

B of M 01: Book of Mormon Introduction

Monte F. Shelley, 1 Jan 2012

Quotes

- I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness. (Mother Teresa)

1. Title Page of the Book of Mormon

Who wrote the title page?

Who abridged the record of the Nephites and Jaredites?

What part of our Book of Mormon is not an abridgment?

To whom was the Book of Mormon written?

What was the purpose of the Book of Mormon?

“To show unto the remnant ... of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ ... manifesting himself unto all nations.” (Title Page)

2. Translation Process

Joseph found the plates buried in a hill near Palmyra, New York.

Do we have record of Joseph calling this hill Cumorah?

How did Mosiah translate the book of Ether? (Mos 8:13; 28:13)

What did Joseph find with the plates? (JS—H 1:34–35, 52)

How long did it take to translate? When was it published?

What dictionary would be good for Book of Mormon study?

Modern dictionary, Webster’s 1828 or 1844, or OED/SOED?

How did Joseph translate the Book of Mormon?

Joseph said he translated it “through the medium of the Urim and Thummim ... by the gift and power of God” (HC 4:537). Oliver said, “Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or ... ‘Interpreters.’” (*Messenger and Advocate*, 14)

According to witnesses, the translation process was:

1. Joseph used interpreters to see the English text;
 2. Joseph read off the text to the scribe;
 3. The scribe heard the text;
 4. The scribe wrote the text. (“Tight”)
- The original manuscript supports the hypothesis that the text was given to Joseph word for word and that he could see the spelling of at least the names.
 - The original text includes bad English, but good Hebrew
And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness. (1 Ne 2:4)
“dreamed a dream” (1 Ne 3:2); build buildings, “judge righteous judgments,” plates **of** brass, rod **of** iron
 - The original vocabulary appears to come from the 1500s and 1600s, not from the 1800s. ... The original text contained expressions and words with meanings that were lost from the English language by 1700, but none after the early 1700s.
to counsel = ‘to counsel with’ (1547) – Alma 37:37 originally read “**counsel the Lord** in all thy doings”
to require = ‘to request’ (1665) – Enos 1:18 reads “thy fathers have also **required** of me this thing”
to cast arrows = ‘to shoot arrows’ – Alma 49:4 reads “the Lamanites could not **cast** their stones and their **arrows**.
but if = ‘unless’ (1596) – Mosiah 3:19 originally read “and will be forever and ever **but if** he yieldeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Archaic)

3. Computer Resources for Scripture Study

At www.lds.org you can read the Internet scriptures or download eBooks and mobile apps. At <http://ldsview.byu.edu> you can download LDS View for Windows desktop computers, the scriptures in 30 languages, and an English Parallel Bible to check the meanings of any Hebrew or Greek Bible word. At <http://wordcruncher.com> you can download WordCruncher, the Webster’s 1844 dictionary, and some Maxell Institute eBooks (more will be added in 2012). At <http://scriptures.byu.edu> you can see where scripture verses are referred to in conference talks.

4. Three and Eight Witnesses

What did the three witnesses see and hear?

What did the eight witnesses see and hear?

How many witnesses were excommunicated?

How many of those later returned?

Did any witnesses ever deny their testimony?

5. Bring us nearer to God than any other book

Joseph: I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. (Title Page; HC 4:461)

Critics say many changes mean it is not the most correct book. Most changes fixed paragraphing, punctuation (done by printer), spelling, and printing errors (omission, typos). Some are clarifications and modernizations. Copyright law requires changes to maintain the copyright.

In what way is it the most correct book?

6. Where was Lehi’s Promised Land?

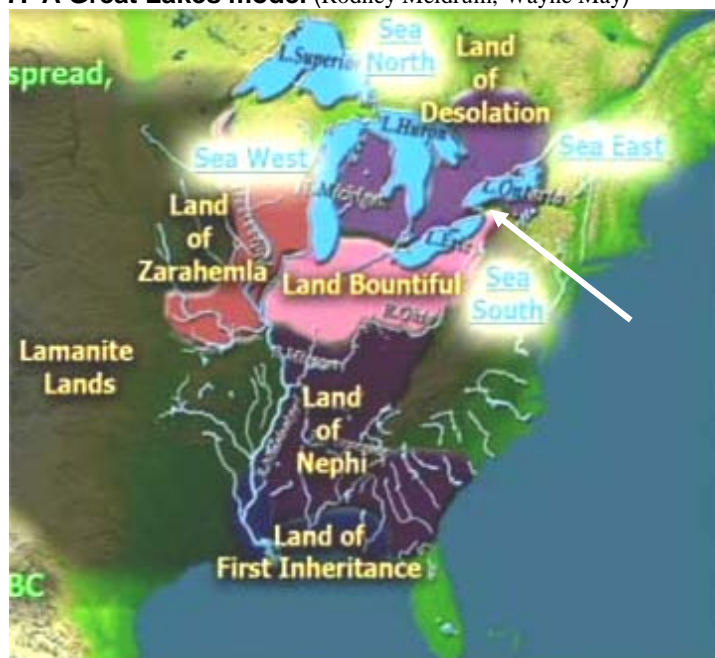
Some proposed models: The ovals show the approximate areas from where Nephi landed to Mormon’s “hill Cumorah.” The arrows show suggested locations for the narrow neck of land.



What is the official Church position on geography?

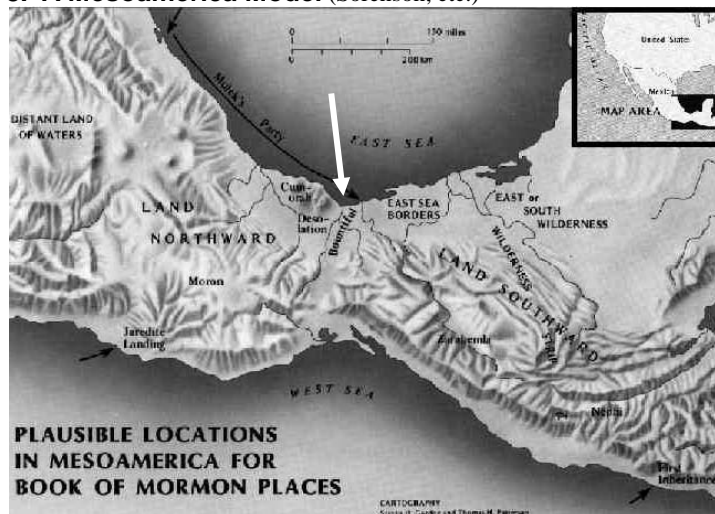
"The Church emphasizes the doctrinal and historical value of the Book of Mormon, not its geography. While some Latter-day Saints have looked for possible locations and explanations [for Book of Mormon geography] because the New York Hill Cumorah does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of Cumorah, there are no conclusive connections between the Book of Mormon text and any specific site." (Fax from the Office of the First Presidency to FARMS, April 12, 1993)

7. A Great Lakes model (Rodney Meldrum; Wayne May)



Mormon's hill Cumorah is the same hill that we call the Hill Cumorah in New York. Jaredites, Nephites, and Mulekites came across the Atlantic. The Mississippi River is the River Sidon. "Nephite north" = northeast. The narrow neck is 30 miles wide.

8. A Mesoamerica Model (Sorenson, etc.)



Jaredites and Nephites came across the Pacific. The Mulekites came across the Atlantic. Most LDS and BYU scholars prefer this model. The narrow neck is 120 miles wide.

Mormon's hill Cumorah is in Mexico, not New York.

Why Mesoamerica? (Where; Proctor)

- The **internal geography** described in the Book of Mormon requires that the land be *hourglass* shaped with a narrow neck.

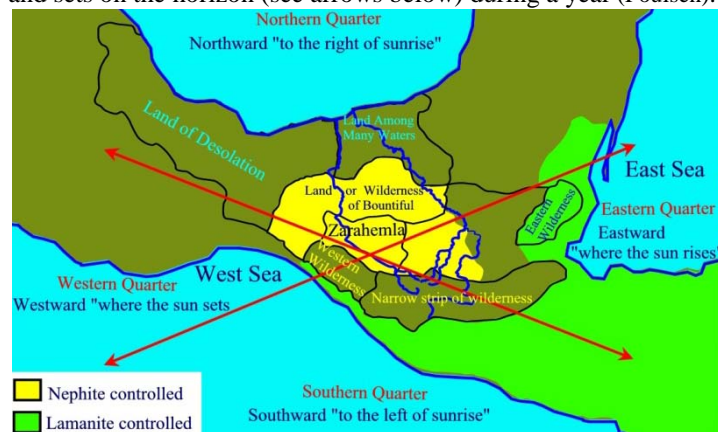
- Writings.** Mesoamerica is the only place with a sophisticated writing system during Book of Mormon times.
- Advanced cities and fortifications.** Archaeology confirms such cities in Mesoamerica in Book of Mormon times.
- Rivers** must be the right size and in the right portions of the land (we find such correlation in Mesoamerica).
- The Book of Mormon suggests a **temperate climate** (for growing such things as "wheat" and "barley") and never mentions snow or cold in the New World.
- Both Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican cultures had developed **agriculture, commerce, religion, architecture, calendrics, and astronomy.**
- Volcanic** activity and **earthquake** zones. The three days of darkness is consistent with a period of intense volcanism. There is evidence for active volcano activity mainly confined to the time period around AD 30.

Why are Mulekites the only other inhabitants mentioned?

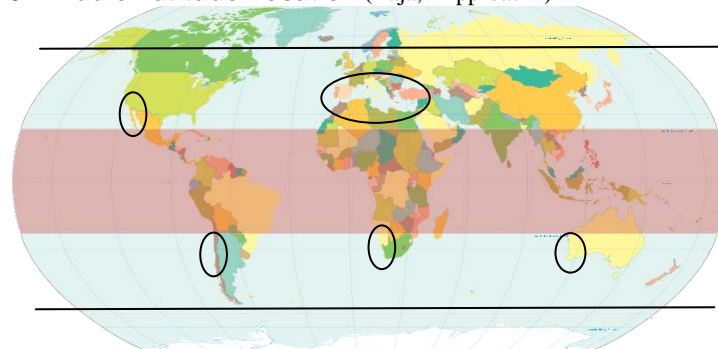
Evidence shows that Olmecs and Mayans lived in Mesoamerica before and after 600 BC. Most LDS scholars suggest that Book of Mormon peoples occupied a small area and intermingled with existing Native Americans. A possible scenario might be thus: When the Lehites arrived, they would have found sparse communities of "others." The Lehites would have peacefully coexisted with these "others." Some might have joined the Lamanites while others might have joined the Nephites. (Alone)

"Nephite North" = northwest.

Some say this shift is due to how the Hebrew and Egyptian languages refer to directions (Sorenson, 38; *Reexploring*, ch 52). Others suggest that east and west refer only to where the sun rises and sets on the horizon (see arrows below) during a year (Poulsen).



9. Middle Latitude Location (Baja, "Approach")



Mid-latitude areas are above/below the tropics (shaded) and below/above the polar ice cap (lines). In tropical areas, all twelve months have average temperatures above 64° F. Mid-latitude weather patterns differ from those in the tropics. Ovals show the five areas with a Mediterranean climate like Jerusalem.

Many geographical items in the Book of Mormon imply a mid-latitude location. However, there is a scarcity of geographical items that might support a northern latitude location or tropical wet location. For example, grapes (and wine) and figs, two annual growing seasons (a season of grain and a season of fruit), the growing of barley as a significant crop including its use as a medium of exchange along with silver and gold.

Our seeds from Jerusalem did grow exceedingly

When Lehi's family left the Jerusalem area, they "gathered ... all manner of seeds of ... grain ... and ... fruit of every kind" (1 Ne 8:1). When they landed in the New World, Nephi said "we did begin to till the earth, ... yea, we did put all our seeds into the earth, which we had brought from the land of Jerusalem. And ... they did grow exceedingly" (1 Ne 18:24).

A friend of mine with a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology was asked to contribute biological insights to a Mesoamerica publication. He said he would if he could explain why the Book of Mormon land could NOT have been in Mesoamerica. They declined.

Seeds from one area cannot be planted anywhere in the world and be expected to "grow exceedingly." They might germinate in many locations, but they will "grow exceedingly" only in an area with a similar climate. Plants and seeds today are classified according to climate zones and then sold accordingly. The first European settlers in New England and Australia suffered famine and privation for years until they could determine by trial and error what would best grow in their new climate, and where to get suitable seeds and plants. The land of Jerusalem is in one of only five Mediterranean climate zones (ovals above).

"A Choice Land": A Mediterranean climate has a moderate annual temperature range (not too hot or cold) with a distinct wet winter season and a distinct dry summer season. This allows for different types of agriculture over the entire year which supports a wide variety of crops and animals.

Three year famine

⁵ There was a great famine ... ⁶ [and] the earth ... was dry. ... ¹⁷ [After three years] the Lord ... caused that rain should fall upon the earth, insomuch that it did bring forth her fruit in the season of her fruit ... [and] her grain in the season of her grain. (Hel 11:5-17)

In a Mediterranean or semi-arid climate as in Baja California, there is little or no rain in the *summer* months. Winds bring rain clouds from the ocean. If the winter winds bypass the area, a drought will occur. This could last hundreds of years without substantially upsetting the general pattern of global wind circulation. As the Lord said to Isaiah, "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (2 Ne. 15:6; Isa. 5:6).

In tropical and subtropical climate areas, the primary source of rain is caused by air rising from the heated surface of the earth. This form of precipitation is difficult to change from a normally very high rainfall amount to an acute dry condition without somehow altering the tilt of the earth and changing the locations of the earth's poles and the equatorial zone, and in the process unduly modifying climate regimes throughout the earth.

Hail, east wind, insects

⁶ I will send forth hail ... the east wind; and insects ... ⁷ because of their iniquities and abominations. (Mosiah 12:6-7)

Hail, insect infestation and destructive east winds can only occur in limited areas of the middle latitudes (such as in Baja California), especially Mediterranean climate areas with annual and distinct wet and dry seasons.

- a. **Hail** → cold enough for hail formation, but warm enough for updrafts that form hail
- b. **East winds** (possibly hurricanes) → not too far north or south
- c. **Insect infestations** → dry enough for sustained droughts to leave insects with little to eat.

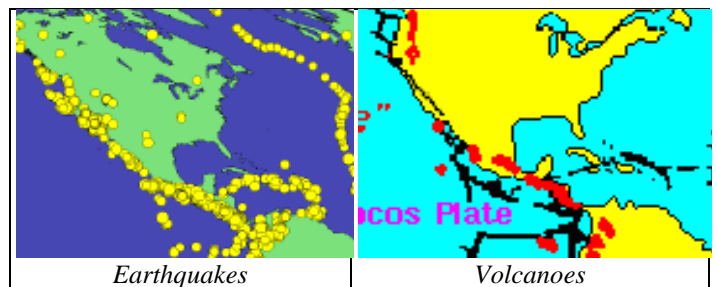
Great storm, quaking, three days of darkness (3 Ne 8:12-23)

⁵ There arose a great storm, such ... as never had been known in all the land. ... ¹² The whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth; ¹³ And the highways were broken up. ... ¹⁹ [After about 3 hours] the quaking ... did cease ... [and] there was thick darkness ..., insomuch that the inhabitants ... could feel the vapor of darkness; ... ²² There was not any light seen, neither fire, ... sun, ... moon, ... [or] stars, for so great were the mists of darkness ... upon the face of the land. ²³ And ... it did last for ... three days.

Hurricanes or typhoons are "great storms" with whirlwinds, thunder, and lightening. Such storms hit the coastal lands (Baja, Mesoamerica) but not the more inland areas.

Earthquakes cause the earth to shake, break up highways, and change "the face of the land." Many earthquakes have occurred in Mesoamerica and Baja, but very few in the Great Lakes area.

A volcano is the likely cause of three days of darkness. Baja and Mesoamerica have volcanoes, but not the Great Lakes.



If the people only saw the darkness and not the explosion of ash, a volcano would have erupted miles away from where the people lived. When Mount St. Helen's erupted in 1980, residents around the mountain did not experience nearly as much darkness as those who lived about 50 miles to the east where the wind carried the ash. Those who experienced the greatest darkness didn't even know that the volcano had erupted, they only saw the dark clouds form and hide and defuse the sun. (Baja, "Destruction")

10. Book of Mormon Quiz

- a. All of Lehi's descendents were involved in the last battle when Mormon was killed.
- b. When Moroni died, there were no living descendents of any of the original Nephites.
- c. How long were Jaredites at the beach before getting on barges?
- d. Everyone who went with Jared to the beach got in the barges.
- e. All who came to the New World with Jared were ruled by his family.
- f. When Coriantumr died, there were no living descendents of any who came to the New World with Jared.
- g. The Book of Mormon is an account of all people who came to the American continent up to AD 400 when Moroni buried the plates.

11. Jaredite Geography

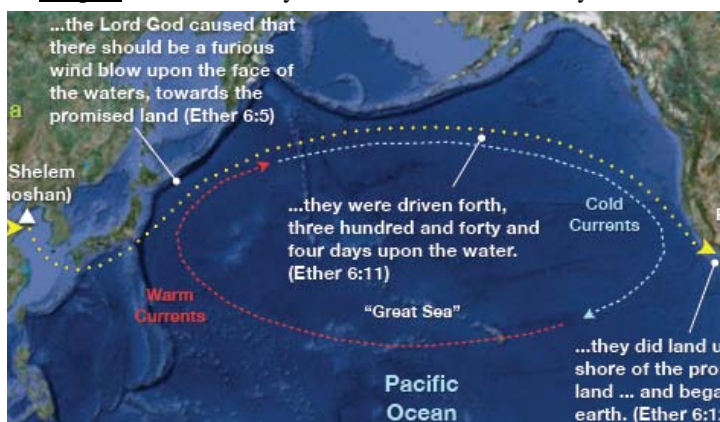
¹ Jared and his brother, and their families, and also [their] friends ... and their families, went ... northward ... with their flocks. ...³ They did also carry with them deseret, ... [or] a honey bee; and ... seeds of every kind. ...⁵ The Lord commanded them ... [to go] into that quarter where there never had man been. ...⁶ They ... did build barges ... [and] cross many waters. (Eth 2:1–6)



¹³ The Lord did bring Jared and his brethren ... to that great sea which divideth the lands. ... They ... dwelt in tents upon the seashore for ... four years. ...³ The brother of Jared ... went forth unto the mount, which they called the mount Shelem, because of its exceeding height, and did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones. (Eth 2:13; 3:1)

Along the entire 9,000-mile coastline of present-day China there is only one mountain on the coast—Mount Laoshan. This remarkable mountain is of “exceeding” height, rising directly from the seacoast to an elevation of 3,717 feet and covering an area at its base of 172 square miles. (Baja, “Jaredites”)

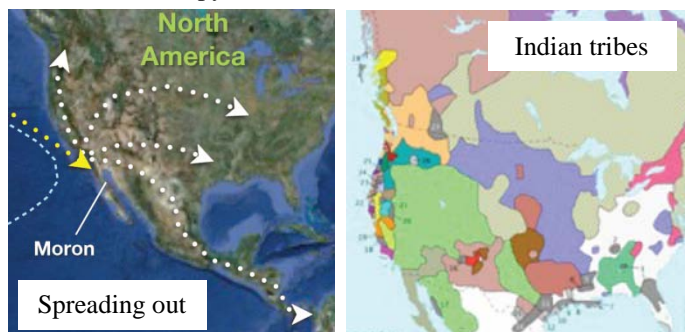
If some families decided to stay and later spread out in the land, we might expect some genetic similarities with the descendents of those who crossed the ocean. We might also expect to see “temples” like those they were familiar with in Babylon.



This 7,250-mile route comprises three major ocean currents. ... These three drift rates ... calculate to a total ocean drift time of some 350 days. ... This is a remarkably close match to the ... 344-day Jaredite voyage over the same route. (Baja, “Jaredites”)

¹⁴ Jared had four sons. ...¹⁵ The brother of Jared also begat sons and daughters. ...¹⁶ And the friends of Jared and his brother were ... about [22] souls; and they also begat sons and daughters. ...¹⁸ They began to spread upon the face of the land, and to multiply ... and they did wax strong in the land. ...¹⁹ And the brother of Jared began to be old. ...²⁰ The sons and the daughters of the brother of Jared were [22] souls; and the ... sons and daughters of Jared were twelve. (Eth 6:14–20)

22 souls = 22 heads of household or 11 couples. After the people “spread upon the face of the land,” the friends and their families are not mentioned any more. Many could have migrated to Central America and become known as Olmecs and Mayans. They would have built temples like those they knew in the Old World (pyramids).



²⁰ [Jaredites] built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.²¹ And they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness, to get game. And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants. (Eth 10:20–21)



12. Lehi: Jerusalem to Bountiful



- ① Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days (1 Ne 1:4)
- ② All these things ... were done as my father dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel (10:16)

- ③ We traveled ... four days, nearly a south-southeast direction ... [to a place we called] Shazer. (16:13)
- ④ Ishmael ... was buried in the place ... called Nahom. (16:34)
- ⑤ We did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey. ... And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, ... [or] many waters. (17:5)



Great Lakes: Lehi and Jared must have sailed the Mediterranean or south around Africa to get to the Atlantic and then to America.

Mesoamerica: Most scholars agree that Lehi followed the above path from Jerusalem to Bountiful, but they are not sure which possible location was actually Bountiful. After leaving Bountiful, some scholars have suggested Lehi may have followed the dashed line along an equatorial current.

13. Lehi: New World Geography



For more maps and information about the Baja model, go to www.aChoiceLand.com.

14. Distance from landing place to the hill Cumorah

Speed	Mile/hr	Hours/day	Miles/day	
Run	5-6	16	80-96	Ultramarathon rate
Fast	3-4	8-14	30-50	Solo, min. provisions
Normal	2-3	6-10	12-25	Small groups
Slow	1-2	7-9	7-15	Large groups, pioneers

Great Lakes: About 1000 miles to Cumorah in New York from the Gulf of Mexico or 2500 miles from Mesoamerica.

Mesoamerica: About 500 miles. The average group travel speed was 11 miles an hour. From the land of Nephi to the narrow neck was about 350 miles. (Sorenson 8-36)

Baja: About 500 miles.

Days	Mi/day	Miles	From ... To
8	7-15	50-80	Nephi to Helam (Mos 23:1-19)
13	7-15	90-190	Helam to Zarahemla (Mos 24:20-25)
1	7-15	6-8	Amnihu to Gideon (Al 2:15-20), fighting
3	12-25	35-60	Melek to Ammonihah (Alma 8:6)

15. Width of the narrow neck of land

The narrow neck was "a day and a half's journey" (Alma 22:32) or "a day's journey for a Nephite" (Hel 4:7).

Great Lakes: The 30 miles could be easily crossed by most people in 1 to 1 ½ days.

Mesoamerica: The 120 miles is just within the range of plausibility (75-125 miles) for one capable of running an average of 5 to 6 miles an hour for up to 16 hours a day. For some Indians and Mexicans who could cover 100 miles a day, averaging 6 miles an hour was not exceptional. (Sorenson 9, 36)

Baja: The 50 miles could be easily crossed at a walking speed of 3 to 4 miles an hour in 1 to 1 ½ days during daylight hours.

16. Why is all expansion northward?

The Book of Mormon mentions no cities south of the land of first inheritance. "The Nephites ... hemmed in the Lamanites on the south, that ... they should have no more possession on the north" (Al 22:33).

Great Lakes: Lamanites could have easily gone south or west.

Mesoamerica: No cities are south because the city of Nephi must have been near the southern limit of what the Nephites recognized as the greater land of Nephi (Al 22:28). (Sorenson 12)

Baja: They could not go south or any farther east or west.

17. What direction is "Nephite north"

Great Lakes: North East.

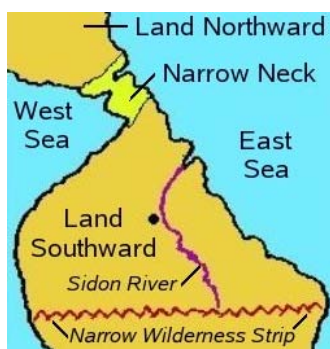
Mesoamerica: North West.

Baja: North

18. River Sidon: Direction of flow

²⁷ "The land ... [of the Lamanites] was divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west ... through the borders of Manti, by the head of the river Sidon, running from the east towards the west—and thus were the Lamanites and the Nephites divided (Alma 22:27). Since rivers start in mountains and run downhill, the narrow strip is mountainous. "The river Sidon ... ran by the land of Zarahemla" (Alma 2:15) which was in the north. It flowed to a sea because dead Lamanites were "cast into the waters of Sidon, and ... their bones are in the depths of the sea" (Alma 3:3).

Mesoamerica: The “narrow strip of wilderness” is like a bowtie that “ran from the sea east to the sea west” and rivers would flow downhill to the north or south (Pratt). Since “the river Sidon ran by the land of Zarahemla” in the north (Al 2:15), it must flow north. Dead bodies cast into the river flow into Nephite lands and by their cities.



Baja: The “narrow strip of wilderness” is like a necktie that “ran from the sea east to the sea west” and rivers would flow downhill to the east or west. Based on geographical clues, the river Sidon ran to the west sea. Nephites would cast dead bodies into the river Sidon downstream from Zarahemla and Gideon (a) to prevent the blood and gore flowing past these prominent Nephite cities, and (b) to avoid contaminating the river water used for drinking, bathing and agriculture. (Baja, “Sidon”)



The dotted line is wilderness area.

“They ... did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and ... 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” (Hel 3:8). This map shows the approximate location and size of Lake Cahuilla before AD 1500. It was about twice



as big as the Great Salt Lake. The present but smaller Salton Sea was created in 1905 when the Colorado River overflowed and filled the dry lake bed with water. (Baja, “Jaredite”)

19. River Sidon: Why is only one river mentioned?

The river Sidon is the only river mentioned by name and the only one mentioned before many people left Zarahemla and went into the land northward (Hel 3:4) or the land of Cumorah/Ramah (Morm 6:4; Eth 15:11).

Great Lakes: There are many rivers.

Mesoamerica: There are two major rivers that are candidates for the river Sidon.

Baja: There is only one river below the narrow neck of land.

20. River Sidon: Width, depth, and speed

Lamanite and Nephite armies cross the river Sidon multiple times in quick succession and with seemingly ease. During a single battle around hill Riplah, there are at least six separate crossings of the river Sidon by significantly large army groups (Alma 43:23-54. See also 2:27, 34-35; 16:6-7). A wide, deep, or swift river would be difficult to cross. No boats or bridges are mentioned.

Great Lakes: The river Sidon is the Mississippi river.

Mesoamerica: The river Sidon is the Grijalva or Usumacinta river. Pictures of these rivers show people boating. It would be difficult to find a part of the river that could be crossed on foot.

Baja: Directly downstream from the head of the Rio San Ignacio the watercourse noticeably narrows and can be readily crossed. And the river at this location can be waded with little effort, like the Jordan River in Israel and the Sidon River in Lebanon, in slow moving, shallow water. Much of the water originating at the head of the Rio San Ignacio reaches the sea through underground stream courses, thus diminishing its above-ground flow downstream. This is common in dryer climates, especially at certain seasons of the year.

21. What does “nearly surrounded by water” mean?

³²The 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)

22. “Swept off” and “cursed shall be the land”

“This ... land ... is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off” (Eth 2:10). People can be “swept off” a land by compelling them to flee or die by the sword (Eth 14:27), pestilence, or famine (drought, crop destruction). “If iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land” (2 Ne 1:7). A land is cursed by lack of rain and pestilence. Lengthy periods of drought are a key trigger for mass migration.

Great Lakes: The Woodland period was from 1000 BC to AD 1000. Hopewell Indians are part of the Woodland period. From AD 500 to 1000 “was a time of apparent population dispersal, although populations do not appear to have decreased.”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland_period)

Mesoamerica: The classic period (AD 200–900) was a time of cultural flourishing when many ancient temples were built. It was also a time of warfare and rivalries. In southern Mexico and Guatemala, one now sees thousands of ancient mounds and walls, the remains of forgotten cities, many tangled in jungle growth. (Proctor, 10)

Baja: Wars and lack of rain caused people to leave or die. Most of the Baja peninsula now has a desert climate instead of a Mediterranean climate due to reduced rainfall. Like the 3-year famine, this can be caused and changed by wind directions.

23. What happened to those who were swept off?



Some Nephites and Lamanites (e.g., Ammonites) left before being swept off. Some believe Hagoth's people went by boat to the Polynesian islands. The non-fighting Ammonites who left (Hel 3:12) may have become the peaceful Anasazis or Hopis. "The Anasazi culture of the US Southwest includes UA [Uto-Aztecan] peoples (Hopi) and other UA relatives (Tanoan pueblos in New Mexico), and archaeologically the Anasazi appear about the time of Christ" (Stubbs).

Lamanites and Nephites who were "swept off" scattered over all the face of the earth like branches broken off a tree. They separated into many subcultures and language groups with similar characteristics, and spread throughout western North American, and down to Meso-America and beyond. These language groups have been classified into an extended language family called Uto-Aztecan. This language family of Central America and western North America includes Comanche, Hopi, Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs), Paiute, Pima, and Shoshone and others. Several linguists have traced the origin of this language family to the area around southern California and Arizona, near the borders of Baja California. (Baja, "Cursed")

The Hopi people, living in the northeast corner of Arizona, claim their ancestors came from a "red city," located "where the rocks and earth are red," somewhere "in the far southwest" of their present home. The name Zarahemla means "red city." The landscape of our proposed land of Zarahemla is red earth and rocks. The Aztecs of Mexico and Central America claim their ancestors came from an area northwest of central Mexico, near the southwest United States, called Aztlán. Some claim that Aztlán means "place of the white heron [egret or white-faced ibis]." Baja California is a breeding ground of the white heron. (Baja, "Cursed")

Official statements: When Moroni first visited Joseph Smith in 1823, he said "there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang" (JS—H 1:34).

The Lord told Newel Knight in 1831 to "journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the

Lamanites" (D&C 54:8). At that time the lands west of Missouri were Indian lands.

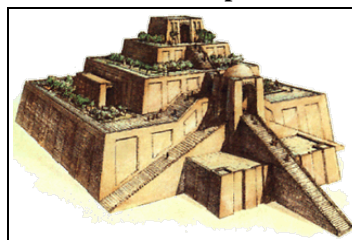
In an 1833 letter written by commandment of the Lord, Joseph said, "The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians. ... By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph which was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them, ..." (HC 1:315).

24. Where are the ruins?

Most ruins in the Americas that date to Book of Mormon times are in Mesoamerica. There are also remains in the Great Lake area. In both places, they show evidence of people before Lehi arrived and after the final battle. Proponents of both models use these ruins as evidence. The Baja model suggests that these ruins may very well have been created by descendants of those who came to the promised land with Jared or Lehi. Some were swept off the land in the final wars while others left earlier (e.g., friends of Jared, Hagoth, Ammonites, and others).

In Baja, we should find only artifacts or remains of items actually mentioned in the Book of Mormon and that could have survived until now, such as cast up highways as seen in Baja. We should not find remains of structures that the Nephites did not construct before being swept off. Remains may not exist if they were perishable like adobe, or left "desolate" (deserted, laid waste, destroyed). Christ said if the house of Israel here and in Israel did not repent ... "the places of [their] dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to [their] fathers" (3 Ne 10:6–7): (Baja, "Cursed" and "Ruins")

Mesoamerican temples look like what Old World Temples?



Babylonian Temples



Jerusalem Temple



Mesoamerican temple

25. How did the plates get to New York?

The final battle at the hill Cumorah was 384 years after the sign of the coming of Christ (Morm 6:5). Moroni was writing 400 and 422 years after the sign of the coming of Christ (Morm 8:6; Moro 10:1).

We do not know what Moroni did or where he went during the 35+ years after the final battle at the Nephite hill Cumorah. However, "Brigham Young ... [said that Manti] Temple Hill was the spot where Book of Mormon Prophet Moroni dedicated the land for a temple site." (<http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/manti>)

Great Lakes: Moroni had to hide out for over 35 years before burying the plates in the same hill as where the final battle took place. Did he travel to Manti, Utah and return to bury the plates? Or, did he travel to Utah after he buried the plates?

Mesoamerica: A shipwrecked English sailor walked in 11 months from Mexico to the border between Maine and Canada. This is about the same distance and same route Moroni may have taken (Sorenson, 45). When traveling from Central America to New York, Utah is out of the way. However, one can walk a long way in 35 years.

Baja: When traveling from southern California to New York, one might reasonably go through Manti, Utah.

Quotes

A. Joseph: I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.

B. Ezra Taft Benson: “There are three ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. It is the keystone in our witness of Christ. It is the keystone of our doctrine. It is the keystone of testimony. ... Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 5–6).

C. Ezra Taft Benson: “The Book of Mormon ... was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. ... Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. ... If they saw our day and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 6).

D. Ezra Taft Benson: The moment you begin a serious study of [the Book of Mormon, you] will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. ... When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

E. Ezra Taft Benson: The Lord ... [said] the Book of Mormon contains the ‘fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 6).

3 Nephi 27:13–21 says the gospel (or good news) is that Christ came to be crucified, resurrected, and judge people according to their works. Those who have faith, repent, are baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end will be guiltless. The Book of Mormon definitely contains a fullness of the gospel.

F. Ezra Taft Benson: We are to use the Book of Mormon in handling objections to the Church. After seeing God the Father and Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith told a minister about it. Joseph was surprised to hear the minister say that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased. (JS–H 1:21) This remark symbolizes practically all of the objections that have ever been made against the Church by nonmembers and dissident members alike. Namely, they do not believe that God reveals His will today to the Church through prophets of God. All objections, whether they be on abortions, plural marriage, seventh-day worship, or other subjects, basically hinge on whether Joseph Smith and his successors were and are prophets of God receiving divine revelation.

Here... is a procedure to handle most objections through the use of the Book of Mormon.

1. **Understand** the objection.
2. Give the **answer from revelation**.
3. Show how the correctness of the answer really depends on **whether of not we have modern revelation**.
4. Explain that ... [this] really depends on **whether the Book of Mormon is true**.

Therefore, the only problem the objector has to resolve is whether the Book of Mormon is true. For if the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith was His prophet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it is being led today by a prophet receiving revelation. (“The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” Regional Representatives Seminar, SLC, 4 Apr ’86)

For ideas and examples of this procedure, download “BM 01- Supp- Answering Questions with the Book of Mormon.pdf” at www.sviewp.com.

G. Glenn L. Pearson: For the 1st six weeks of my mission, I lived in the home of Reverend Carl Pedersen. My goal was to get Pedersen to read the Book of Mormon. I used a simple formula: every religious discussion ended with a explanation about Mormons are right and the non-Mormons are wrong if it turns out that the Book of Mormon is true. I said, “Reverend. You must find out for yourself. I won’t argue with you about infant baptism, sprinkling, the nature of God, the Apostasy, etc.” This approach eliminated any chance for arguments....

One day Pedersen said, “My first assignment as a minister was to give seven lectures entitled ‘The Mormon Gold Bible.’ I wanted to do it right and tell the truth. I asked the rector if we had any reliable books on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon.

“He replied: ‘Yes, we have a number of books which expose them; but I wouldn’t bother with books. Mormons are such vile people and the Book of Mormon is such a wicked fraud that there isn’t any lie you could invent which would be as bad as the truth. Just make up your own stories. That’s what we all do.’”

“And that’s what I did. Now I realize how wrong that was. When I first began to read the Book of Mormon a few weeks ago, I still believed that Joseph Smith was an ignorant and wicked man. But it wasn’t long until I realized that he couldn’t possibly have been an ignorant man. No ignorant man could have produced this book. It was a fiendishly clever imposture. I decided that he was an absolutely evil and positively brilliant genius.

“As I read on, it occurred to me that no man, no matter how brilliant, could have produced such a book. It would take some power outside this world to give him the knowledge that would be necessary to come up with a fraud which would baffle the world for a hundred years. Absolute proof that this book was a fraud should have come to light long ago. As I was reading the book for the first time, I realized that none of the attacks against it were of any validity. I decided that Joseph Smith was not only an evil genius but also he was in league with the devil. He had to have some help from outside this world. I decided it must have been the devil who helped him.

“Then one day it occurred to me that I had not read a single word which would lead a man into sin or to lose faith in Christ. In fact, it was the most Christ-loving book I ever had read, and if true, the greatest proof of Christ’s divinity the world had ever received. I decided that the simplest and most believable explanation for the book was that it came exactly as Joseph Smith said it did.” (*Moroni’s Promise*, 10–12)