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Travels Between Nephi and Zarahemla

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Abstract: In this response to the criticism that Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon, Hanks claims that the Book is so intricate, with numerous migrations, expeditions, flashbacks, interpolations, and other plot complexities, that it would have been amazing for an untutored boy to have written it. He includes a chart of travels between Zarahemla and the land of Nephi.

TRAVELS BETWEEN NEPHI AND ZARAHEMLA *

by Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of the Seventy

A noted writer on the Book of Mormon, commenting on the complexity of the book, observed that the ancient story is "tremendously involved." That this is true is attested by many first-time readers of the book who have found it difficult to follow the numerous migrations, expeditions, interpolations, flashbacks, and other plot complexities abound-

(For Course 17, lessons of September 24 and November 5 and 12, "Structure and Purpose of Book of Mormon," "In the Land of Promise," and "A Great Patriarch"; for Course 27, lessons of September 3 and 10, "Keystone of Our Religion" and "A Book for Our Time"; for Course 29, lesson of September 17, "Standard Works of the Church"; and of general interest.)

ing in this great volume of sacred scripture. The accompanying chart has proved helpful to many young (and older) students in presenting an understandable picture of some of the important movements in the book.

The chart has absolutely *nothing* to do with the correlation of Book of Mormon places to regional or global geography. Neither has it anything to do with the relative location of places named in the book, though some of this can be ascertained from

*Reprinted from *The Instructor*, January, 1957, page 31.

NEPHI

2 Nephi 5:5-9.

First Read: 1 Nephi 1:4, 5, 8, 18-20
1 Nephi 2:2-4, 19, 20
1 Nephi 18:8, 23
2 Nephi 5:5-9

ZARAHEMLA

Omni 1:12-19.

NEPHI

- (1) Mosiah leads group from Nephi. They discover Mulekites in Zarahemla, unite; Mosiah becomes King. *Omni 12-15, 19.*
- (2) Expedition to Nephi fails through internal strife. *Omni 27, 28.*
- (3) Zeniff leads expedition to Nephi. Becomes vassal King. *Omni 29; Mosiah 9-22.*
- (4) Ammon leads group of 16 seeking knowledge of Zeniff's group. Plan escape of people, now led by Limhi, from bondage. *Mosiah 7:2 et seq.*
- (5) Limhi tells Ammon of 43 men who failed in search for Zarahemla, but found land of Jaredites, now extinct. The expedition brings back 24 gold plates. *Mosiah 8:7-9; 28:11-17; Ether 1:2.*
- (6) Limhi's people escape to Zarahemla. *Mosiah 22:11-13.*
- (7) Followers of Alma (Priest of Noah converted by Abinadi) get to Zarahemla. *Mosiah 24:20-25.*
- (8) Converted sons of Mosiah go on mission to Nephi. *Mosiah 27:8-20, 32; 28:1-9.*
- (9) Alma, the younger, converted. Becomes a leader and teacher. *Mosiah 27:8-20, 32; 29:42; Alma 4:15-20.*
- (10) Sons of Mosiah lead converts to Zarahemla. Meet Alma who guides them. *Alma 27:11-16, 20.*

ZARAHEMLA

Kings of Nephi
for Period
of Lines 3
through 6:

1. Zeniff
*Mosiah 7:9,
21, 22*
2. Noah
Mosiah 11:1
3. Limhi
Mosiah 19:26

Kings of
Zarahemla
for Period
of Lines
1 to 9:

1. Mosiah
Omni 19
2. Benjamin
Omni 23
3. Mosiah
Mosiah 6:3

the book itself. It simply pictures Nephi and Zarahemla as two centers of activity between which, around which, and in relation to which, much Book of Mormon action takes place. The chart is limited in its intentions and purposes. It offers no new or startling information or challenge to the serious Book of Mormon scholar, but it is designed to help a reader keep his finger on the thread of the story through the movements of the people.

The heart and soul, the flesh and sinew of the the Book of Mormon are its marvelous spiritual teachings and its timely personal lessons of life and for living. All other aspects of it or approaches to understanding and teaching it, are, in my opinion, completely subordinate and incidental to these. The great truths and teachings of the book should be continually studied that we might ". . . liken [them] to us, that [they] might be for our profit and learning." This chart pictures part of the story skeleton upon which those truths are built.

About 600 years before Christ, the Prophet Lehi was blessed by the Lord with a vision of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and its people. Lehi went forth among the people to warn them, but they were angry with him and mocked him and tried to take his life. Commanded by the Lord to depart the land, Lehi led those who would follow him away from Jerusalem in search of the choice land which the Lord had promised them.

After much travail in the wilderness they built a ship and succeeded in reaching their promised land. After a period of strife and distress among the sons of Lehi, Nephi and others were warned of the Lord to flee from the elder brothers, Laman and Lemuel. Departing into the wilderness they located themselves in a place which they called "Nephi," built a temple, and established one of the most important geographical areas in the Book of Mormon.

Some four centuries later, the land of Nephi was overrun with wickedness; and a man of God named Mosiah, being warned of the Lord to flee from Nephi, led his faithful followers in the wilderness where they discovered the land of "Zarahemla." The people then inhabiting Zarahemla were the Mulekites (who had left Jerusalem a few years after Lehi's group, entirely independent of them), ". . . the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king." (*Omni* 19.) (See chart, line No. 1.)

Some time later, during Mosiah's reign, a group of adventurers "desirous to possess the land of their inheritance" set out for the land of Nephi. (*Omni* 27.) This expedition failed through internal strife and the survivors returned to Zarahemla. (See chart, line No. 2.)

A short time later Zeniff, a member of the pre-

vious, ill-fated expedition, formed another party which he led to the land of Nephi. Being "overzealous to inherit the land," Zeniff made a compact with the king of the Lamanites (who were in possession of the land) and became a sort of vassal-king. (See chart, line No. 3.) (The full story of Zeniff and his successors and their people during this period is told in *Mosiah*, chapters 9 through 22.)

Upon the death of Zeniff, his son Noah became king. Through Noah's lechery and treachery, he brought his people to evil ways and then to subjection and bondage. The Prophet Abinadi was sent among them to warn them and was put to death by King Noah, but not until Abinadi had filled his mission and had touched the heart of one of Noah's wicked priests, Alma. The latter became converted, tried to protect Abinadi, and was driven into the wilderness where he taught the Gospel and established the Church.

When Noah died, his son Limhi, a "just man," became king over the land of Nephi, finding his people in the virtual slavery into which Noah had led them.

While this period of history was being lived in the land of Nephi, many events had occurred in Zarahemla. The first Mosiah had died and had been succeeded by his son, the great King Benjamin, who, like his father, reigned in righteousness and justice. When Benjamin died, he was succeeded as king by his son Mosiah, grandson of the first Mosiah.

During the reign of the younger Mosiah in Zarahemla, an expedition was formed to search out the land of Nephi to inquire concerning Zeniff and his group, from whom no word had been received since they set out on their journey in the reign of the first Mosiah. This expedition of sixteen was headed by Ammon, "a strong and mighty man," who led them to Nephi. This occurred during the reign of Limhi in that land. Ammon told Limhi of events in Zarahemla and learned from Limhi the sad story of Zeniff and Noah and their people. The two began to plan an escape for Limhi's people. (See chart, line No. 4.)

During their conversation Limhi told Ammon of an expedition he had sent out trying to discover Zarahemla to find relief for his people's bondage. The expedition did not find Zarahemla but returned, having found a land where once a mighty people lived. They brought back twenty-four gold plates which told the history of these now-extinct people (the Jaredites). (See chart, line No. 5.)

Limhi and his people escaped and were led by Ammon's group back to Zarahemla. (See chart, line No. 6.)

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IN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH (Concluded from preceding page.)

plans. According to the plan, the resulting church must be "truly catholic (meaning universal and suggesting the goal of Christian unity), truly evangelical, and truly Reformed (suggesting the Lutheran and Calvinist heritages respectively)."

The Stand of the Mormon Church

Some have asked about the possible involvement of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the ecumenical movement. In the April General Conference of 1920 Elder James E. Talmage said:

We are aware that at the present time there is in progress a great world movement having for its object the federation of denominations and sects professing belief in Christianity. . . .

It is a very important question to ask: Just where does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stand in relation to that matter? I answer, it stands aloof and alone.¹

Elder Talmage suggested that the idea of our joining the other churches would be "sacrilege" because our authority to preach and administer the ordinances of the Gospel has come from neither the Catholic nor the Protestant churches, but, "We constitute a Church that has been organized and named by the Lord Jesus Christ."²

Three years later Elder David O. McKay wrote in a *Millennial Star* editorial:

There is permeating Protestant Christendom today, a keen realization of the necessity of uniting all creeds into one great Christian church. The petty

¹General Conference Report, April, 1920, page 103.

²See footnote 1.

NOTE: A concluding follow-up discussion, "A Fertile Field for the Restoration," by Wilburn C. West, will appear in the next issue.

differences and distinctions now existing among the various creeds professing the name of Christ are recognized as barriers to the fulfillment of the hope that Christianity shall become the world-wide religion.

Elder McKay found the key to the problem and its solution in the words of Roger Williams who founded the first Baptist church in America. Of Williams, Elder McKay said:

. . . He was convinced that there was "no regularly constituted church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any church ordinance; nor can there be, until new apostles are sent by the Great Head of the church for whose coming I am seeking."

Once this reason for the existing disunion throughout Christendom is recognized, and with it the acceptance of the fact that Jesus Christ . . . is the only one who has the authority and right to establish His Church among men . . . then, and not till then will the great difficulty be overcome of establishing one great united Christian Church upon the earth.

Such a church will be called the Church of Jesus Christ.³

The Apostle Paul had seen the same key to church unity when he wrote to the Ephesians:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith. . . . (Ephesians 4:11-13.)

³*Millennial Star*, volume 85, April 19, 1923; pages 248, 249.
Library File Reference: CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

TRAVELS BETWEEN NEPHI AND ZARAHLEMA (Concluded from page 373.)

Alma led his group of followers and converts to join the people at Zarahemla. (Alma's story is told in *Mosiah*, 23 and 24.) (See chart, line No. 7.)

In Zarahemla the sons of (the younger) Mosiah left the faith and became "the very vilest of sinners." Alma's son, also named Alma, united with them in trying to destroy the Church. Visited by an angel, the younger Alma and the sons of Mosiah were converted and sought to repair the damage they had done to the Church.

Mosiah's sons unitedly refused the kingship and went on a mission among the Lamanites, their unregenerate enemies, in the land of Nephi. (See chart, line No. 8.)

Alma the younger became the head of the Church and the chief judge of the land, but left this office

to preach the Gospel. (See chart, line No. 9.)

The sons of Mosiah led their converts back to Zarahemla. On the way they met Alma, also returning, and they accompanied him and his followers to Zarahemla. (See chart, line No. 10.)

There was a long period of conflict between the people of God at Zarahemla and their opposers at Nephi. The Savior visited them at Bountiful, near Zarahemla, where they had gathered at the temple. Peace reigned for 200 years; then there was wickedness, continued conflict, and finally the war of extermination. Moroni completed the records given into his custody by his father, Mormon, and deposited them in a stone box in the hillside. He returned fourteen centuries later to lead the Prophet Joseph Smith to their resting place.

Library File Reference: BOOK OF MORMON—HISTORY.