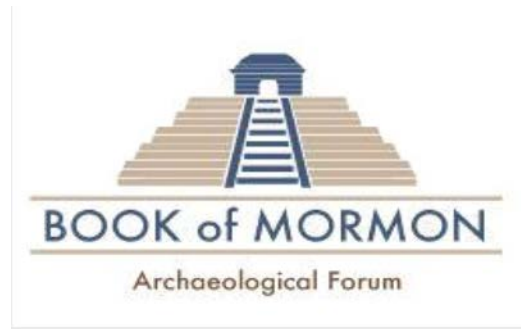




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## The Narrow Strip of Wilderness Was Mountainous

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**Abstract:** Following is a sampling, in chronological order, of the many scriptures (1) requiring that the narrow strip of wilderness was mountainous—meaning that Gideon, Minon, Manti, the head of river Sidon, and city/land of Nephi were all higher in elevation than Zarahemla, (2) conclusively proving that the river Sidon had to have flowed to the north and not to the south, and (3) also proving that the areas where most of the Lamanites and Nephites lived were very close to and within mountains.



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## The Narrow Strip of Wilderness Was Mountainous

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Following is a sampling, in chronological order, of the many scriptures (1) requiring that the narrow strip of wilderness was mountainous—meaning that Gideon, Minon, Manti, the head of river Sidon, and city/land of Nephi were all higher in elevation than Zarahemla, (2) conclusively proving that the river Sidon had to have flowed to the north and not to the south, and (3) also proving that the areas where most of the Lamanites and Nephites lived were very close to and within mountains (all scriptures are shown in italics; emphasis is added where appropriate):

- Ca. 200 BC: Omni and Mosiah state: “*He [Mosiah] did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land [of Nephi] into the wilderness (Omni 1:13) . . . [up to] the hill north of the land of Shilom, which had been a place of resort for the children of Nephi at the time they fled out of the land (Mosiah 11:13) . . . [and then Omni 1:13 continues] through the [narrow strip of] wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land [or city] of Zarahemla.*” [The area south of Zarahemla was higher in elevation than Zarahemla. Until ca. 124 BC, the land of Zarahemla—to which Mosiah<sub>1</sub> came down to—could not have encompassed an area greater than about the size of Salt Lake Valley.]<sup>1</sup>
- Ca. 170 BC: King Noah “*caused a great tower to be built on the hill north of the land Shilom, which had been a resort [a defensive gathering place] for the children of Nephi at the time they fled out of the land [of Nephi]” (Mosiah 11:13). [The area north of the land of Nephi was higher in elevation than Nephi.]*
- 87 BC: “[The spies of Alma said,] *we followed the camp of the Lamanites and to our great astonishment, in the land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of [southward toward] the land of Nephi . . . the Amlicites have joined them [Lamanites]” (Alma 2:24). [Therefore, because Nephi was higher in elevation than Zarahemla, because Minon was also higher than Zarahemla, because Minon was in the pathway to Nephi, and because Manti was also in that pathway and was located south of Minon and within the narrow strip of wilderness, then Manti also must have been higher in elevation than Zarahemla.]*
- About 85 BC: “*The king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, . . . among all his people [including to the line dividing the Nephites/Lamanites which ran] through the borders of Manti by the head [beginning or principal source<sup>2</sup>] of the river Sidon” (Alma 22:27).*
- In 81 BC: Alma told Captain Zoram where to find the Nephite captives taken from the city of Noah. “*Alma returned and said unto them: behold the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness [southern part of the narrow strip of wilderness], away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the*

*east of the river Sidon*” (Alma 16:6). [Therefore, where they crossed the Sidon south of Manti was higher than Manti. Thus, the river Sidon must flow north.]<sup>3</sup>

- About 77 BC: The Ammonites, camping near Manti, received word they would be going eastward down to Jershon: “*Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea . . . And . . . it did cause great joy among them. And **they went down into the land of Jershon***” (Alma 27: 22, 26). [The east part of the narrow strip of wilderness was higher than the land of Jershon located by the east sea.]
- 74 BC: [Moroni] *concealed* [the remainder of his army] *in the west valley, on the west of the river Sidon, and so down into the borders of the land Manti*” (Alma 43:32). [Therefore, the valley of Manti was lower in elevation than the head of river Sidon.]
- 72 BC: “[Mormon ‘returns’ to the account of] *Amalickiah and those who had fled with him into the [narrow strip of] wilderness; for, behold, he had taken those who went with him, and went up [southerly] in the land of Nephi among the Lamanites* (Alma 47:1). [The area south of Zarahemla, including Minon, Manti, and the land of Nephi, were all higher in elevation than Zarahemla.]<sup>4</sup>
- 64 BC: The Lamanites had captured Manti and were considering their next city to conquer from Manti. However, “*neither durst they march **down [north]** against the city of Zarahemla; neither durst they cross the head of Sidon, over [east of and down] to the city of Nephihah [located westward near the city of Moroni, which was located near the east sea]” (Alma 56:25). [If Rod Meldrum’s Manti was Huntsville, Missouri, then (1) how could the Lamanites have gone down to Montrose/Zarahemla, Iowa? (2), How could they have crossed the Mississippi River on foot— at a location south of Nauvoo (being the head of Sidon)? and (3) How could they have even contemplated traveling over eight hundred miles to near the Atlantic coast (Jonathan Neville’s east sea) to attack Nephihah? Impossible! Manti was clearly located higher in elevation than Zarahemla.]*
- 63 BC: Helaman and his sons had taken many prisoners near the west sea and from the city of Cumeni, located within the narrow strip of wilderness, and had decided to “*guard them, sword in hand, **down** to the land of Zarahemla. . . And . . . we did resolve to send them **down** to the land of Zarahemla; therefore, we selected a part of our men, and gave them charge over our prisoners to **go down** to the land of Zarahemla*” (Alma 57:15–16). [The area of the narrow strip of wilderness near the west sea was also higher in elevation than Zarahemla proving that the narrow strip of wilderness was mountainous and continuous from the west sea to the east sea.]
- 61 BC: “*Moroni and Pahoran went **down** with their armies [from Gideon] into the land of Zarahemla*” (Alma 62:7). [Because both Minon and Gideon were higher in elevation than the city/land of Zarahemla, because they were only about five miles apart, and because the river Sidon ran between them, then it must have flowed down to the north past Zarahemla.]

- 12 BC: Nephite and Lamanite dissenters converted to Gadianton robbers. “*And they did commit murder and plunder; and then they would retreat back into the **mountains**, and into the wilderness and secret places, hiding themselves that they could not be discovered, receiving daily an addition to their numbers, inasmuch as there were dissenters that went forth unto them*” (Helaman 11:25; see also 3 Nephi 1:27). [Therefore the mountains were located in close proximity to the population areas of the Nephites and the Lamanites.]
- 12 BC: “*And the robbers did still increase and wax strong, insomuch that they did defy the whole armies of the Nephites and also of the Lamanites, and they did cause great fear to come unto the people upon all the face of the land*” (Helaman 11:32). [The dissident Nephite and Lamanite robbers were hiding within the narrow strip of wilderness because they were countering the military actions against them and proselytizing among both the Lamanites and the Nephites.]
- 11 BC: “[The] *robbers did make great havoc, yea, even great destruction among the people of Nephi and also among the people of the Lamanites . . . They [the Nephites] sent an army . . . into the wilderness and **upon the mountains** to search out this band of robbers . . . [The Nephites and Lamanites were] obliged to return out of the wilderness and out of the **mountains** unto their own lands, because of the exceeding greatness of the numbers of those robbers **who infested the mountains and the wilderness***” (Helaman 11:27–28, 31). [Because the robbers were bothering both the Lamanites and the Nephites and because the closest mountains to both of these lands were located within the narrow strip of wilderness between these two lands, then the narrow strip of wilderness must have been mountainous.]
- AD 3: “*And it came to pass that the ninety and third year did also pass away in peace, save it were 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 do much slaughter among the people*” (3 Nephi 1:27).
- AD 13: “*And it came to pass in the thirteenth year there began to be wars and contentions **throughout all the land [the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla]**; for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it became expedient that all the people, **both the Nephites and the Lamanites**, should take up arms against them*” (3 Nephi 2:11).
- AD 14: “*And it came to pass in the commencement of the fourteenth year, the war between the robbers and the people of Nephi did continue and did become exceedingly sore; nevertheless, the people of Nephi did gain some advantage of the robbers, insomuch that they did drive them back out of their lands into the **mountains** [in the narrow strip of wilderness between the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla] and into their secret places*” (3 Nephi 2:17).

- AD 17: Lachoneus prepared against the time when “*the robbers should come down out of the [narrow strip of] wilderness against them*” (3 Nephi 3:17).
- AD 17: “*The people said unto Gidgiddoni: Pray unto the Lord and let us go up upon the mountains and into the wilderness, that we may fall upon the robbers and destroy them in their own lands*” (3 Nephi 3:20). [Lachoneus advised against the people’s request that they go on the offensive against the robbers in their own lands up in the mountains instead of staying down in the city/land of Zarahemla.]
- AD 18: “[The] robbers had prepared for battle, and began to come **down** and sally forth, from the hills, and **out of the mountains** . . . and began to take possession of the lands, both which were in the land south [of the narrow strip of wilderness] and which were in the land north [of the narrow strip of wilderness], and began to take possession of all the lands which had been deserted by the Nephites [including the Lamanites], and the cities which had been left desolate” (3 Nephi 4:1). [This account gives clear evidence that the narrow strip of wilderness **that divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla** was mountainous.]

Clearly, the Gadianton robbers were infesting the mountains between the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla within the narrow strip of wilderness. (For further confirmation, see 3 Nephi 2:11–17; 4:1; 3:17–20.)

Bottom line: Not a single scripture in the Book of Mormon indicates that the river Sidon flowed south from Zarahemla or that Manti was located lower in elevation than Zarahemla. Rod Meldrum disagrees, without quoting a single scripture, saying:

To recap: The Sidon River in the Book of Mormon flowed past **Zarahemla southward and “down” toward Manti** which was at the head or confluence . . . The “headwaters” could refer to the confluence of present day Missouri and Mississippi rivers.<sup>5</sup>

To come to this flawed conclusion, Meldrum must misconstrue or misstate what the Book of Mormon actually says and means about the narrow strip of wilderness being higher in elevation than Zarahemla from the east sea to the west sea. Meldrum does correctly assert at page two of *Prophecies*, that Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“*Anything that Church authorities, —including Joseph Smith—have said about ‘Book of Mormon geography’ is irrelevant if it conflicts with what is in the Book of Mormon itself...*” *Joseph Smith stated “the Book of Mormon says what it means and means what it says.”*

Actually, the scriptures state that the narrow strip of wilderness was not only higher but also mountainous. Neither Meldrum nor Neville cite any scriptures supporting their erroneous conclusions that the narrow strip of wilderness was not mountainous or that the Sidon flowed south or that it flowed down from Zarahemla toward Manti. Nowhere in the central United States territory can all of the Book of Mormon requirements as cited above be met. The truth is that the Heartland Model is fatally flawed because the river Sidon must flow north, not south.

To confirm this conclusion, note that The Book of Mormon states that the Amlicite army and the Nephite army crossed the Sidon river on foot south of Zarahemla (Alma chapters 2 and 3). The following is a photo of the Mississippi river at its confluence with the Ohio River. This is Meldrum's head of river Sidon. This clearly shows the impossibility of such a feat anywhere on the Mississippi south of Montrose, Iowa and therefore it is additional evidence that the Mississippi river could not have been the Sidon. Also remember that Zerahemnah crossed the Sidon on foot near its head and then he could see Lehi and his army standing on the east bank. This would also not have been possible.

For all of the above reasons the Mississippi could not have been the river Sidon.



## Notes

1. See my article, "Zarahemla: Its Size and Its Rise and Fall," [http://www.bmaf.org/zarahemla\\_rise\\_fall—andersen](http://www.bmaf.org/zarahemla_rise_fall—andersen).
2. One definition of "head" in Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary is the following: "The principal source of a stream; as the head of the Nile" (Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* [New York: S. Converse, 1828], s.v. "head").
3. Rod Meldrum (see endnote 5) erroneously claims that Alma 16:6 states "(speaking of Jershon and Antionum) All of which were north of the land of Manti which was to the south (Alma 16:6)." This is the Book of Mormon quotation:  
*"Alma returned and said unto them: behold the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness, [south part of the narrow strip of wilderness] away **up** beyond the borders of the land of Manti....And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon."* (Alma 16:6)

Clearly Sidon river was located higher than Manti at that point on the southern edge of the narrow strip of mountainous wilderness—the south wilderness. Manti was not south of Antionum. Antionum was east of Zarahemla near the east sea coast at the east end of the narrow strip of wilderness that ended on the east sea.

*"now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum, which was east of the lands of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the seashore which was south of the land of Jershon, which also bordered upon the wilderness south, [narrow strip of wilderness] which wilderness was full of the Lamanites." (Alma 32:3)*

This is the area of the east end of the narrow strip of wilderness that went down by the east seashore. Remember the Ammonites had just previously gone from the Manti area down to Jershon. The Lamanites/Zoramites, rather than fighting at or near Jershon on the east sea coast, went into the narrow strip of wilderness to the east to Manti that was located up in the middle of the narrow strip of wilderness. In fact, it says *"will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness [the south side of the narrow strip of mountainous wilderness] away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti."* Therefore, clearly the river Sidon is even higher in elevation than Manti at the crossing.

4. See Alma 43:20–54. Also, see my article, “The Truth and the Proof: Sidon River Flowed North, Not South,” [www.bmaf.org](http://www.bmaf.org).

5. [www.bookofmormonevidence.org](http://www.bookofmormonevidence.org) (accessed August 12, 2015).