence in the Church saw his geographic speculations published as footnotes to the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon – later removed. <sup>[61]</sup> This was after the passing of certain Apostles (e.g. John E. Page) who held different geographic views.

A dubious unsigned document in the hand writing of Frederick G. Williams alleges essentially the same Chilean landing site as that proposed by Orson Pratt. This document was unjustifiably promoted as "a revelation to Joseph, the Seer". <sup>[6]</sup> These indiscretions are still drawn upon to give the appearance of supporting a South American setting. The fact is the original geography proposed by Pratt and others was not localized in South America, but spread Book of Mormon events over much of the Western Hemisphere. <sup>[61]</sup> There is no known firsthand verifiable statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith advocating a hemispheric geography for the Book of Mormon. Neither Orson Pratt nor his brother Parley (who entertained a somewhat different geography for the Book of Mormon) ever attributed their exaggerated models to Joseph Smith. <sup>[4]</sup>

While there was a general lack of consensus among the various exaggerated geographies proposed by early members of the Church, all the early Saints agreed without exception, on the general location of the Book of Mormon land Cumorah, "in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains" – the Finger Lakes region of western New York. (Mormon 6:4; LDS D&C 128:20) This much had been revealed!

First Presidency member George Q. Cannon was quite certain about the location of Cumorah. At the same time, he had "no confidence" in proposed Book of Mormon

maps of his day, and discouraged their distribution. <sup>[7]</sup>

Elder B. H. Roberts, willing to admit the possibility of “some misconceptions and ... wrong deductions” leaned towards a Central American geography straddling the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (not Panama). He found reasons to question South American sites promoted by earlier church leaders. (B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, “IX. - The Geography of the Book”, Vol. 3, 1895, pp 499-503) Like LDS leaders before him, Elder Roberts ardently defended the scriptural location of Cumorah. In an article titled “Central and Western New York an Ancient Battle Field”, Roberts resourced the work of Josiah Priest for its physical evidence. (B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, Vol. 3, pp 67-68)

Joseph Smith’s mother Lucy Mack Smith, and Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, related that the identity of Cumorah was made known early on by divine being. <sup>[8,9]</sup> “Cumorah” was “something new” to David Whitmer, who first heard the name in company with Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery near Fayette New York, when they encountered an old traveler (an angel incognito) who said he was going to “Cumorah”. Whitmer’s account in no way contradicts Mother Smith’s history, which has young Joseph much earlier repeating the expression “hill of Cumorah” communicated to him by the angel. <sup>[10]</sup> The expression “hill of Cumorah” means hill of the Book of Mormon land Cumorah. Joseph simply learned about “Cumorah” before David Whitmer.

Joseph Smith declared his signed, September 6th, 1842 letter to the Church (LDS D&C 128) to be “the word of the Lord”. (LDS D&C 127:10) The most plain and straight forward interpretation of LDS D&C 128, verse 20, is that it refers to the Book of Mormon land Cumorah. The Hill Cumorah is not specifically mentioned in the verse. The angelic declaration of the fulfillment of the prophets, and coming forth of the Book of Mormon, as stated in the verse, took place in the Smith family home in the Book of Mormon land of Cumorah – western New York. Cumorah is listed with other sites of spiritual significance to the Restoration of the Gospel, located in the general vicinity of the Finger Lakes. Readers are given to know the location of Cumorah with much the same assurance as Elijah’s Carmel mention in the previous verse. (LDS D&C 128:19)

Apparently not many, if any early members of the Church picked up on the fact that the land of Zarahemla and the land of many waters (near Cumorah) were so near each other, that travelers from the elevated land of Nephi in the south could get lost and end up confusing one region for the other. According to the Book of Mormon, the land of Zarahemla cannot possibly be thousands or even many hundreds of miles away from Cumorah. (Mosiah 8:7-8; 21:25-26)

It was not LDS members who first devised the notion of a “Cumorah” in Mexico or Central America. The revealed location of Cumorah was conveniently rejected by RLDS Louis Hills and Jeremiah Gunsolley. <sup>[11]</sup> The main subject of Joseph Smith’s epistle (LDS D&C 128), indicating the Finger Lakes location of Cumorah, is baptism for the dead; a teaching not practiced in the RLDS (Community of Christ) church. Joseph’s letter has been relegated to an historical appendix in the RLDS version of the Doctrine and Covenants. (Appendix C, RLDS D&C 110) Though the Mexican / Mesoamerican “Cumorah” hypothesis is now espoused by some prominent LDS members, it was in

fact denounced in General Conference of the LDS Church. [\[12\]](#)

*Could church leaders have received revelation, short of complete understanding?*

**Yes. The general location of Cumorah was known. Other Book of Mormon sites became the subject of far flung speculation.**

The Apostle Paul wrote:

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:9 - 10)

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma received revelation on the subject of resurrection, yet certain details were left to his own opinion. (Alma 40:20)

It is an “all or nothing” fallacy that says that because early church leaders speculated, disagreed and changed their minds about the location of many Book of Mormon sites, that no information had been given on the location of American covenant lands. At the very least Joseph Smith knew and revealed that some Book of Mormon lands were in his own country (e.g. Cumorah). Beyond this he allowed others of the Church to form divergent opinions regarding the whereabouts of other Book of Mormon sites.

*In his 1841 bestseller, **Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan**, did renowned traveler John Lloyd Stephens actually discuss mound builder antiquities found in his own country?*

**Yes! Stephens’ two-volume book discusses more than the “comparative modern” ruins of Central America:**

Stephens’ bestseller in fact elucidates on the history and antiquities of northern America:

“...a new flood of light has poured upon the world, and the field of American antiquities has been opened...In our own country, the opening of forests and the discovery of tumuli or mounds and fortifications, extending in ranges from the lakes through the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi, mummies in a cave in Kentucky, the inscription on the rock at Dighton...the ruins of walls and a great city in Arkansas and Wisconsin Territory, had suggested...the strong belief that powerful and populous nations had occupied it and had passed away, whose histories are entirely unknown.”

[\[13\]](#)

*Did Stephens believe that the Central American ruins which he and Catherwood documented were very ancient?*

**No – he did not!**

Stephens in fact devoted an entire chapter in *Incidents of Travel in Central America* to the conclusion that the hewn stone ruins were relatively recent works – not truly ancient:

“...they are not the works of people who have passed away, and whose history has become unknown; but...they were constructed by the races who occupied the country at the time of the invasion by the Spaniards, or of some not very distant progenitors.” [\[14\]](#)

*Was Joseph Smith aware of Stephens’ conclusions regarding the date of the Central American ruins - in other words, had Joseph Smith completely read Stephens two-volume book?*

**Yes! Having “read the volumes with the greatest interest”, Joseph Smith could not have missed Stephens’ conclusions that the Central American stone ruins dated relatively recent:**

In a letter to John M. Bernhisel dated November 16, 1841, in the handwriting of John Taylor, the Prophet praised Stephens’ book saying that it, “corresponds with & supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon; I have read the volumes with the greatest interest & pleasure & must say that of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most correct luminous & comprehensive.” [\[15\]](#)

*Is there anything in Joseph Smith’s reference to “this country” (in his letter of appreciation for Stephens’ book) that indicates he meant Central America?*

**No! Stephens’ book in fact discusses “a new flood of light” pertaining to “American antiquities” found in his “own country” (the United States of America).**

Some months after reading Stephens’ bestseller, Joseph Smith published several signed editorials on North American evidence for the Book of Mormon. These articles followed the topics highlighted in Stephens’ brief but accurate historical outline of “American antiquities” – antiquities found in what Stephens refers to as “our own country” (the United States). Stephens lists:

“...the field of American antiquities...In our own country, the opening of forests and the discovery of tumuli or mounds and fortifications, extending in ranges from the lakes through the valleys of the Ohio ...” [\[13\]](#)

This list predates Joseph Smith’s signed editorial on Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*:

Corroborating earth, timber and rock works described in the Book of Mormon (e.g. Alma 48:7-8), Joseph Smith cites ancient North American “...forts, tumuli, roads, wells, mounds, walls enclosing between one and two hundred, and even five hundred

acres of land; some of them stone, and others of earth, twenty feet thick, and exceeding high..." [16] Joseph Smith summarizes the relationship between mound builder antiquities and the Book of Mormon:

"If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.-were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts..." [16]

Joseph Smith seems to distinguish these discoveries from "Stephens and Catherwood's researches in Central America". [16]

Stephens cites, "mummies in a cave in Kentucky..." [13] Joseph Smith later published an entire article on this subject, drawing mostly from a chapter in Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*. [17] In this article Joseph Smith equates "North American Indians" with Book of Mormon "descendants of Israel". [18]

After John Taylor became official editor of the *Times and Seasons*, he published a preface from Stephens' work in which the renowned traveler clearly distinguishes the "country" of Yucatan from his own. [19] There is absolutely no evidence backing up the argument that when Joseph Smith tells of Book of Mormon peoples inhabiting "this country", that he means Central America. [20]

*Does Joseph Smith's Journal mention John Lloyd Stephens' discoveries in Central America?*

**No! The redacted *History of the Church*, however, has inserted the following entry after the date June 25, 1842:**

"Transacted Business with Brother Hunter and Mr. Babbit, and sat for a drawing of my profile to be placed on a lithograph of the map of the city of Nauvoo."

"The Work of Stephens and Catherwood."

"Messrs. Stephens and Catherwood have succeeded in collecting in the interior of America a large amount of relics of the Nephites, or the ancient inhabitants of America treated of in the Book of Mormon, which relics have recently been landed in New York." [21]

The above statement was not written or dictated by Joseph Smith. It is a more recent inclusion in a redacted compilation of church history. The Prophet's journal entry for Saturday, June 25, 1842 (in the handwriting of Willard Richards, clerk) makes no mention of the work of Stephens and Catherwood, or of relics.

Joseph Smith's Journal actually reads:

25 June, 1842 – Saturday

“Transacted Business with Bro. Hunter and Mr. Babbit. & sat for the drawing of his profile. for lithographing on city chart.” [\[22\]](#)

Joseph Smith is here referred to in the third person, because the original journal entry was written by Willard Richards (clerk).

The well meaning redactor of *History of the Church* apparently thought it acceptable to represent the entry as if Joseph had made it himself. The insertion about Stephens and Catherwood may have been viewed as historically informative, but it is not authentic. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* (September 13, 1841), on the other hand, does mention Catherwood's presentation “before the publick” praising it as “a wonder to the world.” (2:126)

***Did the Times and Seasons newspaper suggest that all New World Book of Mormon lands are in Central America?***

**No! Early members of the Church recognized that Book of Mormon events took place in lands occupied by the United States of America. (E.g. LDS D&C 10:48-51) Beyond this they speculated and contradicted.**

The 1841 *Times and Seasons* under Editor Don Carlos Smith (brother of Joseph Smith) announced Stephens' and Catherwood's discoveries in Central America as proof “that, on this vast continent, once flourished a mighty people, skilled in the arts and sciences, and whose splendor would not be eclipsed by any of the nations of Antiquity...” [\[23\]](#)

Unsigned articles published September 15, 1842 featured extracts from Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. These articles advocated an exaggerated geography; alleging that the Book of Mormon's “narrow neck of land” embraces all of Central America; and that Lehi landed in South America, just south of Panama. [\[38, 39\]](#)

Even the overly touted “ZARAHEMLA” article (October 1, 1842) does not in fact promote a localized Central American geography. The unsigned article speculates that the ruins of Quirigua could be those of Zarahemla or some other Book of Mormon city. [\[36\]](#) Because the writer(s) of the article had an exaggerated geography in mind, the conflict between the “ZARAHEMLA” article and a Letter from Joseph Smith published in the same issue, went unnoticed. [\[33\]](#)

The epistle to the Church signed by the Prophet in hiding, places Cumorah in the Finger Lakes region of North America. (LDS D&C 128:20) As previously noted, according to the Book of Mormon, the land of Zarahemla cannot possibly be thousands, or even many hundreds of miles from Cumorah. (Mosiah 21:25-26) Evidently, the delegates in charge (LDS D&C 127:1) of the *Times and Seasons* did not perceive a problem.



The *Times and Seasons* under John Taylor (editor) referenced the works of both Josiah Priest and John Lloyd Stephens – a fact more than one Central American Cumorahists fails to mention. John Taylor saw evidence for the Book of Mormon coming from both northern and Central America. <sup>[24]</sup> More than a year had passed after the publication of the “ZARAHÉMLA” article when John Taylor published his “ANCIENT RUINS” editorial. Editor Taylor wrote:

“the accounts given in the Book of Mormon concerning large cities and civilized people having inhabited this land, was generally disbelieved and pronounced a humbug. Priest, since then has thrown some light on this interesting subject. Stephens in his “Incidents of Travels in Central America,” has thrown in a flood of testimony...” <sup>[24]</sup>

Early members of the Church overreached in more than geography, in their efforts to defend the Book of Mormon against those who scoffed at the idea of advanced civilizations in ancient America. With John Taylor as acting editor, assisted by Wilford Woodruff, an emphasis was placed in the *Times and Seasons* on archaeological discoveries described in the popular books of the time - especially Stephens’.

Unlike Josiah Priest, John Lloyd Stephens never openly criticized the Book of Mormon in his bestsellers. An unsigned 1843 article emphasized Stephens’ work “ought to be in the hands of every Latter Day Saint; corroborating, as it does the history of the Book of Mormon. There is no stronger circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the latter book...than that contained in Mr. Stephens’ works.” [19] Stephens work was inappropriately promoted as an essential guide to the ruins of Book of Mormon cities. <sup>[25]</sup> The ensuing tradition, in time, led to confusion, deep disappointment and embarrassment. <sup>[26]</sup>

John Taylor urged that, “the Book of Mormon does not give a more extensive account of large and populous cities than those discoveries now demonstrate to be even in existence”. <sup>[24]</sup>

What ever his specific views regarding the ruins of Mexico and Central America, John Taylor definitely accepted Cumorah in western New York. <sup>[27]</sup>

John Taylor quotes an article published in the Texas Telegraph, October 11, 1843, which concludes:

“The antiquarian who is desirous to trace the Aztec or Toltec races in their migrations from the northern regions of America, may find in these ancient edifices many subjects of curious speculation.” <sup>[24]</sup>

*With members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in charge of publishing the Times and Seasons, was anything ever printed in the paper that Joseph Smith did not endorse or agree with?*

**Unfortunately – yes!**

January 28, 1842, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was instructed by revelation to “take in hand the Editorial department of the Times and Seasons”. The following February the paper was purchased by the Church from Ebenezer Robinson, who since the death of Don Carlos Smith, had been sole proprietor. John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff were then appointed to take charge of the printing establishment. Though the Twelve had been commanded to take the editorial department in hand, it was not fully decided at that time whether Joseph Smith would be the editor instead of the Twelve.

[28]

In the February 15, 1842 edition, Ebenezer Robinson bid farewell to subscribers and made the following, perhaps premature announcement:

“The Editorial chair will be filled by our esteemed brother, President Joseph Smith, assisted by Elder John Taylor, of the Quorum of the Twelve, under whose able and talented guidance, this will become the most interesting and useful religious journal of the day.

With these considerations, I feel confident that the agents and friends of the Times and Seasons will exert themselves to support the press; knowing that while it is under the supervision of him whom God has chosen to lead his people in the last days, all things will go right.”

Brother Robinson’s ironic parting comments were followed by an announcement to subscribers:

“It will be noticed in the above communication of our much respected friend, E. Robinson, Esq. that the paper is no longer printed, and published by that gentleman; but that it has fallen to our lot to issue this valuable and interesting periodical, and to take the Editorial chair... As it regards ourselves we have very little to say, but shall leave it for the future to unfold; and for a discerning public to judge. The important events that are daily transpiring around us; the rapid advance of truth; ...the epistles and teachings of the Twelve; and the revelations which we are receiving from the most High, will ho doubt furnish us with material to make this paper interesting to all who read it, and whilst we solicit the patronage, and support of our friends, we pray that the God of Israel may inspire our hearts with understanding and direct our pen in truth. Ed.”

Regrettably, the February 15, 1842 edition of the paper was published in the Prophet’s name. The end of the paper bears the following:

“THE TIMES AND SEASONS, is edited by JOSEPH SMITH. Printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH.”

This has given some the misinformed impression that Joseph Smith began his editorial career in February 1842. Though members of the twelve were responsible for

the paper at this time and even published in the Prophet's name; an untoward, and embarrassingly risqué notice was printed in the paper giving every appearance of being endorsed by the editor "JOSEPH SMITH" and or John Taylor. The following apologetic notice "TO THE PUBLIC" was published March 15, 1842 in the *Times and Seasons*, pg 729:

"Lest wrong impressions should obtain abroad, detrimental to the interest and influence of President Joseph Smith, respecting a marriage notice, which appeared in the *Times and Seasons*, of the 15th of February ult. I deem it a privilege to make a short statement of facts concerning the matter, which, I am confident, will entirely exonerate that gentleman from all blame or censure, which may have been put upon him on account of the publication of said notice.

On the 6th of Feb. I gave possession of the establishment, to Willard Richards the purchaser on the behalf of the Twelve; at which time my responsibility ceased as editor. On the 7th this marriage took place, and the notice was written by one of the hands in the office, and put in type by one of the boys, without, undoubtedly, any expectation of its being printed. At this time it was not fully decided whether President Smith should take the responsibility of editor, or not, therefore that paper went to press without his personal inspection; and as this article was standing in type with the other matter, it found its way into the paper unnoticed, as both the person who wrote it, and the boy, together with either journeymen, had been discharged by the purchasers, also, the proof reader did not observe it, as the words used were printer's phrases and he was not looking for any thing indecorous or unbecoming. The first time Pres't Smith or myself saw the article, was after the papers had been struck off, when it was too late to remedy the evil. We both felt very sorely mortified, at the time; but I am fully persuaded that the kind readers of the *Times* will cheerfully overlook whatever fault there may be, as that was the first time any such thing ever appeared in the columns of this paper, and not attribute any blame to Pres't Smith, as he is not guilty in the least, and had no knowledge of the thing until it was too late.

I will here take the liberty to state that from an intimate acquaintance of near seven years with Pres't. Joseph Smith, I never yet have seen a single indecent or unbecoming word or sentence, from his pen, but to the reverse; therefore I can with all confidence, assure the patrons of this paper, that they have nothing to fear, but every thing to hope for, in the exchange of editors.

E. ROBINSON."

*Is there any known revelation indicating that the Lord changed his mind and wanted Joseph Smith to take editorial responsibility for the Times and Seasons.*

**No. This appears to have been Joseph's own decision, or rather his concession.**

The January 28, 1842 revelation specifically states:

“Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph. go and say unto the Twelve That it is my will to have them take in hand the Editorial department of the Times and Seasons according to the manifestation which shall be given unto them by the Power of my Holy Spirit in the midst of their counsel Saith the Lord. Amen.” [\[29\]](#)

Elder Woodruff’s insightful journal (February 3) records:

“A Revelation was given a few days Since for the Twelve to obtain the printing esestablishment of E Robinson & govern the printing of the Times and Seasons... After consulting upon the subject the quorum appointed Elders J. Taylor and W Woodruff of the Twelve to Edit the Times & Seasons & take charge of the whole establishment under the direction of Joseph the Seer.” (2:153)

*History of the Church* 4:513 states that on Thursday, February 3, 1842 “Elder Woodruff took the superintendence of the printing office, and John Taylor the editorial department of the Times and Seasons...” This note was not entered in Joseph Smith’s Journal. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* shows that Elders Woodruff and Taylor were laboring in the “printing esestablishment” in early February 1842. (2:153-154)

*If members of the Twelve knew that “it was not fully decided whether President Smith should take the responsibility of editor, or not”, and that Joseph Smith had not personally inspected the paper, why then did they allow the February 15, 1842 edition to indicate that the paper was “edited by JOSEPH SMITH. Printed and published... by JOSEPH SMITH”?*

**Though Joseph Smith was not directly involved in editing and publishing the issue, the publishers note at the end of the paper was apparently regarded as true in the sense that the newspaper was perceived to be under the direction of Joseph Smith or rather, his delegation.**

It is clear, from the previous editor’s comment, that the proof reader of the February 15 edition, was not Joseph Smith; for, according to Ebenezer Robinson, the paper “went to press without his [Joseph Smith’s] personal inspection”, and “the proof reader did not observe it [the embarrassing article], as the words used were printer’s phrases and he was not looking for any thing indecorous or unbecoming.” (See above, *Times and Seasons*, “TO THE PUBLIC”, March 15, 1842, pg 729)

Granted, Joseph Smith never issued an endorsement or “ED” to the unbecoming article. Granted the embarrassing piece was overlooked by members of the Twelve, put in charge of the paper. The question remains: Why did members of the Twelve allow the paper to claim publication “by JOSEPH SMITH”? The answer could be that they saw themselves as agents acting in the Prophet’s behalf. It is evident that they did not require Joseph’s active participation in the newspaper in order to claim that the paper was published “by JOSEPH SMITH”.

Several days after the embarrassing incident with the newspaper, Elder Woodruff recorded (February 19, 1842):

“Joseph the Seer is now the Editor of that paper & Elder Taylor assists him in writing while it has fallen to my lot to take charge of the Business part of the establishment.”

*Is Joseph Smith’s signature, “ED” at the end of articles important?*

**Yes!**

Joseph Smith publicly announced his editorship of the Church’s newspaper, March 15, 1842. The respectability of the periodical needed help, and who better to lift the reputation of the paper among the Saints. Joseph took up the duty even though his heart and mind were already engaged in greater concerns. To his subscribers, the Prophet wrote:

“This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforth. I am not responsible for the publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision, JOSEPH SMITH.”

Eight months later Joseph officially resigned. The November 15, 1842 edition contained his statement of resignation:

“I beg leave to inform the subscribers of the Times and Seasons that it is impossible for me to fulfil [fulfill] the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer. The multiplicity of other business that daily devolves upon me, renders it impossible for me to do justice to a paper so widely circulated as the Times and Seasons. I have appointed Elder John Taylor, who is less encumbered and fully competent to assume the responsibilities of that office, and I doubt not but that he will give satisfaction to the patrons of the paper. As this number commences a new volume, it also commences his editorial career. Joseph Smith.”

The 19th century use of the term “signature” includes editorial marks such as “ED”. [\[30\]](#)

It is academically irresponsible to claim Joseph Smith’s full endorsement of statements that do not have his signature or “ED”. Given the plurality of those involved with the *Times and Seasons* newspaper, the complications of their lives, their varying backgrounds, opinions, degrees of inspiration and authority, distinction must be given to articles endorsed with Joseph Smith’s “ED” or signature. In short, Joseph’s signature or “ED” at the end of articles in the newspaper serves a purpose. Joseph Smith refused to take responsibility for things published outside of his supervision; or for things not endorsed with his signature. “ED” or his signature signifies Joseph Smith’s endorsement during the time period when he served as official editor.

Had others been allowed to sign articles “ED”, without Editor Joseph Smith’s

approval, they certainly could have signed the unsigned articles printed during the official editor's public absence. This never happened. It is clear that Joseph Smith alone took responsibility for articles signed "ED" during his editorship.

*Is Joseph Smith's name appearing at the end of issues of the Times and Seasons newspaper, the same as his signature?*

**No. His name at the end of the newspaper is part of a statement, not a signature.**

Remember, the February 15, 1842 edition of the *Times and Seasons* bore Joseph Smith's name, yet Joseph Smith refused to take responsibility for it. His name appearing at the end of a newspaper does not mean that he authored all of its content. "ED" is the editor's signature appearing at the end of articles in the paper, which he wishes the public to know he endorses in a particular way.

Issues of the *Times and Seasons* actively edited by Joseph Smith (after February 1842), end with:

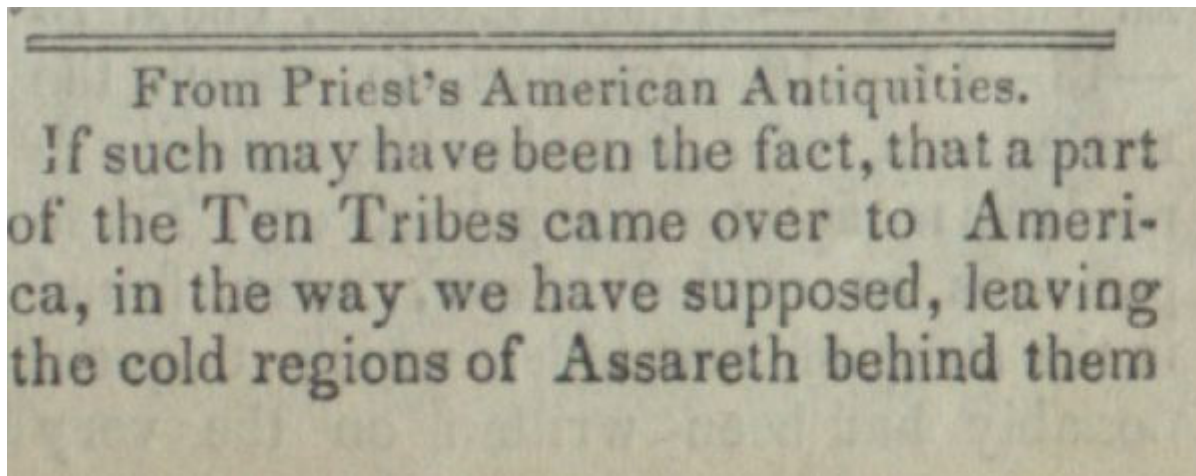
"The Times and Seasons, IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith. Printed and published about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH."

Issues of the newspaper published during a "short season" when Joseph Smith found it necessary to delegate his editorial and other business responsibilities to others (e.g. Fall of 1842, LDS D&C 127:1) end with:

"The Times and Seasons, Is edited, printed and published about the first fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOSEPH SMITH."

Joseph Smith's name in these printings is part of a publication statement. The fact that there is no explicit "IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith" printed at the end of issues during the fall of 1842 is significant. It was during this period that Joseph Smith found it necessary to keep a low public profile in an effort to avoid arrest. He had delegated his business concerns to others. (LDS D&C 127:1; 128:1) His name appearing in the publication note at the end of the paper simply signifies that he had authorized others to actively edit, and publish the paper in his behalf.

Joseph Smith's name appearing at the end of the paper should not be construed as a blanket endorsement of everything in it.



*Of the Times and Seasons* articles actually signed by Joseph Smith, how many are there that relate to the subject of Book of Mormon lands?

**There are five signed articles, and one that consists entirely of a self explanatory extract from Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*, with no accompanying LDS commentary or signature.**

By comparison, there are three unsigned articles that draw from Stephens' bestseller, that were published during Joseph Smith's public absence in the fall of 1842.

*What are the six articles that Joseph Smith published and how many of them draw on Josiah Priest's American Antiquities for archaeological support of the Book of Mormon?*

**Four of the six articles by Joseph Smith cite Josiah Priest's work on the mound builders, as providing evidence in support of the Book of Mormon. The six articles are:**

- (1) The "Wentworth Letter" published under "CHURCH HISTORY" [\[20\]](#)

Joseph relates in the Wentworth Letter how a heavenly messenger appeared to him with a mission to "bring the joyful tidings, that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled, that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence..."

Regarding the Book of Mormon and its ancient covenant peoples, Joseph explains:

"I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people was made known unto me: I was also told where there was deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgement [abridgment] of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on

this continent...”

“In this important and interesting book the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the tower of Babel, at the confusion of languages to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era. We are informed by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites and came directly from the tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed about the time that the Israelites came from Jerusalem, who succeeded them in the inheritance of the country. The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country...”

The letter is signed, “JOSEPH SMITH”

(2) “A CATACOMB OF MUMMIES FOUND IN KENTUCKY” [\[18\]](#)

This article draws from a chapter in Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*. In the article Joseph Smith clearly relates Book of Mormon “descendants of Israel coming to this continent” with “North American Indians”. The article is signed “ED” and the end of the issue explicitly states that “The Times and Seasons, IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith...”

The article resources Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 1833 edition, pp 110-112.

The article follows Stephens’ list of discoveries in the United States, and parallels the topic of Egyptian mummies relating to the Book of Abraham. (“EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES”, Times and Season, Vol. 3, May 2, 1842, pg 774)

(3) “From Priest’s American Antiquities” [\[31\]](#)

This extract discusses North American “tokens of the presence of Jews... along countries adjacent to the Atlantic.” The article is self explanatory to its audience. There is no LDS commentary or signature. The end of the issue explicitly states that “The Times and Seasons, IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith...”

The article extracts: Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 1833 edition, pp 65-67.

(4) “TRAITS OF THE MOSAIC HISTORY, FOUND AMONG THE AZTECA NATIONS.” [\[32\]](#)

This article draws from a chapter in Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*. Priest cites renowned naturalist and traveler Alexander von Humboldt in favoring the idea that certain ancestors of the mound builders arrived in



the “lake country” (Great Lakes region), and that their descendents eventually migrated as far south as Mexico. (Priest, *American Antiquities*, 1833 edition, pg 202; see also Robert S. Spence, *The Contributor*, Vol. 4, No. 9, June, 1883, pg 358)

Joseph Smith concludes that the Jaredites arrived in the “lake country of America” (region of Lake Ontario). In Joseph’s view, this accounts for flood legends found among the natives of western NY and in Mexico. The article nowhere explicitly states that Book of Mormon lands are to be found in Mexico or Central America. Migration from the Great Lake region (as suggested by Priest and Humboldt) is implied. The article is signed “ED” and the end of the issue explicitly states that “The Times and Seasons, IS EDITED BY Joseph Smith...”

The article resources Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 1833 edition, pp 199-202.

(5) “AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES” [\[16\]](#)

The first part of this article quotes directly from the 1833 edition of Priest’s *American Antiquities*. The opening line begins: “Some have supposed that all the great works of the west, of which we have been treating, belong to our present race of Indians...” The article then relates North American earth and timber constructions and artifacts to the Book of Mormon narrative. The Book of Mormon is set forth as explaining the mysterious works of the mound builders. It is in this article that Joseph Smith concludes:

“If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.-were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book. They would find their conjectures more than realized-that a great and mighty people had inhabited this continent-that the arts sciences and religion, had prevailed to a very great extent, and that there was as great and mighty cities on this continent as on the continent of Asia.”

Stephens’ and Catherwood’s researches in Central America are briefly mentioned as evidence of a great and mighty people with “stupendous ruins” inhabiting the continent. It is concluded that the people of Central America are historically tied to the Book of Mormon, but the article does not specifically say that Book of Mormon lands are located in Central America. The article is signed by Joseph Smith, “ED”.

The article resources Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 1833 edition, pp 216-224.

(6) “LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH” [\[33\]](#)

Published in the October 1 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, this epistle to the

Church from the Prophet in hiding has been canonized as LDS D&C 128. According to LDS D&C 127:10, it is “the word of the Lord”. The general Finger Lakes location of the land Cumorah is indicated in the epistle. The letter is signed “JOSEPH SMITH.”

*Were the signed articles published in any particular order relative to topics discussed in Priest’s book?*

**Yes.**

The signed articles that rely on Priest’s book draw on topics from pages 110-112, 199-202 and 216-124 (in that order) from the 1833 edition of *American Antiquities*. The *Times and Seasons* articles discuss in greater details subjects which Joseph Smith found summarized in Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. These are discoveries actually listed by John Lloyd Stephens relating to “the field of American antiquities” in his “own country [the United States]”. <sup>[13]</sup>

*Do any of the signed articles mention John Lloyd Stephens?*

**Yes. One briefly mentions Stephens at the end of the article; but the article mostly relies on Josiah Priest’s work treating the mound builders, as well as on quotes from the Book of Mormon.**

As a final example of a “great and mighty people” inhabiting the Americas, the “AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES” article mentions the “stupendous ruins” of Central America. The end of the article briefly mentions “Stephens and Catherwood’s researches” as showing prime examples of “sculpture”, “architectural design, and more imperishable ruins”.

Joseph Smith does not claim that these relatively recent ruins are described in the Book of Mormon. Indeed the stone ruins of Central America are more imperishable than the North American earth, timber and rock works of the Jaredites and Nephites discussed previously in the article.

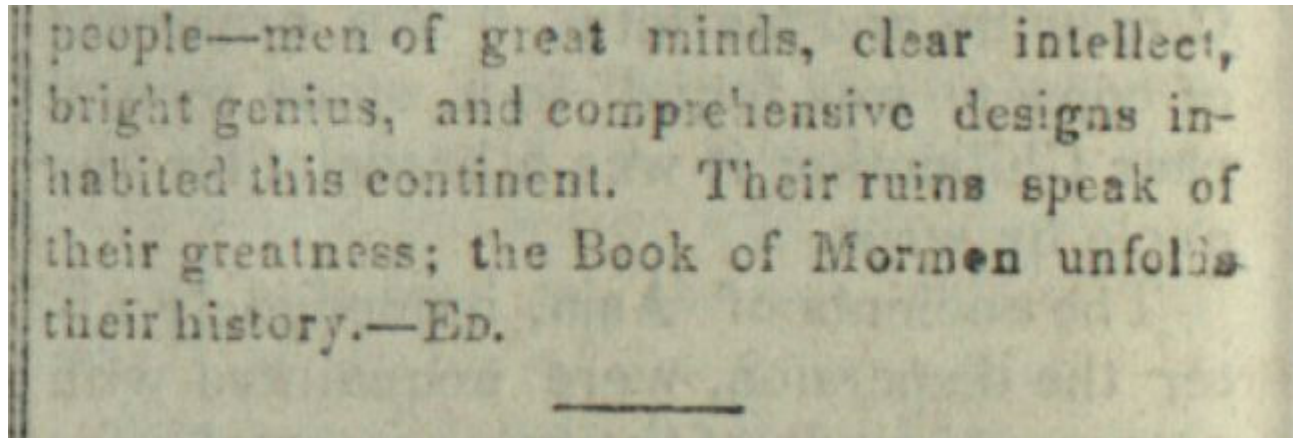
Priest emphasizes Humboldt’s conclusion that North American mound builder descendents eventually migrated into Mexico and Central America. <sup>[34]</sup> Joseph Smith does not say that Book of Mormon lands are to be found in Central America, though he seems to have accepted the possibility that Book of Mormon peoples or their descendents eventually migrated there. The *Times and Seasons* article only states that “the ruins of Guatamala [Guatemala], and other cities...show that a great and mighty people...inhabited this continent. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormen [Mormon] unfolds their history. –ED.”

*Do any of the articles signed by Joseph Smith explicitly place Book of Mormon lands in Mexico or Central America?*

**No!**

Without exception, the signed articles relating to Book of Mormon lands, place

Book of Mormon events in mound builder country, North America.



*If Joseph Smith regarded Stephens' writing as "the most correct luminous & comprehensive", "of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country", why did Joseph Smith's signed articles rely so heavily on Priest's American Antiquities?*

**Josiah Priest's work deals primarily with the mound builders of North America. The Book of Mormon's authentic literary setting treats these ancient peoples!** [\[60\]](#)

Even though Stephens' comprehensive summary of mound builder antiquities was favored by Joseph Smith, the editor nevertheless found it necessary to draw from Priest's detailed work for material support of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph may have chosen to praise Stephens' accurate historical commentary on the antiquities of his own country (the United States), above Priest's exhaustive work, simply because Priest had made disparaging comments about the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, Joseph Smith's letter of appreciation for Stephens' work is in the handwriting of John Taylor and may, to some extent, have been drafted by him. [\[15\]](#)

*Is there any proof that Joseph Smith planned to segue from articles featuring Priest's American Antiquities, to articles relying on Stephens' Incidents of Travel in Central America?*

**No.**

Joseph Smith's signed articles featuring Priest's *American Antiquities* were published almost consecutively from May through July, 1842. There is a notable break of several issues (including the entire month of August, 1842) between Joseph Smith's signed editorials on Priest's work, and the unsigned articles highlighting Stephen's bestseller.

The unsigned articles cluster in the September 15, through October 1, 1842 issues of the newspaper. Joseph Smith's July 15, "AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES" article briefly mentions Stephens and Catherwood near the end of the article, but their discoveries are not central to the article. The "American Antiquities" article does not

necessitate or even adumbrate the unsigned articles published in the fall. The very next issue (August 1, 1842) in fact, published a discussion citing “American Antiquities, to prove that the aborigines were descendents of Joseph”. (“GREAT DISCUSSION ON MORMONISM BETWEEN DR. WEST AND ELDER ADAMS, AT THE MARLBORO’ CHAPEL”, *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, August 1, 1842, pg 864)

***What are the three unsigned Times and Seasons articles that extrapolate on Stephens’ 1841 bestseller, and in what ways do they contradict each other and LDS scripture?***

**These are the unduly celebrated unsigned articles published in the fall of 1842. Their geographic scenarios are incompatible with each other and they misconstrue the Book of Mormon!**

Two of the unsigned articles featuring extracts from Stephens’ bestseller, appeared in the September 15, 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*. The first of these alleges the “wonderful ruins of Palenque” discovered by Stephens and Catherwood, “are among the mighty works of the Nephites”. The article anachronistically relates these hewn stone ruins to Nephi’s building a temple “like unto the temple of Solomon”. Contrast these statements with Joseph Smith’s signed “AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES” article (July 15, 1842), which relates Nephi’s building of a temple in form like Solomon’s, to works of the mound builders of North America. There is no explicit mention in the Book of Mormon of any Nephite temple made of hewn stone – none! Timber was used to construct Nephite temples. (2 Nephi 5:15, Helaman 3:9)

The unsigned commentary uses the first person plural, e.g. “We are sorry...” possibly indicating joint authorship.

The authors clearly have an exaggerated geography for the Book of Mormon in mind, in alleging that the Nephites “lived about the narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America, with all the cities that can be found.”

An exaggerated geography is also implied in the last unsigned article printed in the September 15, 1842 issue. Though this article quotes from Stephens’ book on the “Toltecan Indians” of Mexico, the LDS commentary insists that Lehi landed in South America, “a little south of the Isthmus of Darien [Panama]”. The curious article uses the first person plural, and mentions Joseph Smith in the third person.

Regrettably, this dubious *Times and Seasons* article got inserted in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith’s assistants in the Historian’s Office of the Church. This has tended to give the piece more prominence than it deserves. Since then, the anonymous article has indiscriminately shown up in more recent compilations – likely a carry over from Joseph Fielding Smith’s work. [\[35\]](#)

Joseph Fielding Smith by the way was a sharp critic of the Mesoamerican “Cumorah” prevarication, and a staunch defender of scriptural Cumorah. Unfortunately he tried to fit scriptural Cumorah in the context of a traditional albeit non-scriptural hemispheric geography. See *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:233-234; 73-74.

Neither of the unsigned articles in the September 15, 1842 issue is compatible

with the limited setting described in the Book of Mormon.

The last and most unduly celebrated unsigned article was printed in the October 1, 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*. This is the same issue in which Joseph Smith's signed letter to the Church appears - the Prophet's canonical epistle that indicates the Finger Lakes location of Cumorah, which he wrote while in hiding.

The unsigned "ZARAHEMPLA" article speculates (with a disclaimer), that the stone ruins at Quirigua found by Stephens and Catherwood have something to do with the ruins of Zarahemla or some other Book of Mormon city. The article reads:

"It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and veracity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them: and that a large stone with engravings upon it as Mosiah said; and a 'large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,' as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left remembrances of the, (to him,) lost and unknown. We are not going to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon." [\[36\]](#)

Had the writers of this article more carefully read the Book of Mormon and both volumes of Stephens' work (as Joseph Smith had), they may have discovered reasons to question their hasty conclusions. For instance:

The Quirigua ruins documented by Stephens and Catherwood date more recent than Book of Mormon times. Stephens himself suspected the ruins were relatively recent. [\[14\]](#)

The Book of Mormon city of Zarahemla, as other Nephite cities, was built of timber, matching perfectly the descriptions of North American mound builder cities in Joseph Smith's own country. (Helaman 3:9, 3 Nephi 8:8)

It was Amaleki the son of Abinadom who told of "a large stone... with engravings on it" brought to Mosiah I. (Omni 1:12, 20) It was not Mosiah who told the story, as implied in the unsigned article. The large engraved stone documented in Stephens' bestseller dates more recent than Book of Mormon times - an embarrassingly presumptuous announcement on the part of the writers of the anonymous article! Of course, native peoples of temperate North America also inscribed on stone.

The only Isthmus mentioned in the article is the Isthmus of Darien at Panama. The placement of "Zarahemla" at Quirigua conflicts with a previous unsigned article alleging that the narrow neck of land "embraces Central America". What is more it is as if the writers of the article confused the "narrow strip of wilderness" south of Zarahemla with the "small neck of land" to the north - an easy mistake to make when cursorily reading the Book of Mormon. (Alma 22:27-32) To quote the unsigned "ZARAHEMPLA" article:

"Since our 'Extract' was published from Mr. Stephens' 'Incidents of Travel,' &c.,

we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or Guatemala [Guatemala], is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south... '...thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.' [See Book of Mormon 3d edition, page 280-81.]”

Zarahemla cannot be in Guatemala if Lehi’s adduced landing is south of Panama - that is, south of the presumed “small neck of land” alleged in the previous ‘Extract’ commentaries. According to the Book of Mormon, the “small neck of land” was north of Zarahemla. (Alma 22:31-32) What is more, Zarahemla cannot be in either Central or South America with Cumorah in mound builder territory near the Finger Lakes - as revealed in Joseph Smith’s signed letter to the Church. (LDS D&C 128:20)

The unsigned articles are a mass of confusion! The good brethren who contributed the provocative articles definitely had one or more exaggerated setting in mind, and had apparently not studied the Book of Mormon thoroughly enough to see the conflict between Joseph Smith’s epistle to the Church and their sensational extrapolations from Stephens’ bestseller.

In the November issue in which Joseph Smith officially resigned as editor, because it was, “impossible” for him “to fulfil [fulfill] the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer”, the *Times and Seasons* published an article titled “RUINS RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN YUCATAN MEXICO.” The article describes the stone ruins of “Chi-Chen” but it does not speculate on their origin. The article concludes:

“The subject is one that should excite the deepest interest in the minds of Americans. It is as yet wrapped in profound mystery, which will doubtless require many years of laborious research to unfold.” <sup>[37]</sup>

This article is more careful than the unsigned *Times and Seasons* pieces that extrapolated on Stephens’ work several weeks prior. There is no written attempt in the article to connect the Yucatan ruins with cities described in the Book of Mormon. This is a good thing, since the Yucatan ruins, though featured as the background of a popular church painting, are known to date more recent than Book of Mormon times.

***Were the unsigned articles published in any order reflected in Stephens’ bestseller?***

**No.**

Unlike Joseph Smith’s signed articles drawing on Priest’s *American Antiquities*, the unsigned articles commenting on Stephens’ book do not follow an order of topics presented in his book. The first “Extract” article (September 15, 1842) draws from Stephens’ writings about Palenque. <sup>[38]</sup> It is followed by an extract on the “Toltecan Indians” of Mexico. <sup>[39]</sup> The October 1, *Times and Seasons* article quotes Stephens on the ruins of Quiriqua. <sup>[36]</sup> Stephens and Catherwood documented the Quiriqua ruins

before they visited Palenque. This of course is the order the sites are discussed in *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. This is not the sequence the sites were presented in the *Times and Seasons*.

***Did Joseph Smith ever insert a disclaimer in any of his signed articles that drew from Priest's American Antiquities?***

**No, he did not!**

Unlike the unsigned "ZARAHÉMLA" article which states "the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them" and later adds: "We are not going to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla..." there is no disclaimer in any of Joseph Smith's signed *American Antiquities* commentaries.

***Do Joseph Smith's commentaries on Priest's American Antiquities use the first person plural, "we", "us" and "our"?***

**Josiah Priest uses the first person plural, but Joseph Smith's commentaries, by enlarge do not.**

A line from one of Joseph's editorials reads: "Here, then, we have two records found upon this continent..." <sup>[32]</sup> Joseph Smith's use of "we" in this line doesn't really suggest joint authorship. Contrast Joseph Smith's line above with lines from the unsigned "ZARAHÉMLA" piece which read:

"Since our 'Extract' was published... we have found another important fact... we are of opinion... and so we make another EXTRACT..." <sup>[36]</sup>

It is most probable that the unnamed "we" appearing in the "ZARAHÉMLA" article were members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

***Why would the author(s) of the unsigned articles choose to attribute the Central American ruins to the Nephites, when Stephens himself concluded that the ruins were relatively recent? Did they completely read Stephens' work as Joseph Smith had?***

**Perhaps the newspaper writer(s) did not fully read or accept certain conclusions in Stephens' bestseller. Joseph Smith had "read the volumes" and regarded Stephens' historical digest of his own country's antiquities as "the most correct".**

Wilford Woodruff recorded in 1843 (October 17) that he had read Stephens' *Incidents of Travels in Central America* on his "Journey to Nauvoo with family in 1841." (2:319) The two-volume bestseller carried by Elder Woodruff, was a present "for President Joseph Smith" from Dr John M. Bernhise of New York City. (2:124) Elder Woodruff recorded in his journal that he spent at least a day reading volume one of Stephens' bestseller. <sup>[40]</sup> He only mentions perusing the second volume. <sup>[41]</sup> It is in the second volume that Stephens' devotes an entire chapter to reasons why the Central

American ruins are comparatively “modern” and not truly ancient.

In their eagerness to forge a connection between Stephens’ bestseller and the Book of Mormon, the writer(s) of the unsigned articles appear to have overlooked things in both books. On the other hand they definitely were mindful of the revealed location of Cumorah given in the Prophet’s letter of September 6, 1842. (LDS D&C 128:20) The Prophet’s epistle was read to the Saints on Sunday, September 11, 1842, “at the Grove near the Temple”. <sup>[42]</sup> Though Wilford Woodruff was unable to attend this solemn gathering, due to illness, he nevertheless learned of the epistle’s content. <sup>[44]</sup> It appears that those left in charge of the newspaper so overreached in time and geography that they perceived little difficulty laying claim to the ruins of “all the cities that can be found.” <sup>[38]</sup>

Regarding the Palenque stone ruins (~A. D. 600) and the faulty tradition attributing them to the Nephites, Michael D. Coe (professor of anthropology at Yale) remarked “....I can only sympathize with the Mormon scholar who has to work that one out!” <sup>[43]</sup>

*Whose copy of Incidents of Travel in Central America was used for the unsigned newspaper articles?*

**It’s uncertain.**

Could Joseph Smith’s personal copy of Stephens’ bestseller have been borrowed by someone laboring in the printing office? It’s possible.

It’s also uncertain whose copy of *American Antiquities* was resourced by Editor Joseph Smith for his signed articles. We do know that by October of 1843, Wilford Woodruff was reading a copy of Stephens’ 1843 sequel, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. (2:319) Members of the Church in general had an interest in getting and reading Stephens’ works.

*Is there any indication in either Joseph Smith’s or Wilford Woodruff’s Journal that Joseph visited the printing office during his public absence, when the unsigned articles were printed?*

**No, there is not.**

According to Wilford Woodruff’s faithful diary of August and September, 1842, Joseph Smith had been “deprived of the privilege of appearing openly, & deprived of the society of his own family” because sheriffs were “hunting him to destroy him without cause...” <sup>[44]</sup> According to Elder Woodruff, he and John Taylor of the Quorum of the Twelve continued “in the printing Business.” <sup>[44]</sup> It was Joseph’s desire in particular that “Elder Taylor publish the Times & Seasons in Nauvoo.” <sup>[45]</sup>

Wilford Woodruff makes several references to his work in the printing office during the fall of 1842. <sup>[46]</sup> Though Elder Woodruff was confined to his house from the 10th of August to the 19th of September with periodic relapses of sickness, he was nevertheless in regular communication with other brethren who thought it “wisdom” for



Elder Taylor and himself “to continue in the printing Business” and not be called away on missions. <sup>[44]</sup> Wilford Woodruff records for September 26: “Commenced labours this day again in the printing Office the first time I have been to the printing Office in 40 days.” This entry evidently did not count his early morning visit to the printing office the day before. His journal notes that he spent the 27th through the end of September in the printing office “most of the time [though not all] Posting Book.” <sup>[46]</sup>

It is evident that during his confinement at home, Elder Woodruff was nevertheless able to write, in as much as his journal mentions a letter which he wrote to a Brother Webster. <sup>[44]</sup> It is entirely possibly that between his bouts with illness, Elder Woodruff was able to make short handwritten drafts, edits or contributions to the paper. In fact, in light of Elder Woodruff’s sedulous character it is almost inconceivable that he did nothing for the newspaper during his convalescences at home. The fact the Elder Woodruff had previously been assigned the “Business part” of the printing establishment, doesn’t mean he did not assist John Taylor in the troubled fall of 1842. After all, the initial divine directive was for members of the Twelve to “take in hand the editorial department of the *Times and Seasons*”. <sup>[29]</sup>

Responsibility for the *Times and Seasons* weighed so heavily on Elder Woodruff that on the 6th of August, 1842 he had scarcely arrived home to Nauvoo from a difficult journey up the Mississippi, “thoroughly pickled with the Billious fever” as he put it, only to find that Elder Taylor and he were out of paper for the press. “But notwithstanding my sickness” records Elder Woodruff, “I could not stop to rest...I went down the River with a skiff 6 miles... & got what paper we needed for the present use. We were until midnight rowing over the rapids back again & in addition to my fever I had a sever cough.” (2:185)

If sick and aching Elder Woodruff could row against the current of the River back to Nauvoo to supply the paper; he could certainly have put his hand to a few speculative articles intended to strengthen the saints’ faith, during his recovering episodes. How fitting it is to consider that in ages past, souls of similar resolve and direction had sailed across a gulf and up the strait of the same Mighty American Nile; then up the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers till at last they arrived only a short distance from the shore of a great, freshwater west sea – in a choice land in the general region of Cumorah. (Helaman 3:29)

While Joseph was secluded at his home, he met with John Taylor on a couple of occasions. Joseph’s journal notes that on the evening of Wednesday September 21, 1842, Joseph talked with Elder Taylor about the removing of a printing press to Keokuk. There were prospects of Keokuk becoming a Mormon town, and Joseph wanted one of the printing presses moved there for publishing a political paper. Clearly, John Taylor was overseeing the presses at Nauvoo.

Still secluded at his home, Joseph was again visited by Elder Taylor on Friday, September 23, 1842. There is no indication that during these meetings, the upcoming October 1, unsigned “ZARHEMLA” article was ever regarded as an item of sufficient importance to be discussed.

Had it been important to recognize the speculative article as authoritative, the Prophet could have openly given his “ED” to the piece as he had the “AMERICAN

ANTIQUITIES” article of the previous July; or signed his name to it, as he did the letter to the Church that featured in the same fall issue as the unsigned “ZARAHEMLA” piece. Its publication could also have been postponed till there was no longer a need for the Prophet to keep a low public profile.

Neither Wilford Woodruff’s nor Joseph Smith’s Journal mentions any of the dubious unsigned articles. On the other hand, Joseph’s canonical epistle, written while he was in hiding, and giving the location of Cumorah, is found in its entirety in his journal!

Regarding the Prophet’s public absence, an epistle from Joseph Smith to the Latter-day Saints, dated September 1, 1842 explains:

“...I have thought it expedient and wisdom in me to leave the place for a short season, for my own safety and the safety of this people...I have left my affairs with agents and clerks who will transact all business...When I learn that the storm is fully blown over, then I will return to you again.” (LDS D&C 127:1)

In name Joseph Smith was still official editor of the *Times and Seasons* during his public absence. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* records for November 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12, 1842:

“Was spent in the Printing Office & in the city Council. Elder Taylor & myself had an interview with Joseph Smith & he wishes us to take the responsibility of the Printing Office upon ourselves & liberate him from it.”

The journal does not say that this interview took place in the printing office. In as much as John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff had been actively managing the printing office, The *Times and Seasons* was now to be officially “...EDITED BY JOHN TAYLOR. Printed and published...by JOHN TAYLOR & WILFORD WOODRUFF.” When he officially resigned, Joseph Smith explained that he had too many concerns to be effective as editor of the newspaper. <sup>[47]</sup>

According to Wilford Woodruff’s November 12th, 1842 diary entry, Joseph had up till then, not really felt “secure to stay at home”. It was on that date that the Nauvoo city council passed an ordinance “regulating the proceedings on writs of habeas corpus”. <sup>[48]</sup> It is important to appreciate that even though Joseph was many times at his home in Nauvoo during the fall of 1842, he was nevertheless keeping a low profile, avoiding being seen by those who sought his arrest. Though he discretely made contact with the brethren and on occasion appeared before a gathering of the Saints “unexpectedly” <sup>[46]</sup>, it is clear that Joseph had delegated business responsibilities such that he could flee the city without greatly interrupting daily operations.

There is no record in either Joseph Smith’s or *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* of a visit by the Prophet to the Nauvoo printing office during the period of his public absence when the unsigned articles came out. Even if Joseph had risked appearing in public at the printing office, this would hardly prove that the Mesoamerican ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla. Joseph’s journal records that he came to call at the

printing office on Saturday, December 3, 1842. By that time the Prophet had officially resigned as editor. Recorded in his journal are multiple visits to the printing office prior to his public absence.

***Did publishing the overreaching and erroneous unsigned Times and Seasons articles demonstrate dishonesty or disloyalty to the Prophet?***

**No.**

The unsigned articles, though contradictory and scripturally inconsistent, were the effort of sincere men who, while accepting the revealed location of Cumorah, nevertheless entertained exaggerated views of Book of Mormon geography. These good brethren were allowed to speculate, sensationalize, and publish their ideas. Though they wrote with exuberance, they did not explicitly claim their opinions to be divine revelation. Joseph Smith did not endorse their contradictory articles with his signature; neither did he upbraid their opinions. There is no indication that these articles were ever intended to be anything more than interesting and provocative press.

The location of Cumorah was secured by revelation and the Prophet's signature in the very issue as the last of the unsigned, unendorsed articles.

The Saints today are given the opportunity to choose between silver and dross; between the revealed location of a covenant Book of Mormon land, as set forth in scripture, or exotic geographic pottage extrapolated from an 1841 bestseller. They can build their understanding of Book of Mormon covenant lands on bedrock or try to build a mansion of erudition on speculative sand.

As was characteristic of his leadership style, Joseph Smith did not micromanage the *Times and Seasons*, especially during his public absence in the fall of 1842. He likely thanked the brethren who governed themselves, and carried on in his absence. His "ED" or signature was sufficient to show what publications bore his full endorsement and authority.

All of the early brethren agreed with the revealed location of Cumorah. The authentic setting for the Book of Mormon rests closer to where they agreed, than where their geographic speculations diverged.

Just because we do not have a signed statement by Joseph Smith addressing Lehi's proposed landing on the coast of Chile, or Lehi's proposed landing a little south of Panama, "Zarahemla" in South America, or "Zarahemla" in Guatemala, or "Manti" (south of Zarahemla) in Missouri etc., does not mean that Joseph Smith agreed with all these contradictory geographies promulgated by early Latter-day Saints.

***Is there any known, firsthand verifiable statement by Joseph Smith that supports the Central and South American speculations found in the unsigned Times and Seasons articles?***

**No!**

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated:

“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians...after having been hid up in the earth for the last fourteen hundred years, containing the word of God which was delivered unto them. By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendents from that Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them... (Signed) JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.” [\[49\]](#)

Nephi, in the land of promise stated:

“...the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered.” (1 Nephi 22:7)

Joseph’s expression “our western tribes of Indians” referred to Native American tribes who lived west, or were pushed west from the east coast by colonial expansion. (2 Nephi 1:10-11, Mormon 5:9, 19-20) Missionaries were sent to these peoples in the early days of the Church. Of particular interest were those “western” native people who settled near Lake Erie in western New York. Latter-day scripture unapologetically refers to these peoples as “Lamanites”. (LDS D&C 28:8-9; 30:5-6) We are informed that these people are of Joseph and Jewish descent. (LDS D&C 19:27; 57:4, 2 Nephi 30:4) Their land, “this land” was blessed anciently to become free to all people. (LDS D&C 10:45-52, 1 Nephi 14:1-2) The land of their inheritance, even “this land” of the Book of Mormon, is the land of “New Jerusalem.” (3 Nephi 20:14, 22; 21:2-4, 22-23, Ether 13:2-8) The New Jerusalem, “the city of Zion” is to be built in northern America, in “the land of promise”. (LDS D&C 57:1-4; 84:2-3)

Joseph Smith’s use of the term “western tribes of Indians” parallels his contemporary Josiah Priest’s usage. Priest describes mound builder antiquities of Ohio etc. as “Discoveries in the West”. The modern borders of the United States do not fit this 19th century usage.

*History of the Church* records that in 1830 there was “a great desire manifest by several of the Elders respecting the remnants of the house of Joseph, the Lamanites, residing in the west-...” This desire had come from what the brethren had learned from the Book of Mormon about the promises of God to the Lamanites. The brethren inquired of the Lord and were directed by revelation to go to the “Lamanites” residing in the west. The elders were sent to Native Americans living near Lake Erie – which to them was a great inland west sea. [\[50\]](#)

Author and publisher Wayne N. May for one, has pointed out that Joseph’s statement about the Book of Mormon being “a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians...” should not be regarded as merely the Prophet’s opinion. The Prophet’s statement was part of a letter to New York newspaper Editor N. C. Saxton, dated January 4, 1833. The Prophet wrote a follow-up letter to Saxton (February 12, 1833) in which he states that his earlier letter was written “...by the commandment of God...” Joseph further stated that the contents of the letter are “important” and wished them to be published in their entirety. [\[51\]](#)

According to Joseph Smith, it was the same messenger sent from God to reveal

the location of the gold plates, who also told Joseph that “the Indians were the literal descendents of Abraham...” <sup>[52]</sup> Moroni’s reference to “the former inhabitants of this continent” (JS-H 1:34) was understood by Joseph to mean “the Indians” of northern America.

During the march of Zion’s Camp, Joseph wrote a letter to his beloved Emma. We have, in the Prophet’s own handwriting, the following statement (June 4, 1834):

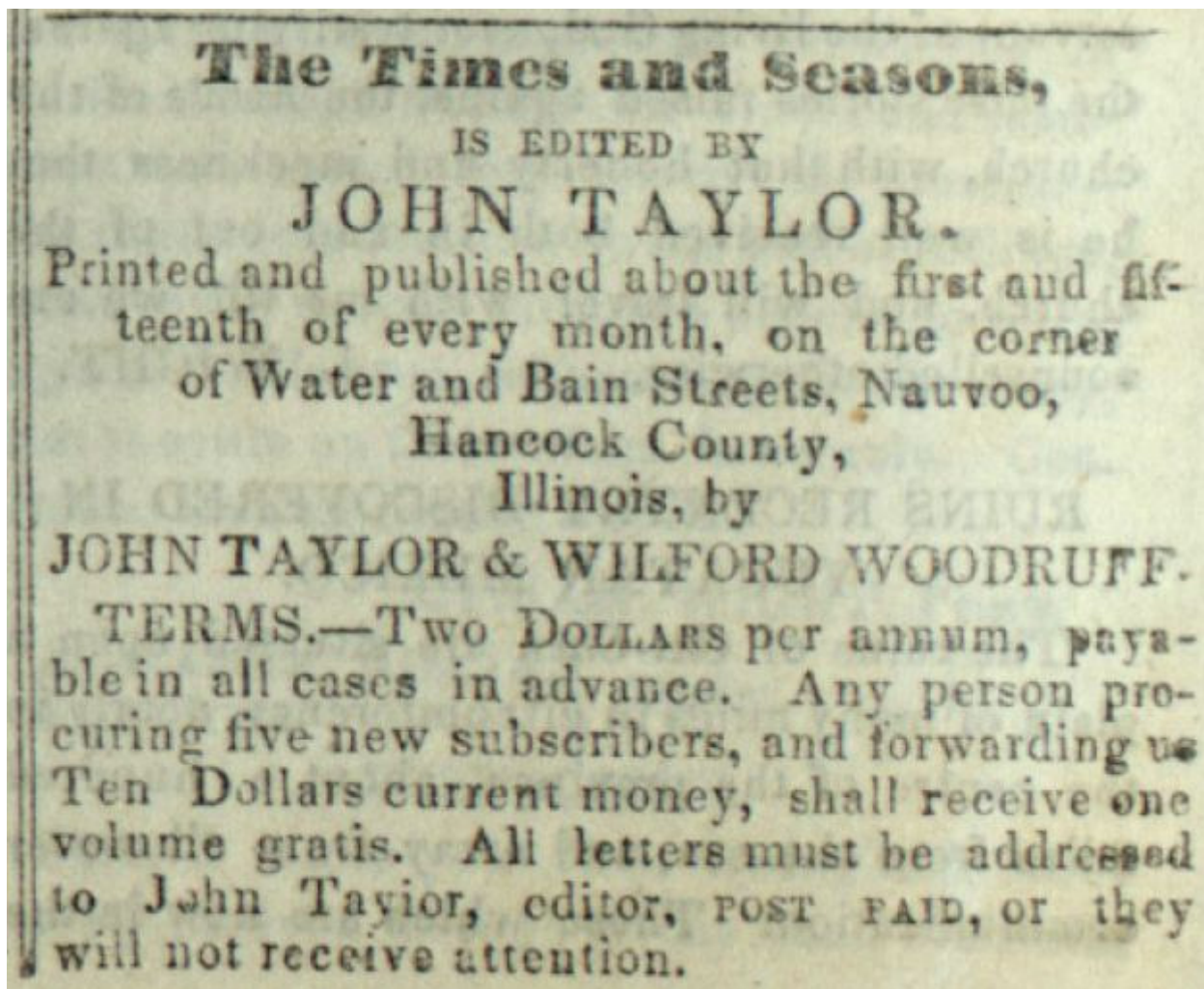
“We arrived this morning on the banks of the Mississippi...we left the eastern part of the state of Ohio...The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally [occasionally] the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendor and the goodness so indescribable.” <sup>[53]</sup>

Thus the Prophet positively identifies certain of the ancient mound builders of North America as Nephites. Some of their plains were the very plains over which Zion’s camp journeyed.

It was the Prophet’s conviction that the remains associated with a hill near Col. Lyman Wight’s home in Missouri were that of “an old Nephitish Altar an[d] Tower”. <sup>[54]</sup>

From an early age, Joseph exhibited a detailed knowledge of the ancient inhabitants of America. <sup>[55]</sup>

At the very least, Joseph Smith knew and revealed that some Book of Mormon events and lands (e.g. Cumorah) were in his own country. Early members of the Church accepted this. It was their exaggerated competing geographies which went beyond; taking in Central, and in many cases, South America. One far-flung scenario in particular would come to prevail for a while in the Church. Elder Orson Pratt’s hemispheric geography became something of a tradition, even though its scale was never really supported by scripture. <sup>[4]</sup>



*Did John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff repeat the speculations found in the unsigned, fall 1842, articles?*

**Indeed, they did!**

In 1841, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that while journeying to western New York with his family, he spent a "day in reading the 1st vol of INCIDENTS OF TRAVELS IN Central America Chiapas AND Yucatan BY JOHN L. STEPHEN'S". He said he "felt truly interested in this work for it brought to light a flood of testimony in proof of the book of mormon in the discovery & survey of the city Copan in Central America A correct drawing of the monuments, pyramids, protaits, & Hieroglyphics as executed by Mr Catherwood is now presented before the publick & is truly a wonder to the world. Their whole travels were truly interesting" <sup>[40]</sup>

Continuing their inland voyage the next day towards Lockport, in route through the genuine landscape of the Book of Mormon, Elder Woodruff found himself drawn into Stephens' marvelous adventures in Central America. He recorded:

"[September] 14th Our baby was quite unwell with the bowel complaint. I continued reading Stephens travels & felt hily interested in them." <sup>[40]</sup>

It is evident that Elder Woodruff was taken with Stephens work and saw in *Incidents of Travel in Central America* “proof” of the Book of Mormon which neither book claim. There is, for instance, no mention of stone pyramids in the Book of Mormon. Elder Woodruff said he “perused the 2d Vol of Stephens travels In Central America Chiapas of [should be “&”] Yucatan & the ruins of Palenque & Copan. It is truly one of the most interesting histories I have ever read.” <sup>[41]</sup>

Did Elder Woodruff overlook Stephens’ arguments to why the Central American ruins were relatively recent works? What is clear, from his journal entries, is that Wilford Woodruff had formed a strong opinion about Central American ruins proving the Book of Mormon, before Joseph Smith even had the chance to read Stephens’ bestseller.

Other presumptuous and overreaching articles similar to the unsigned fall 1842 articles were published with Wilford Woodruff’s assistance while John Taylor served as both official and acting editor of the *Times and Seasons*. See for instance the article titled: “STEPHEN’S WORKS ON CENTRAL AMERICA”. <sup>[56]</sup>

This article was published exactly one year after the “ZARAHÉMLA” article, possibly by the same author(s). The article begins:

“We have lately perused with great interest, Stephen's works on Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan.”

The article exuberantly advertises that Stephens’ book “has been read with great interest throughout this continent, and tens of thousands of copies have been sent to, and sold in Europe...” The article stresses that Stephens’ work “ought to be in the hands of every Latter Day Saint; corroborating, as it does the history of the Book of Mormon. There is no stronger circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the latter book...than that contained in Mr. Stephens’ works.”

The article overreaches, as in the unsigned “ZARAHÉMLA” piece, asserting that the Book of Mormon gives “accounts... of cities that bear a striking resemblance to those mentioned by Mr. Stephens, both in regards to magnificence and location...”

Though published before the Prophet’s death, the piece bears no signature and carries no prophetic authority. Recall Joseph’s refusal to take responsibility for things not under his supervision and not signed by him. <sup>[57]</sup> It was with the best of intentions that early members of the Church sought to strap their sacred scripture to the coattail of Stephens’ success.

The writer(s) of the 1843 article on Stephens’ works exuberantly announced that *Incidents of travel in Central America* afforded “the most indubitable testimony of the historical truth of that book [the Book of Mormon], which has been treated so lightly by the literati and would be philosophers of the present age.” The Saints of course, were not entirely beyond treating the Book of Mormon lightly themselves. (LDS D&C 84:54-57)

The issue ends with the following publication note:

“The Times and Seasons, is edited by JOHN TAYLOR. Printed and published

about the first and fifteenth of every month, on the corner of Water and Bain Streets, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, by JOHN TAYLOR AND WILFORD WOODRUFF.”

Later that same month, Elder Woodruff found occasion to do a little more than “peruse” Stephens’ latest book. His October 17, 1843 journal entry reads:

“I have been for the last two days reading Stephens works & travels in Yucatan his second work. I red his first work on my Journey to Nauvoo with family in 1841. I found them highly interesting & also the present work. It is a great proof of the truth of the Book of Mormon. I read them with the highest degree of interest.” (2:319)

Elder Woodruff makes no explicit reference to Joseph Smith’s opinion on the subject.

On January 1, 1844 another article was published in the *Times and Seasons* unmistakably by the editor (John Taylor). The editorial titled “ANCIENT RUINS” appeared with these comments:

“Every day adds fresh testimony to the already accumulated evidence on the authenticity of the “Book of Mormon”. At the time that book was translated there was very little known about the ruined cities and dilapidated buildings. The general presumption was, that no people possessing more intelligence than our present race of Indians had ever inhabited this continent, and the accounts given in the Book of Mormon concerning large cities and civilized people having inhabited this land, was generally disbelieved and pronounced a humbug. Priest, since then has thrown some light on this interesting subject. Stephens in his “Incidents of Travel in Central America,” has thrown in a flood of testimony, and from the following statement it is evident that the Book of Mormon does not give a more extensive account of large and populous cities than those discoveries now demonstrate to be even in existence.-Ed [John Taylor]”

The article, bearing John Taylor’s editorial signature, then quotes from the October 11, 1843, Texas Telegraph on stone ruins found in Texas:

“...vestiges of ancient cities and ruined castles or temples on the Rio Peurco and on the Colorado of the west...huge blocks of limestone regularly hewn and laid in cement...there are similar ruins on the Colorado of the west, which empties into the California sea...Neither the Indians residing in the vicinity, nor the oldest Spanish settlers of the nearest settlements, can give any account of the origin of these buildings. They merely know that they stood there from the earliest periods to which their traditions extend. The antiquarian who is desirous to trace the Aztec or Toltec races in their migrations from the northern regions of America, may find in these ancient edifices many subjects of curious speculation.”

Note that the *Times and Seasons* article mentions Josiah Priest, whose work the



previous editor (Joseph Smith) editorialized. Quoting from Priest, Joseph Smith had defended the existence of advanced societies in northern America (mound builders), and related them to Book of Mormon peoples. It is evident that John Taylor also accepted Priest's work on the mound builders as relevant to the Book of Mormon.

John Taylor definitely accepted the scriptural location of Cumorah near the Finger Lakes. <sup>[58]</sup> John Taylor accepted all that had been revealed relative to Book of Mormon lands and events in his own country. John Taylor also continued to publish speculative ideas about Stephens' and Catherwood's discoveries, but it is significant that we have no known statement by John Taylor attributing the fall 1842 unsigned articles to Joseph Smith.

When John Taylor quotes Joseph Smith relative to Stephens' discoveries, he quotes from Joseph's signed "AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES" article. <sup>[59]</sup>

There is also no known statement by Wilford Woodruff attributing any of the unsigned articles to Joseph Smith.

*Are all of Joseph Smith's statements on Book of Mormon lands consistent?*

**Yes, they are!**

LDS scripture and firsthand verifiable statements by Joseph Smith place the Book of Mormon's literary setting with the mound builders of North America. Mainstream American History and Literature scholars agree that the literary setting for the Book of Mormon should be classed in the "Mound-builder" genre of the 19th century. <sup>[60]</sup> Central American settings "for the Book of Mormon" are recognized as later developments, the results of a misadventure. <sup>[26]</sup> These exotic settings do not represent the original setting of the Book of Mormon.

*Suppose hypothetically, that Joseph Smith had chosen to endorse the speculative "ZARAHEMLA" article with his signature (something he did not do). What would this have proven?*

**Hypothetically, it might have shown that he, like his associates, knew "in part" and prophesied "in part" on the subject of covenant lands. (1 Corinthians 13:9)**

It would not prove that Zarahemla is in Guatemala!

Just before attaching their disclaimer, the publishers of the unsigned "ZARAHEMALA" piece announced "the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them". In all honesty and fairness, this claim should be recognized for what it is – an exuberant blunder. The publishers did not give careful consideration to Stephens' opinion on the date of the ruins. Nor did they consider the scriptural fact that Cumorah (whose location they accepted) and Zarahemla cannot possibly be thousands of miles apart. (Mosiah 21:26)

It is the location of Cumorah, given by Joseph Smith that fits the Book of Mormon's authentic literary setting, not the sensational ruins at Quirigua.

*Can statistics demonstrate that Joseph Smith endorsed any of the unsigned Times and Seasons articles?*

**There is no statistical substitute for Joseph Smith's written endorsement.**

Statistics is unable to sort out who edited what in the unsigned *Times and Seasons* articles. The editing of a single word can change the tone and meaning of a sentence without dramatically affecting sentence length. Who made what edits, and the extent to which Joseph Smith endorsed the conflicting ideas in the articles is unknown.

*So why did nobody sign the fall 1842 extract articles?*

**The *Times and Seasons* commentaries were speculative and controversial, even for Latter-day Saints; who had different geographic opinions on the whereabouts of Book of Mormon sites south of Cumorah.**

The allegations that "Zarahemla" was at Quirigua and that Lehi landed just south of Panama conflicted with geographies promulgated by Orson Pratt, Frederick G. Williams and others. <sup>[61]</sup>

The use of the first person plural in the unsigned articles suggests they were a joint effort. Believing their ideas to be interesting and faith promoting, the writers decided to go ahead and publish the articles! Because the articles were speculative and controversial, it isn't surprising that the articles were not signed.

Feedback from the LDS community probably convinced the *Times and Seasons* writers that they had done a good thing. One convert wrote:

"As you enquire [inquire] after the reasons that operated to change my mind to the present faith, I only remark that Stevens' [Stephens'] Travels had some influence, as an external evidence of the truth of the Book of Mormon." <sup>[62]</sup>

The argument that Joseph Smith wrote but did not sign the speculative and controversial articles because he did not want to draw attention to his whereabouts, does not explain the unsigned "STEPHEN'S WORKS ON CENTRAL AMERICA" published October 1, 1843, nor the unsigned eulogy alleging "cities ... discovered by Mr. Stevens in Central America, exactly were the Book of Mormon left them" <sup>[25]</sup> These unsigned articles were published after the Prophet came out of hiding, and after he had officially resigned as editor; the latter being printed after his death.

In the long run the erroneous articles contributed to a tradition which led to profound disappointment.

There could have been no greater devotee of the Central American "Zarahemla" tradition than Thomas Stuart Fergusson, founder of the *New World Archaeological Foundation*. After years of searching for Book of Mormon cities in Central American jungles, a disenchanted Fergusson charged "I have been spoofed by Joseph Smith." <sup>[26]</sup> The truth is Fergusson spoofed himself!

*If the unsigned “ZARAHÉMLA” article was written by Joseph Smith (as some presume), why then did John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff allow the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon to feature Orson Pratt’s geographic views?*

**John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff knew who actually contributed the “ZARAHÉMLA” article of October 1, 1842. They knew it was only a speculative piece with no real authority.**

The President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1879 was John Taylor. He and the Quorum of the Twelve assumed leadership of the Church after President Young’s passing. President Taylor chose to allow the new 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon to convey, in footnotes, Elder Orson Pratt’s views on Book of Mormon geography. [61] These views were inconsistent with the placement of ancient Zarahemla at Quirigua - alleged in the unsigned *Times and Seasons* article. [36] Orson Pratt had Zarahemla far south of Panama’s isthmus, in the Torah incompatible Southern Hemisphere.

Despite the oversights in Elder Orson Pratt’s exaggerated geography, there were insightful scriptural deductions which he and his associates made that deserve recognition:

Ether 15:8, in the 1879 edition (pg 606), reads: “...<sup>c</sup> waters of Ripliancum...”

The footnote reads: “c, supposed to be Lake Ontario.”

Footnotes d and e corresponding to verses 10 and 11 read: “d, southward, brought them into the region, near the hill, called by the Nephites, Cumorah.” “e, Ramah was the hill Cumorah.”

It is evident that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1879, including President Taylor and Elder Woodruff, accepted the scriptural location of Cumorah as revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. [61] This location near the Finger Lakes and the Montezuma Marsh of western New York is truly within “a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains”, south of a great body of water (Ripliancum), which is comparatively larger than any of the Finger Lakes – exactly as the Book of Mormon describes.

Given that Lake Ontario (ancient Lake Iroquois with its watery fenlands) is “Ripliancum” as the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon propounds, what other inland body of water in the region has a shoreline long enough to be the Book of Mormon’s “west sea”?

Find the northern end of this inland sea and go eastward a day and a half’s journey on foot, (Alma 22:32) and you will have successfully crossed the inland breadth of the authentic Book of Mormon land Bountiful. It is just that simple! Author Phyllis Olive saw this before many others!

It is hard to imagine the God of Israel ever intending covenant lands to be a mystery to his covenant people. According to the Book of Mormon, even the Gentiles should recognize the land of promise choice above all other lands, if they do not treat the scriptures lightly. (Ether 2:7-12)

*Why were the footnotes published in the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon absent in later*

*editions?*

**Some of the geographic footnotes in the 1879 edition were recognized as problematic.**

For one thing, the Chilean landing hypothesis <sup>[5]</sup> was critically reviewed and called into question. <sup>[6]</sup> Competing exaggerated geographies of the day became subjects of controversy, and confusion among members of the Church. <sup>[7]</sup> All geographic footnotes were absent in the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon (Edited by James E. Talmage).

*Should so called “Book of Mormon geography” even matter?*

**Some Latter-day Saints forget that the subject of Book of Mormon lands is not so much about “geography” as it is about covenant lands!**

Covenant lands matter, especially to God and to faithful Israelites (Leviticus 26:42), but as the scripture above (Ether 2:7-12) indicates, this is also a subject that should concern Gentiles. It makes reason stare to think that the God of Israel would not place keys in scripture for accurately identifying covenant lands. The challenge for the Latter-day Saints is to pay enough attention to scripture to see these keys clearly.

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