



Type: Book Chapter

Part 6: Summary of the Criteria for an Acceptable Model from the Text, by Feature

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Source: *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*

Published by: Provo, UT; FARMS, 1990

Page(s): 328-353



Part 6

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Summary of Criteria

1-2 land southward

It was nearly surrounded by water. The southernmost point noted was probably either the local land of Nephi or the land of first inheritance (Lehi's landing point).

In relation to this land the only seas definitely mentioned are east sea (sea east) and west sea (sea west). The only river mentioned is the Sidon.

The overall length referred to was on the order of 400 miles. The width is uncertain but apparently less than the length.

1.1 general land of Nephi

In the early first century B.C. this entity reached from the west sea through the local land of Nephi to the east sea adjacent to Antionum and Moroni. Earlier there the term had no doubt been applied to an intermediate extent of territory in the general highland area which the city of Nephi would have controlled but not extending to the east sea.

Nothing is definitely known about lands to the south of the local land of Nephi, although there might have been such. The land of first inheritance on the coast probably was the farthest south point referred to.

1.11 local land of Nephi (Lehi-Nephi)

At one level, this consists of the city of Nephi (known at one point in time as Lehi-Nephi) plus surrounding cultivated lands and perhaps villages or hamlets directly dependent on the capital in economy and administration. At another level (first extended sense), it included the land (and city) of Shilom, which was adjacent to the local land of Nephi and which extended perhaps no more than fifteen miles from the capital.

Local Nephi was higher in elevation than Zarahemla or, of course, the coasts; no other regularly settled land or city is said or implied to have been at a higher elevation, although elevated terrain (the narrow strip of wilderness at least) lay in its northward quadrant and probably was higher. Toward the west sea from local Nephi, the lands in order of increasing distance and descending elevation were Shilom, Shemlon, and the west wilderness (coastal lowlands). Shemlon was within sight of the city of Nephi; the distance from Nephi to the beginning of the coastal plain probably did not exceed twenty five miles. From Nephi to the west sea itself would not likely have exceeded fifty miles.

1.111 city of Nephi (Lehi-Nephi)

A local administrative, ritual and no doubt economic center of modest size in the middle of the first millennium B.C., then apparently abandoned for at least a generation before being repaired and reoccupied ca. 200 B.C. (by the Zeniffites). It had considerable political stature through at least the next

century and a half, part of that time being the key settlement and primary reference point in the greater land of Nephi.

1.112 land and city of Shilom

A minor land and city administratively dependent on Nephi and within a dozen miles of the latter.

To its north lay a hill that was a landmark for parties going to or coming from Zarahemla. From its top the local lands of both Nephi and Shilom could be scanned.

Lamanite armies came up through it to reach Nephi. Limhi's party went around it when traveling toward Zarahemla by an unusual route (the description of the route taken likely means that their way first was toward Shilom (i.e., westward), then veered northerly short of going into Shilom as such.

On the south of Shilom Nephite lands were directly exposed to Lamanite attack, probably out of Shemlon which was adjacent. This vulnerable area was still within a small number of miles from the city of Nephi (Lehi-Nephi) itself).

1.113 hill north of Shilom

This hill was not precipitous, for atop it a pyramid tower was built, and its top also served as a rendezvous point for a large party or hundreds or more. The normal route from Nephi toward Zarahemla went past it.

1.114 place called Onidah

Defiant Lamanites, unwilling to be drafted into the king's service against the Nephites, resorted to this point because it was the "place of arms." Plausibly this consisted of an obsidian outcrop as nothing else seems to qualify; by controlling it, these defiant commoners could arm themselves (and perhaps also disadvantage the king's army by denying them the arms resource). No named place is indicated to intervene between it and the capital, Nephi; the army marched directly to and from it. There is reason to think that it lay to the east, or possibly south, of Nephi.

1.115 mount Antipas

At or near the place called Onidah, this mountain likely was upwards of a thousand feet high from the base (and not much more). It had a configuration at the top (crater or declivity?) where thousands of Lamanites camped (one went "into" it).

1.116 city of Shimnilom

A city (no land is mentioned) associated with the Nephi-Shilom core. As its people gathered at the hill north of Nephi and Shilom when they fled,

Shimnilom must have been south of that hill and perhaps south of Nephi (but only a few miles or tens of miles).

1.117 city of Lemuel

Everything said of Shimnilom also applies to Lemuel.

1.12 land of Shemlon

Westward (i.e., downslope toward the west sea) from Shilom.

Lamanites came from the west wilderness (lowlands) to occupy Shemlon, and they attacked Nephi by passing up through Shemlon and Shilom. From an elevation at Nephi Shemlon could be seen.

1.13 place (land, forest, waters) of Mormon

Northward from Nephi, on the order of thirty or forty miles from Nephi. Initially it was called a "place" in the borders of the land of Nephi where wild animals were normal. It was adjacent to "the waters of Mormon" and featured a "forest" or copse. The "waters" most likely was a sizable lake. (Apparently the same waters rose at the time of the crucifixion to submerge Jerusalem; at least part of the land of Mormon may also have been submerged at that time.) The area of Mormon had agricultural lands sufficient to support hundreds of families and eventually came to be termed a land.

1.14 land of Helam

At a distance of eight days (about sixty or sixty-five miles on a direct line through broken country) for Alma's party from Mormon. In general it lay northward from Nephi and Mormon and was near the narrow strip highland band. But it was off the main route from Nephi to Zarahemla. Notable for beauty and "pure water," it may have been a mountain valley of limited size.

1.141 valley of Alma

One day's hard travel from Helam toward or into the narrow strip of wilderness, approximately half way between local Nephi and local Zarahemla.

1.15 land of Amulon

Off to one side, but not much, from both the route to Helam and the main route to Zarahemla, in a northerly direction from Nephi. It was on the order of fifty or sixty miles from the city of Nephi (Lehi-Nephi). The territory around Amulon and Helam must have been mountainous, to account for the Lamanite army's getting lost.

Amulon was politically peripheral to the main Lamanite nucleus in and near Nephi, rather being associated with Helam, Jerusalem (but northward beyond Jerusalem), and the west wilderness Lamanite zone.

Because of the last relationship, it probably was in fairly close proximity to the lowlands (i.e., toward the west) while still “up” like Nephi. From Amulon to Ishmael and Nephi may have been “over.”

1.151 dwelling place of the Amalekites

No specific land is identified, but they were associated with Amulonites in certain enterprises, so likely their prime area of inhabitation was associated with Amulon and Jerusalem.

1.16 land and city of Jerusalem

Farther from Nephi than Mormon (“away joining the borders of Mormon”) and perhaps not directly accessible from Mormon. Covered by rising waters at the time of the crucifixion, it apparently lay adjacent to the waters of Mormon. It lay generally northward from Nephi, for it was reached by Aaron on a direct journey from the dispersion point of the missionaries in the borders of the lands of the Lamanites as they approached from Zarahemla. It was connected politically/culturally with the west Lamanite lowlands and Amulon and Helam. Since it was laid out from the beginning to be a “great city” and later was covered by rising water, it probably lay on then lightly inhabited, flat terrain near a sizable body of water (likely the same as the waters of Mormon).

1.161 village of Ani-Anti

Apparently the only significant settlement on a transect from Jerusalem southward to Middoni. An elevation separated Ani-Anti from Jerusalem and another from Middoni. Missionaries had converged on it separately from the dispersion point by way of Jerusalem and by some other route (through Mormon?) For a mere “village” to be singled out as a stopping point from two directions, we must suppose that the general vicinity had a low population density.

1.17 land of Middoni

It lay across an elevation from Ani-Anti. Middoni was at a lower elevation than Nephi (a valley?) and thus probably coastward from Nephi, although not as far down as the west wilderness lowland, for Middoni remained linked politically with the Nephi-Shilom core. From Ani-Anti to Middoni did not go through Ishmael but crossed an elevation.

From Ishmael, going to Middoni took travelers part way along the route to Nephi, then turned another way. The use of a “chariot” from Ishmael toward Middoni suggests that the route was moderately smooth. No city of Middoni is mentioned.

1.18 land of Midian

A land, intermediate in location between the core and Ishmael, and mentioned but once, hence small(?) It was convenient for people to reach it separately from Middoni and the Nephi-Shilom core. No specific elevation information is communicated.

1.19 land of Ishmael

From the missionaries' dispersion point, Ammon went straight to Ishmael, apparently without stopping at and perhaps not passing through any other significant settled area. One entered the land from the Zarahemla (northward) side across a definite boundary (pass, valley lip?). Minor lands nearby were ruled from Ishmael while not being construed as part of it. The route to Nephi also led part way to Middoni, the two diverging beyond a certain point.

Surface water was scarce. No city is mentioned; population may have been limited because of the water situation or because the land had only recently been settled.

1.191 waters of Sebus

A small body of water in the land of Ishmael (at least there was only a single access point to it for "flocks," hence it could not be a conventional river or lake), not many miles from the king's residence. No other water seems to have been available for the needs of "flocks."

1.2 wilderness strip along the west borders of the sea

This lowland extended from the land of first inheritance (Lehi's landing point) on the extreme south past that portion of the west wilderness considered to be "in" the land of Nephi. It continued northward past the "city by the sea" "on the west" of the land of Zarahemla to near the general land of Bountiful, a total distance of at least 350 miles in all.

It sheltered abundant game; Lamanite non-agriculturists at one time lived in the area in enough numbers to constitute a subversive danger for the Nephites on the north as well as the Zeniffites and later Lamanites in Nephi. Nephi's traveling "many days" from the landing point to reach the local land of Nephi would have been partly through this wilderness.

Access to the land of Zarahemla from that portion of the strip on the west of Zarahemla was possible, though difficult, via a pass at Antiparah across the west mountain border of the Sidon basin. The only other access was way north, over the basin edge to Ammonihah. Melek, on the interior side of the basin westerly from Zarahemla, was safe from attack by groups passing along the coast, apparently due to the ruggedness of the mountains. Lamanites who at one time inhabited the strip west of Zarahemla lived down on the coast, not in these mountains. Yet the top (?) of the mountain chain

north of Antiparah allowed armies to pursue each other and fight, hence the summit may have been fairly flattish and continuous. (See also Joshua.)

1.21 land of their fathers' first inheritance

Around the first landing point of Lehi's party located in the west wilderness lowland. Likely the southernmost point mentioned in the land of promise. It contained surface deposits of several types of ores.

1.22 Lamanite king's unnamed homeland

The king sent armies up out of Shemlon through or around Shilom to local Nephi, yet Shemlon itself had been "taken possession" of by the Lamanites. The only place they could have come from was the west wilderness, their early and traditional homeland. Logically the most favorable settlement zone within this area would have been the foothill (piedmont) area below Shemlon but above the flattest portion of the lowland (poorer drainage, hotter). This foothill zone could have connected culturally and politically with Jerusalem and Amulon as well as with Shemlon.

1.3 land of Siron

A land through the east sea borders of the land of Zarahemla and then Antionum, from which one went "over" to Siron.

2-1. narrow strip of wilderness between Nephi and Zarahemla (south wilderness)

Sometimes this was also called the south wilderness, which I take to be synonymous with the narrow strip.

It consists primarily of rugged mountains constituting the watershed from which the Sidon river flows northward. Attempting to pass through it without adequate knowledge of routes and landmarks could result in aimless wandering and suffering hunger, thirst and extreme fatigue. From Manti, the southernmost settled area of the land of Zarahemla, one ascended past the head of the river into undescribed country nowhere indicated to be settled. Nephi was on the order of ten days through further wilderness (past Helam, Amulon and Mormon) from the narrow strip proper.

In an extended sense the strip stretched from the sea east to the sea west. From Manti westward, garrison cities at Zeezrom, Cumeni, Antiparah and perhaps a coastal city fronted this narrow strip.

2. general land of Zarahemla

During the reign of Mosiah, Benjamin's son, the territory ruled from the city of Zarahemla increased from a very localized area on the river until it encompassed Melek, Ammonihah, probably Aaron, Gideon and Manti, probably constituting the basin of the Sidon river. Some later references suggest that the name may have applied at times even to the borders by the

east sea. It was considered the Nephite heartland, a place of security against external attack, and also a breadbasket and population center.

The Zarahemla area is characterized as the center or heart of the land, clearly to some extent in a geographical sense but also possibly in some symbolic sense.

2.01 quarter(s) of the land

Presumably four were conceptualized by the Nephites. One was explicitly on the south by the west sea (Manti-Judea-Antiparah and on to the west sea). Another probably included the land of Moroni. Logically the others would encompass respectively the Mulek-Bountiful zone (at least called a distinct "part of the land") and the Ammonihah-Noah sector, but the language of the text on these two is not definite.

2.11 local land of Zarahemla

In Benjamin's time a population of some thousands occupied only the territory within a day's travel of the royal city. That same space continued as a functional entity to Mormon's day. Life was distinctly oriented to the river, which ran "by" the land.

Immediately across the river, to the east of the populated area, lay the extensive hill Amnihu, and the uplands including the valley of Gideon lay nearby eastward. The limited flat land east of the river was of little population and economic significance to Zarahemla. Rather, a strip near and on the west side of the river upstream from the city contained the crucial subsistence land.

A piece of wilderness (Hermounts, a salient of "the west wilderness") lay only some miles west of the city, although it was a more considerable journey "over" some intervening elevated terrain before reaching Melek and the west wilderness proper.

2.111 city of Zarahemla

Lying on the west bank of the Sidon river, it was called a "great city," but we do not know if that greatness was due to its population, its administrative and economic centrality, or its religious and political fame. At quite a late date, the presence of Nephi's "garden" within the city suggests that the place may not have been densely populated, although it could have occupied substantial space, logically stretched along the river. From the time of captain Moroni and the Amalickiahite war Zarahemla was surrounded by a "wall" fortification with at least one "gate." While it was burned at the time of the crucifixion, the area through which Mormon approached the city in the early fourth century A.D. was covered with buildings.

From the city, regular routes led "over" via Gideon (about twenty miles away) thence to Manti and on up to Nephi, "over" westward to Melek, "over" to Sidom (downstream but the route evidently not following the

river), and along the river's west bank from upstream Minon. It lay on the order of 180 miles on a straight line from Nephi, and around 100 from the middle of the narrow strip of wilderness.

2.112 cultivated strip along the river

When Lamanite/Amlicite and Nephite armies battled and chased through lands on the west side of the river and near to it, the result was to destroy so many crops that a famine resulted in the local land of Zarahemla before the next crop could be harvested. Clearly this strip of land was quite flat and likely of alluvial soil.

2.113 river ford above the city

When the combined Lamanite/Amlicite army approached the city from upstream along the west bank, Alma and his men went straight to one particular point to intercept them. There they waded across the river and came ashore fighting. Since the river is the only one mentioned in the record, it may well have been a sizable one, requiring a ford (or a boat) to cross. Nowhere else is a body of men represented as crossing this stream afoot.

2.114 hill Amnihu

It lay across the river east of the city of Zarahemla and was extensive enough that two large armies could intentionally meet thereon for battle. The valley of Gideon was within ten or fifteen miles, eastward and southward.

2.115 hill Manti

Where Nehor underwent ritual execution. Since he was "carried" there from the city of Zarahemla, the hill probably lay only a few miles distant. The symbolism of the top's being "between the heavens and the earth" was involved in the execution, so it is reasonable that it was a pointed, though not necessarily high, hill.

The direction is not clear, but plausibly it lay to the north and west, in the direction of the nearby wilderness of Hermounts.

2.12 wilderness of Hermounts

A section of the west wilderness occupied by wild beasts and to which remnants of the Lamanite-Amlicite army fled. It began not more than about ten miles from the occupied area of the local land of Zarahemla. The fact that their bones were later found and heaped up suggests that the wilderness area later was settled by Nephites.

2.2 river Sidon

The only stream mentioned by name in the record, we are certain of its course only from its origin up in the narrow strip of mountain wilderness above Manti down to Zarahemla. It must have had a sizable flow, because

bodies of the dead cast into it up even up above Manti in the dry season (when fighting went on) were assumed to have gone down to the depths of the sea. One ford, a little upstream from the city of Zarahemla, is mentioned.

The “head of the river Sidon,” referred to several times, may or may not have been a particular point (perhaps a confluence of two or more tributary streams) but was the highest part of the flow conceptualized by the Nephites as the river .

Its course northward from Zarahemla is not clear. If Sidom received its name in remembrance of the Phoenician port of Sidon, a position along the river may be indicated for that land; the pointed mention of people coming in to be baptized at Sidom could confirm this.

The relatively large area of the “borders by the east sea” vs. near silence about the west borders hints that the river debauched to the east and that the east lowlands in part constituted its delta. That nothing was said about crossing the river during the Amalickiahite wars may indicate that the mouth was south of the Nephite possessions. Possibly the “line” which they fortified to defend their east sea lands was the lower course of the river.

Statements and hints about topography combine to form a picture of the land of Zarahemla as mainly occupying the basin of this river.

2.21 most capital parts of the land

After capturing the city of Zarahemla, dissenter Coriantumr proceeded northward with his army “through the most capital parts of the land” in “the center of the land” (i.e., not notably toward either the east or west sea sides but apparently downstream along the river). Logically, this area was the same as where the Amlicites, and later the king men, lived.

2.221 Amlicite zone

A distinct area down the Sidon from the city of Zarahemla. It was sufficiently large and populous (quite certainly with “the people of Zarahemla”) that their numbers were comparable to the main Nephite force based at Zarahemla. Probably the area was near the river and primarily on its west. Plausibly this is the same area as later constituted the king-men area.

2.222 king-men area

A distinct area, with “cities,” resistant to conventional Nephite power based at Zarahemla. The area was near the river and primarily on its west, robbers’ areas. Plausibly this is the same area as earlier constituted the Amlicite zone.

2.3 valley, land, and city of Gideon

First mentioned around 90 B.C., this place was named for Zeniffite military leader Gideon, who had arrived in Zarahemla with Limhi’s group

only a few years previously, so we can assume that the valley had not been seriously settled earlier.

It was located about 15 miles east of the river just upstream from Zarahemla and an equal distance easterly from Minon. The approach to Gideon from the hill Amnihu (and Zarahemla) was apparently not steep, for fighting continued all the way between the two. The normal route from Zarahemla to Manti and thus to Nephi ran through Gideon. Travelers went over into and out of the valley, suggesting a marked depression.

2.4 land and city of Manti

The southernmost named portion of the general land of Zarahemla. Immediately above the city of Manti, which lay on the Sidon river, the land ascended to the narrow strip of wilderness containing the head of the river. This was always the preferred entry area into the land of Zarahemla from the land of Nephi. Zarahemla was approximately forty to sixty miles away on a beeline, but travel along the river apparently was not usual.

No large populated area is indicated; extensive wilderness reached very close to the city itself. The land may have been more a trade center and early warning spot against invasion than a major settlement zone.

A few miles above the city of Manti, the river Sidon has a small valley (tributary?) entering from the east direction, down which a known route came which an army predictably moved on its way into the area from the distant east and south. The hill Riplah lay immediately south of this small valley. A bit farther upstream on the Sidon a small valley (tributary?) entered from the west.

2.41 land of Minon

People from here fled toward Zarahemla ahead of the Lamanite-Amlicite army coming down the west bank of the Sidon river. It lay twenty five or thirty miles upriver from Zarahemla. Mentioned but once, it probably was small.

2.42 hill Riplah

A modest hill immediately east of the Sidon above Manti and south of a known route into the land from the distant east and south.

2.43 city of Judea

This is mentioned only in connection with the defense of the west sea, south quarter. Helaman and his 2000 young warriors went southward (directly?) from their homeland in Melek to Judea, the Nephite base for that quarter. Judea was in a position, down-drainage from Amalickiah, Cumeni and Zeezrom, that Nephites holding it blocked Lamanite movement down toward Zarahemla. No land is mentioned and food had to be imported; probably this was mainly a garrison town.

2.44 city of Zeezrom

A garrison city west of Manti near the narrow strip of wilderness, with Cumeni farther west. No mention is made of Zeezrom's recapture, hence it probably was of minor importance. No land is mentioned.

2.45 city of Cumeni

Between Zeezrom and Antiparah in the defensive string of cities near the narrow strip of wilderness toward the west sea. Separate, but partially parallel routes led from it toward Judea and toward Manti. Upon losing this spot, the Lamanites were obliged to retreat to Manti, their base.

2.46 city of Antiparah

The farthest west and most elevated garrison city of the series on the west sea, south sector that began with Manti. Like the others, it was adjacent to the narrow strip of wilderness. From here to Judea and Zarahemla was down; and on the other side the way led down to the west sea coast. Apparently this city was at the upper west and south limit of the Sidon basin/land of Zarahemla.

Helaman's tactical ploy at Antiparah involved a party of his men from Judea moving to and near Antiparah, only to be pursued into the wilderness northward. Eventually they returned to Judea. The distance on the ground from Judea to Antiparah is probably no more than forty or fifty miles.

The fact that Helaman's party was seen by the Lamanites as credibly passing near Antiparah toward the west sea city shows that there was no alternative route, that is, Antiparah was in a pass.

2.47 city "in the borders by the (west) seashore"

Mentioned only incidentally in relation to action near Antiparah, it was apparently the next (final) garrison city westward from Antiparah. Since this is the sole mention of a Nephite settlement near the west sea, this site likely originated from Moroni's effort to cut off the wilderness area to the north near the sea from Lamanite infiltration.

2.48 land of Melek

It lay in a general west direction from Zarahemla, "over" some intervening elevation and at a distance of scores of miles. Melek was the westernmost settled area within the greater land of Zarahemla, adjacent to the west wilderness (mountain) strip which constituted the edge of the Sidon basin. While no city is mentioned in this land, people gathered in from a substantial territory along the wilderness border to (villages?) where Alma preached. The area was agriculturally productive to a notable degree thus perhaps fairly extensive. Since a traveler went "into" the land, it had some

definite physical boundedness, perhaps being nearly surrounded by higher land (although it would have been drained by a tributary of the Sidon).

The vulnerable Anti-Nephi-Lehies were settled here, in part because of its safety from Lamanite attack; the mountain portion of wilderness along here was rugged and seemingly impassable by an army for there was never a threat of their being attacked. Melek's young soldiers went directly from home to Judea.

Melek may have been counted generally in the same general west sea, south quarter of the land, yet on the north of Melek lay Ammonihah at a distance on the order of fifty miles; Alma's journey from the former to the latter may indicate that Melek's nominal affiliation was with the presumed Ammonihah quarter.

2.51 land and city of Ammonihah

Something like fifty to fifty-five miles north of Melek, Ammonihah too lay generally near the west wilderness (mountain) strip, across which Lamanite armies came to attack Ammonihah as their first target. The land of Ammonihah, at least on the west of the city, was open enough that approaching Lamanites were sighted at a distance.

Emphasis on the city rather than the land may mean that the land was not very extensive, or at least not heavily populated in Alma's day. From the city itself, refugees "came out," while travelers went "into" the area, which suggests some sort of depression.

Noah was a relatively nearby place, probably easterly from Ammonihah. Also, from Ammonihah to Aaron seems to have been a direct trip, with east or northeast the most likely direction (distance cannot be determined directly). The land of Sidom was also in rather direct connection with Ammonihah (distance uncertain), quite surely to the east.

2.52 land and city of Noah

Adjacent to Ammonihah, generally on the east (or southeast?), at a distance not likely to exceed twenty or thirty miles.

2.53 land and city of Aaron

A direct trip from Ammonihah, clearly inland, that is, eastward or northeastward, at an unknown distance. Inasmuch as the next major land beyond Aaron was Nephihah, which was in the borders of the east sea, Aaron must be approximately in the middle of the land and could have lain on the Sidon River which ran generally through the middle of the land southward.

2.54 land of Sidom

In an easterly direction from Ammonihah and Noah. Refugees from the former city came directly to Sidom, implying a normalized social and economic link and some measure of adjacency between the two. No city is

mentioned, although one is possible. A substantial population looked to this district, however. There is some likelihood that it was on the Sidon River thus in a depression relative to the approach from Ammonihah.

2.55 land of David

Mentioned only in the final Nephite retreat in the fourth century A.D., it must lie between local Zarahemla and the west sea to the north and west. It could have been in the same general area as Noah or Ammonihah of earlier date. No city is mentioned; the city of Angola, spoken of almost simultaneously, could have been in the land of David or nearby. Since the Nephites could not defend here successfully, it likely consisted of more open country than Joshua, at the coast, where they held a line for years.

2.56 city of Angola

Mention is made of this place only in the final Nephite retreat, together with the land of David, which see.

2.60 east wilderness

In general this refers to uninhabited areas near the east sea. A continuous strip of wilderness at one time extended from Lamanite lands northward to near Bountiful, but Lamanite squatters therein were first compressed along the east seashore then were driven southward out of the whole area as a strategic military measure. Still a remnant east wilderness could be found next to the city of Moroni.

The distance from Bountiful to Moroni, and thus the maximum length of this wilderness (from the Nephite viewpoint) is subject to some inferences. We can be reasonably certain about the portions from Bountiful to Mulek or Gid and from Lehi or Morianton to Moroni. On a line parallel to the coast, these distances are each on the order of ten to fifteen miles based on the military movements reported. The middle part, involving Omner, is less clear. The mileage from Omner to Mulek/Gid and from Omner to Morianton/Lehi should be approximately the same—twenty to twenty-five miles is plausible. Thus the total length of the coastline from Bountiful to Moroni would be unlikely to exceed 75 miles and could have been less.

2.61 land and city of Moroni

The city was on the coastal plain “by” the east sea (which is said of no other city), and it finally sank beneath the waters of the sea, yet there was some wilderness area immediately east of the city. The language could still fit if it lay on a river, lagoon or estuary separated from the actual seacoast by a strip of wilderness a mile or so wide. Since the place was founded as a garrison city to anchor the east end of a Nephite line of defense, the land area around the city and its economic importance may have been limited.

Nephihah, northwestward, was the nearest major administrative center and land, to which refugees from Moroni fled. The two lands bordered each other. The direct distance between the two is not likely to exceed twenty-five miles and could be less. Northward from Moroni, along the east sea littoral toward the narrow neck, were Lehi and Morianton. Lehi seems to have been nearer Moroni, but perhaps not by much. The distance from Morianton to Moroni probably was fifteen miles at most.

2.611 land of Antionum

A distinct area south beyond the conventional borders of Nephite lands in the east sea sector “nearly bordering upon the seashore,” yet it contained at least one named “hill” (Onidah) upon which Alma preached to a considerable group. Antionum was adjacent to the south wilderness; in time it came under Lamanite rule. It was also south of Jershon, probably with considerable territory intervening, some of which later came to be called the lands of Nephihah, Moroni, etc. From Antionum to Jershon Alma “came over,” crossing an elevation or other natural dividing feature (watershed, river?). From Antionum one also went over to the land of Siron, which was closer to the conventional Lamanite administrative realm, hence southward. To go from Antionum to Manti the Lamanite army traveled “round about,” probably through Siron and other unnamed Lamanite lands a long circuitous distance (weeks of travel).

2.6111 hill Onidah

An elevation within the land of Antionum near the capital settlement. Its height is unknown, but a sizable group met atop it to be preached to.

2.62 land and city of Nephihah

A regional administrative and perhaps economic center located in the borders by the east sea somewhat inland from Morianton, Lehi and Moroni. The sector including all four cities was termed “this part of the land,” perhaps constituting a unified ecological area of some kind. Near Nephihah were plains.

Nephihah was probably on the order of twenty to twenty-five miles from Moroni and ten to fifteen from Lehi and Morianton. One route from Nephihah to Moroni went through Lehi and Morianton then down by the shore (beach?); there must have been others.

Nephihah was approached from the land of Zarahemla by a route shared part of the way by Lamanite support forces headed from Nephi to Morianton. From Nephihah to Manti was “over” (presumably over the east elevation bounding the basin of the Sidon). No lands of strategic interest to the Lamanites intervened between the Jershon-Nephihah-Antionum sector and Manti. The land of Nephihah bordered on the land of Aaron, which is nearer the center of the land southward. (This was said of it immediately

upon its founding as a garrison center, at a time when Jershon and Antionum were also considered neighbors, but in the latter case considerable distance actually intervened, for additional lands were later carved out between them; the same might be true of the stretch between Aaron and Nephihah).

2.63 land and city of Lehi

(See also land and city of Nephihah and land and city of Moroni.) In the general borders by the east sea but “down by the seashore” in comparison with Nephihah. Lehi was built “in a special manner,” which could refer to siting, plan or material. It was only a few miles (eight?) from the city of Morianton, with which Lehi’s people had a quarrel over the limited lands available to them. Lehi was nearer the camp of Moroni in Jershon than Morianton. Morianton had access to a route northward to the narrow pass different than the route from Moroni’s camp (presumably Morianton’s was the route, “down by the seashore,” followed by Amalickiah).

2.64 land and city of Morianton

See land and city of Lehi and land and city of Nephihah.

2.65 city of Omner

In the borders by the east sea, down by the seashore northward a distance of around fifteen to twenty-five miles from Morianton and southward from Mulek and Gid about the same. It may have been a relatively small place (no land is mentioned) not worth the Lamanites’ defending nor the Nephites’ attacking, for its recapture is not mentioned.

2.66 city of Gid

In the borders by the east sea northward from Omner. In the order of Amalickiah’s conquest, Gid appears south of Mulek, yet the order of the two is reversed in Helaman 5:15, so they are offset, Gid being farther inland than Mulek. No land is mentioned, so Gid may have been little more than a garrison at first, although later it was a Nephite city on its own. No mention of its settling is made—so it may have been in existence for some time.

2.67 city of Mulek

It is not reported as founded by the Nephites as were other east sea border cities, so likely it was an old site that was traditionally connected to the landing of Mulek’s party. This hints that it is near (but not by) the sea, as confirmed in the account of Amalickiah’s attack. Not far north lay the city/land of Bountiful. The favored route to there ran from Mulek via “the beach by the seashore.” Emphasis on Mulek’s impregnability suggests that it may have been in a special setting that discouraged conventional attack. See also city of Gid.

2.68 land and city of Jershon

When first mentioned in connection with the resettlement of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, this land was said to be south of the land of Bountiful. In it Nephite armies were based to protect the east coast and the south defense line. Moroni's headquarters remained there throughout the conflict with Amalickiah and his successor. The first threat in that area, from the Zoramites and Lamanites based in Antionum on the south, confronted the Nephites in the borders between Jershon and Antionum. This "borders" may have been sizable, for out of it was divided off Nephiah, Moroni, Lehi and Morianton, it appears. A city of Jershon existed at or near the camp of captain Moroni. Jershon was inland some distance and so not exposed to Amalickiah's initial sweep northward "down by the seashore."

2.681 camp of Moroni

See land of Jershon. From Lehi this place was reached by going "over," perhaps across a low watershed (or a river?) since both areas were in the borders by the sea. From here to the narrow pass one traveled on a different and shorter route than used by the people from Morianton in reaching the pass.

2.7 wilderness strip on the west of Zarahemla

Basically this is the lowlands along the west sea which stretched from the land of first inheritance on the extreme south past (through) the land of Nephi to near the narrow neck of land. The early, (relatively) quick occupation of the whole strip by the culturally unsophisticated (non-agricultural) Lamanites suggests that the entire strip was broadly similar in ecological terms. On the west of the land of Zarahemla this wilderness consisted of both the lowlands and the mountain strip which separated it from the Sidon basin. The wilderness of Hermounts was one local portion of the west wilderness which extended to a point very near the city of Zarahemla on its west.

2.71 land of Joshua

On a, or the, major route north and west from Zarahemla when traveling to the land northward via the borders by the west sea. Nephite military occupancy for years constituted a complete block against Lamanite expansion northward in that direction, hence it must be in a highly strategic position, logically controlling a key pass or passes out of the Sidon basin/land of Zarahemla headed northward

2.72 land between Zarahemla and Bountiful (refuge area)

This was considered in the center of the lands occupied by the Nephites around the time of Christ, in both the land southward and land northward. It was elevated (people came up to it from both south and north)

and lay “between” the lands Zarahemla and Bountiful. The description is ambiguous however. The phrasing suggests at one point that the designated area included parts of both Bountiful and Zarahemla and had room for many thousands, yet it also turns out to be so small that it (a part of it?) could be surrounded by the robbers.

2.721 fortified line near the west sea border of Bountiful

This line was prepared to block Lamanite expansion into the land northward; it seems to have served as a “cork” in much the same way as the land of Joshua later did for the Nephite armies. This line is specified as being at the very boundary of what was considered the land of Bountiful in its extension to the west side of the narrow neck. One supposes that the line ran from the sea inland (“unto the east”) to impassable terrain, for the distance all the way to the east sea was greater than the one day indicated.

2.8 general land of Bountiful

The northernmost portion of the land southward. It is connected to the land Desolation, the southernmost part of the land northward, by a small or narrow neck of land. Bountiful and Desolation abut along a line, plausibly a river. At the time of Alma 22 Bountiful was considered wilderness. Soon its strategic value led to its being occupied and heavily defended by Nephite forces. Most statements about Bountiful refer to the area of the narrow neck toward the east sea. It is unclear whether Bountiful was thought to reach all the way to the west sea; Hagoth’s west sea shipbuilding scene was “on (just beyond?) the borders” of the general land Bountiful; according to Hel. 4:7, it is possible that the general land Bountiful then did reach the west sea.

2.801 narrow neck of land

An isthmus connecting the lands northward and southward, plausibly between 75 and 125 miles in width, between the east and west seas. Within it the lands of Desolation and Bountiful abutted on each other along a line, possibly a river.

2.802 narrow pass, narrow passage

Both terms are used, apparently interchangeably. This is a specific feature within the narrow neck. Apparently only here was there an assured route into that portion of the land northward considered of strategic interest to the Nephites. Presumably it lay somewhere along the line separating Bountiful and Desolation. One precise spot constituted the south entrance, control of which denied northward passage to all whom the possessors wished to block. Approach to it via the east seacoast went through Bountiful, but other approaches that avoided Bountiful also existed. This was not just the preferred route northward but apparently the only feasible one, at least for large groups.

2.81 local land Bountiful

Called both land Bountiful and land of Bountiful, this land was only the immediate area around the city Bountiful. The city/land must be close to the narrow pass (twenty miles?) Yet in the final battles, Bountiful was ignored, confirming that it was not immediately *at* the pass (in this case the Lamanite attackers came via the west coast rather than the east coast).

2.811 city of Bountiful

Southward from it lay Mulek and Gid; to its north the only specific place noted was the south entrance to the narrow pass. One approached from Mulek via the east sea beach (there was another route, followed by Teancum, farther inland). Bountiful was near or on the coast and probably not more than fifteen miles from Mulek on foot (ten on a beeline?). Nothing indicates it was founded by Nephites. See also local land of Bountiful.

2.812 Hagoth's ship construction site

On the west sea at the narrow neck of land, not quite counted in either Desolation or Bountiful but near both in their general sense. The precise location was no doubt a cove or lagoon rather than sheer open beach.

2.91 city of Onihah

Destroyed at the time of the crucifixion and very likely in the land southward, but more detail is lacking.

2.92 city of Gilgal

Same as Onihah.

2.93 city of Mocum

Same as Onihah.

2.94 city of Moronihah

Same as Onihah.

3.1 east sea, sea east

The two word orders seem used indiscriminately. It formed the coast of the land southward all along its eastward side from Lamanite lands past those controlled by the Nephites, as well as being adjacent to the narrow neck and also the land northward at least past Jaredite Ablom, i.e., ca. 200 miles. Waters from the Sidon River carried corpses to "the depths of the sea" (probably the east sea), implying an ocean.

3.2 west sea, sea west

The voyage of the Nephites across the (Pacific) ocean landed on this shore. Both terms are used interchangeably. It stretched for over 450 miles, between the land of first inheritance and Hagoth's destination(s); unquestionably it was ocean, not a lake.

3.3 sea south

Used but a single time, in reference to the land northward.

3.4 sea north

Used but a single time, in reference to the land northward.

4. land northward

The land northward of essential concern to the Nephites lay toward the east sea and was reached exclusively via the narrow pass. The maximum distance of Nephite penetration was on the order of a couple of hundred miles, all of it (except the Cumorah area and thereabouts) without mention of elevated terrain. Nothing concrete is said of the width of this territory, except that it was obviously wider than the narrow neck; it is a safe presumption that its scale was roughly similar to the land southward referred to. Coastal voyages were also made to the land northward via the west sea and colonies were planted there. No hint is given in the Nephite record that they occupied the highland area toward the west side, which had included the Jaredite land of Moron.

4.1 land Desolation

Also known as the land of Desolation. It was the rather localized, southernmost portion of the land northward of direct concern to the Nephites and adjoined the land of Bountiful along a line. The narrow pass lay within the land Desolation. It is uncertain whether this land was conceived as reaching to the west sea. Its relative lack of trees was interpreted by the Nephites as due to Jaredite deforestation.

4.11 city Desolation

Known also as the city of Desolation. Approached from the south only via the narrow pass, it was the first city encountered in the land northward. As long as Nephite armies controlled it, their foes could have no access to any of the land northward of concern to the Nephites, while losing possession of it opened up opportunities for Lamanite expansion. It was close (twenty? miles) to Teancum and the east sea. In a battle at or near Desolation the dead were cast "into the sea," probably via a river or estuary.

4.12 city Teancum

It was near the city of Desolation, the next major place lying nearer the east sea. Access to it from the south was solely through the city of Desolation.

4.13 city Boaz

No land is indicated for this place, but it may have been within the land Desolation. It lay northward from the city of Desolation and probably was the next major population center in that direction. The distance from Desolation is uncertain but likely no more than twenty or thirty miles. Since its loss opened up the entire Nephite land northward to Lamanite assault, it probably lay at the northern limit of the route constriction between the two major lands which at its narrowest constituted the narrow pass.

4.21 land covered with large bodies of water

This area was in the land northward but sufficiently near the land Bountiful that it could have combined politically with it to form a bloc whose existence would have been a strategic threat to the Nephites. Absolute distances cannot be inferred, but it is reasonable to suppose that it was the same territory which earlier had included the Ripliancum of the Jaredites and later the lands of waters, rivers and fountains around Cumorah, which would place it on the order of a hundred miles from the narrow neck. The text is not clear on whether the land of waters of H12 is the same as that of A156. The two may be distinct, that referred to in Helaman being more distant to the north than the former one.

4.22 furthermost parts of the land northward

The statement does not allow us to relate this area to better known territories to the south.

4.23 land of Cumorah

A land of many waters, rivers and fountains, the territory in which the armies settled was "by" the hill; they camped around the hill. It was large enough not only to contain hundreds of thousands of encamped people but also to provide their subsistence for four years.

4.231 hill Cumorah (same as 5.3 hill Ramah)

It was "by" the land of this name, which may mean that adjacent, skirting foothills and plains were a primary characteristic of the land. From base to top, the hill was between 1000 and 3000 feet high and not so precipitous that wounded, fatigued men could not ascend it in the dark.

4.311 land Antum

The hill Shim was in the land Antum, which was relatively near to Mormon's homeland. The hill and land were in the same general area, not far from the east sea, as Cumorah.

4.311 hill Shim

Also called "a hill which shall be called Shim" and "the hill of Shim." Going from Moron (inland), Omer passed first Shim then Ramah/Cumorah to reach Ablom by the east sea. The order of Mormon's retreat suggests that Shim is farther south than Cumorah by an unknown, but not necessarily large, distance.

4.32 land and city of Jashon

Near the land Antum and hill Shim. Since the latter was southward from Cumorah, Antum and Jashon would have been less than a hundred miles northward from the narrow pass. It may have had a sizable population since both land and city are mentioned, unlike the case of some other land northward cities.

4.41 land and city of Shem

A fortifiable city where the Nephites gathered in their people, suggesting that the population was substantial and this was a regional center. Its relationships to Jashon, Antum and other areas cannot be determined from the text, although it was generally northward from the narrow pass. It was northward from Jashon at an indeterminate distance.

4.42 city of Jordan

Still farther north than Boaz, this is the northernmost named place in the Nephite land northward. One major retreat farther on, they made the deal with the Lamanites to meet at Cumorah, which must have been at about the same distance northward.

4.5 Sherrizah

A place, perhaps a city, where Nephites fought Lamanites during the final battles in the land northward, possibly in the Boaz-Jashon sector.

4.6 Moriantum

Either a city or land in the land northward where Lamanites and Nephites fought and committed atrocities. No inference can be made about its position in relation to other places except that it is mentioned at the same time as Sherrizah.

4.91 city of Jacobugath

No details are provided about this place destroyed at the time of the crucifixion, but it was in the northernmost part of the land northward.

4.92 city of Laman

No details are provided about this place destroyed at the time of the crucifixion, but it is more likely to have been in the land northward than in the land southward because its fate was related along with that of Jacobugath.

4.93 city of Josh

See city of Laman.

4.94 city of Gad

See city of Laman.

4.95 city of Kishkumen

See city of Laman.

4.96 city of Jacob

See city of Laman.

4.97 city of Gadiandi

See city of Laman.

4.98 city of Gadiomnah

See city of Laman.

4.99 city of Gimgimno

See city of Laman.

5.1 land of Moron

The land where Jaredite rulers lived by preference from beginning to near the end of that people's existence. No city is mentioned, although there may have been one. It was westerly and at a higher elevation than the final battle area. In specific relation to Nephite geography, Moron is said to have been "near" (beeline distance?) the land of Desolation. The prophet Ether's having dwelt in a cave no great distance from Moron while observing most of the final wars of the Jaredites, later to appear on the battlefield at Ramah to observe the last scenes, confirms that this distance was limited. (Omer took "many days" to reach Ablom from Moron, yet Moron was "near" Desolation. Resolution: Omer, with family along, took an indirect but easier route than was considered in making the statement "near.")

- 5.3 hill Ramah (same as 4.231 hill Cumorah)
Omer passed by the hill Shim and then by this hill on his way from Moron to the east sea at Ablom.
- 5.31 place called Ablom
In Omer's day, an un- or lightly settled location on the east sea, easterly from Cumorah, Shim and Moron.
- 5.32 place called Ogath
Located southward from the waters of Ripliancum and very close to the hill Ramah.
- 5.33 land of Corihor
One retreat from the borders of the east seashore, this land includes a valley (Shurr), and the hill Comnor is near, perhaps overlooking the land. It is reasonable that this is in the same hilly area in general as Ramah/Cumorah.
- 5.331 hill Comnor
See land of Corihor.
- 5.332 valley of Shurr
See land of Corihor.
- 5.5 Lib's great city
At or near the narrow pass.
- 5.7 waters of Ripliancum
An impassable body or system of bodies of water (probably estuaries, lagoons and river[s] since the sea was near) less than a hundred miles northward from Ramah/Cumorah.

Generalized Criteria

- 0.1 The dimensions of the New World lands where Book of Mormon events took place can hardly exceed several hundred miles in length and fewer in width.
- 0.11 The promised land was quite surely located in the tropics since no indication of cold or snow is given in the text, while heat is. This is confirmed by the fact that the season for warfare and that for agriculture were different (in a temperate place, they would coincide).

0.2 At the time of the catastrophe accompanying the crucifixion, “the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth.” These familiar phenomena, though of remarkable intensity, changed only the face of the land, not its topography nor its configuration or outline. Mormon and Moroni never evidence uncertainty about the scenes where the pre-Christian events of their forefathers took place. The hill Ramah was the hill Cumorah, without a hint of difference in their forms; Zarahemla was rebuilt after its burning; the Lamanites in the fourth century came out of the same highlands (Nephi) and along the same river Sidon as had their ancestors hundreds of years earlier; the narrow pass in Alma 50 was identical to the narrow pass in Mormon 3; and so on. Thus the text does not justify the view that fundamental geological changes or other changes in nature took place which involved the rise or fall in elevation of large areas. Certainly the known facts of natural history rule out any assumption that continental changes took place.

0.3 The civilizations of Lehi’s people and the Jaredites were both literate; they would have left evidence of that behind. Areas that lack (in archaeology or history) evidence of writing are quite certainly not where the text’s Nephites dwelt.

0.4 Naive linguistic comparisons have sometimes been made by Latter-day Saints—to site names, names of divinities, the names of peoples, etc. All those comparisons are methodologically unreliable, hence any model depending seriously on them gains nothing thereby.

0.5 The record being replete with reference to large populations and “cities,” we must suppose that the core promised land area will manifest evidence of such through archaeology, and they need to date correctly. It will not do to propose a location where such evidence is lacking.

0.51 Assumptions (there are no demonstrations) that a particular people mentioned in tradition must be a particular Book of Mormon group, or that a particular culture or site represents a given Book of Mormon place, mislead, for methodologies to give confidence in such relationships do not exist.

0.6 Assumptions of arbitrary, unrealistic population increase adds nothing to a geographical model, rather misleading.

0.7 The Book of Mormon never tells us where, nor when, the plates of Nephi were buried by Moroni. Strong arguments can be adduced to suggest that he did not place them in the hill Cumorah of the final battle. (He would have had to hang around in the midst of the Lamanite-controlled hill territory for

at least 35 years to do that, something most unlikely.) Hence that Joseph Smith obtained the plates from the hill in New York tells us nothing, either way, about where the battleground was.

0.8 The text we have of the Book of Mormon being a translation from a drastically different language and culture, we must not suppose that our current ethnocentric readings of the English terms having geographical significance can misleadingly control our interpretation. We need to discover, if possible, what the original terms meant to the writers (e.g., "elephants," "great city," "north," "dragons"), realizing that the author's meanings are not be obvious from the English as we naively construe it. Thus models must not depend crucially on culturally uninformed interpretations of terms in the text.

0.9 It has often been supposed that the Church authorities (particularly Joseph Smith) must have had accurate, and by implication revealed, knowledge about Book of Mormon geography. The evidence is against that view; too many statements from those authorities are in contradiction to the text and to each other to allow us to suppose that anybody knew for sure the answers to the crucial geographical questions. Furthermore, later Church authorities have asserted that definite knowledge about geography has never been revealed to the Church. Hence, statements about geography made by historical figures deserve to be assessed critically in the same terms as do modern statements; those of early date are no more likely to be correct because they were early and none are authoritative.