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Chapter 11

A Textual Analysis of the Locations of Cities Identified in 3rd Nephi

Before attempting to compare the cities identified in 3rd Nephi with specific geographic locations, it is first prudent to analyze the text and the text structure to see what it might indicate with regards to location. In other portions of the Book of Mormon examined earlier the destruction is described by prophecy, vision, or, in the case of Samuel the Lamanite, the recounting of events conveyed by an angel. There are no specific cities identified in any of these other portions; there are however a few geographical references.

Nephi's Vision

1 Nephi 12:3–5 mentions that there were many cities, and that the mist of darkness was on “the face of the land of promise” and that later the “vapor of darkness” passed off from “the face of the earth,” perhaps implying by use of the phrase “land of promise,” as opposed to more generic terms, that there were cities in both the land northward and the land southward and that the darkness affected them. It also mentioned that Nephi saw “the plains of the earth” that were “broken up” and “cities that were sunk.”

Prophecies of Zenos and Samuel the Lamanite

The prophecy of Zenos in 1 Nephi 19:10–12 contains no specific geographical references. The preaching of Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 14:20–29 contains a generic reference to the “face of the earth,” to “the face of the whole earth,” and to “all the face of this land.” It does mention that “many cities shall become desolate.”

Location of Cities in Either the Land Northward or the Land Southward according to 3rd Nephi

1. Geographical clues from textual ordering, structure, and grouping

Third Nephi 8:8–10 initially identifies three cities and their method of destruction in this order:

Zarahemla
Moroni
Moronihah

After a series of “And” statements initiating those verses (common elsewhere in the Book of Mormon), 3rd Nephi 8:11 then makes a final “and” statement: “And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward.” The next verse (v. 12) starts with the clause “But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward.” Recognizing that verse breaks were not part of the original Book of Mormon translation, the implication is that verses 8–11 are part

of one clause with a summary statement as to the destruction that had occurred in the land southward inclusive of those three cities. There are no further cities enumerated in the land northward in chapter 8, but just general references to cities in the land northward and the nature of their destruction (3 Nephi 8:12–18).

Using the Book of Mormon text and geographical relationships, the Sorenson model has placed Zarahemla in the land southward. Moroni is also located along the borders of the east sea (Gulf of Mexico) in the land southward. As there is some question as to where Moroni might precisely be located along the east sea, the Sorenson model could accommodate Moroni along a stretch of the coast. A location for Moronihah is not identified, however, Sorenson thought that Moronihah should probably be in the vicinity of Jershon in the borders by the east sea based on the operational area of Moronihah in a military capacity, which area is also within the land southward and may lie fairly close to the boundary between the land southward and the land northward (Sorenson, 2000, 118).

In a textual structural parallel, when a voice was later heard among the inhabitants, there is a nearly verbatim recounting in 3rd Nephi 9:3–5 of 3rd Nephi 8:3–5, which also initially identifies the same three cities and their method of destruction, in the exact same order:

Zarahemla
Moroni
Moronihah

The voice (which later identifies itself as Jesus Christ, 3 Nephi 9:15) then goes on to list additional cities that were destroyed. One could make the argument that by parallel textual construction with 3rd Nephi 8:8–18, the additional cities listed would by inference be located in the land northward, essentially a geographically ordered list. Since 3rd Nephi 8:12 indicates that the destruction was much more extensive in the land northward, this would not be an unreasonable argument. However, one of these additional cities is Jerusalem, which, according to the Sorenson model, is located deep into the land southward somewhere in the vicinity of Lake Atitlán.

By looking carefully at the textual structure in 3rd Nephi 9, it becomes apparent that the listing of the cities is clearly based on primary groups derived from the type of destruction that the cities underwent; geographical order would only be a secondary grouping tier. All of the groupings are based on a different destructive hazard, although some of the groups consist of just one city, and some of the differences in destructive method are slight.

The groupings by destructive method (including additional descriptions from 3rd Nephi 8 where slightly different and applicable) are as follows:

- Burned with fire; “take fire”
—Zarahemla
- “sink into the depths of the sea”; “caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned”
—Moroni
- “earth was carried up upon the city”; “in the place of the city there became a great mountain”; “covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof”; “buried up”
—Moronihah

- “caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth”
—Gilgal
- “caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth”;
“waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof”
—Onihah
—Mocum
—Jerusalem
- “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”
—Gadiandi
—Gadiomnah
—Jacob
—Gimgimno
- “caused to be burned with fire”; “did cause them (the inhabitants) to be burned”; “did send
down fire and destroy them”
—Jacob-Ugath
—Laman
—Josh
—Gad
—Kishcumen

In considering a secondary geographical ordering influence, and in evaluating how the record was created for 3rd Nephi 8, it may have been that Mormon (or another compiler at the time) utilized the list in the order as spoken by Jesus Christ in 3rd Nephi 9, with the first three cities being from the land southward, and then, when arriving at Gilgal in the recitation of cities, a probable city from the land northward, chose to give a general description of the destruction in the land northward, realizing that most of the cities listed were located in the land northward. The only possible way to make the geographic delineation by order consistent, since Jerusalem is the only city in this list that the Sorenson model identifies to be in the land southward, is to consider that there was perhaps a second historic Jaredite-based city called Jerusalem in the land northward.

2. Cities of Jacob-Ugath and Jacob

The great city of Jacob-Ugath and probably the city of Jacob were located in the land northward. Third Nephi 9:9 makes it clear that the inhabitants of Jacob-Ugath were the subjects of King Jacob, the same Jacob who was king of a secret combination that was forced to flee to the “northernmost part of the land” (3 Nephi 7:9–13).

In addition, although somewhat speculative, the use of hyphenated city names in the Book of Mormon seems to indicate that the second part of the city name is in fact the land where the city is located. For example, the city and land of Lehi-Nephi are located within the land of Nephi (Mosiah 7:1–4; 9:1–8). A group of people that changed religious (and presumably political) affiliation became known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehites, an identity that also became to be considered a place (Alma 25:1; Alma 27:2) that encompassed seven different lands and cities, all of which were part of the land of Nephi (and also part of the larger land of Lehi [Helaman 6:10]). The conversion of the name of the people to the name of an area seemed to follow after the kingdom was conferred to an individual

who was also concurrently took on the name Anti-Nephi-Lehi (Alma 24:3), consistent with the practice in the Book of Mormon of place names corresponding to kings or leaders.

Since Jacob-Ugath is apparently part of the land of Ugath it is possible to extract more detail as to its geographical location from the Book of Mormon. Dr. Brian Stubbs, a Native American language linguist, indicated that Ugath is probably of Jaredite origin being derived from Ogath (Ether 15:8–11), with the “o” to “u” sound shift being a recognized, common historical linguistic sound shift (Stubbs, 2014). In the book of Ether a large battle took place between the armies of Coriantumr and Shiz near the “waters of Ripliancum.” As a result of the battle, the armies of Shiz fled southward before the armies of Coriantumr, ending up pitching their tents at a “place called Ogath,” with the armies of Coriantumr pitching their tents by the hill Ramah, which the Nephites called the hill Cumorah. The Sorenson model identifies the location of the hill Ramah/Cumorah as the modern Cerro Vigía, which is part of the Tuxtla Mountains where the San Martín volcano is located. By the description of the movement and locations of the armies, the location of Ogath (Ugath) is not too far south of Cerro Vigía.

There are no other apparent examples of Nephite/Lamanite place names incorporating Jaredite place names other than Gilgal, which is of Biblical origin, but there are examples of Nephite/Lamanite personal names incorporating Jaredite place and personal names. Examples of this are: Ahah:Aha, Coriantor:Corianton, Coriantumr:Coriantumr, Corihor:Korihor, Kishcumen: Kishcumen, Morianton:Morianton.

The location of Jacob-Ugath is quite clearly in the land northward, speculatively in the vicinity just south of Cerro Vigía. Since Jacob-Ugath is part of the northernmost part of the land it may indicate that the northernmost extent of the land northward may have been somewhere south of Veracruz.

3. Jaredite Place Names as a Location Indicator

As is apparent from even a cursory reading of the Book of Mormon, many of the place names are named after individuals, typically kings or other types of leaders. In addition, it has been recognized that some of the original Jaredite place names were utilized or at least recognized by the Nephites. It is clear from the text of the Book of Mormon that the Jaredite civilization was located in the land northward and at the narrow neck separating the land northward from the land southward, with perhaps some minor overlap into the land southward on the boundary.

Therefore, an analysis of the city names listed in 3rd Nephi chapters 8 and 9 with regards to Jaredite origination should provide us with some additional information as to cities that would likely be located in the land northward. Obviously, this is not considered definitive evidence, as it is possible that some of these cities (i.e., Moroni) took their names from an individual who had a Jaredite or Jaredite-derived name but may never have actually lived in the Jaredite lands.

The city name of Gilgal is directly referenced in Ether 13:27–30 as the valley of Gilgal. The name Jerusalem was known to the Jaredites from the teachings of Ether (see Ether 13). While not directly identified as Jaredite place names, some cities exhibit Jaredite linguistic patterns. John A. Tvedtnes (1973) prepared a phonemic analysis of Jaredite proper names and identified the following city names as being of Jaredite origin:

Moroni
Kishcumen

Tvedtnes identified the following city names of having at least some possibility of Jaredite origin:

Mocum
Gadiandi
Gadiomnah

Stubbs indicated that Onihah is probably of Jaredite origin being derived from Orihah (Ether 1:32), with the “r” to “n” sound shift being a recognized historical linguistic sound shift.

From a linguistic and textual standpoint, ten of the sixteen cities (Jacob-Ugath, Jacob, Jerusalem, Gilgal, Moroni, Kishcumen, Mocum, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, and Onihah) could be located in the land northward or immediately adjacent to the land northward. The others, with the exception of Zarahemla, could also be located within or near the land northward based on textual analysis. This does not mean that all are located in the land northward, just that their location in the land northward would not be anomalous.

4. Land of Bountiful

The land of Bountiful is mentioned in 3rd Nephi 11:1 and is noteworthy because it was apparently one of the cities that was apparently spared from much of the destruction as it was a place where a “great multitude” gathered post destruction “round about the temple.” It must have been in an area where the destruction was visible as the people were “showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.” It is not known precisely how long after the destruction that the multitude was gathered, as it occurred “in the ending of the thirty and fourth year” and “soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven” (3 Nephi 10:18). This description also perhaps suggests that they were able to use the height of the temple to get a better view of things.

“Whole Earth” and “All the Land” Phrases

The phrases “whole earth” and “all the land” are utilized in various places in 3rd Nephi chapters 8 and 9. In general, the context appears to be that the “whole earth” is discussed in relation to both the lands northward and southward. “All the land” is sometimes used referring to either the land southward or the land northward, depending on the context, but also is used in a similar context as the “whole earth.” The understanding that these terms are commonly used referring to a limited geographical area typically encompassing the Nephite cultural area has been discussed thoroughly in previous academic articles (Ball, 1993). The conclusion reached is that these terms are referring to a local event that is simply widespread, unless further defined by context.

