

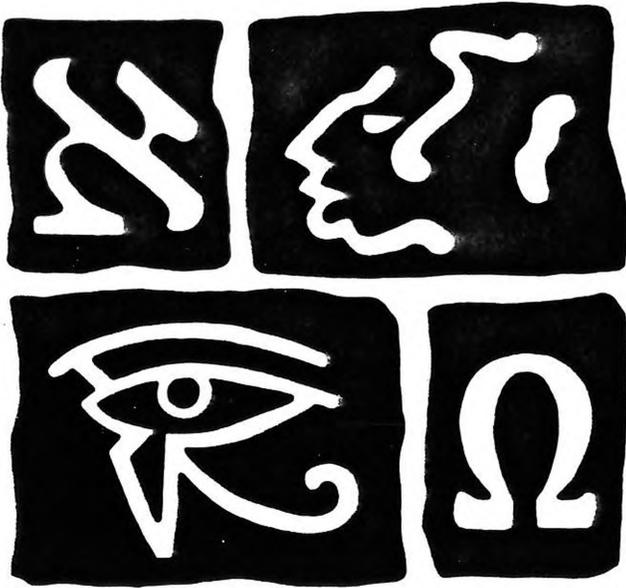


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Author(s): John L. Sorenson
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John L. Sorenson

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F.A.R.M.S.
P.O. BOX 7113
UNIVERSITY STATION
PROVO, UTAH 84602

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Fortifications in the Book of Mormon Account Compared with Mesoamerican Fortifications

John L. Sorenson

The Book of Mormon makes abundant reference to the construction and military use of fortifications by the Nephites and Lamanites. From the point of view of placing the scripture in its correct external setting, the remains of fortifications will be among the most useful materials that archaeologists can use to compare the excavated record of culture history with the scriptural record.

This study compares what the Book of Mormon says about fortifications with what is known from archaeology and history about fortifying in Mesoamerica before the arrival of the Spanish. (I take central and southern Mesoamerica to constitute the “land of promise” of the Nephites, where the New World events told in the Book of Mormon took place.) The prevailing expert view has long been that Mesoamerica was largely free from military conflict. In recent years that view has begun to change to a picture more like that conveyed in the scripture—that warfare was a frequent or even dominant concern with profound consequences for ancient society. This article provides documentation for this growing congruence.

Mesoamerican Fortifications

The stereotype is firmly entrenched that, except for the centuries immediately preceding the Spanish Conquest (termed the Post-Classic Period), warfare was unimportant or virtually absent.¹ Even serious scholarship from two generations ago—by Armillas, Rands, and Palerm²—that demonstrated the contrary was generally ignored, so strong was the bias. By the 1960s some Mayanists had begun to acknowledge that military activity probably had had some significance in their area even prior to the Post-Classic Period (A.D. 1000-1521). Webster’s important publication on his excavations at Becan,³ which showed that this city in the middle of the Yucatan Peninsula was dramatically fortified before A.D. 300, ought to have given the *coup de grace* to the old notions, yet even now little attention is being paid by most Mesoamericanists to war as a factor in the area’s cultural development.

I have examined virtually all the relevant literature on this matter of which I am aware. Table 1 includes 34 regions of Mesoamerica in which more than 200 specific places were fortified and over 100 others were considered to have been sited with military defense in mind. The materials are drawn from over 75 publications.⁴ Unquestionably other reported sites have been missed in my search.

¹ David L. Webster, *Defensive Earthworks at Becan, Campeche, Mexico: Implications for Maya Warfare*. Tulane University Middle American Research Institute Publication 41 (New Orleans, 1976), 1-2.

² Pedro Armillas, “Fortalezas Mexicanas,” *Cuadernos Americanos* 41 (Sept.-Oct. 1948): 143-63; “Mesoamerican Fortifications,” *Antiquity* 25 (1951): 77-86; Angel Palerm, “Notas sobre las Construcciones Militares y la Guerra en Mesoamérica,” *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Anales* 8 (1956): 123-34; Robert L. Rands, “Some Evidences of Warfare in Classic Maya Art,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1952.

³ Webster, *Defensive Earthworks*, 3-4.

⁴ To be published elsewhere.

Table 1. Numbers of Fortified or Defensive Sites by Area⁵

<u>Area</u>	<u>Named Sites</u>	<u>"Others/Many"</u>
Tarascan area		x
Rio Balsas basin	3	x
Toluca valley	4	x
Hidalgo	1	
Valley of Mexico	15	x
Tlaxcala	8	x
Puebla	5	x
Huasteca	2	x
Northern Veracruz	12	50+
Central Veracruz	8	
Morelos	5	x
Highland Guerrero	1	
Mixteca Baja	1	
Mixteca Alta	7	x
Tehuacán Valley	1	x
Cuicatlan Cañada	17	x
Oaxaca Valley	15	x
Coastal Mixteca	2	
Isthmus of Tehuantepec	2	x
Chiapas Highlands	12	x
Central Depression	10	
Soconusco	5	
Western Highland Guatemala	30	
Central Highland Guatemala	46	x
Alta Verapaz	4	
Baja Verapaz	6	
Usumacinta	1	
Laguna de Terminos	7	x
Campeche-West Yucatan	4	
Petén	12	
Central Yucatan	4	
Northern Yucatan	11	
Western Honduras	4	x
El Salvador	<u>1</u>	
Total	262	

The numbers must not be taken very seriously as a count of the sites actually present in the areas listed. These numbers vary greatly according to accidents of discovery. For example, the large numbers for the highlands of Guatemala are due largely to the survey of John W. Fox and the SUNY-Albany project which investigated the pre-Columbian Quiche state.⁶ Tlaxcala and Puebla

⁵ Far western Mexico is excluded. Sites from that marginal area, such as the famous one of La Quemada, would add nothing but length and emphasis to the picture drawn here. Further, the assignment of a particular site to a specific region is sometimes in doubt due to lack of adequate geographical information in the sources.

⁶ John W. Fox, *Quiche Conquest: Centralism and Regionalism in Highland Guatemalan State Development* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978).

have been examined with considerable care by Angel García Cook.⁷ Serious surveys of other areas could sharply increase the numbers of sites for them. Still, even the limited information in Table 1 will surprise most Mesoamericanists. Few of them hitherto could have named as many as a score of fortified places.

After all, it is not easy to identify some sites as fortified. In some cases archaeologists doing field reconnaissance have reported only hillside "terraces," although further examination has convinced others that these had defensive intent. Nor is it easy to spot moats or ditches which have been obscured by subsequent natural or human action, particularly when the features may lie at a considerable distance—even miles—from built-up sites. Walls can be especially hard to detect where the materials from which they were constructed have been carried off for various nonmilitary purposes by ancient or modern peoples. (The potentially ephemeral nature of walls is demonstrated by one built at a comparatively recent date; the Spanish in colonial days forced the Indians to erect a great stone wall enclosing a huge area of the Valley of Mexico to contain the Europeans' cattle. Over two million people worked for four months on the vast project, yet today no traces of it seem to have been identified.⁸)

The construction date of a fortification may be difficult to establish. A full-fledged excavation often can bracket a possible date but not a definitive one. Many of the sites counted here have been dated not from excavation but from the occurrence of characteristic ceramics found on their surface during brief field surveys. (Some in use at the time of the Conquest are identifiable historically though not archaeologically.) While the use of surface potsherds for dating is useful, construction from earlier periods of inhabitation may be hard to detect today, having been obscured if not destroyed by later construction. For a majority of the sites considered in this project, dating has not been established definitively. I merely report what the literature indicates.

Table 2 gives the site counts according to 10 chronological periods.⁹ The numbers reflect the fact that a single site was often used through more than one period.

Table 2. Fortified and Defensive Sites by Period

<u>Period</u>	<u>Definite</u>	<u>Possible</u>
Early Pre-Classic (pre-1000 B.C.)	0	1
Early Middle Pre-Classic (1000-600 B.C.)	0	2
Late Middle Pre-Classic (600-400 B.C.)	5	1
Late Pre-Classic (400-50 B.C.)	30	2
Proto-Classic (50 B.C.-A.D. 200)	26	8
Early Classic (A.D. 200-400)	14	8
Middle Classic (A.D. 400-650)	11	13
Late Classic (A.D. 650-850)	27	11
Epi-Classic (A.D. 850-1000)	12	10
Post-Classic (A.D. 1000-Conquest)	177	16

⁷ Angel García Cook, "The Historical Importance of Tlaxcala in the Cultural Development of the Central Highlands," in Jeremy A. Sabloff, ed., *Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians*. Vol. 1. Archaeology (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 244-76.

⁸ Henry F. Dobyns, "Estimating Aboriginal American Population: An Appraisal of Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate," *Current Anthropology* 7 (1966): 406.

⁹ Since the periods I am using here are purely chronological, they may differ slightly from phase or period attributions in the original sources, for the authors of those use divergent systems of terminology.

A detailed functional categorization of the elements of fortification technology will not be attempted now. Few sites have been described in sufficient detail to permit that, however, it is possible to point out some of the major innovations that occurred, even according to the limited present evidence. Table 3 summarizes what can be said. (Dates for the periods are given in Table 2. Detail is insufficient to justify distinguishing Early from Late Middle Pre-Classic.) Obviously, further systematic survey and excavation will fill in some of the blanks.

Table 3. Periods of Appearance of Fortification Features

<u>Technological Features</u>	<u>E.Pr.</u>	<u>M.Pr.</u>	<u>L.Pr.</u>	<u>Pro.</u>	<u>E.Cl.</u>	<u>M.Cl.</u>	<u>L.Cl.</u>	<u>Ep.</u>	<u>Post</u>
Earthen barrier		x	x	x			x	x	x
Mud-brick wall									x
Stone wall			x	x			x	x	x
Wooden (palisade) wall			x	?	?			x	x
Spiny-thorny barrier								?	x
Isolated guard posts			x	x		x	x	x	x
Elevated defensive site	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Moated/ditched site		x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Causeway across ditch				?	x		x	x	x
Bridge entrance								x	x
Gateway in wall			x		x				x
Missile throwing site									
—on wall									x
—from a tower		?	x	x					x
Intra-sector(ward) wall				?		?			x
Elite walled enclosure				?		x	x		x
Tall public structures thought to be redoubts						x		x	

Regarding the time of appearance of these features according to region, it is sufficient for my present purpose to note only that areas north and west of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec—the Valley of Mexico, Tlaxcala, Puebla, Oaxaca, the Tehuacan Valley, the Cuicatlan Cañada—show significant experience with defensive fortifying before the time of Christ and perhaps as early as 1300 B.C.¹⁰

Only a single spot in southern Mesoamerica, near the southeastern limit of the culture area, is certain to have been fortified at a notably early date. This is the site of Los Naranjos in western Honduras. An apparent moat around the area of public structures had been constructed there in the Jaral Period to which the excavators assigned the date 800-400 B.C. Since the remains show connections with the Olmec culture of Mexico, perhaps this precocious appearance of fortification technology is owed to influence from the central Mexico area where it appears even earlier. The Los Naranjos construction had attained a respectable 1.3 kilometers in length and seven meters in depth in the Jaral Period. Later, between A.D. 250 and 500 (Eden II Period), the same site, plus a substantial area of fertile farmland, was surrounded by a ditch 5 kilometers in length with a two-meter-high embankment inside it.¹¹

It is tempting to try immediately to explain the facts summarized in Table 3. Current archaeologists would be predisposed to construct either an evolutionary or a historical model to

¹⁰ Cook, "Historical Importance," 252.

¹¹ Claude F. Baudez and Pierre Becquelin, *Archéologie de Los Naranjos Honduras. Études Mesoamericaines*, Vol. 2 (México: Mission Archéologique et Ethnologique Française au Mexique, 1973), 3-6, 69.

manage the data. The former schema might presuppose that warfare and fortifying activity constituted adaptations to stresses from population growth and the concurrent development or collapse of sociopolitical structures. Such a model might try to categorize the early part of the sequence as “politically formative” followed by an era of “regional state structures,” only to result in a final phase of “militarized minor polities.” Actually, the sequence seems to me to show such irregularities that it seems no credible version of straight-line sociocultural evolution is clear, although a cyclical model might serve.

An alternate view attempts to disentangle historical threads and corresponding cultural influences, with emphasis on details of their interrelationships rather than on any overall developmental scheme. (Many contemporary archaeologists would consider this kind of interpretation to be “old fashioned.”) But we do not yet know enough to make history out of our sketchy data. There are only hints toward such an eventual history. I observed above that the area north and west of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec seems to have seen earlier military development than did southern Mesoamerica and may have been a source for basic patterns that persisted all the way to the Conquest. Yet we do not know enough at this time to sketch the picture. The fact is that neither a social evolutionary nor a historical interpretation is at present believable in the light of the data at hand about fortifications. I can only repeat that appropriate though disappointing statement: “more research needs to be done.”

Both evolutionary and historical explanations presuppose some force or tendency (“adaptation,” possibly, or “diffusion”) to be at work in society which can provide us a key to understand what took place. However, I suggest that a simpler explanation may account for much of the phenomena we call “fortification.” The basic notions involved in defensive behavior may be so commonsensical that much of what went on required no consistent social nor historical forces. It is obvious even to many children that if faced with an antagonist, the safest procedure is to move behind a barrier such as a tree. Piling up earth or stone slabs to make a “fortification” wall may not require so much cultural knowledge as simply good sense. It is equally obvious that getting on higher ground gives one an advantage over an enemy. I would not be surprised to find that a few key principles of fortifying have been reinvented time after time on the basis of common sense. Nevertheless, certain defensive notions are far less obvious and may have constituted unique inventions with a historical or cumulative cultural basis. One might be an entrance through a defensive wall which forces an attacker to turn sideways, thus slowing him down and rendering him more vulnerable.

At this point in studying the topic, however, I consider explanation much less feasible and also less important than description. It is important to realize that fortifying in Mesoamerica is a phenomenon that occurred over a wide area and over a long period of time, contrary to previous expert opinion.

On the basis of what is now known it is possible to conclude the following:

1. There is good reason to believe that Mesoamerican cultures were like all the world’s other archaic civilizations—war was ever present. It is inaccurate to suppose that Mesoamerican cultures were peaceful, except for brief periods.
2. Indeed the inventiveness and scale of effort shown by the Mesoamerican peoples in this aspect of culture demonstrate that warfare was a crucial aspect of their concern, not mere cultural embroidery.
3. Archaeologists have only begun to examine the relevant Mesoamerican materials; we have a great deal yet to learn about most of the details of fortification and of warfare generally in that area.
4. On this topic, all the standard sources interpreting the area’s cultural history seriously underestimate its importance and hence are unreliable.

Fortifications in the Book of Mormon

The appendix includes references and summaries for all Book of Mormon statements about fortifying. There are 24 places in the text where some aspect of fortifying is alluded to. Here I shall summarize the key points that emerge.

The process of fortifying falls into five complexes which can be expected to have different cultural (technological), geographical, and temporal manifestations of relevance to archaeologists: (1) that of the Nephites in the original land of Nephi from the late sixth century to the late third century B.C.; (2) that of the people of Zeniff, who renewed the decrepit walls of the earlier Nephites at the cities of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom and used them to some degree until their departure toward the end of the second century B.C.; (3) the extensive work beginning under Moroni around 75 B.C. and extending at least to the war with the robbers about 90 years later (3 Nephi 3); (4) the final Nephite wars from early in the fourth century A.D. for at least a quarter of a century and perhaps for the 60 years until the Nephite destruction at Cumorah; (5) the Lamanite fortifying effort in the mid-first century B.C. (Alma 55:6; 57:4), which may have carried over in unreported ways into Lamanite lands. The first complex need not extend beyond a limited highland area. The second was distinguished only by modifications of the remains of the first complex. The third was widespread throughout much of the greater land of Zarahemla, perhaps with special emphasis in the "borders by the east sea" at the narrow neck of land and southward. (The geographical extent was sufficiently great that it would not be surprising for there to have been regional differences.) Complex four was centered in the area of the narrow neck and may not have been represented by many examples; we have no descriptions of what strongholds it yielded. The fifth complex by Lamanites is mentioned only for two limited areas: (1) part of the eastern lowlands of the land of Zarahemla and (2) adjacent to the narrow strip of wilderness separating the highlands of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla. Their technology probably represented primarily cultural borrowing from complex three, though with what modifications that cannot now be ascertained.

When the technological features of each complex are put in chronological terms, we find that the only thing we can be sure of is that complexes one and two, which are known to appear in a zone perhaps only as small as a single valley, are characterized by "walls" surrounding two cities. We cannot be sure of the material, but the form of the wall would have been entirely distinct from that used later by Moroni (cf. Alma 49:8). It is not unreasonable to suppose that stone walls are meant, since Nephi (cf. 2 Nephi 5:14-16) had known the stone wall at Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 4:4) and might have communicated the *concept* to his immediate descendants in the land of Nephi, although he likely did not know any useful information about the technology involved in its construction.

Complex three, and presumably any Lamanite borrowing of that, was characterized by minor variations on the following: an excavated dry ditch, a wooden wall against which the excavated soil was sometimes piled, a simple gateway opening through the encircling wall at a single point ("the pass"—Alma 62:24), a timber parapet, and towers above the height of the walls from which missiles could be thrown by the defenders down against the attackers (Alma 50:4). The areas enclosed could be extensive. At Nephihah (Alma 62:22), seemingly thousands of Lamanites were camped in only a portion of the enclosure while Moroni's entire army, again of thousands, got inside at night in the quiet sector of the enclosure without being detected. And at Bountiful (Alma 53:3), the whole "land" (obviously the local land, the environs of the city) of Bountiful was enclosed in an impressive wall-making project. Also, several passages may be read as implying the use of isolated strong points apart from the cities *per se* (e.g., Alma 50:10).

While the use of the earthen barriers proved tactically important when first introduced, it may not have proved effective in the long run. When Moroni put down internal rebellion (Alma 51:18; 62:7), the fortifications at Zarahemla or other center-of-the-land locations seem to have played no part in the fighting, and Coriantumr (Helaman 1:20, 21) had little trouble getting inside Zarahemla's wall. In fact, following the Moroni-inspired flurry of construction of walls in the great war of Alma 51-62, we find little to indicate that new ones of the same sort were built or even that the old ones were maintained.

As to complex four, no description is provided to clarify what Mormon meant by "fortify." Nothing he says suggests that whole settlements were then surrounded with walls. His statements may be read as meaning nothing more than that his Nephite armies in the fourth century A.D. constructed a line of minor garrisons or strong points. We are unable to tell. However, Alma 53:5 probably indicates that Mormon was familiar with the earthen fortification around Bountiful. The statement that "this city became an exceeding stronghold ever after" makes sense only if it was a

fourth-century A.D. observation by Mormon. (Bountiful's status as an impregnable [sacred and neutral?] city in the final wars could explain why there is no mention of it in Mormon's account of those wars.)

Incidentally, the Arnold Friberg painting of Samuel the Lamanite preaching from Zarahemla's wall, which appeared in copies of the Book of Mormon for a number of years, is surely based on a misunderstanding. The use of stone is nowhere suggested in the text; rather, that wall seems to have been of the same "heaps of earth" construction described in Alma 50:1-6. Helaman 13:2 clearly states that the reason Samuel could not be struck by stones or arrows while atop that wall was because of the protection of the Spirit, not because he was out of range as is implied in the painting. Moreover, had he (v. 7) "cast himself down [to escape] from the wall" as shown by the artist, his preservation would truly have been remarkable, for it looks 60 feet high. (True, the structure could not be ascended from the inside by those wishing to seize the prophet, for Pahoran was fatally trapped without recourse between the vertical inner wall and his armed pursuer Coriantumr [Helaman 1:21; cf. Alma 62:21], but Samuel could have scrambled down the outer slope to get away into the countryside while his pursuers could only pursue him via a gate some distance away.)

It might be that some elements of fortification technology passed to the Nephites from the Jaredites. No mention is made of fortifications in the Book of Ether, yet its brevity may provide the explanation for this omission. Certainly warfare was frequent and intense among that early people, and over thousands of years of fighting it would be surprising if they had not come up with some defensive concepts. If there were such, they might have reached the Nephites through the Mulekites (cf. Omni 1:17), through other unnamed peoples whose ancestors survived the Jaredite era, or else through Nephite observation of the Jaredite ruins or their records (cf. Mosiah 8:8 and 28:11-19). But of course that source could not explain the walls of complexes one and two identified above which existed prior to any knowledge of the Jaredites by the early Nephites.

Comparison of Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican Fortifications

It is evident that all the features mentioned or inferred above for the Book of Mormon complexes one through five were present already during the Mesoamerican Late Pre-Classic or Proto-Classic periods, the archaeological periods coinciding with the Book of Mormon occurrences. In terms of geography, if we accept for the moment a general spatial correlation between Book of Mormon lands and Mesoamerica, broad agreement can be seen. We do not yet have sufficient chronological control to ascertain when fortifications appear in many of the regions of Mesoamerica, but it is generally apparent that known archaeological sites display the right sorts of military technology to agree with the Book of Mormon account.

Furthermore, the trajectory we see in the growth of knowledge of fortifications—from essential ignorance of the topic only a few years ago to the present general outlines of agreement—suggests that when further field study of appropriate sites is done, the correlation now seen only broadly may become much more specific.

Appendix. Book of Mormon Statements about Fortifications

Jacob 7:25. The people of Nephi did fortify against them.

Jarom 1:7. Began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance.

Mosiah 7:10. Outside the walls of the city [of Nephi].

Mosiah 9:8. We began to . . . repair the walls of the city, yea, even the walls of the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom.

Mosiah 21:19. The king himself did not trust his person without the walls of the city. 23. The king having been without the gates of the city.

Mosiah 22:6. Behold the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side of the city [of Nephi].

Alma 49:2. [Ammonihah] . . . had been rebuilt.... They had cast up dirt around about to shield them from the arrows and the stones. 4. The Nephites had dug up a ridge of earth round about them, which was so high that the Lamanites could not cast their stones and their arrows at them that they might take effect, neither could they come upon them save it was by the place of entrance. 8. [This was done] . . . in a manner which never had been known among the children of Lehi. 13. [The Lamanites] . . . knew not that Moroni had fortified, or had built forts of security, for every city in all the land round about. 18. The Lamanites could not get into their forts of security by any other way save by the entrance, because of the highness of the bank which had been thrown up, and the depth of the ditch which had been dug round about, save it were by the entrance. 19. And thus were the Nephites prepared to destroy all such as should attempt to climb up to enter the fort by any other way, by casting over stones and arrows at them. 20. [Meanwhile] . . . they were prepared, yea, a body of their strongest men, with their swords and their slings, to smite down all who should attempt to come into their place of security by the place of entrance. 22. Now when [the Lamanites] found that they could not obtain power over the Nephites by the pass, they began to dig down their banks of earth that they might obtain a pass to their armies . . . but behold, in these attempts they were swept off by the stones and arrows which were thrown at them; and instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead.

Alma 50:1. [Moroni] caused that his armies should . . . in the commencement of the twentieth year of the reign of the judges, commence in digging up heaps of earth round about all the cities, throughout all the land which was possessed by the Nephites. 2. And upon the top of these ridges of earth he caused that there should be timbers, yea works of timbers built up to the height of a man, round about the cities. 3. And he caused that upon those works of timbers there should be a frame of pickets built upon the timbers round about; and they were strong and high. 4. And he caused towers to be erected that overlooked those works of pickets, and he caused places of security to be built upon those towers, that the stones and the arrows of the Lamanites could not hurt them. 5. And they were prepared that they could cast stones from the top thereof . . . and slay him who should attempt to approach near the walls of the city. 6. Thus Moroni did prepare strongholds . . . round about every city in all the land. 10. On the south, in the borders of their possessions . . . [he] caused them to erect fortifications. 11. Fortifying the line between the . . . land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi, from the west sea, running by the head of the river Sidon . . . [to the borders by the east seashore—verse 9].

Alma 51:18. [Note that in the civil fighting between Moroni's forces and those of the dissenters, in the center of the land, the battles slew 4000 of the latter without a hint of their having advantage of fortifications.]

Alma 51: 23. [Amalickiah's forces] . . . took possession of the city [of Moroni], yea, possession of all their fortifications. 26. [Then they continued on] . . . taking possession of . . . [additional cities] . . . all of which were on the east borders by the seashore. 27. And thus had the Lamanites obtained . . . many cities, by their numberless hosts, all of which were strongly fortified after the manner of the fortifications of Moroni.

Alma 52: 2. [Thwarted in advancing farther, the Lamanites] retreated with all their army into the city of Mulek, and sought protection in their fortifications [cf. 52:17]. 6. [Meanwhile Teancum] . . . kept his men . . . making preparations . . . by casting up walls round about and preparing places of resort. 9. [Furthermore, Moroni] sent orders unto [Teancum] that he should fortify the land Bountiful, and secure the narrow pass which led into the land northward.

Alma 53:3. [Lamanite prisoners were set to work] . . . digging a ditch round about the land, or the city, Bountiful. 4. And he caused that they should build a breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch; and they cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers . . . until they had encircled the city of Bountiful round about with a strong wall of timbers and earth, to an exceeding height. 5. And this city became an exceeding stronghold ever after; and in this city they did guard the prisoners of the Lamanites, yea, even within a wall. 6. [Mulek, now recaptured, had been] . . . one of the strongest holds of the Lamanites . . . [and now he had built also at Bountiful] a stronghold. 7. [More fortifications were worked on.]

Alma 55:16. [At the city Gid, where Nephite prisoners were held, the Nephite force at night] . . . cast in weapons of war unto the prisoners 20. . . . who were within the wall of the city, and [thus] had given them power to gain possession of those parts which were within the walls. 25. [Lamanite prisoners taken there did] . . . commence . . . strengthening the fortifications round about the city Gid. 33. [Meanwhile, the Lamanites had] . . . fortified the city Morianton until it had become an exceeding stronghold.

Alma 56:15. [When Helaman and his 2000 young men arrived at the city of Judea, they found the small Nephite army] . . . toiling with their might to fortify the city.

Alma 57:4. The people [i.e., the Lamanite forces] of Antiparah did leave the city, and fled to their other [nearby] cities . . . to fortify them.

Alma 58:21. [At Manti, part of the Nephite force] . . . did take possession of the city. 23. [Thus they] . . . had obtained possession of their strongholds [around or in the city].

Alma 62:20. [At Nephihah] . . . when the night came, Moroni went forth in the darkness of the night, and came upon the top of the wall to spy out in what part of the city the Lamanites did camp with their army. 21. And . . . they were on the east, by the entrance. [Whereupon the Nephites prepared] . . . cords and ladders, to be let down from the top of the wall into the inner part of the wall. 22. [Then they came] . . . upon the top of the wall, and let themselves down into that part of the city . . . where the Lamanites did not camp. 24. [Finding the Nephites inside the walls when morning came, the Lamanites] . . . did flee out by the pass. 36. [Immediately afterward, at the city of Moroni, in the night] . . . Teancum . . . did let himself down over the walls of the city. 42. [The war was essentially over, but to be sure] . . . Moroni . . . fortified those parts of the land which were most exposed to the Lamanites.

Helaman 1:20. [Dissenter] Coriantumr led a Lamanite army to Zarahemla where they did cut down the watch by the entrance of the city . . . that they did take possession of the whole city. 21. Pacumeni, who was the chief judge, did flee before Coriantumr, even to the walls of the city . . . [where] Coriantumr did smite him against the wall.

Helaman 4:7. And there [adjacent to the land of Bountiful] they did fortify against the Lamanites, from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified . . . to defend their north country.

Helaman 13: 4. [Samuel the Lamanite was refused admittance to the city of Zarahemla, so] . . . he went and got upon the wall thereof. 16:2. [After hearing his words at length, unbelievers] cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him. 6. When they saw that they could not hit him with their stones and their arrows, they cried unto their captains, saying: Take this fellow and bind him. 7. [Whereupon] he did cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands.

3 Nephi 3:14. [Thousands of Nephites and righteous Lamanites gathered together in an appointed place between the lands of Zarahemla and Bountiful. Their leader caused that] . . . fortifications should be built round about them. 25. They did fortify themselves against their enemies [the robbers]. 4:16. [The robber armies] came up on all sides to lay siege.

Mormon 2:4. [The fleeing Nephites] did fortify the city [of Angola] with our might; but notwithstanding all our fortifications the Lamanites did . . . drive us out. 21. [Having fled into the land northward] . . . we did fortify the city of Shem.

Mormon 3:6. [At the narrow neck] we did fortify against them.

Mormon 5:4. [In the land northward certain] cities . . . were maintained by the Nephites which [were] strongholds.