



Type: Magazine Article

An "Ideal" Book of Mormon Geography

Author(s): Lynn C. Layton

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 41, No. 7 (July 1938)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 394–395, 439

Abstract: This article contains a map of the proposed geography of the Book of Mormon but does not super-impose this geography over a present-day map. The author makes an analysis of the geographical descriptions in the Book of Mormon text.

AN "IDEAL" BOOK of MORMON GEOGRAPHY

By LYNN C. LAYTON

Without attempting to locate the scene of action on the present-day map the author here suggests a feasible location of names and places with respect to each other, as revealed by the text itself.

ZARAHEMLA! What glorious thoughts are brought to the mind of any Latter-day Saint by the name of this great metropolis of the ancient Nephites. Here lived the rulers of the people of Nephi, from Mosiah to Mormon. From here Moroni and the brave young general, Teancum, went forth to fight the degenerate sons of Laman, led by the wicked Amalikhiah. From the neighboring land of Jershon, Helaman led his two thousand "Little Sons" to aid the sorely beset Antipus. Here for six hundred years a great people lived, loved, fought their battles and built a great civilization.

To any Latter-day Saint these stories are as familiar as if they were a part of our own history, yet the place of Zarahemla and its surrounding lands remain undetermined. What satisfaction if we could picture the Sidon as we do the Jordan, a definite part of the earth, could visualize the battles fought and the people who fought them in their proper settings. Teachers of the Book of Mormon know the difficulties of presenting to a group of students the missionary journeys of Alma and the Sons of Mosiah when they themselves have only a vague idea of the lands visited, their distance from each other or the natural barriers encountered.

It has often been said that little can be known of the geography of the Book of Mormon because of the great changes which took place at the time of the Crucifixion. Before accepting this theory, remember that while much of the record is a history of events which occurred before the meridian of time, the historian, Mormon, lived some four hundred years after that time. A careful study of the book shows that most of the references to travel or geography are phrased in his words, not those of the original authors. After several years of study the author is convinced that the Book of Mormon contains sufficient information for the student to construct a map of Zarahemla and its surrounding lands.

As the River Sidon played such an important part in the history of the Nephites, even until the days of Mormon, and was one great physical feature of the land which remained unchanged during this period, it will,

MANY individual members of the Church, in private capacity, have expressed their views and their theories concerning Book of Mormon geography. Here is another view—representing merely the personal beliefs of one student of the subject and not necessarily representing the views of the Church or its members generally. But this presentation is unique in that it does not attempt to place the scene of action on the present-day map, but merely indicates the relative positions of one place with respect to another, as inferred from a study of the text itself.

if located, form a sort of base meridian for the construction of a map.

In Alma 22:27 Mormon gives a description of the land ruled over by the king of the Lamanites in the year 90 B. C. He speaks of a "narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west, and round about on the borders . . . of the wilderness which was on the north, by the land of Zarahemla, through the borders of Manti, by the head of the river Sidon, running from the east towards the west—and thus were the Nephites and Lamanites divided." In this passage we learn three facts about the Sidon, that its headwaters are in a narrow strip of wilderness

which runs from the sea on the east to the sea on the west, that the head of the Sidon is north of the Land of Nephi, and that the Land of Manti is near the wilderness in which the Sidon has its source.

Reading from Alma 16:7 we find that Zoram and his sons (Nephites coming from Zarahemla) crossed the Sidon "with their armies, and marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness, which was on the east side of the river Sidon." About 74 B. C. the great Nephi general, Moroni, fought a campaign in this region. Here he ambushed the Lamanites as described in Alma 43:25-44. Paying special attention to verses 31, 32 we read, "Therefore, he divided his army and brought a part over into the valley, and concealed them on the east, and on the south of the hill Riplah; and the remainder he concealed in the west valley, on the west of the river Sidon, and so down into the borders of the land Manti." (Read verses 31-42.) From these passages we can be sure that near its head the Sidon flowed from south to north.

That the Sidon still flowed from south to north near Zarahemla is shown by Alma 2:15: "The Amlicites came upon the hill Amnihu, which was east of the river Sidon, which ran by the land of Zarahemla." And in Alma 8:3 we read that Alma went from Zarahemla to the "Land of Melek, on the west of the river Sidon."

Apparently the Sidon flowed into the sea on the north as Alma 3:3

speaks of the bones of the slain Lamanites whose bodies were thrown into the river as being "in the depths of the sea."

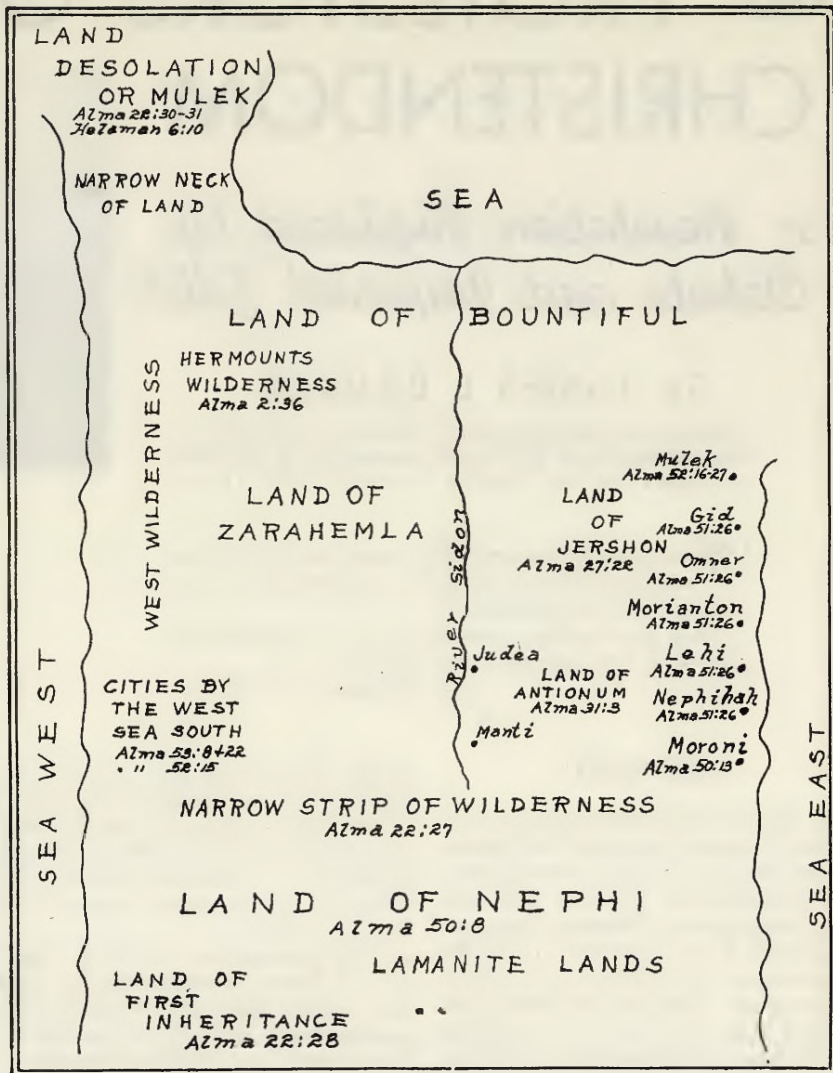
To begin our skeleton map it is necessary to consider the land of Nephi, which includes in its general term all of the lands held by the Lamanites in the first century B. C. Here the first Nephite city was built by Nephi the son of Lehi. Nephi 5:6-17. From this city Mosiah went forth to discover the land of Zarahemla. In the first century B. C. it was ruled by the Lamanites and was the land to which the sons of Mosiah went to preach the Gospel. The extent of this Lamanite kingdom is outlined by Mormon in Alma 22:27, and we have learned that it was separated from Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness which ran east and west from sea to sea. "And the land of Nephi did run in a straight course from the east sea to the west." Alma 50:8.

Now we are presented with a unique situation: The Sidon running from south to north ends in a sea. The Land of Nephi running east and west runs from sea to sea. The narrow strip of wilderness divides the Land of Nephi from Zarahemla, or the Nephite lands, and also runs from sea to sea, running east and west. If you will note this forms a T, with the Sidon as the stem and the Land of Nephi as the top bar. From this T and the east and west sea shores we can locate many of the ancient lands.

The Land of Zarahemla was near the Sidon. In the year 322 A. D. the last wars of the Nephites began "in the borders of Zarahemla by the waters of Sidon." Mormon 1:10.

About 81 B. C. Zoram and his sons left Zarahemla and "crossed over the river Sidon, with their armies, and marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness, which was on the east side of the river Sidon." Alma 16:7. This passage together with Alma 2:15-37 (pay particular attention to verses 15 and 27) show that Zarahemla was on the west of the Sidon. They also fix Manti as on the east near the head of Sidon.

Zarahemla was the center of the Nephite lands in the days of Moroni. In the year 62 B. C. Moroni wrote an epistle from the city of Mulek to Pahoran, who was then chief judge of Zarahemla, accusing him of neglecting to send reinforcements to the frontiers "because ye are in the heart of our country . . . surrounded by security." Alma 60:19.



The above diagram shows the relationship of Book of Mormon lands to each other in the first century B. C. as developed in the accompanying article. In fitting this diagram to any map, allowance must be made for the fact that rivers, sea coasts, etc. which deviate several degrees from a meridian may be said to run North or South.

It is suggested that the student try to trace the course of the following journeys or military campaigns on the above diagram.

Alma 43:17-54, 44:22-24, 51:22-37, 52:1-40, 56:9-57, 62:14-38, 63:4-6; Helaman 1:14-33; Mormon 1:6. (Note here that Zarahemla was in the Land Southward.)

Many other lands and cities may be located by using the Book of Mormon index as a guide.

No attempt is made here to suggest the location of any cities in the Land Northward.

In the year 51 B. C. Coriantumr, a renegade Nephite, led a great Lamanite army "down to the land of Zarahemla." Helaman 1:17-18. After capturing Zarahemla he "did march forth with a large army, even towards the city of Bountiful; for it was his determination to go forth and cut his way through with the sword, that he might obtain the north parts of the land." Helaman 1:23. "But behold, this march of Coriantumr through the center of the land gave Moronihah great advantage over them." Helaman 1:25.

These verses establish the fact that Zarahemla was in the center of the Nephite lands, also that the city

Bountiful was north of Zarahemla.

The Land Bountiful was near the "small neck of land which divided the land southward from the land northward" and was inhabited by the Nephites "even from the east unto the west sea." Alma 22:29-33. Note here that verse 32 tells us that the "land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water." This use of the term "land of Zarahemla" apparently includes not only the specific land surrounding the city of Zarahemla, but all Nephite lands of this period.

The city of Bountiful was separated from the city of Mulek by

(Concluded on page 439)

AN "IDEAL" BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY

(Concluded from page 395)

plains, but was near it, as on one occasion Moroni sought to induce the Lamanites to "meet them upon the plains between the two cities." Alma 52:20.

Mulek was one of a number of cities which were on "the east borders by the seashore." Alma 51:26. It was from here that Teancum fled northward on one occasion to reach the city of Bountiful. Alma 52:23-27.

Thus we establish the land Bountiful to the north of Zarahemla and the City Bountiful in the eastern end of the Land Bountiful.

The City of Moroni is also important to us as it was built "by the

east sea: and it was on the south by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites." Alma 50:13. This would place it on the east end of the T. This location is important as Moroni was one of the cities which sank beneath the sea at the time of the crucifixion. III Nephi 8:9.

It would be impossible to place more of the lands in an article of this length, but with the use of the accompanying chart and the text of the Book of Mormon many more may be located with surprising accuracy. Perhaps if all the requirements of the text are considered, the Book of Mormon student may locate the Land of Zarahemla on the present-day map.

THE LORD'S WAY OUT OF BONDAGE

(Continued from page 401)

pose of the journey was withheld. President Snow answered the call to go, and then wondered and worried until further light was given.

He finally went to bed and rested fairly well during the night, appearing to feel very much better the following morning. It was Wednesday, May 17, the day on which the special conference opened in the tabernacle in St. George. It was during one of these meetings that President Snow received the renewed revelation on tithing. I was sitting at a table on the stand, reporting the proceedings, when all at once father paused in his discourse. Complete stillness filled the room. I shall never forget the thrill as long as I live. When he commenced to speak again his voice strengthened and the inspiration of God seemed to come over him, as well as over the entire assembly. His eyes seemed to brighten and his countenance to shine. He was filled with unusual power. Then he revealed to the Latter-day Saints the vision that was before him.

God manifested to him there and then not only the purpose of the call to visit the Saints in the South, but also Lorenzo Snow's special mission, the great work for which God had prepared and preserved him, and he unveiled the vision to the people. He told them that he could see, as he had never realized before, how the law of tithing had been neglected by the people, also that the Saints, themselves, were heavily in debt, as well as the Church, and now through strict obedience to this law—the

paying of a full and honest tithing—not only would the Church be relieved of its great indebtedness, but through the blessings of the Lord this would also be the means of freeing the Latter-day Saints from their individual obligations, and they would become a prosperous people.

Directly on tithing, President Snow said:

The word of the Lord is: The time has now come for every Latter-day Saint, who calculates to be prepared for the future and to hold his feet strong upon a proper foundation, to do the will of the Lord and to pay his tithing in full. That is the word of the Lord to you, and it will be the word of the Lord to every settlement throughout the land of Zion.

President Snow then referred to the terrible drought which had continued so severely for three years in the South. The Virgin River and all its tributaries were virtually dry. One old resident stated:

This has been the driest winter in thirty-five years; and the winter before, the driest in thirty-four years. The Pine Valley Mountains, usually covered with snow, are comparatively barren. Conditions are very discouraging to the families of this locality. The lucern and grain are drying up now and the recent frost played havoc with the grapes. Prospects are very discouraging indeed.—*Salt Lake Herald*, May 21, 1899.

Four days later this statement was made:

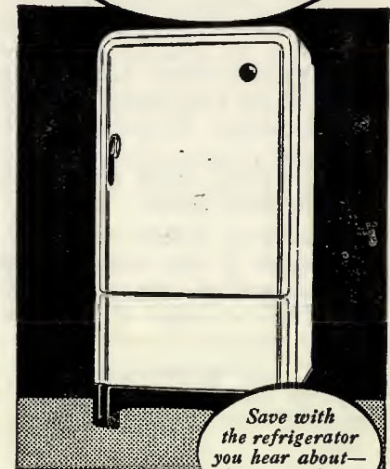
This is the coldest May, and the driest year the Dixie people have known.—*Salt Lake Herald*, May 25, 1899.

President Snow said, after his return:

All through "Dixie" we found everything
(Concluded on page 440)

NO
Noise
... for it has no
moving parts in its
freezing system

SERVEL
ELECTROLUX
THE Gas REFRIGERATOR



- Continued low running cost
- Lasting efficiency
- More years of satisfaction
- Savings that pay for it

Here's a word to the thrifty: With a Gas refrigerator you're free from costly upkeep expense because this silent, different refrigerator has no moving parts in its freezing system. No noise, no wear. See the new models. Easy terms.

**MOUNTAIN FUEL
SUPPLY COMPANY**

36 SOUTH STATE SALT LAKE CITY
Serving 21 Utah Communities