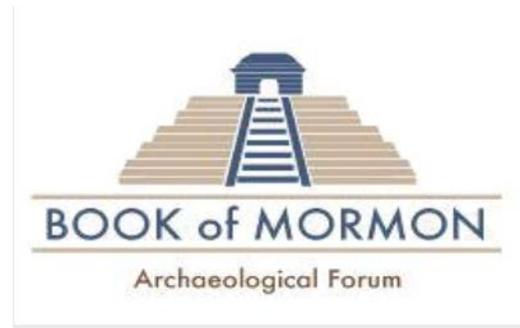




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Book of Mormon Objective Geographic Standard No. 4: The Nature and Location of the Three Defensive "Lines"

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Abstract: This article is the fourth of a series of articles that will provide readers and the students of Book of Mormon with specific provable geographic standards without reference to any real world geography. The specific standard identified in this article will be referred to hereafter as Geographic Standard No. 4 and will focus on the nature and relationship of the only three defensive "lines," mentioned in the Book of Mormon.



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Book of Mormon Objective Geographic Standard No. 4: The Nature and Location of the Three Defensive "Lines"

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This article is the fourth of a series of articles that will provide readers and the students of Book of Mormon with specific provable geographic standards without reference to any real world geography. The specific standard identified in this article will be referred to hereafter as Geographic Standard No. 4 and will focus on the nature and relationship of the only three defensive "lines," mentioned in the Book of Mormon, namely:

1. **The line of defense** that extended from the east sea to the west sea located within the narrow strip of wilderness, established by Moroni in 72 BC.
2. **The "line of possessions of the Lamanites"** that started on the east sea and connected to, or was a part of, the defensive line within the narrow strip of wilderness,
3. **The line that separated the land Bountiful**—located within the land southward— from the land Desolation— located within the land northward—which line started on the west sea and ran easterly for a distance of "only" about fifteen miles.

Following a discussion of this objective standard, currently proposed models will be compared with this standard and the areas where it has not been followed will be shown and discussed.

Joseph Smith stated that the Book of Mormon (1) "was the most correct of any book on earth"¹ and (2) "that is says what it means and means what it says."² Surely it was not translated by revelation so that only "scholars" could understand it. It shouldn't take intricate chiasmic structures—although they are fascinating and helpful—to understand it. It was translated into the English language by Joseph Smith so that unsophisticated readers could understand it. The Book of Mormon, including its geography, should be able to be understood by even the ordinary, reasonable reader.

In the face of so many divisive and vastly different models, maps, books, etc. that seem to be increasing exponentially regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon, what seems to be helpful—for those intent on locating the lands of the Book of Mormon—are some objective geographic standards that are specifically described in the Book of Mormon. All proposed models would then have to conform to these standards or be deemed invalid when applied to that particular standard. Several of these specific geographic standards are described in the Book of Mormon.

Any average reader of the Book of Mormon, knowing that Nephi correctly knew that the east side of the Red Sea ran in a "south-southeast" direction (1 Nephi 16:13), should reasonably believe that the writers of the Book of Mormon knew and correctly used cardinal directions. Even more importantly, the average reader would also reasonably believe that the Lord would

not allow Joseph Smith to deceive people by using the direction of east and secretly mean north. There is no deception in the Book of Mormon.

This Geographic Standard No. 1 must apply—give or take a couple of miles and directional variations of a few degrees— regardless of where a proponent geographically places any of the three defensive lines described in the Book of Mormon.

In the discussion that follows, all Book of Mormon scriptures are italicized, and emphasis is shown via bolding.

One day's travel by a marching army will be deemed to be about ten air miles. (In that respect, see Joseph and Blake Allen's and Kirk Magleby's excellent explanations.)³ All maps by Joseph and Blake Allen and by Kirk Magleby have been used with their respective permissions.

Relevant Objective Geographic Facts from the Book of Mormon

Following are relevant geographic facts and scripturally provable conclusions associated with the relationship of the only three defensive geographic "lines" described in the Book of Mormon.

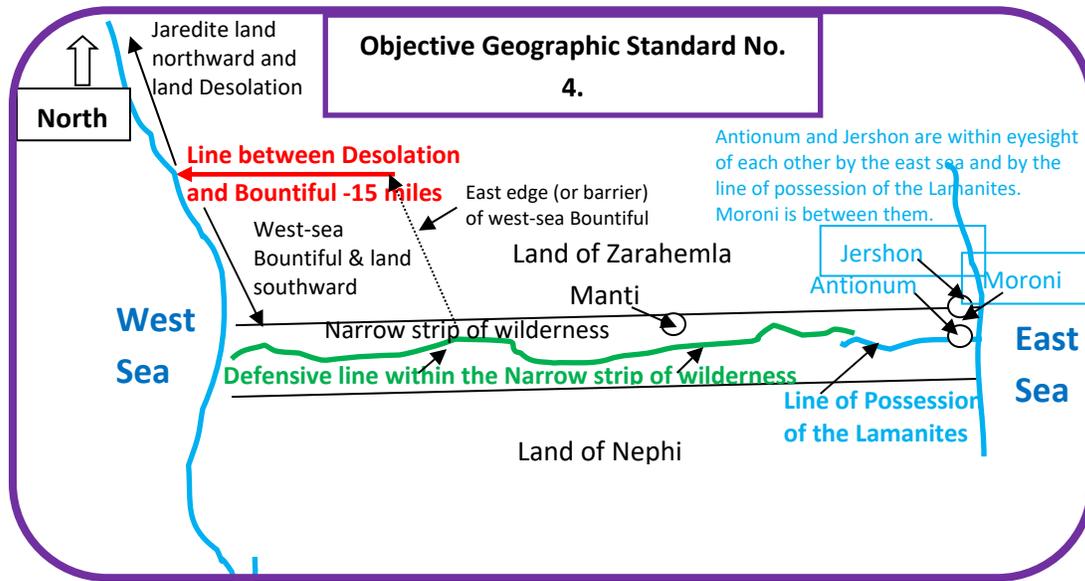
1. **The first military line of defense**,⁴— shown in green on the map on page four,
 - was created by Moroni in 72 BC. It was located within the narrow strip of wilderness that extended from the east sea to the west sea (Alma 50:11).
 - This line of defense separated the greater land of Nephi on the south, from the greater land of Zarahemla on the north, which lands and line of defense also extended from the east sea to the west sea (Alma 50: 1–13).
 - Part of this line of defense went through the borders of Manti across the "*head of the river Sidon*" (Alma 22:27 and Alma 50:11). It was this 'line' of defense and the narrow strip of wilderness that went from east to west, not the river Sidon.
 - Most of Moroni's military life of 17 years as chief Captain was spent in establishing and defending the line of defense located within the narrow strip of wilderness from the east sea to Manti to the west sea and in maintaining and protecting the area of the city/land of Zarahemla (Alma 43 through 62).
2. **The second military dividing line** —shown in blue on the map on page four,
 - was the "*line of possessions of the Lamanites*"⁵ which was also created by Moroni in 72 BC. It began on the east sea near where the cities of Moroni and Antionum were located (Alma 50:13).
 - This line of possessions of the Lamanites was either an extension of the defensive line within the east end of the narrow strip of wilderness that divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla from the east sea to the west sea (Alma 50:7–14 and Alma 22:27), or was the same as the east end of that line.
 - This "*line of possessions of the Lamanites*" was where Moroni, in 72 BC, "*drove all the Lamanites who were in the east wilderness into their own lands, which were south of the land of Zarahemla*" [meaning to the south of the "*line of possessions of the Lamanites.*" (Alma 50: 7, 13)

- Antionum was located by the “*line of possessions*” where the Lamanites were congregated (Alma 31:3 and 43: It was located by the east sea and south of Jershon 18–22).⁶ Jershon was also located by the east sea. Both of these locations were east of the city/land of Zarahemla.
 - In 74 BC—the year Moroni became chief captain— Zerahemnah and his armies were camped in Antionum and were close enough to see the armies of Moroni which were located in Jershon. Zerahemnah “*durst not come against the Nephites*” from Antionum near the east sea. He took his Lamanite/Zoramite army into the narrow strip of wilderness to the center of the land between the east and west seas attempting to take the city of Manti located within the narrow strip of wilderness near the head of river Sidon. He and his army were obliterated— in the valley of Manti—by Moroni who tossed their dead bodies into the river Sidon (Alma 43 and 44).
 - In the year 67 BC while Lehi and Teancum were defending the east-sea city/land Bountiful, Moroni was defending the center of the land (including Manti area) and the west sea locations within the narrow strip of wilderness (Alma 52:11–15).
 - During 66 BC Moroni was stationed on the west sea trying to stop Ammoron “*in the borders by the west sea*” (52: 11–12). It was during this year that he sent Helaman and 2000 stripling warriors to help Antipus within the western end of the narrow strip of wilderness near the west sea to defend the Nephite locations in that area (Alma 56:9).
 - Leaving Helaman to help Antipus, Moroni returned to the east sea area, in 65 BC, to help Teancum retake Mulek (Alma 56, 57, and 58). In 64 BC Moroni, Teancum, and Lehi **took back** Mulek.
 - From 74 BC to 57 BC—Moroni’s seventeen-year tenure as Chief Captain— his entire life was spent in establishing and defending this military line of defense within the narrow strip of wilderness, which included the “*line of possessions of the Lamanites,*” and in protecting the city/land of Zarahemla (Alma 62: 52).
3. **The third and different military line of defense**⁷—in red on the map on page four,
- separated Desolation from west-sea Bountiful. It was located within the “*small neck of land*” that was located “*between the land northward and the land southward*” (Alma 22:32). **Initially it was not a military defensive line but a dividing line between Desolation and Bountiful, both of which were under Nephite exclusive control in 72 BC.**
 - This line began on the west sea and extended in an west to east direction from the west sea about fifteen miles—“*only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation*” (Alma 22:32 and see Geographic Standard No. Three).
 - This line was also known as the “*line between desolation and Bountiful*” (3 Nephi 3:23). **In 34 BC this line first became known as a military defensive line.**
 - In 34 BC Moronihah stationed his soldiers on the same line—but it was only for a day’s distance— to defend their north country—Desolation and the Jaredite land northward (Helaman 4:5–8). This had to have been the same line because in verse eight is says “*the Lamanites had obtained all the possession of the Nephites which was in the land southward.*” Verse five and six refer to the land Bountiful. And verse

six states that they fortified the line starting from the west sea. Therefore, this could not have taken place on the east sea.

- This defensive line was located south of the Jaredite land northward, which included the land Desolation, and north of the west end of the narrow strip of wilderness (Alma 22:29).

Therefore, the relationship of these three defensive lines should graphically look generally as follows:



Applying this standard to various proposed models or maps results in the following analysis and conclusions:

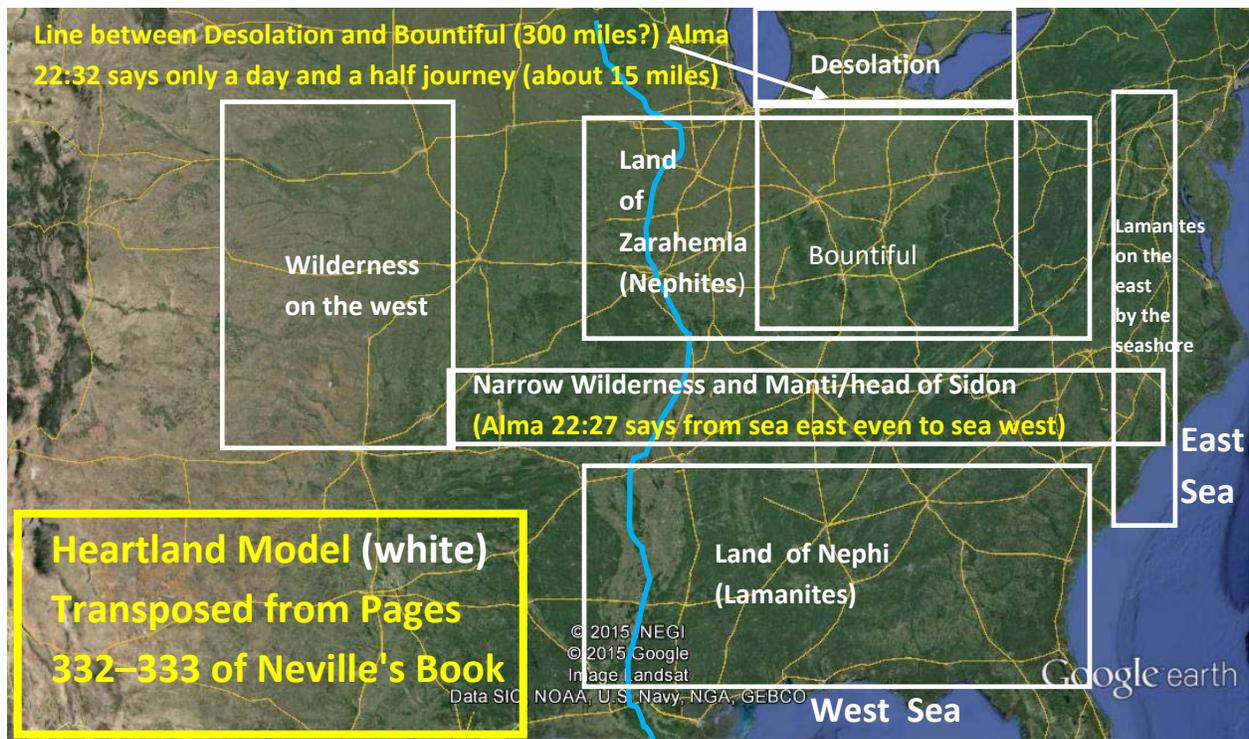
The Heartland Theory ⁸

This Model does not describe any of the three lines of defense. The only thing it indicates is that the "wilderness" that went from the "sea east even to the sea west" went from the Atlantic Ocean due west to a west wilderness somewhere in the Great Plains—not a sea. The following is an adaptation to a Google Map taken from pages 332 and 333 of Jonathan Neville's book *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again*.

Notice that the only possible line between Desolation and Bountiful is over three hundred miles long. Alma 22:32 states that this line must be only about fifteen miles—“*only the distance of a day and a half.*” And this line must begin on the west sea. None of these conditions are reflected in the Heartland Model; therefore, this theory is erroneous.

Also this model does not show the area to where Moroni, in 72 BC, forced "all" the Lamanites located in the east sea area to relocate south of the "line of possessions of the Lamanites"—meaning south of the defensive line located within narrow strip of wilderness.

Also, readers should take note of the fact that this model places the west sea not west of the east sea, not west of the land of Zarahemla, and not west of the land of Nephi, as required by the Book of Mormon, but south at the Gulf of Mexico. This **map violates** the Book of Mormon and the Geographic Standard No. 4.



The Sorenson Model ⁹

The Sorenson model—as shown on his map on page five of his book, *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon*—places the Coatzacoalcos River as the line between Desolation and Bountiful. This river runs more than a hundred miles in a north-to-south direction instead of east to west as required by the Book of Mormon. Sorenson places the east sea as the Gulf of Mexico with the west sea being the Pacific. He changes the name of the narrow strip of wilderness to the “wilderness strip” and labels it as an undefined wilderness that generally goes in a north-to-south direction instead of east to west, ending up near Campeche. Sorenson’s model does not show the *line of possessions of the Lamanites* to where the Lamanites were relocated following their expulsion from the east wilderness. The following information is from Sorensen’s Map No. 5 at page 37 of his book.

Notice in the map that follows that the east wilderness is located directly north of Zarahemla/Santa Rosa—instead of east. And it is northwestward from Nephi/Kaminaljuyu (Guatemala City) instead of east. Alma 22:27 states that the narrow strip of wilderness “*ran from the sea east even to the sea west.*” And Mormon further states that “*he cut off all the strongholds of the Lamanites in the east wilderness, yea, and also on the west, fortifying the line between the Nephites and the Lamanites, between the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi, from the west*

sea [the line], running by the head of the river Sidon—the Nephites possessing all the land northward [of the line], yea, even all the land which was northward of the [west-sea] land Bountiful, according to their pleasure” (Alma 50:11).

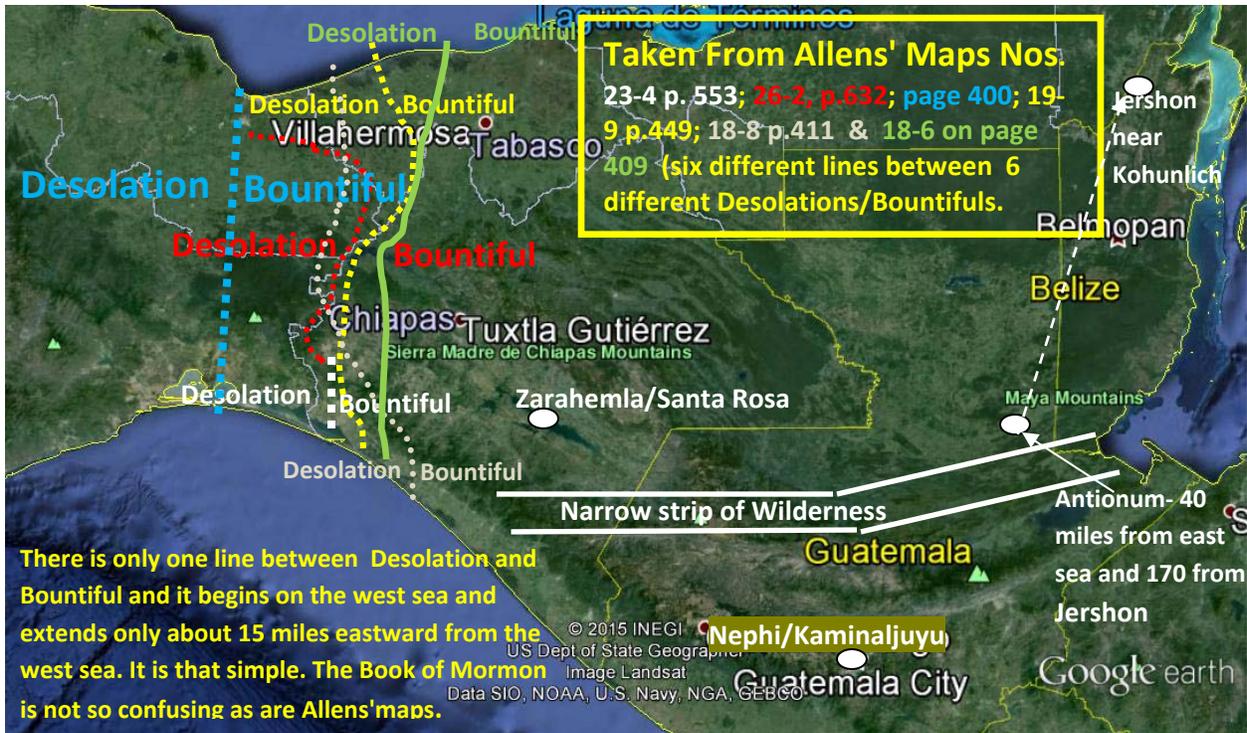
This Model does not come close to the requirements of the Geographic Standard No. 4.



The Model of Joseph and Blake Allen ¹⁰

Joseph and Blake Allen also place Zarahemla at Santa Rosa. They correctly place the narrow strip of wilderness as the mountainous area including the Cuchumatanes, the Chama, and the Sierra Santa Cruz mountains —running in an east to west direction. However, they never show the defensive line within the narrow strip of wilderness; nor do they show the east-sea line of possessions of the Lamanites; nor do they describe in the text on any map the "line between Desolation and Bountiful." They discretely show a small black dotted line running north to south between a sub-Desolation/Bountiful—in white on the map below—from the west sea about fifteen miles, however they do not name that line as the "line between Desolation and Bountiful."

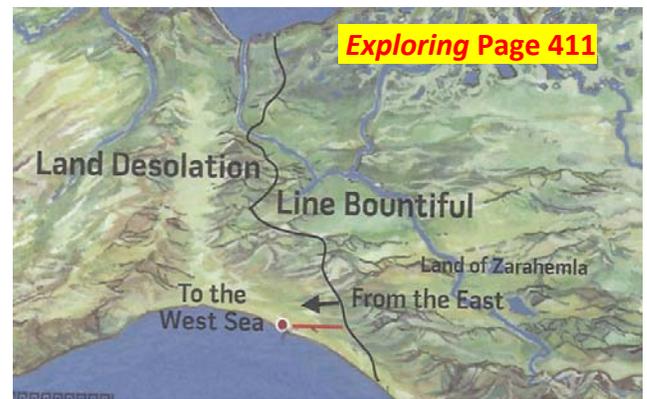
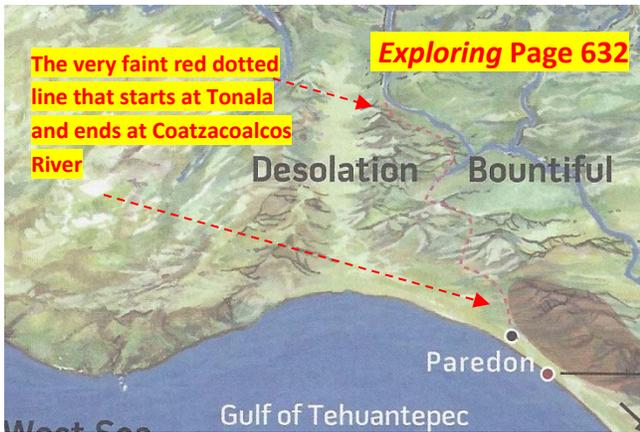
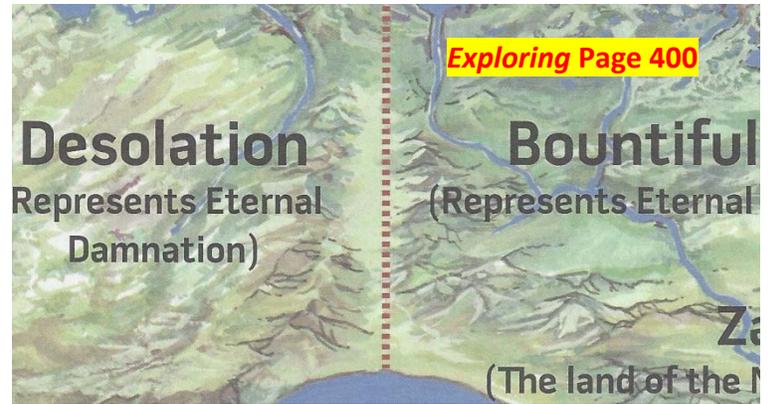
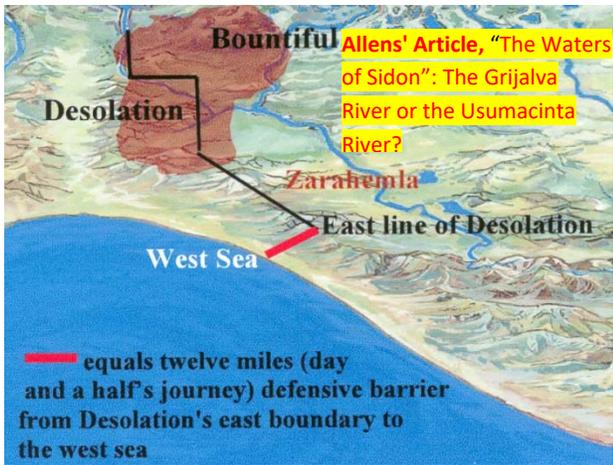
In fact, they show seven different lines between seven different Desolations and Bountifuls without naming any of them on their maps as the "line between Desolation and Bountiful"—see maps below. The Book of Mormon geography cannot be that confusing and difficult to understand. Mormon states that "it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite on the line [between] Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea" Alma (22:32). There is only one such line between Desolation and Bountiful and it is only about twelve to fifteen miles long. The Book of Mormon says it; means it; and it is that simple.



The seventh line is taken from the article titled “The Waters of Sidon”: The Grijalva River or the Usumacinta River?¹¹

Allens' 7 Maps of 7 Different Lines Between 7 Different Desolations and 7 Different Bountifuls





On the first map notice that Jershon is located near Kohunlich, Yucatan (see pages 624 and 766), which is 170 miles from Antionum—which the Allens place in an area forty miles due east from the east sea/Bay of Honduras (see map at page 661). According to the Book of Mormon, the armies of the Nephites and those of the Lamanites/Zoramites could see each other from their respective camps—which would not be possible 170 miles apart. Therefore, Jershon and Antionum cannot be located more than a couple of miles from each other. Notice also that Geographic Standard No. 4 requires that Antionum be located at the very edge of the line of possessions of the Lamanites.¹²

On the Allens' map at page 661, Antionum is located about forty miles west of the east sea rather than adjacent to it. And it is located about ten miles north from the narrow strip of wilderness instead of the required location adjacent to the "*line of possessions of the Lamanites.*"

This model does not conform to Geographic Standard No. 4.

Garth Norman's Map ¹³

The map proposed by Garth Norman is inaccurate because (1) his line between Desolation and Bountiful runs north, then west, and then north—not eastward, (2) his line extends over 160 miles instead of about fifteen, (3) he does not show the "*line of possessions of the Lamanites*," (4) he improperly shows the Zoramite/Lamanite city of Antionum more than forty miles inland northwest from the east sea to near Poptun, and also thirty miles north from the narrow strip of wilderness instead of adjacent to the narrow strip of wilderness, and (5) he puts Jershon at Lamanai, more than 150 miles from Poptun/Antionum in contravention of the Book of Mormon which clearly shows that the armies could see each other from Antionum and Jershon, and therefore, not more than a couple of miles apart.

Thus, this model does not conform to Geographic Standard No. 4. See the endnotes No. 5 and 6 for the supporting scriptures.



Kirk Magleby's Model ¹⁴

Kirk Magleby places Zarahemla at Emiliano Zapata, twenty-five miles north of Palenque. He correctly places the fifteen-mile line of defense between Desolation and Bountiful starting on the west sea near Tonala, Mexico, but then incorrectly locates 99 percent of Bountiful north of that line. He correctly locates the narrow strip of wilderness—the green line on his following map No. 32—from the Gulf of Honduras westward to the Pacific, but then he incorrectly locates Antionum over a hundred miles north of the narrow strip of wilderness in northern Belize. Antionum must be located adjacent to the narrow strip of wilderness, as shown on the Geographic Standard No. 4.

In the year 72 BC, Moroni chased all the Lamanites from the east sea area to the south of the *line of possessions of the Lamanites*, which was located within the narrow strip of wilderness and near the east sea. The Lamanite/Zoramite army congregated at Antionum preparing to battle against Moroni stationed at Jershon, which was also located near the east sea and just south of

Jershon. They were within eyesight of each other. Then, when Zerahemnah **saw** the preparedness of Moroni and his army, he chickened out and tried to beat Moroni to Manti near the head of Sidon (see endnote No. 6). Therefore, Antionum and Jershon could not have been located more than a couple of miles from each other.

How could Zerahemnah have seen Moroni's army located forty miles north from Antionum, in Jershon in the Yucatan? Why would Zerahemnah have marched with his army a hundred miles north of his line of possessions of the Lamanites to Antionum in Belize only to not be able to see Moroni forty miles farther north and then to be scared of what he could not see and flee back to the narrow strip of wilderness? This seems to be (to use Kirk's terminology) "nonsensical."



Richard Hauck's Map ¹⁵

The map proposed by Richard Hauck seems fairly close to Geographic Standard No. 4. He places the narrow strip of wilderness from the Gulf of Honduras easterly to the Pacific and he places Antionum adjacent to the line of possessions of the Lamanites located within that narrow strip of wilderness and also near the east sea as required by the Geographic Standard No. 4. He also correctly places Jershon and Antionum within eyesight of each other and located near the Gulf of Honduras.

He also correctly places the fifteen-mile long defensive line between Desolation and Bountiful starting on the west sea and then following the ridgeline of the Bernal mountains easterly until it comes to a manmade Preclassic wall connecting the Bernal mountains with the Sierra Madre Mountains. This wall is located near the area called Horcones, Mexico.

The land Desolation and the land northward are properly located northward from this line. The west-sea land Bountiful and the land southward are correctly located southward from the same line.



Robert Roylance's New Theory

In Robert Roylance's new theory about Book of Mormon geography, the Yucatan is viewed as the Jaredite land northward. The city/land of Zarahemla is located at El Seibal on the Pasion River about 8 miles before its confluence with the Usumacinta. Incredibly he identifies three west seas, (1) the Gulf of Mexico, (2) the Pacific Ocean, (3) the Lake Peten Itza. He places the line between Desolation and Bountiful as a line between two lakes in the Peten—Lake Peten Itza being the one called the west sea. Apparently he claims that there was a lake about nine miles from Itza that was the east sea. He also claims the east sea to be the Caribbean. In his model, he shows Bountiful to be a small area within the Peten basically surrounding the Lake Peten Itza and the several smaller lakes in the area. The following is his map taken from his recent draft of his pending article entitled, "A Comparative Analysis of the Geographic Location of the 'Land Northward.'" He calls his model the Pasion River Model.

Notice that he locates the place where Hagoth set sail on the northwestern edge of the Yucatan about 200 miles north of his proposed defensive line between Desolation and Bountiful. This defensive line is a nine-mile line between two lakes in the central Peten. Incredible! According to the Book of Mormon, Hagoth's Harbor was located south of that line and close to but south of Desolation and within the land Bountiful and he set sail in the west sea. This west sea must be the same west sea where Lehi landed and certainly not the Gulf of Mexico

This model does not even come close to what is required by the Book of Mormon.



Endnotes

1. “Introduction,” *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981).

2. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), under “Scriptures.”

3. According to Joseph and Blake Allen, “In the Nephite measuring system,” a day’s travel is equal to about eight miles. (Joseph Lovell Allen and Blake Joseph Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. rev. [American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2011], 412)

According to Kirk Magleby, “We can say with confidence that 10 air (straight line) kilometers [6.2 miles] per day are on the low end of what we would reasonably expect from Book of Mormon journeys. Fifteen air kilometers [9.3 miles] per day are probably typical of Book of Mormon travels led by well-informed guides, and 20 air kilometers [12.4 miles] per day (or more) are not unreasonable.” (Kirk Magleby, “Land Southward Travel Times,” Book of Mormon Resources Blog, <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2011/10/land-southward-travel-times.html>, [accessed October 19, 2015])

4. Alma 50:11 *And thus he cut off all the strongholds of the Lamanites in the east wilderness, yea, and also on the west, fortifying the line between the Nephites and the Lamanites, between the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi, from the west sea, running by the head of the river Sidon—the Nephites possessing all the land northward, yea, even all the land which was northward of the land Bountiful, according to their pleasure.*

5. Alma 50:13 *And it came to pass that the Nephites began the foundation of a city, and they called the name of the city Moroni; and it was by the east sea; and it was on the south [part of the land of Zarahemla] (see Alma 50:11) by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites.*

Alma 43:18,19, 22 [Moroni] *met the Lamanites in the borders of Jershon...And when the armies of the Lamanites saw...that Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates... Behold.... they durst not come against the Nephites in the borders of Jershon; therefore they departed out of the land of Antionum [Antionum was located in or near the borders of Jershon] into the wilderness, and took their journey round about in the wilderness, away by the head of the river Sidon, that they might come into the land of Manti and take possession of the land; for they did not suppose that the armies of Moroni would know whither they had gone.*

6. Alma 31:3 *Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum, which was east of the land of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the seashore, which was south of the land of Jershon, which also bordered upon the wilderness south, which [narrow strip of] wilderness was full of the Lamanites*

7. See article Geographic Standard No. 3.

8. See Jonathan Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again,* (Rochester, NY and Cottonwood Heights, UT: Legends library publishing, 2015).

9. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985)

10. (Joseph Lovell Allen and Blake Joseph Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. rev. [American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2011], 412)

11. The Waters of Sidon”: The Grijalva River or the Usumacinta River? (http://www.bmaf.org/waters_sidon_grijalva_usumacinta?__Allen). It was written by Joseph Lovell Allen, Blake Joseph Allen, and Ted Dee Stoddard, Copyright © 2009. It will be referred to hereafter as Allens’ Article.

12. Alma 43:5: *And it came to pass that the Lamanites came with their thousands; and they came into the land of Antionum, which is the land of the Zoramites; and a man by the name of Zerahemnah was their leader.*

Alma 43:15: *And it came to pass as the armies of the Lamanites had gathered together in the land of Antionum, behold, the armies of the Nephites were prepared to meet them in the land of Jershon.*

Alma 31:3: *Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum, which was east of the land of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the seashore, which was south of the land of Jershon, which also bordered upon the [narrow strip of] wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites [because Moroni had chased all the Lamanites from the east wilderness to the line of possessions of the Lamanites within the narrow strip of wilderness].*

Alma 43:22: *Behold, now it came to pass that they durst not come against the Nephites in the borders of Jershon; therefore they departed out of the land of Antionum into the [narrow strip of] wilderness, and took their journey round about in the [narrow strip of] wilderness, away by the head of the river Sidon, that they might come into the land of Manti and take possession of the land; for they did not suppose that the armies of Moroni would know whither they had gone.*

13. V. Garth Norman, *Book of Mormon—Mesoamerican Geography: History Study Map*, 3rd ed. (American Fork, UT: ARCON with Ancient American Foundation, 2008).

14. Kirk Magleby, “Gideon,” Book of Mormon Resources Blog, <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2011/12/gideon.html> (accessed October 20, 2015).

15. Richard F. Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 143.