



# BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

---

## Captain Moroni in Space and Time

Author(s): Kirk Magleby

Published at: Book of Mormon Resources, 5/5/2012

---

# Captain Moroni in Space and Time

Kirk Magleby

Captain Moroni stands like a colossus astride the Book of Alma war chapters. He is introduced to us in [Alma 43:16](#) as the supreme commander of Nephite military forces, appointed at the young age of 25 [Alma 43:17](#). We are not told precisely when he assumed command, but it must have been in the 17th or 18th year of the reign of the judges (ca 75 or 74 BC). His predecessor was Captain Zoram<sup>2</sup> [Alma 16:5](#). This is a brief chronology of Nephite military actions between ca. 81 BC when Zoram<sup>2</sup> was chief captain and ca. 74 BC when Moroni was in command:

- 81 BC - Lamanites destroyed the city of Ammonihah [Alma 16:2](#).
- 81 BC - Lamanites attacked the borders of the land of Noah, took Nephite captives [Alma 16:3](#).
- 81 BC - Zoram<sup>2</sup> & sons, acting on prophetic intelligence, liberated the Nephite captives in the wilderness east of river Sidon and south of Manti [Alma 16:8](#).
- 81 BC - the Lamanite invasion force fought many battles with Zoram<sup>2</sup>'s troops, with the Nephites ultimately prevailing [Alma 25:3](#).
- 78 BC - the Lamanites invaded Nephite territory. No detail is given, but Mormon's cheery annual summary [Alma 16:21](#) implies another Nephite victory.
- 76 BC - Lamanite armies followed the people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehies) from the greater land of Nephi through the narrow strip of wilderness into the eastern part of the greater land of Zarahemla near the land of Jershon. This precipitated the largest Nephite - Lamanite battle in over 500 years, resulting in tens of thousands of casualties [Alma 28:2](#).

In [Alma 28:10](#) Mormon begins a recap of the violent first 15 years of the reign of the judges. He then indicates that the 16th & beginning of the 17th years passed in peace [Alma 30:4-5](#). Korihor appeared on the scene and met his tragic end among the Zoramites in the land of Antionum that same year [Alma 30:59](#). Ominously, the Zoramites on the eastern frontier of the greater land of Zarahemla had separated themselves from the Nephites [Alma 30:59](#) which posed a strategic threat to the Nephite nation because just south of Antionum was east wilderness territory full of Lamanites [Alma 31:3-4](#). In the 17th year of the reign of the judges, the Zoramites in Antionum officially joined forces with the Lamanites [Alma 43:4](#) and began preparing for war [Alma 35:11](#). The pacifist

people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehies) left Jershon for the safer confines of Melek after no more than 2 years residence in Jershon [Alma 35:13](#) and the impoverished, outcast former Zoramites replaced them in Jershon [Alma 35:14](#). This is the setting when Captain Moroni enters the narrative.

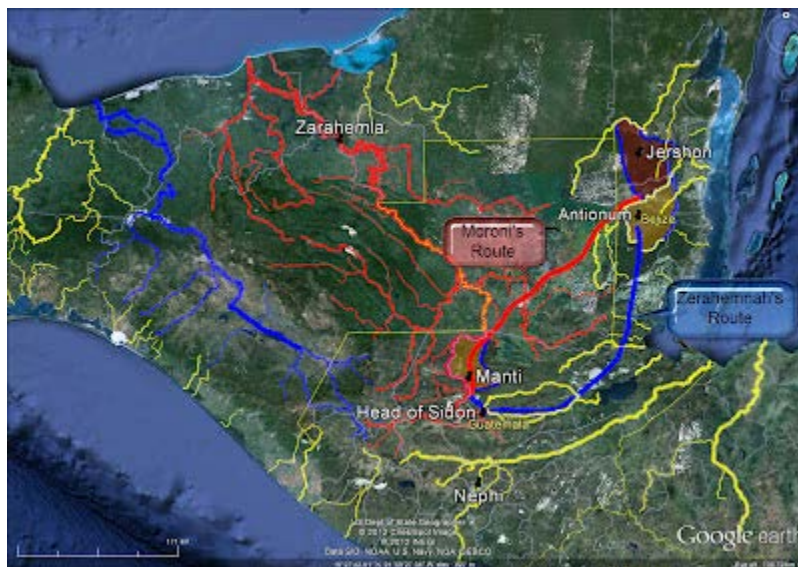
Moroni was a technological innovator. In his campaign against Zerahemnah he equipped his troops with defensive armor [Alma 43:19](#) which startled the enemy into flight. In his first campaign against the Lamanites under King Amalickiah he introduced defensive fortifications [Alma 48:8](#). He was also an able recruiter who inspired confidence in the populace [Alma 50:12](#). Mormon lionized Moroni [Alma 48:17](#) and named his heir after the ancient war hero. Moroni's military strategies and tactics were nothing short of brilliant (See the blog article "[Manti](#)" that describes the campaign against Zerahemnah south of Manti in considerable detail.) Mormon considered Moroni's time the Nephite golden age [Alma 50:23](#). The Nephite nation achieved its maximum territorial extent in the land southward under his military leadership.

Moroni's first documented military action was his defense of the land of Jershon ca. 74 BC [Alma 43:15](#). The Lamanites were joined with the Zoramites & Amlicites (See the blog article "[Peripatetic Amlici](#)" for reasons we support the critical text "Amlicites" rather than the 1981 LDS text "Amalekites") in the land of Antionum. In our proposed correlation, Jershon & Antionum are both in modern-day Belize separated by the large Belize River. As with all images on this blog, click to enlarge.



Proposed location of the lands of Jershon & Antionum.  
Captain Moroni was in Jershon ca. 74 BC

Their initial battle plan had been to attack Jershon from Antionum, but when the Lamanites under Zerahemnah saw the Nephite body armor, they panicked [Alma 43:21](#) and retreated southward in a wide arc that passed near the head of the river Sidon upriver from the land of Manti. The Lamanites' plan B was to attack the land of Manti from the south, presuming it lightly defended. Acting on prophetic intelligence, Moroni left a small force behind to defend Jershon, gathered recruits en route, and arrived at the battle field south of Manti before Zerahemnah and the Lamanites. This map shows likely travel routes for Moroni in red and Zerahemnah in blue. Following the Polochic River, the Lamanites would have traveled approximately 330 kilometers while the Nephites, taking a more direct route, would have traveled approximately 283 kilometers.

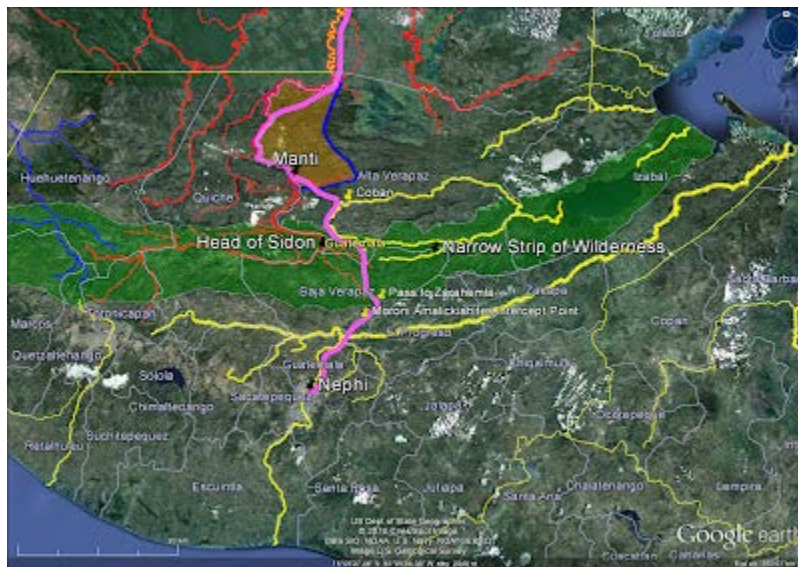


Likely routes of travel for Moroni (red) and Zerahemnah (blue) to the battlefield upriver from Manti ca. 74 BC

For details of the battle south of Manti, see the blog article "[Manti](#)." Due largely to Moroni's skill as a battlefield tactician and inspirational motivator, the Nephites won a decisive victory over a much larger enemy force [Alma 43:51](#).

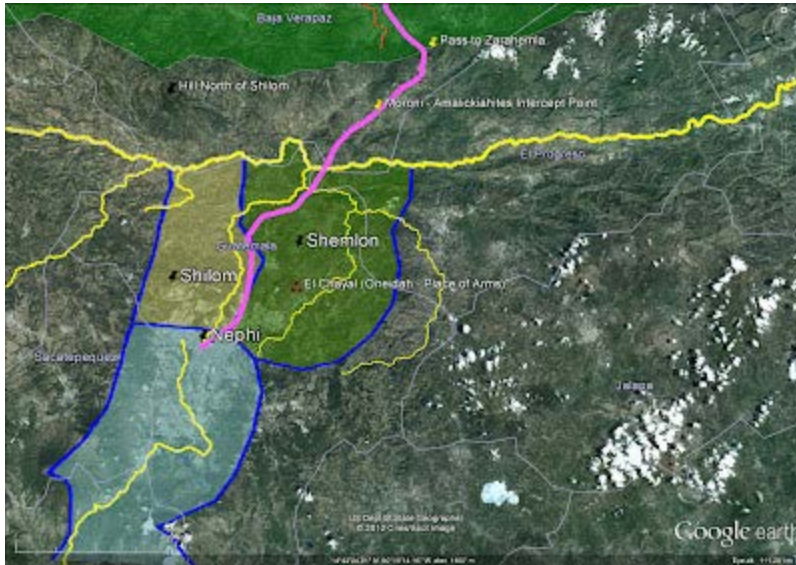
In the 19th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 73 BC) Amalickiah and some of the lower judges dissented [Alma 46:4](#) and Moroni hoisted his famous title of liberty in response [Alma 46:19](#). Amalickiah led a group of followers south, across the narrow strip of wilderness border, into wilderness territory in the northern part of the greater land of Nephi [Alma 46:29](#). Moroni and his troops intercepted the Amalickiahites in the wilderness, administered an oath of allegiance to the cause of Nephite liberty, marched the oath-bound dissenters back north to the greater land of Zarahemla, and executed the

recalcitrants [Alma 46:32-35](#). Unfortunately for the Nephites, Amalickiah, a descendant of Zoram, escaped with a small entourage and went on to found a Lamanite dynasty with first himself [Alma 47:35](#), then his brother, Ammoron [Alma 52:3](#), and finally Ammoron's son, Tubaloth [Helaman 1:16](#), as emperor. If Amalickiah followed the standard trail between Zarahemla and Nephi, the point where Moroni intercepted the Amalickiahites would have been somewhere in the modern Guatemalan Department of Baja Verapaz, likely between the Salama Valley on the north and the Motagua River on the south. This map shows our version of the standard Zarahemla to Nephi trail in purple, with the approximate location of the Moroni - Amalickiahites intercept point indicated.



Likely area where Captain Moroni stopped most of the Amalickiahites in their flight to Nephi ca. 73 BC

We like John L. Sorenson's suggestion that Oneidah (critical text orthography), the place of arms mentioned in [Alma 47:5](#), was probably El Chayal just a few kilometers north east of present day Guatemala City.



Likely location of Oneidah, the place of arms. El Choyal was one of the principal sources of obsidian in Mesoamerica

The purple line on the map below shows the probable route the servants of the slain Lamanite king took from the city of Nephi to the land of Melek where they joined the people of Ammon [Alma 47:29](#). The thing they "came over" was the mountainous narrow strip of wilderness that separated the greater land of Nephi on the south from the greater land of Zarahemla on the north.



Standard Nephi to Zarahemla route in purple, crossing over the mountainous narrow strip of wilderness in green

In Amalickiah's first offensive against the Nephites, ca. 72 BC, he sent his forces right up the center of the greater land of Zarahemla targeting the partially rebuilt Ammonihah in a repeat of the successful 81 BC raid described in [Alma 16:2-3](#). The surprised Lamanite armies faced Moroni's earthen fortifications for the first time. Moroni had excellent military intelligence because even though he had not yet fortified every city throughout the Nephite republic [Alma 50:1](#), he correctly anticipated a thwarted attack on Ammonihah followed by a revenge attack on Noah [Alma 49:15](#).



Proposed locations of Ammonihah and Noah in context with other places associated with Moroni prior to ca. 72 BC

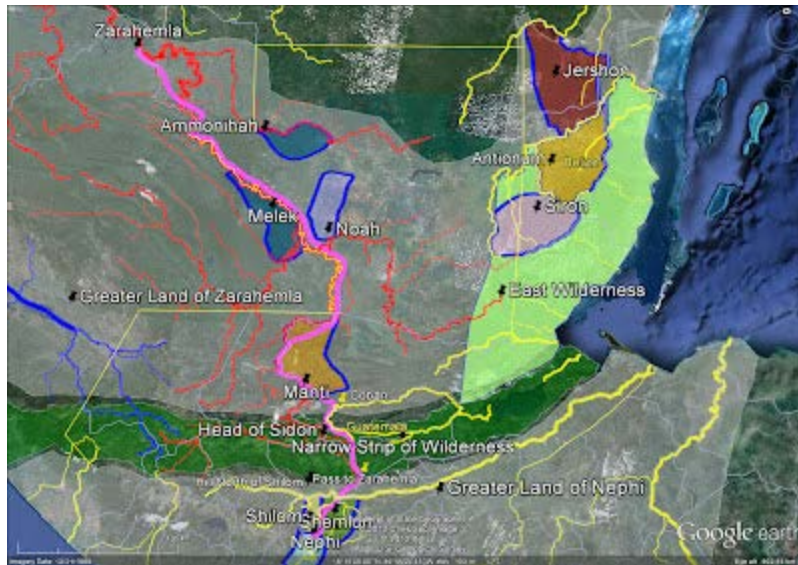
Soundly defeated at Noah by the brilliance of Moroni's military engineering, the humiliated Lamanites retreated back to the land of Nephi [Alma 49:25](#). The casualty count at Noah was an astonishing 1,000+ Lamanites dead and about 50 Nephites wounded [Alma 49:23-24](#). Captain Moroni's innovative defensive strategy was clearly a decisive military advantage for his beloved homeland and the Nephites wasted no time implementing it throughout their territory [Alma 50:6](#).

The 20th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 72 BC) began an axial period in Nephite history. Large defensive public works construction projects were underway throughout the republic [Alma 50:1](#). In a Nephite version of manifest destiny, Moroni cleared the east and west wilderness areas of Lamanites [Alma 50:11](#) and caused Nephite colonists to settle newly-opened areas [Alma 50:9](#). He fortified the southern border of the greater land of Zarahemla [Alma 50:10](#) along the narrow strip of wilderness that separated the Nephites on the north from the Lamanites on the south. Moroni founded his namesake

city and land [Alma 8:7](#) on the east sea in the extreme south eastern corner of Nephite territory [Alma 50:13](#), [Alma 51:22](#). The Nephites were celebrating a string of military victories dating back 10 years. The destruction of Ammonihah in 81 BC had been their last major defeat. Voluntary recruits were flocking to Moroni's armies [Alma 50:12](#) and new cities were springing up [Alma 50:15](#). The Nephite economy was booming [Alma 50:18](#). Mormon identifies the 21st year of the reign of the judges (ca. 71 BC) as a high water mark in the history of the Nephite nation [Alma 50:23](#), the halcyon years [Alma 50:24](#).

Some proposed geographic referents from the Nephite apogee ca. 72 BC.

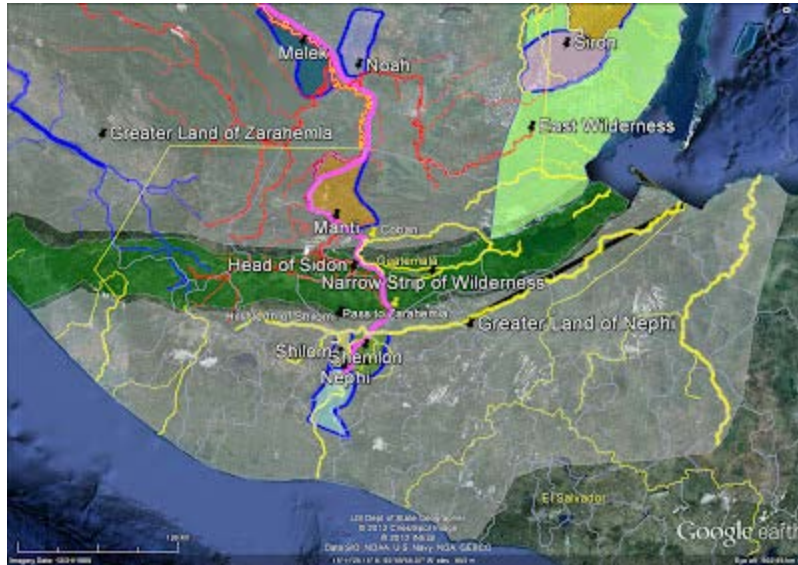
[Alma 50:7](#) the east wilderness; the Lamanites' own lands, the greater land of Nephi; the greater land of Zarahemla.



East wilderness, greater land of Zarahemla, greater land of Nephi at Nephite territorial maximum ca. 72 BC

[Alma 50:8](#) the greater land of Nephi ran in a straight course (in our correlation, generally following the Motagua River) from the east sea to the west. The greater land of Nephi extended from the east sea to the west sea [Alma 22:27](#).





Greater land of Nephi ca. 72 BC. Notice the straight black line running along the Motagua River for 184 kilometers

[Alma 50:11](#) describes Captain Moroni clearing the Lamanites out of the wildernesses on both the east and the west of the greater land of Zarahemla. These are the same wilderness areas Mormon described in [Alma 22:28-29](#) (ca. 90 BC) as being so full of Lamanites that the Nephites were nearly surrounded. Now, 18 years later, confident in his military technology and strategy, Captain Moroni asserted Nephite territorial claims, expelled foreigners, and fortified the border. This is our view of the east and west wilderness areas (pale green) and the defensive line (red) between the Nephites on the north and the Lamanites on the south. This line ran by the head of Sidon which we correlate with the confluence of the Chixoy/Negro and the Salama that forms the Chixoy (credit V. Garth Norman). The line forms the northern boundary of the area we have identified as the narrow strip of wilderness. It is a line of steep cliffs that run almost from the Caribbean to the Pacific, formed by the boundary of the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates.



Proposed east wilderness, west wilderness, and line (in red) between the Nephites and Lamanites ca. 72 BC

[Alma 50:11](#) The Nephites claimed all the territory north of the defensive line shown in red above, although they never really controlled such vast holdings as we explain in the blog article "[Bountiful - Context](#)." Nominal Nephite hegemony extended to the land Bountiful north of the greater land of Zarahemla, and the land Desolation even northward from Bountiful.



Land Bountiful north of greater land of Zarahemla and land Desolation northward of Bountiful ca. 72 BC

[Alma 50:12](#) the "lands of their possessions," mentioned twice in this verse, refers to the territory north of the line between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Our proposal for this line is shown in red on the map above. North of this line lay the greater land of Zarahemla. North of the greater land of Zarahemla lay the land Bountiful, and northward of Bountiful lay the land Desolation in the land northward. The boundary between Desolation and Bountiful was the boundary between the land northward and the land southward.

[Alma 50:13](#) In ca. 72 BC, as part of the eastward expansion of the Nephite nation, Captain Moroni founded an eponymous city and land in the extreme southwest corner of the greater land of Zarahemla to defend against Lamanite incursions. Originally by the east sea, the city of Moroni slid into the ocean at the time of Christ's crucifixion [3 Nephi 9:4](#). In 72 BC, the city and land of Nephiah were founded bordering the land of Moroni and the city (no land is ever mentioned) of Aaron. Also in 72 BC, the coastal city and land of Lehi were established north of Moroni, presumably named after one of Moroni's trusted chief captains [Alma 53:2](#). This map shows our proposed correlations for the cities of Moroni (Tiger Mound, now submerged under the waters of Amatique Bay off Toledo District, Belize), Nephiah (El Prado, Peten, Guatemala), Aaron (El Ceibal, Peten, Guatemala) and Lehi (False Cay, Stann Creek, Belize).



Proposed locations for the cities & lands of Moroni, Nephiah and Lehi, as well as the city of Aaron ca. 72 B.C.

[Alma 50:17-24](#) describes the Nephite golden age, a time of peace and prosperity from ca. 71 BC to ca. 69 BC when Captain Moroni was directing the fortification of many Nephite cities from his headquarters in the land of Moroni.

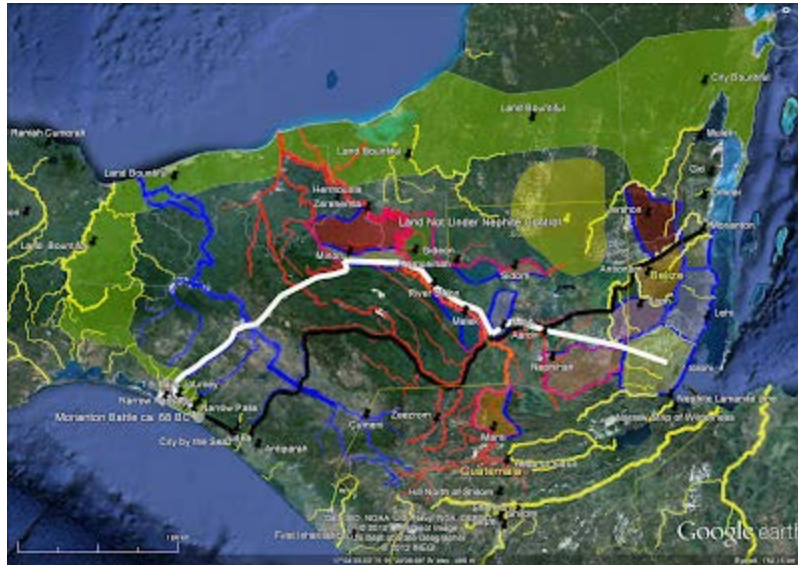
During the Nephite golden age, two major problems lurked beneath the surface of their otherwise prosperous circumstances. 1) The Nephite system of government depended on widespread public morality [Mosiah 29:26-27](#) and granted considerable local autonomy [Mosiah 29:29](#). This decentralization made it relatively easy for fractious dissenters to break away and form seditious rebellions. 2) The Nephites simply lacked the manpower to adequately defend their huge, newly-expanded territory [Alma 51:23](#), [Alma 58:23](#). Reduced through internal dissension and external invasion, the Nephite polity extending from the east sea to the west sea only lasted a few years. Captain Moroni made a serious strategic miscalculation that ended up costing the Nephite nation dearly. Based on their remarkable, unprecedented victory at Noah [Alma 49:23-24](#) ca. 72 BC, Moroni underestimated the number of fighting men that would be required to hold one of the Nephites' newly-fortified cities against a vastly superior enemy force. As it turned out, a fortified Nephite city in Lamanite hands was a military liability rather than an asset.

Up the east seacoast from the land of Lehi, the charismatic Morianton had founded an eponymous city and land and in ca. 68 BC, a border war broke out between the people of Morianton and their neighbors to the south, the people living in the land of Lehi. [Alma 50:25-26](#). This tells us that the border between these two coastal lands was a political boundary subject to interpretation rather than a natural feature like a river. This map shows our proposed city of Morianton (the site of Oshon, Belize District, Belize) north of Lehi and Moroni. The boundary between the lands of Morianton and Lehi we take as the current political boundary between the Belizean districts of Stann Creek on the south and Belize on the north.



Map showing the proposed locations of the lands of Moroni, Lehi and Morianton along the Belizean coast ca. 68 BC

The people living in the land of Lehi, rather than fight their northern neighbors, abandoned their homesteads and fled southward to the camp of Moroni in the land of Moroni [Alma 50:27](#). Fearing an attack from Moroni's powerful force, Morianton convinced his followers to pull up stakes and move en masse into the well-watered land northward [Alma 50:29](#). Moroni dispatched Teancum and his elite troops. After chasing the Moriantonites for some time, Teancum's army intercepted the dissidents near the borders of the land Desolation by the narrow pass that led by the sea into the land northward. This narrow pass was by a sea on the west and a sea on the east [Alma 50:33-34](#). There is a topography, first described by Ric Hauck and Joe V. Andersen, that precisely fits the textual description of the area around the narrow pass. This map shows the Moriantonites likely flight path in black and Teancum's likely interdiction route in white.



Proposed route of Morianton (black) and Teacum (white) to their battle site near the narrow pass that led by the sea into the land northward. Military action ca. 68 BC.

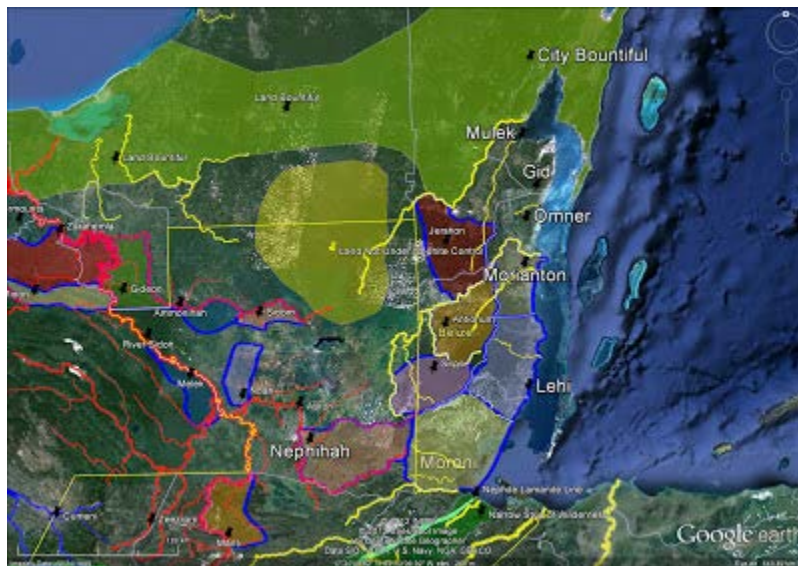
And this closeup of the narrow pass area shows a cluster of important geographic referents near the Bountiful - Desolation border.



Candidate narrow neck, narrow pass & narrow passage all near the east - west Bountiful - Desolation border

In the 25th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 67 BC) Captain Moroni took his army, left the land of Moroni, and marched against the rebellious kingmen, killing 4,000 of them throughout the greater land of Zarahemla [Alma 51:17-19](#). Moroni obviously believed that

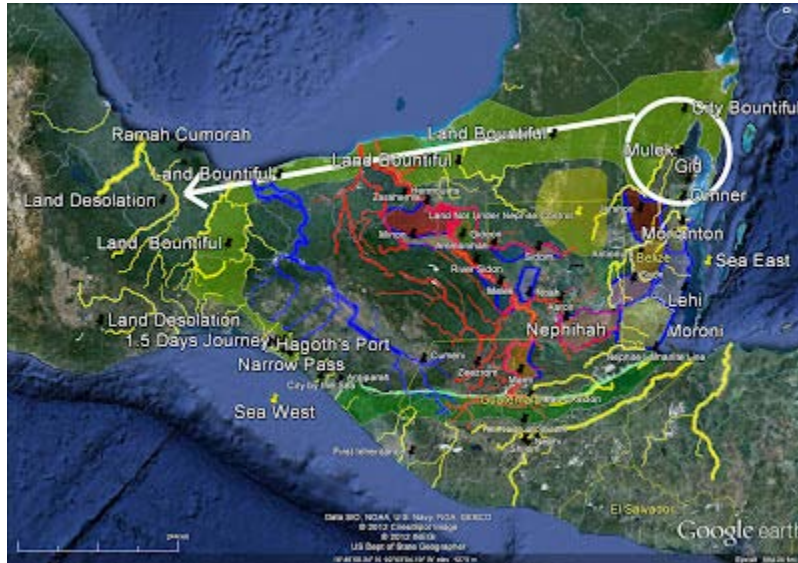
his recent military innovation (fortified cities) would allow the Nephite commanders who remained along the east coast to stand their ground against Amalickiah's huge army. That proved not to be the case. Soon after Captain Moroni's departure, the city of Moroni fell [Alma 51:23](#) and Amalickiah marched right up the east coast in a blitzkrieg, capturing the Nephite cities of Lehi, Morianton, Omner, Gid and Mulek in quick succession [Alma 51:26](#). (Note that "Nephihah" in [Alma 51:26](#) in the 1981 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon is a blatant error also extant in the original manuscript. Royal Skousen's critical text correctly replaces "Nephihah" with "Moroni" in this verse. Nephite refugees from the southern lands and cities along the east coast (Moroni, Lehi, Morianton) fled to inland Nephihah [Alma 59:5](#). Nephite refugees from the northern cities along the east coast (Omner, Gid, Mulek) presumably fled to the land Bountiful defended by Teancum and his very able warriors [Alma 51:31](#). Many Nephite prisoners were incarcerated in the city of Gid [Alma 55:7](#). Here is a map of our proposed correlation of the Nephite east coast. Omner we correlate with the site of Altun Ha in Belize District, Belize. For Gid, we propose the site of Yakalche in Corozal, Belize. Mulek we correlate with the site of Cerros in the New River delta, Corozal, Belize. The city Bountiful we correlate with the site of Bugambilas across the Hondo River from Belize in the modern Mexican state of Quintana Roo. Bugambilas is located about 7 kilometers north of the Mexico - Belize border in the Orthon P. Blanco Municipality north west of Chetumal.



Proposed lands & cities along the Nephite east coast ca. 67 BC

The Lamanites' dream and the Nephites' nightmare was for the Nephites to be surrounded by the Lamanites [Alma 22:34](#), [Alma 52:9](#) with no avenue of escape in time of

crisis. The land Bountiful was the Nephites' last resort. It was the northernmost Nephite land in the land southward, and the gateway to the land northward. This map shows Amalickiah's audacious objective: to invade the land Bountiful north of the city of Mulek and then use it as a staging ground to launch a strike into the land northward [Alma 51:30](#), [Alma 52:2](#) that would encircle the Nephites.

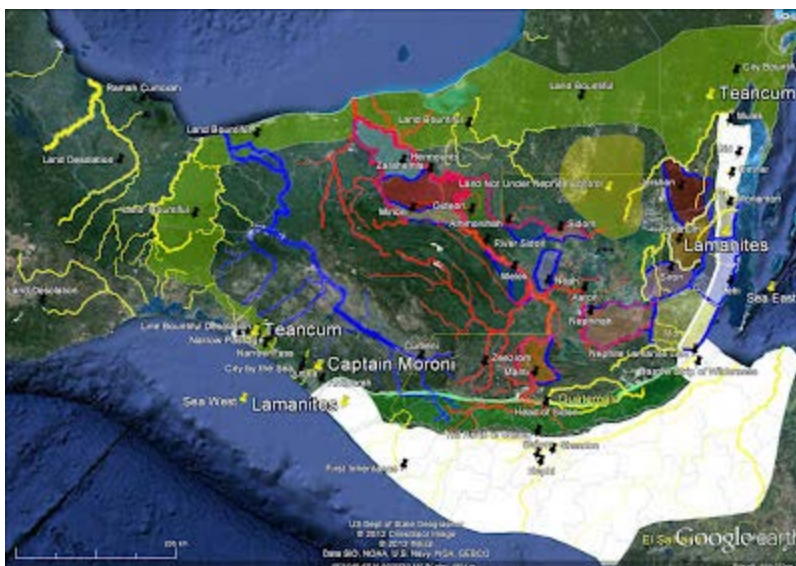


Visualization of Amalickiah's military objective, ca. 67 BC

Fortunately for the Nephites, Teancum stopped Amalickiah's advance before the Lamanites could invade the land Bountiful. Teancum killed Amalickiah in a daring night operation [Alma 51:34](#) and the dispirited Lamanite force hunkered down in the fortified city of Mulek [Alma 52:2](#). At the end of the 25th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 67 BC), Moroni was putting down the kingmen insurgency throughout those parts of the greater land of Zarahemla that still remained in Nephite hands. Teancum was entrenched with his army protecting the city of Bountiful in the extreme north east corner of Nephite lands. The Lamanites were firmly in control of the east coast from Moroni on the south to Mulek on the north. Nephite refugees from Moroni, Lehi and Morianton were temporarily re-located in Nephiah. This map shows the situation as Alma chapter 51 ends.



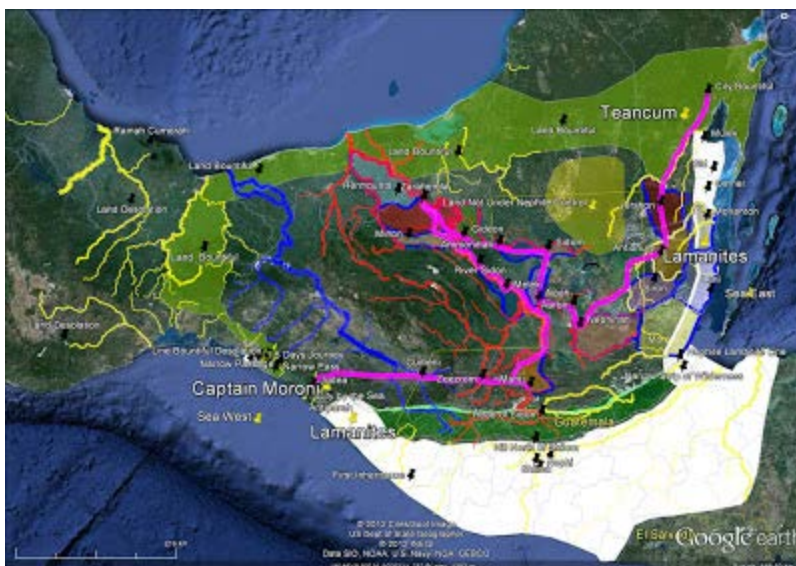




Proposed locations of Lamanite forces under Ammoron on both coasts, Teancum's Bountiful defense forces on both coasts, and Captain Moroni ca. 66 BC

Some of Captain Moroni's strategic thinking is now clear. As he had in previous conflicts, Moroni positioned himself and his army at the leading edge of the most active front. Teancum, with some of the Nephites' best troops [Alma 51:31](#), commanded the armies of last resort defending the all-important land Bountiful on both coasts. If Bountiful ever fell, the Nephites would be surrounded with nowhere to flee.

In the 27th year of the reign of the judges, ca. 65 BC, Captain Moroni, having positioned armies to defend the south and west borders of the greater land of Zarahemla, had began a long march to join Teancum in the north east quarter of the land - in the city Bountiful [Alma 52:17](#). Moroni almost certainly went through the Nephite heartland recruiting more fighting men and strengthening the government against the restive seditious elements that had escaped his purges two years earlier, because his march to the northern east coast took the entire year [Alma 52:18](#). This map shows Moroni's likely circuitous route in purple from the Judea - Antiparah area in the extreme south west of Nephite territory to the city Bountiful in the north east corner.



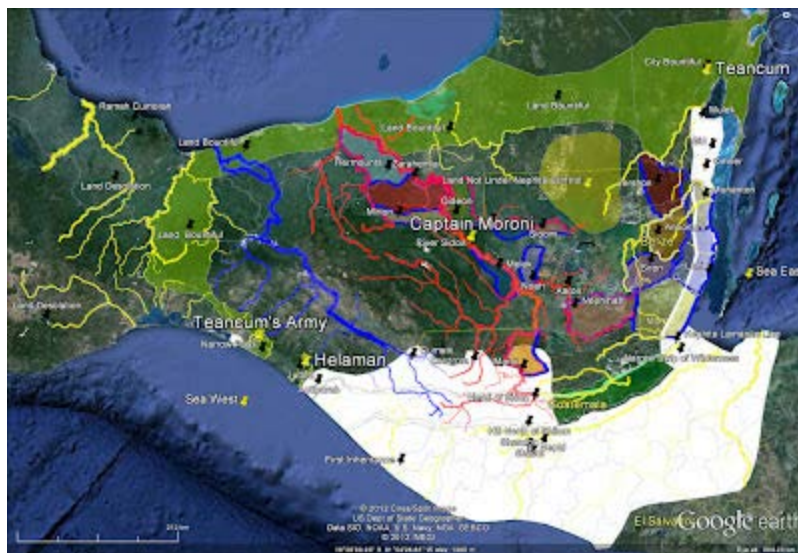
Proposed route of Captain Moroni's march in purple through the greater land of Zarahemla ca. 65 BC

If this was indeed Captain Moroni's route of travel, he went 1,385 kilometers which according to our benchmark (See the blog article "[Land Southward Travel Times](#)") would have taken him about 3 months travel time. It is important now to clarify the chronology as Helaman and his 2,000 stripling warriors become part of the narrative. In the 26th year of the reign of the judges, ca. 66 BC, these are some of the major events that occurred:

- As the year began, the entire east coast from Moroni on the south to Mulek on the north was under Lamanite control, Amalickiah had just tried unsuccessfully to invade the land Bountiful north of Mulek, and Teancum had just killed Amalickiah with a javelin thrust through his heart [Alma 52:1](#).
- Ammoron was crowned Lamanite king, replacing his dead brother [Alma 52:3](#).
- Ammoron traveled from the battle zone (probably the city of Mulek) back to the local land of Nephi to consult with the Lamanite queen [Alma 52:12](#). He raised a large army and led an invasion force up the Nephite west coast. The Nephites were now fighting on an eastern and a western front.
- Captain Moroni, not quite finished with his anti-insurrection campaign against the kingmen throughout the greater land of Zarahemla, had intended to return to the eastern theater and join forces with Teancum in the city Bountiful. Ammoron's west coast invasion changed everything. Moroni hurried to the south west quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla and established a defensive perimeter at key points along the border [Alma 52:11](#), [Alma 52:15](#).

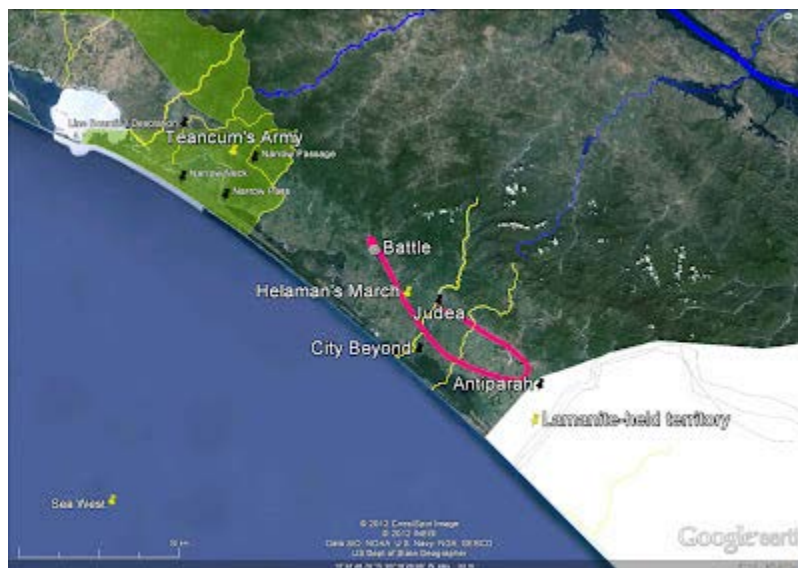
- As a fail safe in case the Lamanites breached the Nephite defenses along the west coast, Captain Moroni ordered Teancum to divide his forces and secure the narrow pass leading into the land northward at the same time he (Teancum) was defending the city Bountiful on the east coast [Alma 52:9](#).
- Moroni did not stay long in the south west. At the end of the 26th year, he was already on his year-long march to join Teancum in the city Bountiful [Alma 52:15](#).
- Meanwhile, as soon as Moroni left the area, a Nephite dissension arose in the south west quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla [Alma 53:8](#). This provided an opening for the Lamanite forces under Ammoron, and they quickly captured the cities of Manti, Zeezrom, Cumeni and Antiparah [Alma 56:13-15](#).
- Seeing the Lamanites approach their homeland in Melek, the people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehies) were about to break their pacifist oath and join the Nephite army [Alma 56:7](#).
- Remaining faithful, the people of Ammon mustered an army of 2,000 young men whom Helaman led from the land of Melek to the city of Judea where they greatly strengthened Antipus and his decimated, dispirited troops [Alma 56:9-10](#), [Alma 56:15-17](#).

This map shows our proposal for the Nephite situation at the end of the 26th year of the judges with Helaman recently arrived in Judea and Captain Moroni en route to the city of Bountiful.



Proposed situation at the end of the 26th year of the judges ca. 66 BC.  
Lamanite-held territories in white.

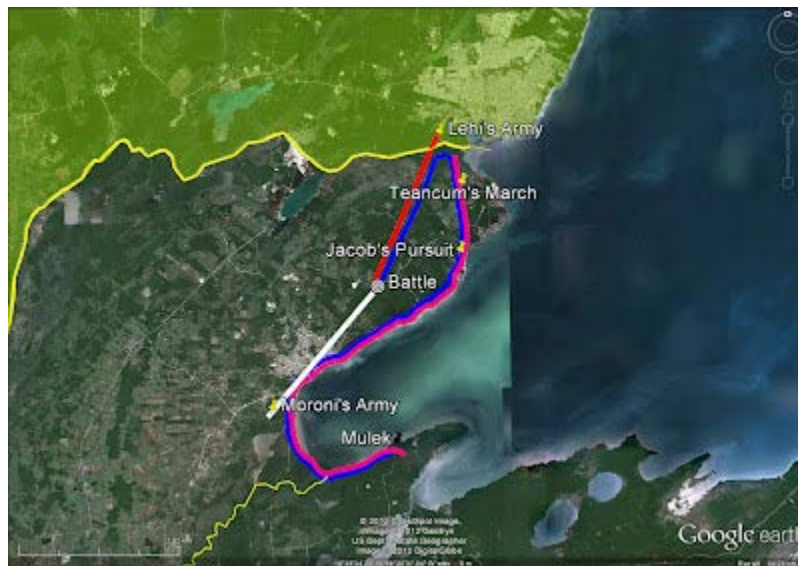
During the 27th year of the judges, ca. 65 BC, Teancum's Bountiful defense forces in the west saw no enemy action and in the east they were not engaged in any direct military activity as they waited for the arrival of Captain Moroni's army to bolster their troop strength [Alma 52:17](#). Captain Moroni's precise activities during the year are not recorded, but he finally joined Teancum in the city Bountiful at year's end [Alma 52:18](#). Helaman and the army of Antipus, on the other hand, were heavily engaged with the enemy in the south west quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla. Helaman and his 2,000 Ammonites marched from Judea to a point near Antiparah, then toward the city beyond on the borders by the seashore [Alma 56:30-33](#). Decoying the Lamanites out of Antiparah, Helaman then marched in a northward direction for part of one day, all of the next day, and part of a third day with the Lamanites in hot pursuit and the army of Antipus behind the Lamanites. Helaman then doubled back to engage the Lamanites in a fierce battle where the 2,000 heroic young Ammonites saved the day [Alma 56:54](#). This map shows our proposed location for this military engagement along the west coast of the greater land of Zarahemla. In our correlation, the city of Judea is the site of Pijijiapan, Antiparah is La Permuta and the city beyond is Pajon, all in the Pacific coastal plain of the modern Mexican state of Chiapas.



Proposed locations of Judea, Antiparah and the city beyond ca. 65 BC

The 27th year of the judges ended with Helaman and his 2,000 warriors in Judea and a much reduced Lamanite force still occupying Antiparah.

During the 28th year of the judges, ca. 64 BC, the weakened Lamanites on the western front voluntarily vacated the city of Antiparah which returned to Nephite hands without bloodshed [Alma 57:4](#). On the eastern front, Captains Moroni, Teancum and Lehi executed a brilliant feint that lured the Lamanites out of the heavily fortified city of Mulek. In our correlation, the city of Mulek is the site of Cerros on Chetumal Bay in Corozal District, Belize. Teancum marched along the seashore with the Lamanites under Jacob in hot pursuit [Alma 52:23-24](#). When they neared the land Bountiful, the Lamanites did an about face and began to return to Mulek with Lehi and his army bearing down on them [Alma 52:28](#). They were met by Captain Moroni who had positioned his army in the Lamanites' return path [Alma 52:34](#). This map shows our proposal for the location of this decisive Nephite victory in which Captain Moroni was wounded. The green shading represents our proposed land of Bountiful north of the Hondo River in Quintana Roo, Mexico. The purple line represents Teancum's march and the blue line Jacob's pursuit. Lehi coming down from the land of Bountiful is shown in red, with Moroni in white coming up from his wilderness camp west of Mulek.



Likely location of the battle of Mulek, ca. 64 BC in what is today the Corozal District of Belize

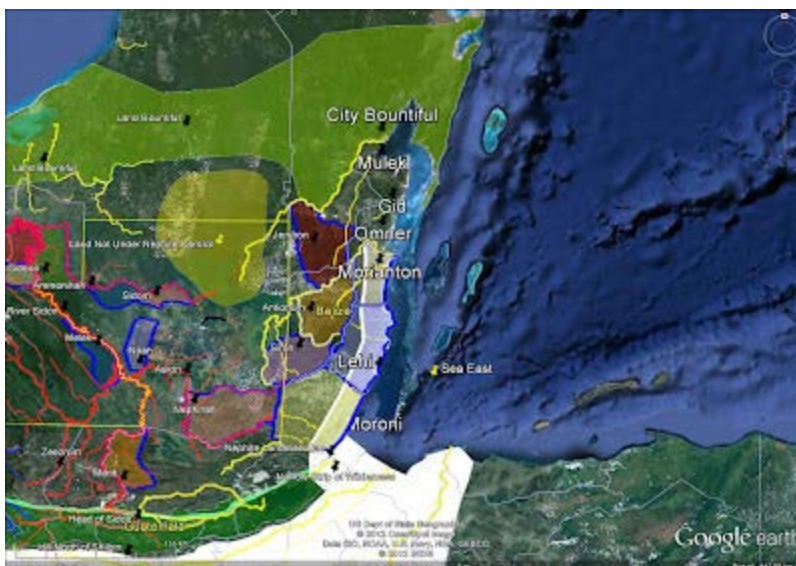
One is frequently in awe of Captain Moroni's skill as a battlefield tactician. If this really is the area where the Battle of Mulek took place, Jacob and his Lamanite troops had just marched 32 kilometers when they were surrounded by two armies who had only traveled 1/4 that distance to the point of engagement. It would not be hard to redraw the map above to make the relative distances even more exaggerated.

After their great triumph, Captain Moroni installed Lehi as the Nephite commander in the recaptured city of Mulek [Alma 53:2](#) while Teancum returned to his familiar city of Bountiful [Alma 53:3](#) where Captain Moroni was also headquartered. As the 28th year of the judges came to a close, the Nephites had retaken one city in the west (Antiparah) and one city in the east (Mulek).

During the 29th year of the judges, ca. 63 BC, Moroni and Ammoron exchanged vitriolic epistles where for the first time, an enraged Nephite commander threatened to go on the offensive and exterminate the Lamanites in their traditional homelands [Alma 54:12](#).

Gid, the next major city south of Mulek along the east coast, was a prisoner of war camp with Nephite men, women and children inside the defensive embankment, Lamanite guards at the entrance, and a Lamanite army encamped outside the city proper. Captain Moroni recruited a small group of ethnic Lamanites who delivered strong wine to the guards standing watch at the city gate. Predictably, the guards drank themselves into a stupor [Alma 55:14](#). This allowed Moroni to arm the prisoners [Alma 55:16](#) and surround the Lamanite army [Alma 55:21](#). At daybreak, the surprised Lamanite forces surrendered without a fight and were eventually marched to the Nephite prisoner of war internment facility at the city Bountiful [Alma 55:26](#).

The city of Omner is conspicuously absent in Mormon's narrative of Captain Moroni's liberation campaign down the east coast. We assume Omner returned to Nephite control because at the end of the 29th year of the judges, Moroni was devising a battle plan to retake the heavily fortified city of Morianton south of Omner [Alma 55:33](#). When you consider the disastrous year the Lamanites had on the southwestern front in the 29th year of the judges (after losing Cumeni, Zeezrom and Manti to Helaman's forces, the Lamanites abandoned their war effort in that part of the greater land of Zarahemla [Alma 58:38](#) and went home) it seems likely that the Lamanites may have simply walked away from Omner as they had the year before from Antiparah to focus their resources on the area from Morianton on the north to Moroni and Nephiah on the south. Omner may have been the source of some of the new Lamanite forces mentioned in [Alma 55:34](#). This map shows our interpretation of the situation on the eastern front at the end of the 29th year of the judges. Lamanite held territory is shown in white.



Lamanite held territory along the east coast ca. 63 BC. By this time Mulek, Gid and presumably Omner were back in Nephite hands.

The 29th year of the judges was pivotal for Helaman's armies in the south western quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla. With Antiparah under Nephite control, Helaman devised a battle plan to retake Cumeni, the next city to the east along the Nephite southern periphery [Alma 57:7](#). The Nephites besieged Cumeni, intercepted delivery of Lamanite food supplies [Alma 57:10](#), and took the Lamanite porters captive. With their supply lines disrupted, the Lamanite army occupying Cumeni soon grew hungry, then despondent and finally they surrendered [Alma 57:12](#). Helaman and company then had a massive prisoner of war population on their hands so they sent part of their force to march the restive Lamanite prisoners down to the land of Zarahemla [Alma 57:16](#). This map shows a likely route (in purple) from our proposed city of Cumeni (La Libertad, Huehuetenango, Guatemala) to the local land of Zarahemla (in the general vicinity of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico). Lamanite held territory is shown in white.





Plausible route from Cumeni to local land of Zarahemla ca. 63 BC

The text says one went down [Alma 57:16](#) from Cumeni (elevation 720 meters) to the local land of Zarahemla (average elevation 53 meters). Note that the likely route of travel followed the Mezcalapa-Grijalva River downstream, skirted around the formidable Sumidero Canyon north of modern Tuxtla Gutierrez, then headed east along the piedmont on the northern edge of the Chiapas Mountains.

The Nephite force guarding prisoners down to the land of Zarahemla traveled for less than 1 day before Nephite spies informed them that a Lamanite army from Manti was approaching Cumeni and an attack was imminent [Alma 57:30-31](#). In our correlation, the city of Manti is the site of Chama in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. The typical travel route in antiquity from Chama to La Libertad is shown in aqua on the map below. It was about an 11-day trip one-way.



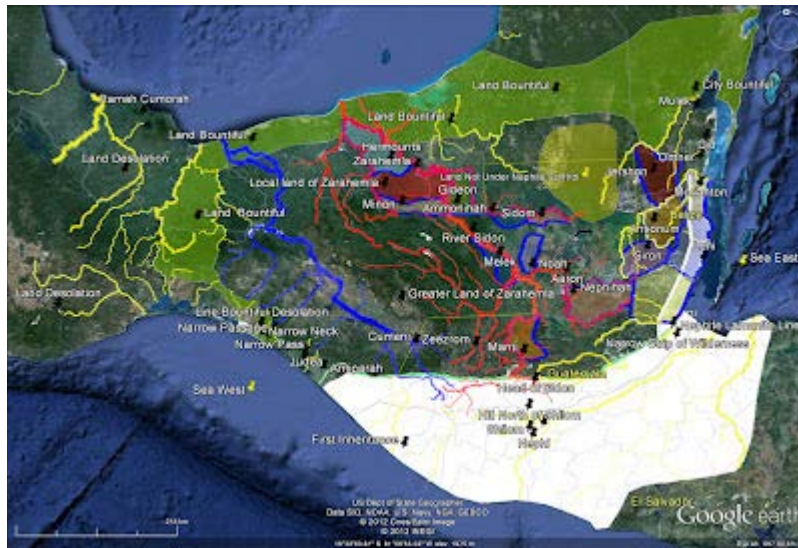
Likely travel route from Manti to Cumeni ca. 63 BC

With help from all 3 Nephite elements (the Cumeni defense force, Helaman's 2,060 Ammonites, and the prisoner of war detail that had been guarding Lamanite captives down to the local land of Zarahemla) the Nephites prevailed in the battle of Cumeni at the cost of 1,000 soldiers killed in action [Alma 57:26](#).

Like Omner on the east coast, we are not told how the city of Zeezrom returned to Nephite hands. We do know that several months [Alma 58:7](#) elapsed between the liberations of Cumeni and Manti. The Nephites were stretched very thin [Alma 58:3](#), [Alma 58:32](#) defending their far-flung territory including the newly-retaken cities of Antiparah and Cumeni. Helaman considered 2,000 reinforcement troops from the Nephite heartland trivial [Alma 58:9](#) relative to the daunting task he faced of defeating a vastly superior [Alma 58:8](#) Lamanite army protected by heavy fortifications around the city of Manti [Alma 58:23](#). Helaman knew that 2,000 fresh fighting men were far below the demographic capacity of the Nephite nation at the time [Alma 58:36](#). Nephite supply lines, so robust just two years earlier along the west coast [Alma 56:27-29](#) were now very tenuous [Alma 58:7](#) as Helaman's army approached Manti. Helaman had limited contact with his government [Alma 58:34](#) and practically no communication with his commanding officer [Alma 58:35](#). The Lamanites in Manti, on the other hand, were well supplied with both men and materiel [Alma 58:5](#).

The ingenious strategy Helaman employed to retake the city of Manti with very little bloodshed is shown in considerable detail in the blog article entitled "[Manti](#)." One is

frankly awed by the brilliant way Helaman and Moroni took advantage of local terrain to triumph over much larger Lamanite armies. This map shows Lamanite controlled areas in white at the end of the 29th year of the judges, ca. 63 BC, when all the cities in the south west quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla were back in Nephite hands.



Proposed situation at the end of the 29th year of the judges, ca. 63 BC. Lamanite held territory in white.

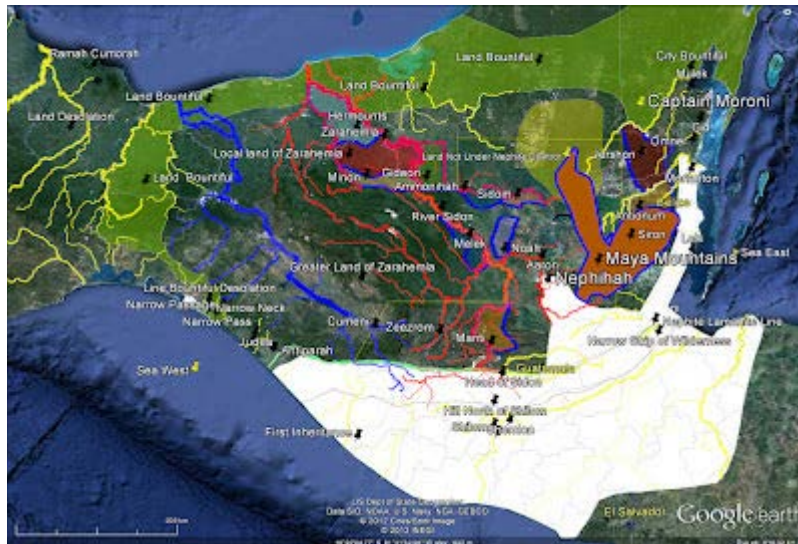
Helaman and his Ammonite "sons" were in Manti [Alma 58:39](#) when the prophet/general wrote his epistle to Captain Moroni. The large Lamanite army that had occupied Manti for three years fled into the wilderness [Alma 58:29](#) after the Nephites recaptured the city. Some of the Lamanite troops returned southward to their homeland, the greater land of Nephi [Alma 58:38](#). Others went eastward where they soon mounted an attack on Nephihah [Alma 59:6](#). A subtle shift has occurred in the map above. The narrow strip of wilderness is no longer visible. The white polygon representing Lamanite held territory now extends to the northern edge of the narrow strip of wilderness. By 63 BC the Lamanites had begun permanently occupying the buffer zone that used to separate Nephite lands on the north from Lamanites lands on the south. An inexorable Lamanite movement northward was well underway. The following geographic referents do not appear in the text after the book of Alma:

- city or land of Manti
- head of river Sidon
- land of Melek
- city of Zeezrom

- city of Cumeni
- city of Antiparah
- city of Judea

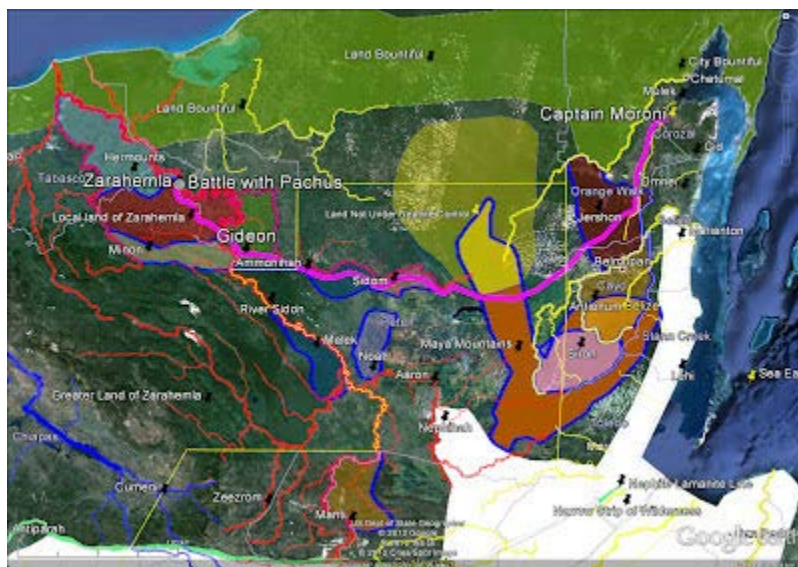
and there are many others we could add to this list. The point is that by 63 BC the Nephites had already passed their territorial maximum in the land southward and would soon begin large scale migrations into the land northward in the face of relentless Lamanite military and demographic pressure.

In the 30th year of the judges, ca. 62 BC, the Lamanites invaded Nephihah. Those Nephites able to flee the slaughter in Nephihah came over and joined the army of Captain Moroni [Alma 59:8](#). In our correlation, the city of Nephihah is the site of El Prado near the confluence of the Machaquila with the Pasion in Peten, Guatemala. Captain Moroni at this time was defending the north east quarter of the greater land of Zarahemla and the eastern part of the land Bountiful - the area between the city Bountiful on the north and the city of Omner on the south. The terrain feature the refugees from Nephihah had to cross over to join Moroni's army was the Maya Mountains where some peaks rise above 1,000 meters elevation. The map below shows the Maya Mountains in brown and our proposal for Nephihah, the general location of Captain Moroni's army, and the extent of Lamanite controlled territory (in white) after the invasion of Nephihah.



Maya Mountains separating proposed Nephihah from Captain Moroni's army ca. 62 BC

When Captain Moroni received Helaman's epistle summarizing 4 years of warfare in the south western quarter of Nephite lands, the supreme commander of Nephite forces was surprisingly ignorant about key developments on the second front in his war [Alma 59:1-2](#). He was equally uninformed about important aspects of defense coordination with his own government [Alma 59:9](#). Moroni sent an epistle to Governor Parhoron (critical text orthography) requesting reinforcement troops for Helaman. Parhoron did not reply because he and the other freemen had been driven out of the city and local land of Zarahemla by rebellious kingmen under newly-crowned king Pachus [Alma 62:6](#). Parhoron was busy setting up a government in exile across the Sidon in the neighboring land of Gideon [Alma 61:5](#). Moroni's scathing second epistle takes up the whole of Alma chapter 60. Governor Parhoron responded to the second epistle, inviting Captain Moroni to bring fighting men and join him in Gideon [Alma 61:15](#) to jointly launch a counter-offensive against the kingmen controlling the local land of Zarahemla. Moroni did travel to Gideon with a few men and recruited many others into his army en route [Alma 62:4](#). Moroni and Parhoron combined forces and routed the kingmen occupying the local land of Zarahemla [Alma 62:7-8](#). This map shows Moroni's likely route of travel from the north eastern war front to the land of Gideon and then on to the battle with Pachus in the city of Zarahemla. See the blog article entitled "[Gideon](#)" for more details on the Gideon - Zarahemla relationship including the topography of going "down" from Gideon to Zarahemla as per [Alma 62:7](#).



Captain Moroni's likely route of travel in purple from the north east front to Zarahemla via Gideon ca. 62 BC

As the 30th year of the judges ended, Helaman was still in the city of Manti, Parhoron had been restored to his judgment seat in the city of Zarahemla, Captain Moroni was in the city of Zarahemla after having executed all the kingmen, and the Lamanites under Ammoron still occupied Nephiah, Morianton, Lehi and Moroni.

In the 31st year of the judges, ca. 61 BC, Moroni sent 6,000 men plus provisions [Alma 62:12](#) to reinforce Helaman's army defending Manti and the south western front. He also sent a similar contingent of men and supplies to reinforce the armies of Lehi and Teancum on the north eastern front. Leaving a defense force behind in the local land of Zarahemla, Moroni and Parhoron together led a major strike force against Lamanite-held Nephiah [Alma 62:14](#). Before they reached Nephiah, Moroni and Parhoron engaged and disarmed a large army of Lamanites. The 4,000 Lamanites who were not killed in the action were put under oath and sent to live with the Ammonites (Anti-Nephi-Lehies) in the land of Melek [Alma 62:17](#). This map shows the likely route Moroni and Parhoron took from Zarahemla to Nephiah, with a proposed location for their battle with the Lamanite expeditionary force just south of our city of Aaron, correlated with the site of El Ceibal in Peten, Guatemala.

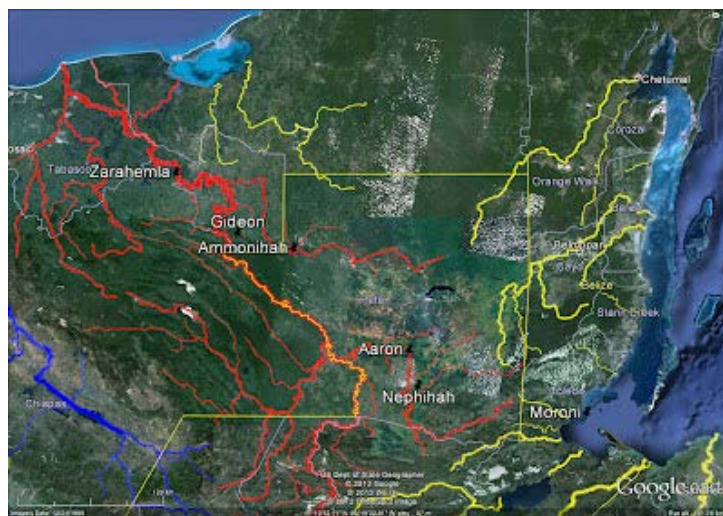


Proposed route of Moroni & Pahoran in purple from Zarahemla to Nephiah.  
Likely route of 4,000 Lamanites in aqua from battle site to Melek.  
Both ca. 61 BC.

Some items of interest in this part of Alma 62:

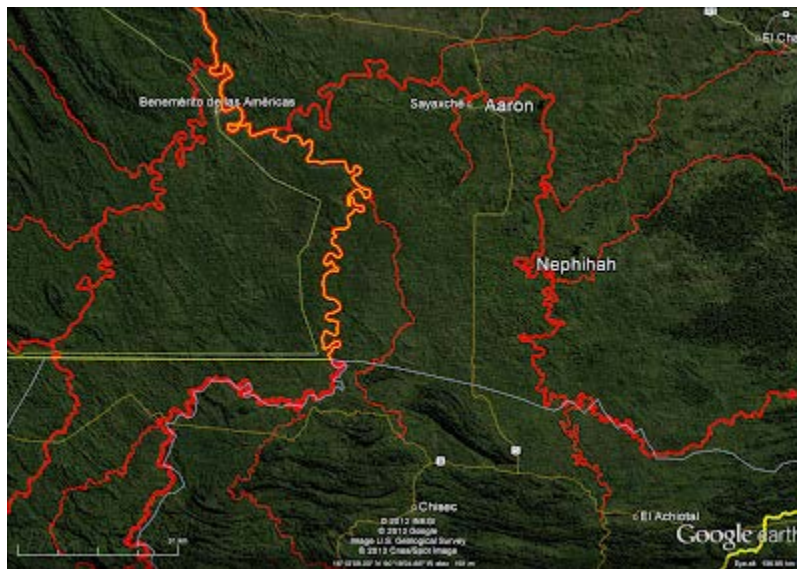
- The Lamanites were obviously attempting to expand their area of influence north of Nephihah which they already held. The text says Moroni & company engaged the large Lamanite expeditionary force as they (the Nephites) were marching towards the land of Nephihah [Alma 62:15](#). The Lamanites' most likely target was the city of Aaron which lay between Nephihah and Ammonihah [Alma 8:13](#), [Alma 50:14](#).
- Additional Lamanites joined with the people of Ammon in [Alma 47:29](#), [Alma 62:17](#), and [Alma 62:29](#). Helaman's 2,060 stripling warriors were not the only Ammonites in the Nephite army. [Alma 55:5](#) tells us one of the servants of the king slain by Amalickiah fought with Captain Moroni.
- The phrase "took their march" [Alma 62:14](#), the military version of "took their journey" [Mosiah 28:9](#) connotes a long trip.
- Mormon's verbiage "they took a large body of men" [Alma 62:15](#) implies a surprise capture rather than a traditional battle.

Gideon was east of Zarahemla [Alma 6:7](#). Ammonihah was east of Gideon (see the blog articles "[Ammonihah](#)" and "[The Usumacinta/Sidon Correlation](#)"). Aaron was a considerable distance beyond Ammonihah [Alma 8:13](#). Nephihah was between Aaron and Moroni [Alma 50:14](#). Moroni was in the extreme south eastern corner of Nephite lands, on the east seacoast [Alma 50:13](#). Notice how logically this string of Nephite polities lays out on our map. Keep in mind that Moroni is underwater on the modern map [3 Nephi 8:9](#).



Proposed relationship between Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, Aaron, Nephihah and Moroni

After their capture of the Lamanite expeditionary force, Captain Moroni and Pahoran did not "take their march" again to Nephihah. They merely "pursued" or continued the march they had previously taken [Alma 62:18](#). This wording is compatible with a relatively short travel distance from the battle site to the land of Nephihah. Nephihah was one of only two places in Nephite lands with plains mentioned [Alma 62:19](#). The other plains were between the cities of Bountiful and Mulek [Alma 52:20](#). Notice on this map the rough, broken country north, south, east and west of our proposed Nephihah, and the level ground immediately around the site.

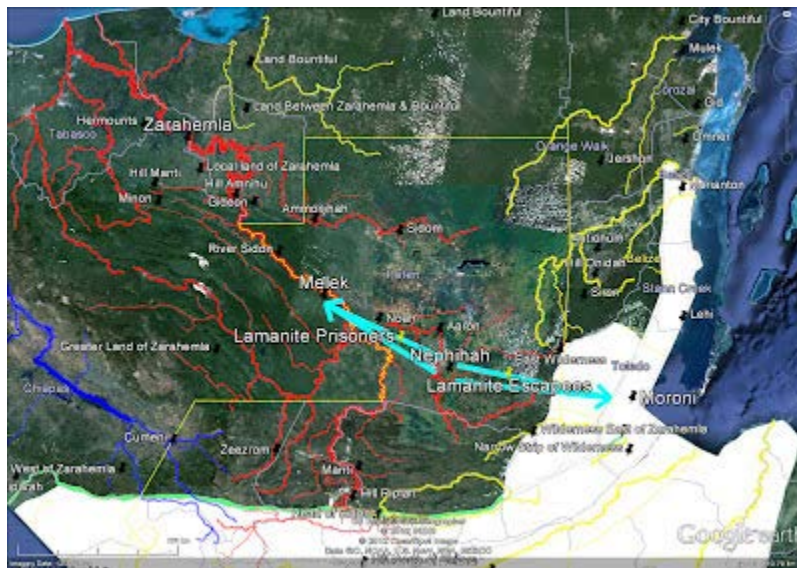


Proposed Nephihah (El Prado) with plains immediately adjacent

Among the Lamanites, Moroni and his army had a reputation for bravery [Alma 62:19](#). The liberation of Nephihah was one of the few times Nephite forces outnumbered their enemy in a military encounter. Moroni may have been able to take Nephihah by brute force, but true to his nature, he devised an ingenious battle plan. He had his army climb the embankment and palisade surrounding the city under cover of darkness and rappel down the inner slope [Alma 62:22](#). At daybreak, the frightened Lamanites fled in confusion out of the gate which was on the eastern edge of the city of Nephihah [Alma 62:21](#). The Nephites killed many Lamanite soldiers and took many prisoners. The Lamanites who escaped went eastward into the land of Moroni [Alma 62:25](#). The prisoners all opted to join the people of Ammon in the land of Melek where they became industrious farmers and herdsman [Alma 62:29](#). Captain Moroni's brilliant battle plan liberated the city of Nephihah without the loss of a single Nephite life [Alma 62:26](#). This



map shows the situation immediately after Nephihah returned to Nephite control. Lamanite occupied areas are shown in white.



Likely movement of Lamanites to Moroni & Melek (aqua arrows)  
after Captain Moroni's liberation of Nephihah ca. 61 BC

After recapturing the city of Nephihah, Captain Moroni marched to the land of Lehi along the east coast [Alma 62:30](#) where the mere presence of the famed Nephite general caused the Lamanite forces to flee in fear [Alma 62:31](#).

Some observations from this part of Alma 62:

- the last time Captain Moroni was on the east coast, a year and a half earlier, he was preparing a battle plan to liberate heavily fortified Morianton north of Lehi [Alma 55:33](#) when he was drawn away to put down the rebellion of Pachus and the kingmen in the local land of Zarahemla. What happened at Morianton? The text is silent. Obviously, by the time Captain Moroni went into the land of Lehi, Morianton was back in Nephite hands because Lehi and Teancum had come down the east coast to the land of Lehi [Alma 62:32](#) from their previous positions north of Morianton.
- there were three different Nephite cities where the text mentions the Lamanite invasion and capture, but not the liberation: Omner, Zeezrom and now Morianton.
- the land of Lehi contained multiple cities [Alma 62:32](#) consistent with [Alma 50:15](#). This was true of Nephite lands in general, although the text only mentions one city by name in any given land - the eponymous city (e.g. Gideon, Lehi, Moroni,

Zarahemla, etc.). Some lands had a city that is never named (e.g. Jershon [Alma 43:25](#)) and some lands had no cities at all ever mentioned (e.g. Melek, Sidom).

- Moroni entered the land of Lehi from the west and forced the Lamanites eastward. Lehi and Teancum entered the land of Lehi from the north and forced the Lamanites southward. The Lamanites in the land of Lehi fled southward along the east coast and joined the main Lamanite army under Ammoron in the land of Moroni [Alma 62:32-33](#).

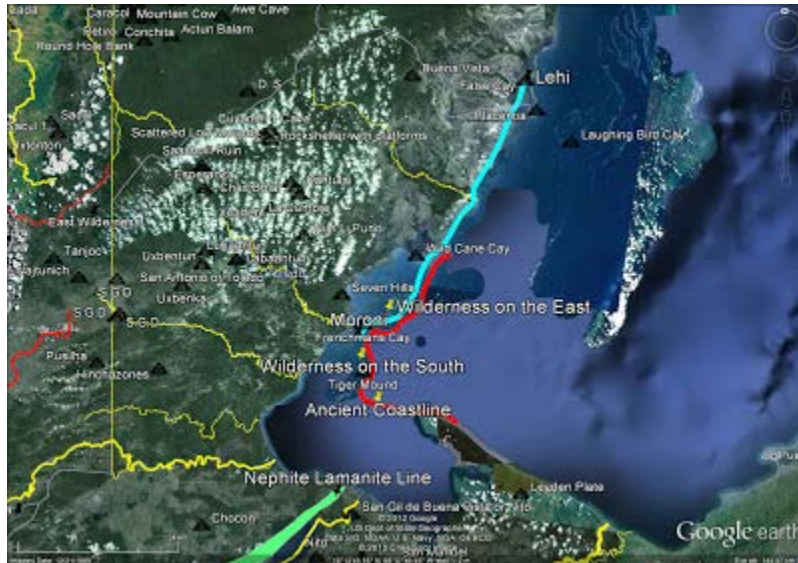
This map shows our interpretation of the situation along the east coast in the latter part of the 31st year of the judges while the Lamanites were still occupying the land of Moroni. Lamanite controlled areas are shown in white.



Lamanite held areas in white after the liberation of the land of Lehi ca. 61 BC

[Alma 62:34](#) begins the account of Captain Moroni's final battle - the liberation of his namesake land of Moroni in the 31st year of the reign of the judges ca. 61 BC. Captains Moroni, Lehi and Teancum all chased Lamanites who fled from the land of Lehi southward along the seacoast [Alma 62:32](#) to the land of Moroni. All the Lamanites were gathered together in one place [Alma 62:33](#), a walled city [Alma 62:36](#) which must have been the heavily fortified city of Moroni [Alma 51:23](#). Both the Nephites and the Lamanites were exhausted after their long march from Lehi to Moroni [Alma 62:35](#). The Nephites were camped around the city of Moroni by wilderness on the south and wilderness on the east [Alma 62:34](#). We know that the city of Moroni was on the east sea coast and that it was near the line that separated Nephite lands on the north from Lamanite lands on

the south [Alma 50:13](#). This map shows our proposed correlation for the city of Moroni, greatly complicated by the fact that it has been underwater since the destruction at the time of the Savior's crucifixion [3 Nephi 8:9](#).



Proposed locations of the cities of Lehi and Moroni along the southern east coast ca. 61 BC

Some things to look for on the map above (click to enlarge):

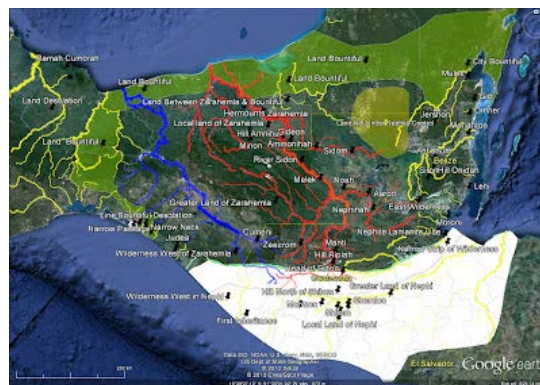
- The likely route from the city of Lehi to the city of Moroni is shown in aqua, a distance of 67 kilometers.
- The likely ancient coastline ca. 61 BC is shown in red. Note the known underwater archaeological site of Tiger Mound south of our proposed city of Moroni.
- The black pyramids represent archaeological sites known to science per the [EAAMS](#) database.
- Some of the archaeological sites that appear to be in open water are in fact on cays - tiny islands (e.g. Frenchman's Cay, Laughing Bird Cay).
- The green line at the bottom of the map represents the boundary between the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates. This forms an escarpment of high cliffs that runs east-west from the Caribbean almost to the Pacific. This thin mountainous strip is our correlate for the line separating the Nephites on the north from the Lamanites on the south.
- The precise location where we place the city of Moroni, in the water about 3 kilometers south south east of the mouth of the Rio Grande River in Toledo

District, Belize, does show evidence of ancient ruins submerged in the shallow water according to reconnaissance work done by archaeologist V. Garth Norman.

- If our proposed Nephite - Lamanite dividing line were extended to the likely ancient coastline extant at the time of Captain Moroni, our proposed city of Moroni would have been 14 kilometers from this line.

In the middle of the night, while his comrades in arms were sleeping, Teancum climbed the wall surrounding the city of Moroni and rappelled down the inside slope. He located king Ammoron and killed him with a javelin thrust to the heart, forfeiting his own life in the process [Alma 62:36](#). Narrative parallels with Amalickiah's death in Mulek six years earlier [Alma 51:34](#) are intentional.

The combined armies of Captains Moroni, Lehi and Teancum (deceased) drove the Lamanites out of the city and land of Moroni in short order [Alma 62:38](#) which ushered in eight years of peace and prosperity among the Nephites in the greater land of Zarahemla. This map shows the situation between the Nephites and Lamanites as the 31st year of the judges ended ca. 61 BC. Lamanite held territories on the south (the greater land of Nephi) are shown in white, the land Bountiful on the north is in green, and the greater land of Zarahemla lies between them. It is important to note that while the Nephites had settlements from the Caribbean to the Pacific and from Alta Verapaz to Tabasco, they did not control every square kilometer of this vast land. Large swaths of Maya and Zoque territory, for example, were never part of the Nephite republic and did not take direction from the city of Zarahemla. It is also important to note that large numbers of partially converted, partially assimilated ethnic Lamanites resided in the land of Melek.



Lamanite held territory (in white) at the end of the 31st year of the judges ca. 61 BC following the liberation of Moroni

Captain Moroni fortified those parts of the greater land of Zarahemla most vulnerable to Lamanite attack [Alma 62:42](#), had his young son, Moronihah, appointed chief captain in his place [Alma 62:43](#), and retired to his home in the city of Zarahemla [Alma 62:42-43](#) at approximately 40 years of age ca. 60 BC. He died 4 years later [Alma 63:3](#) (possibly from war wounds suffered in the battle of Mulek) while his beloved Nephite nation was still at peace.