



Type: Book Chapter

The Early Jaredite Geographic Correlations

Author(s): Jerry D. Grover, Jr.

Source: *The Swords of Shule: Jaredite Land Northward Chronology, Geography, and Culture in Mesoamerica*

Published: Provo, UT; Challex Scientific Publishing, 2018

Pages: 99-108

Chapter 11

The Early Jaredite Geographic Correlations

Initial Jaredite geographic locations in the vicinity of the Olmec heartland can be determined by utilizing the Sumerian meanings of place names and personal names in conjunction with some geographical indicators from the text. This is a new approach that will assist in determining more exact geographical locations. Unlike most proposed Book of Mormon maps, here we will provide a detailed discussion of the underlying geographic references. The initial Gulf of Mexico landing gives little information, other than that the Jaredite landing group “went forth upon the face of the land” and later “spread upon the face of the land” (Ether 6:13, 18). It is worth pointing out that in addition to place names being toponyms, places in the Book of Mormon also take their names from founding kings or other founding leaders (2 Nephi 5:8, Mosiah 18:4). On at least one occasion, a leader took the name of the existing place name:

Alma 24:3

Now the king conferred the kingdom upon his son, and he called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

This practice may be more indicative of the Nephites than of the Jaredites, but is important to remember. Also, it is recognized that in order for any geographical construction to be defensible, the geography must be consistent with *all* geographical references in the Book of Mormon.

Corihor and Omer

Ether 7:4–5 indicates that the rebel son Corihor “went over” to the land of Nehor (from the land of Moron) and then gathered an army, returned, and then “went up” to the land of Moron. In Ether 7:6, Moroni₂ adds an editorial comment saying that the land of Moron was “near the land which is called Desolation by the Nephites.” Moron was identified as “where the king dwelt” and has a West Semitic etymology derived from *mr’*, “lord,” with the attenuation (softening) of the aleph, as in *mrn*, “our lord,” (Book of Mormon Onomasticon 2016).

Without concerning ourselves with the later Nephite location of Desolation at this point, there is some geographic information we can derive here. First, there must be two ways to arrive at the land of Moron from the land of Nehor—one by going back “over,” as Corihor initially came, and the other by going “up,” as he did with his army. Second, the word *Nehor* has a variety of possible meanings in Hebrew and can be potentially derived from the Hebrew *nāhār* meaning “stream” or “river” (Strong’s Concordance 2016, No. 5104). The masculine noun נהר (*nahar*) means “river” or “stream” (Genesis 2:10, Numbers 24:6, Isaiah 48:18). This word is applied to rivers such as the Euphrates and the rivers of Eden but, curiously, never to the Jordan or the Nile. *Nehor* also contains the Hebrew word *hor*, meaning “hole” or “cavern.” In addition, the Hebrew word *nahar* means “snorting,” and the Hebrew word *hori* means “a burning.” The masculine noun חור (*hur*) means “something white,” or “white stuff.” Abarim Publications (2016) provides another potential Hebrew etymology related to “snorting”:

A certain grammatical form of the verb חרר (*harar* ו, or so it is assumed) also leads to נחר (*nhr*). This happens in three places in the Bible:

In Psalm 69:3, where Green translates it with scorched and NAS with parched.

Ezekiel 15:4, where Green and NAS both translate with charred.

Jeremiah 6:29, where Green translated with blow, and NAS has blow fiercely.

(www.abarim-publications.com 2016)

Another derivation from Abarim Publications provides the meaning of “ground between two hills” and “hollow”:

The root חור (*hwr II*) is not used in Biblical Hebrew but in cognate languages it means to bend or turn, or as a noun it means hollow or depressed ground between hills. Its sole derivative is the masculine noun חר (*hor*), meaning hollow. This noun occurs only once in Scriptures, in Numbers 33:32.

Thus, Nehor would contain at least one significant river, situated between two hills and containing a volcanic vent(s), such as a fumarole (hole, snorting, burning, charred, blow fiercely, white stuff [steam/off-gas]).

Later, in Ether 7:8–10, Shule “came to” the hill Ephraim and “did moulten out of the hill.” He then made swords and armed men, and “he returned to the city of Nehor” and defeated Corihor and “obtained the kingdom,” restoring it to his father. At this point in time (approximately 2425 BC), the kingdom appears to consist, at a minimum, of the land of Moron and the land of Nehor.

In Ether 7:15–16, Noah₁ rebels against Shule and obtains “the land of their first inheritance” and becomes king “over that part of the land.” In Ether 7:16, Noah₁ takes Shule and “carried him away captive into Moron.” From this, it is clear that Moron (no mention of whether it is a city or a land here) is part of the “land of their first inheritance.”

From this point, the kingdom remained divided into two kingdoms (Ether 7:20), with one kingdom going to Cohor, Noah₁’s son. *Cohor* contains the element “-hor” and so would share some of the same meanings as *Nehor*, listed above. In Sumerian, *KU*, the equivalent of “Co-,” means “hole.”

After Cohor’s reign, his son Nimrod united the kingdom (Ether 7:22). Sometime later, Jared, the son of the then king Omer, rebelled and “came and dwelt in the land of Heth” (Ether 8:2). The land of Heth is thus presumably outside of the lands of Nehor and Moron. The following summarizes possible Hebrew roots of *Heth*:

The root-verb חתה (*hata*) means to seize or snatch up, usually of fire or coals. It occurs four times: Psalm 52:5, Proverbs 6:27, Proverbs 25:22, Isaiah 30:14. This verb’s sole extant derivative is the feminine noun מחתה (*mahta*), meaning fire pan or censer (Exodus 25:38, Leviticus 10:1).

(www.abarim-publications.com 2016)

By flattery, Jared₂ then gained control of half of the kingdom (Ether 8:3). Although not overtly stated, the land of Heth would likely have been adjacent to either the land of Nehor or the land of Moron. It was most likely adjacent to Nehor: since Jared₂ was able to gain control of half of the kingdom, Heth must have been in direct contact with half the kingdom, and since the place of the king was typically Moron and Omer the king was not at that point deposed, it would seem likely that king Omer’s half of the kingdom would be primarily the land of Moron.

Later, in response to a secret plot to murder him, king Omer “departed out of the land” with his family and “traveled many days, and came over and passed by the hill of Shim, and came over by the place where the Nephites were destroyed, and from thence eastward, and came to a place which was called Ablom, by the seashore” (Ether 9:3). Since the land of Moron was the place where the king dwelt (if possible), it is reasonable to assume that Omer departed from Moron. It is not clear if the “many days” travel also included the time taken for the “departure from the land,” but it more likely describes the entire journey. On the journey, it is clear that there were two ascents and descents, one as they “came over” and passed by the hill Shim, and the other when they “came over” by the place where the Nephites were destroyed. In Sumerian, the word *shim* means a type of basin. Sumerian roots for *Ablom* are:

ab: sea

bal: to unload (a boat)

ba-al-la, *ba-al-la₂*, *ba-al-me*, *ba-al-la-me*, *ba-al-um* (forms of *bal*)

bala: to cross; to transfer (boats over weirs, etc., blocking a stream)

bal-a-am₆, *bal-a-me*, *bal-am₃*, *bal-am₆* (forms of *bala*)

lam: to flourish; to make grow luxuriantly

(Grover 2017)

Ablom does not appear to have been previously settled since it is only identified as a “place,” not a “city” or “land.” A subsequent prince, Nimrah, with a small number of men, “fled out of the land” and “came over” to join Omer (Ether 9:9). Different from Omer’s route, Nimrah’s route indicates only one general ascent and descent. Sumerian roots for *Nimrah* are *nim*, which means “(to be) high, elevated” and “easterner,” and *ra*, meaning “(to be) pure; (to be) clear.” Nimrah occurs as a place name in the Bible:

The name Nimrah occurs only once in the Bible. It belonged to a place on the east side of the Jordan, which was a land good for grazing livestock, which was why the people of the tribes of Gad and Reuben chose to settle there instead of west of the Jordan (Numbers 32:3).

Because the land directly east of the Jordan was Moab, most scholars assume that Nimrah was the same as the Moabitic town called Nimrim and the one called Beth-nimrah. The name Nimrim occurs twice in the Bible, both times in a prophetic passage directed at Moab, and each time connected to proverbially clear waters, which both Isaiah and Jeremiah foresee turning turbid (Isaiah 15:6, Jeremiah 48:34).

(www.abarim-publications.com 2016)

It is not clear where Nimrah lived or where he departed from. It is likely that his father, as king, was located in Moron, but based on the etymology and biblical reference of *Nimrah*, it is equally likely that he lived or originated from a place on the east side of the river in the land of Nehor (*Nehor* having the Hebrew designation of “river”). Nehor as the initial base for Nimrah seems most likely, and it is not too far to Ablom—Nimrah knew where Omer was and found him without much difficulty.

Shortly after, a civil war began that eventually reduced the entire population of the kingdom to 30 persons plus those that were residing with Omer. Omer was then “restored again” to “the land of his inheritance” (Ether 9:13). It is not clear if this land refers to the land of Moron or to the entire kingdom. According to the timeline worked out earlier, this event would have occurred around 2300 BC.

At this juncture, it is possible to begin constructing the Jaredite geography in the Olmec heartland. Certain features are obvious, namely, that there is a sea in an eastward direction where Omer went. One had to ascend and descend at least once to get to the eastern sea, as Nimrah did, so there must be some significant elevation (hills or mountains) adjacent to the sea. The only place in the Olmec heartland where this geographic situation is found is the Tuxtla Mountains (see figure 30).

The next step is to use the geographic meanings embedded in the various names to identify their locations. Summarizing the discussion above, the following places and their associated geographic features need to be located:

Shim: A significant hill located in a basin

Ablom: A location on the eastern sea where boats can be navigated and loaded and unloaded (a harbor)

Nehor: A location with a river, with at least one hot, burning, snorting, smoking hole (volcanic vent)

In the entire Tuxtla Mountain area, there is only one significant hill that is located in a relatively enclosed basin. It is located approximately 2.4 miles south of the town of Tecolapán, on the northwestern extremity of the Tuxtla Mountains. I have been unable to locate a local name, so the hill will be referred to here as the Tecolapán Hill.



Figure 30. Map of the Tuxtla Mountains area.

The only reasonable harbor located adjacent to the Tuxtla Mountains is the Laguna Sontecomapan. There is another harbor possibility at the discharge point of the Coatzacoalcos River, but it is some 20 miles south of the Tuxtlas, and there would be virtually no scenario where one would “come over” the Tuxtlas to get there.

As for the rivers in the land of Nehor, the Tuxtlas are crisscrossed by hundreds of waterways, ranging from tiny arroyos to clear mountain streams and mud-laden giants. There is also an indication that the land of Nehor contained volcanic vents, which indicates an upland river closer to the volcanic activity and rules out much of the southern Tuxtlas, which do not have much volcanic activity. Also, since Ablom was a place of refuge that one had to go over to get to, the river associated with Nehor would be expected to be on the backside (southern side) of the Tuxtla Mountains.

Since we know the location of Shim and Ablom, it is possible to reconstruct the flights of Omer and then Nimrah on a map. Given the location of Tecolapán Hill is almost directly west of the Laguna Sontecomapan (Ablom) and given that there are no ridgelines or elevations north of the Tecolapán Hill, Omer and his party must have been traveling from north to south (remember that there were two ascents and descents prior to arriving at Ablom) when they “came over” and passed by the hill Shim. After the first ascent and descent, passing the hill Shim, Omer and his

group then “came over by the place where the Nephites were destroyed” and went eastward and “came to” Ablom (see figure 31).



Figure 31. Map of Omer’s route to Ablom.

Omer’s journey took “many days” traveling “with his family.” Sorenson estimates that a group of people such as Omer’s would probably move about 11 miles per day, given that they were moving with women, children, and probably flocks, etc. (Sorenson 2000, 56). The modern Highway 180 runs from the current town of Tapalapan (likely within the land of Moron) to Catemaco, and a local road runs from there over to La Barra de Sontecomapan (in the Ablom locality), for a total distance of approximately 50 miles. Thus the journey would have taken a minimum of four or five days, and probably a few more if one considers possible differences in the terrain (there are rougher routes than the highway route) and the additional time it would have taken if they attempted to travel covertly, which may have been the case. This route satisfies the criteria of “many days” of travel specified in the Book of Mormon.

Nimrah appears to have taken roughly the same route (or the latter part of the route), but since he “came over” only once, he either came from the Santiago Tuxtla/San Andrés Tuxtla area, or he came from Moron and stayed higher up on the slope of the San Martín volcano before descending to Ablom. Given the meaning of his name is associated with water and rivers, he likely came from the land of rivers found in the Santiago Tuxtla/San Andrés Tuxtla area.

Since the land of Moron has now been identified, it is now possible to definitively identify Corihor’s movements. Since Corihor “went over” to the land of Nehor (from the land of Moron), the only place he could have come over to reach a place with significant rivers is the Santiago Tuxtla/San Andrés Tuxtla area (see figures 32 and 33).

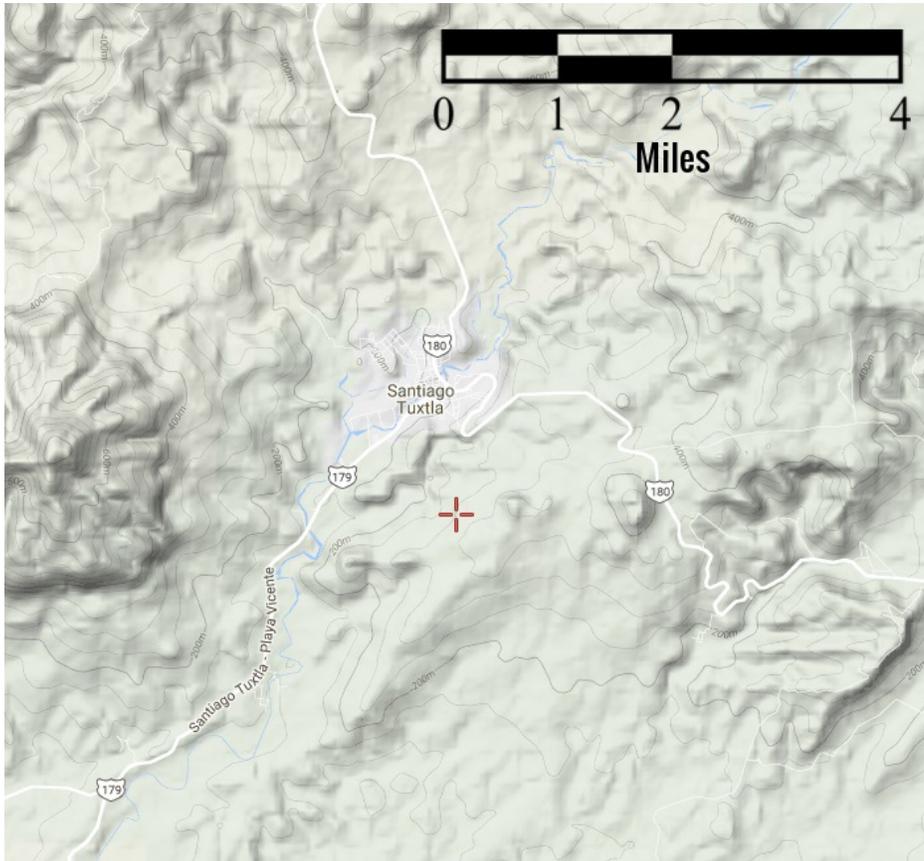


Figure 32. Map of Pixixiapan/Tuxtla River.

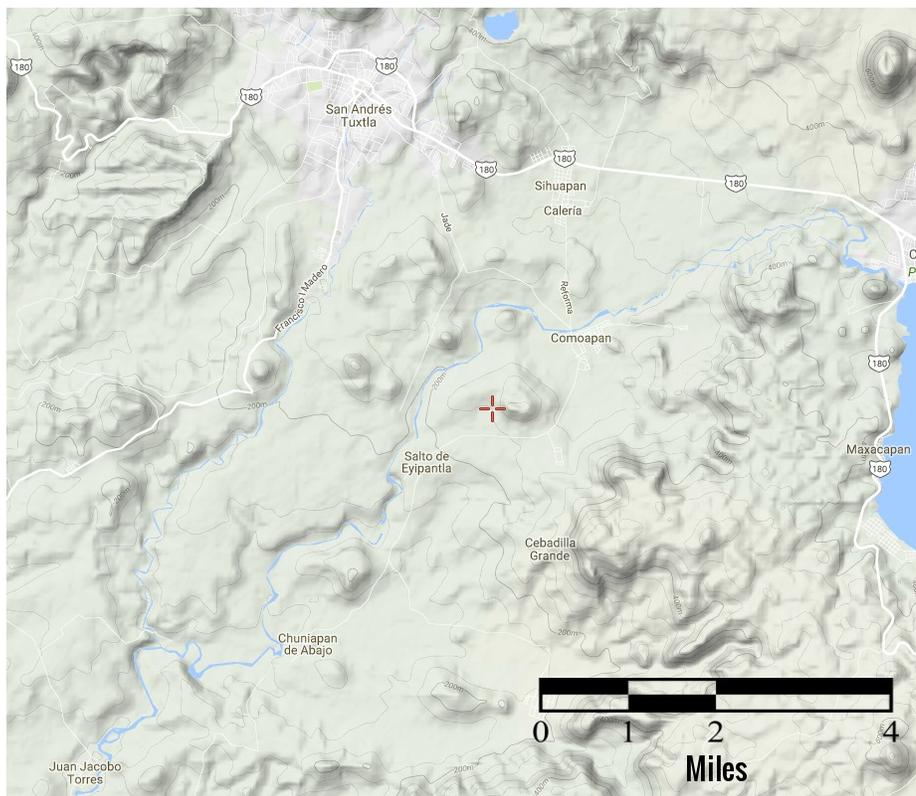


Figure 33. Map of San Andrés/Catemaco Rivers.

The meaning of *Nehor* being “river” and with the principal river in the Tuxtlas being located there (Catemaco River and Rio Tepango branch through San Andrés Tuxtla) verifies this area as at least part of the land of *Nehor*.

This area is also consistent with the military movement back to Moron where the army returned and then “went up” to the land of Moron by going around to the south of the elevated terrain thus avoiding going “over.” The etymology of *Nehor* indicates it is positioned between hills, which could be the hill El Vigia (Ramah), located on the northwest, and the hill area west and south of Lake Catemaco. Finally, further upslope to the northeast, on the San Martín volcano, are some geologically identified volcanic vents, which may have been active in recent times. This satisfies the etymological indicator that the land of *Nehor* contained volcanic vent(s), such as a fumarole (see figure 48).

The extent of the land of Moron at this early point in Jaredite time appears to consist of the gently sloping elevated terrain on the northwestern side of the Tuxtla Mountains, somewhere around 600 feet above sea level.

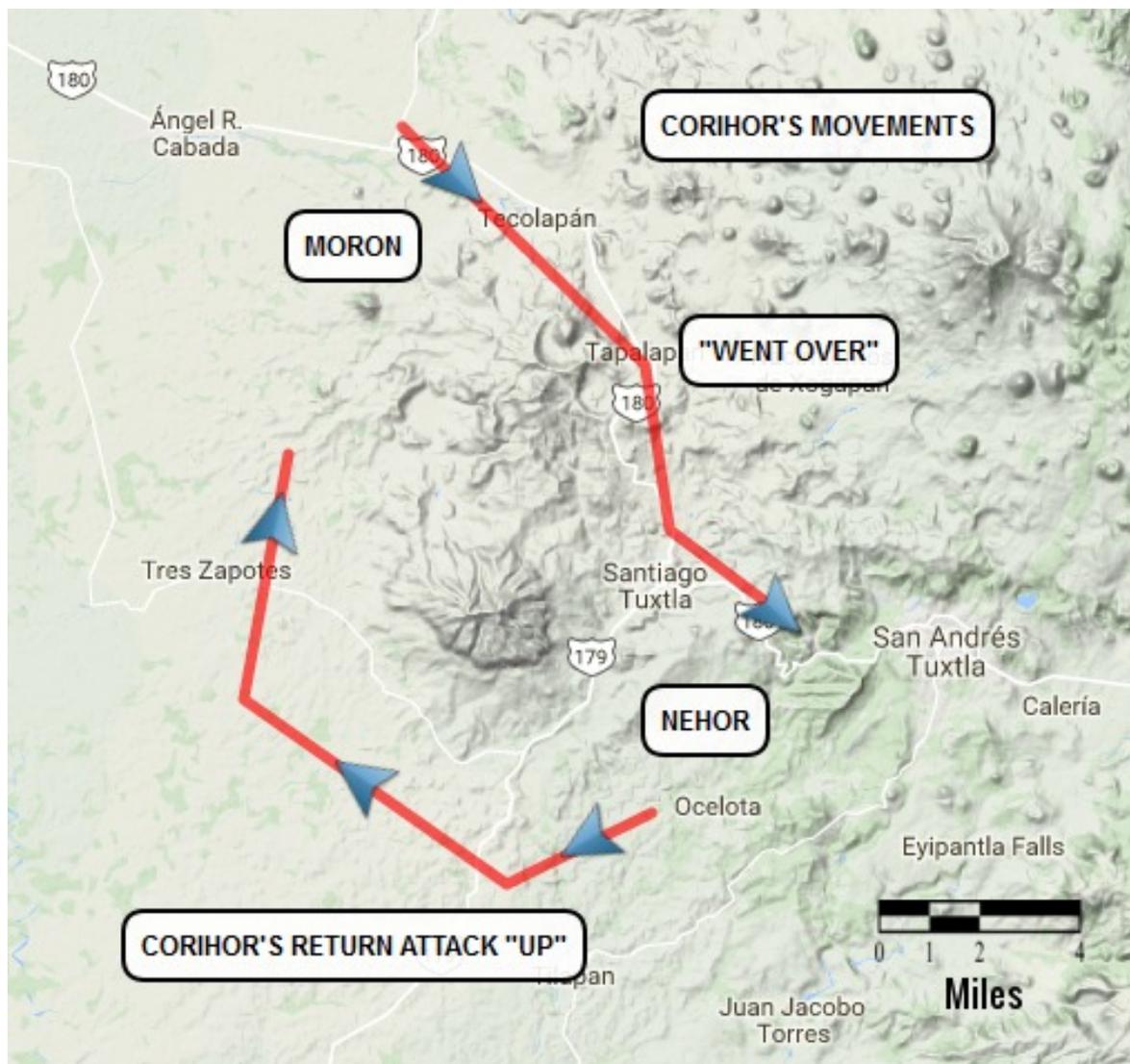


Figure 34. Map of Corihor's movements from and to Moron.

The Land of Heth and the Hill Ephraim

As previously discussed, the Hebrew etymology for Heth is:

hata: to seize or snatch up, usually of fire or coals

mahta: fire pan or censer

As indicated, Heth is likely in a volcanic area. The active volcanic area that is adjacent to the land of Nehor and to Moron is shown in figure 48. Since Jared₂ left and dwelt in the land of Heth, yet at the same time was able to gain control of half the kingdom, he must have been within “flattering distance” to Nehor, which would mean the land of Heth was adjacent to the land of Nehor.

The Tuxtla Mountains are considered a volcanic complex in that there are multiple volcanoes. Some have been long inactive, and the principal volcano that is still active is the San Martín volcano. The San Martín volcano has historically exhibited large, explosive volcanic events. Other, much smaller cinder cones volcanoes which are abundant from the summit of the San Martín volcano extend southeast to Lake Catemaco. The land of Heth would contain, at a minimum, the cinder cone volcano area but likely also included the larger San Martín volcano (see figure 35).

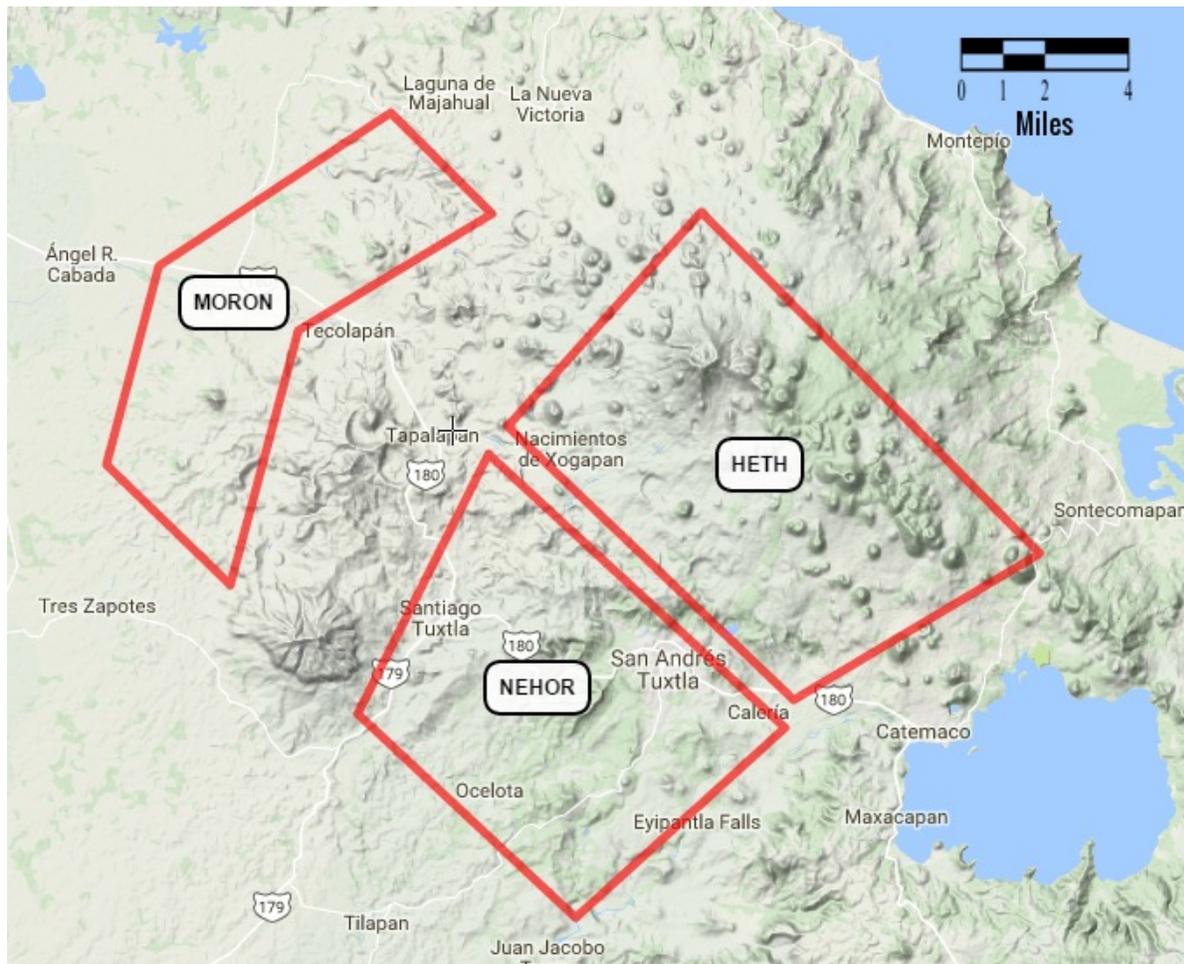


Figure 35. Map of the lands of Moron, Nehor, and Heth.

Etymologically, the name *Ephraim* in Hebrew can be derived from:

parur: boiling pot

pur: casting lots, such as casting pebbles up in the air

paras: to break (through); causes life to cease and turns a living body into dust

paras and *parash*: to spread out

paras: to break in two or divide

Given that the meanings of *Ephraim* include “boiling pot,” “casting lots” such as casting pebbles up in the air, “to break (through)” -- causing life to cease and turn a living body into dust, “to spread out,” and “to break in two or divide,” the obvious match for the hill called Ephraim is a volcano and, more specifically, a cinder cone volcano.

Cinder cones are so named because they consist of pyroclastic debris formed by explosive eruptions consisting of gas charged lava bubbling or lava fountains from a vent. When gas-charged lava is blown into the air, it breaks into small fragments that solidify and fall as either cinders, clinkers, or scoria around the vent forming a circular cone.

During the waning stage of a cinder-cone eruption, the magma has lost most of its gas content. This gas-depleted magma does not fountain but rather oozes quietly into the crater or beneath the base of the cone as lava. Lava rarely issues from the top (except as a fountain during the initial eruption) because the loose, uncemented cinders are too weak to support the pressure exerted by molten rock as it rises toward the surface through the central vent. Because it contains so few gas bubbles, the molten lava is denser than the bubble-rich cinders. Thus, the lava often burrows out along the bottom of the cinder cone, lifting the less-dense cinders like a cork on water, and advances outward, creating lava flow around the cone’s base (Colorado Geological Survey 2015). Cinder cones can erupt over long periods of time; the Paricutin volcano, which is located 200 miles west of Mexico City and came out of a farmer’s cornfield in 1943, experienced an eruption that lasted nine years.



Figure 36. Molten lava spews into the air outside of a cinder cone in a new eruption at Kilauea Volcano on the island of Hawaii on July 24 and 25, 1983. (Associated Press 1983)

The activity of a cinder cone volcano mirrors exactly the etymological description of the hill Ephraim. First, the bubbling gas-charged eruption matches the “boiling pot” etymology. Second, the discharge of small fragments up into the air matches the meaning of casting pebbles into the air. Finally, its description as a hill is consistent with the smaller size relative to the adjacent San Martín volcano. Because there are many cinder cones in the Tuxtla volcanic complex, it is probably not possible to identify the exact hill Ephraim (it may also have been destroyed or covered by subsequent volcanic activity); however, since Tuxtla cinder cones are confined to a fairly specific zone, we can identify a fairly restricted area as the location for the hill Ephraim (see figure 37).

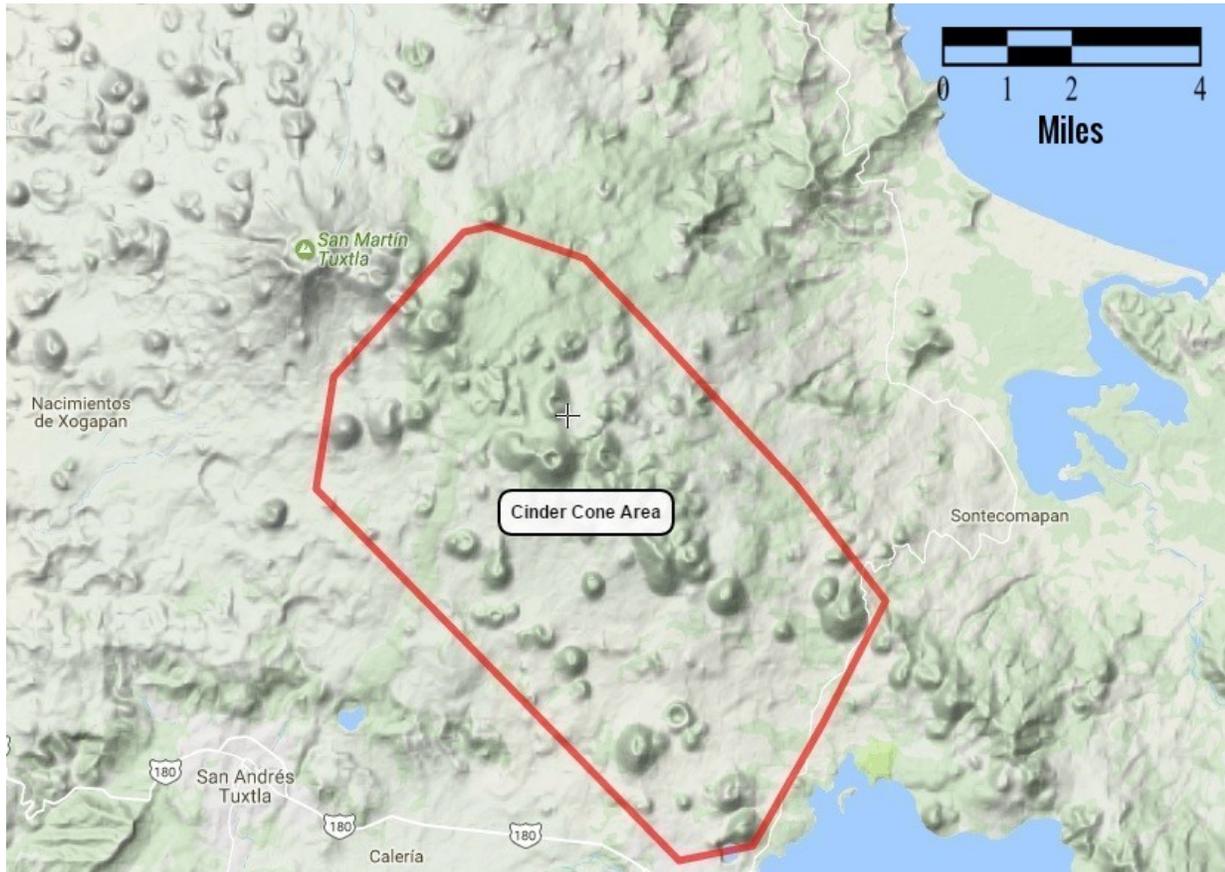


Figure 37. Map of active cinder-cone area and location of the hill Ephraim.