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Gideon

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Gideon

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Gideon was a revered figure in Mormon's view of Nephite history. As a military commander himself [Mormon 2:2](#), Mormon showed great respect in his writings toward righteous leaders and liberators. Gideon was both [Mosiah 20:17](#), [Alma 1:8](#). He was beloved by the Nephites during his lifetime [Alma 1:13](#). Shortly after his martyrdom in the first year of the reign of the judges (ca. 91 BC), a valley named after Gideon appears for the first time in the Nephite text [Alma 2:20](#). This toponym almost certainly followed the Nephite standard for geographic nomenclature which was to name a place after the first settler [Alma 8:7](#). Gideon's martyrdom at the hands of an apostate added luster to the honorific name [Alma 2:20](#) of this prominent valley east of river Sidon [Alma 6:7](#).

Did Gideon reside in his namesake valley when Nehor violently confronted him? He was a member of the church of God [Alma 1:7](#). A brief history of the church among the Nephites in the days of Alma I & his son, Alma II will help us understand the context of the question:

- Alma I founded the church [Mosiah 21:30](#) in the land of Mormon [Mosiah 18:17](#), very near the land of Nephi (from the lands of Nephi & Shilom to the waters of Mormon and back was a weekend trip [Mosiah 18:25, 30-32](#)) about 147 BC.
- Alma I continued to serve as high priest over the church in the land of Helam [Mosiah 23:16](#) about 145 BC.
- The Nephites under King Limhi in the lands of Nephi & Shilom about 121 BC, even though they had entered into a covenant to obey God [Mosiah 21:32](#), did not establish a church [Mosiah 21:34](#) because they did not believe they were authorized to perform the ordinance of baptism [Mosiah 21:33](#). Ammon, recently arrived from the land of Zarahemla, held the proper priesthood authority, but felt personally unworthy to baptize [Mosiah 21:33](#).
- After both Limhi and Alma I were safely in the local land of Zarahemla, Alma I baptized the people of Limhi [Mosiah 25:18](#) about 120 BC.
- King Mosiah II called Alma I to lead the church in the local land of Zarahemla about 120 BC [Mosiah 25:19, 26:8](#).
- Alma I established 7 churches to adequately serve the members in the local land of Zarahemla [Mosiah 25:23](#).

- In the course of fulfilling his duties as high priest of the church, Alma I had his calling and election made sure [Mosiah 26:20](#). See [2 Peter 1:10](#).
- After receiving revelation regarding administrative procedures and church discipline, Alma I created an orderly, smooth functioning church organization in the local land of Zarahemla between about 120 BC and 100 BC [Mosiah 26:37](#).
- Toward the end of the reign of king Mosiah II, about 100 to 92 BC, the Nephite nation enjoyed a construction boom, expanding well beyond the borders of the local land of Zarahemla [Mosiah 27:6](#).
- Where Nephite political authority went, the church soon followed. After Alma II's miraculous conversion, he and the 4 sons of Mosiah II preached to the church not only in the local land of Zarahemla, but also in congregations throughout the entire Nephite nation in the greater land of Zarahemla [Mosiah 27:35](#).
- The church sent its first missionaries to foreign lands in about 92 BC [Mosiah 28:9](#).
- Alma I ordained his son, Alma II, to succeed him as high priest over the church in about 91 BC [Mosiah 29:42](#).
- Alma I, revered as the founder of the Nephite church, died in about 91 BC [Mosiah 29:45, 47](#).
- At the time of his martyrdom in the first year of the reign of the judges (ca. 91 BC), Gideon was an elderly teacher [Alma 1:7](#) in an established church with local members [Alma 1:10](#).
- The efficiency & orderliness of their wholesome lifestyle created an economic boom among church members in about 90 BC [Alma 1:31](#).
- After the devastating Amlicite war in the 5th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 87 BC), Alma II initiated a program of personal ministry to expand and strengthen the church [Alma 4:4](#).
- Wickedness among individual members soon halted the church's progress [Alma 4:10](#).
- Without the stabilizing influence of a strong & growing church, Alma II feared for the safety of the Nephite nation [Alma 4:11](#).
- In the 9th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 83 BC), after having served as chief judge and high priest simultaneously, Alma II transferred the chief judgeship to Nephiah via a plebiscite [Alma 4:16](#) and concentrated solely on the church [Alma 4:20](#).
- Alma II began a preaching circuit in the local land of Zarahemla, then broadened his reach to the entire Nephite nation in the greater land of Zarahemla [Alma 5:1](#).

- The city of Zarahemla was Alma II's last preaching venue in the local land of Zarahemla (the heading to Alma 5 says he delivered more or less the same sermon in multiple locations throughout the local land of Zarahemla [Alma 5](#)). After finishing his ministry in the city of Zarahemla west of the river Sidon, Alma II next went to the city of Gideon in the valley of Gideon east of the river [Alma 6:7](#).
- When Alma II arrived in the city of Gideon in the 9th year of the reign of the judges (ca. 83 BC), he found the church already established [Alma 6:8](#), even though he himself had never been there before in his capacity as high priest [Alma 7:1](#).
- After success in Gideon, Alma II preached in Melek [Alma 8:3](#) and then in Ammonihah [Alma 8:6](#).
- The disinterested people in Ammonihah derided the church as Alma II's personal project [Alma 8:11](#).

Based on the foregoing, it is highly likely that Gideon founded the Nephite settlement in the valley of Gideon, the church was established there while Alma I was high priest, and Gideon was a teacher in that church at the time Nehor murdered him. This implies that Nehor was travelling to preach his apostate doctrines beyond the boundaries of the local land of Zarahemla when he killed the aged patriarch.

Careful analysis of The Book of Mormon text reveals several details about the city of Gideon, the valley of Gideon, and the land of Gideon that will help us site them on the modern map. The numbers **1 – 23** highlighted in **aqua** are the criteria we will use to determine whether or not a given candidate fits the text.

- Nehor had recently planted his church and was in the process of building up his congregation when he met Gideon [Alma 1:6](#).
- Nehor's adherents were in one general location where their pastor could preach to them in a single trip; they were not scattered across Nephite territory [Alma 1:7](#).
- The analysis above implies that Nehor met Gideon in the valley of Gideon, east of the local land of Zarahemla. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the personal name - place name association is mentioned more than once in The Book of Mormon text [Alma 2:20](#); [Alma 6:7](#). This thesis is further strengthened by the fact that Amlici, Nehor's immediate successor, assembled his followers east of Zarahemla (see below).
- Nehor's church and congregants were in the city of Ammonihah [Alma 14:16, 18](#); [Alma 15:15](#); [Alma 16:11](#).

- The valley of Gideon, east of the local land of Zarahemla, was en route to the city of Ammonihah. [1](#)
- Nehor's successor was Amlici [Alma 2:1](#).
- Amlici's power base was geographically distant from the Nephite center in Zarahemla [Alma 2:13](#). [2](#)
- Amlici's center was east of Zarahemla [3](#) because the Amlicites came toward the Nephites and first engaged them at hill Amnihu east of river Sidon [Alma 2:15](#). The critical text (see the article entitled "[Scribal Error](#)" in this blog) adds that the Amlicites came up upon the hill Amnihu, implying that the Amlicites began their invasion from an elevation lower than the summit of the hill. [4](#)
- Hill Amnihu, east of Sidon, was less than one day's travel (See the article "[Land Southward Travel Times](#)" in this blog) from the valley of Gideon because after fighting and pursuing the Amlicites on and around the hill for part of one day, the Nephite army camped for the night in the valley [Alma 2:20](#). [5](#)
- The land of Minon, above (higher in elevation than & upstream from) the land of Zarahemla, was less than 1 day's travel from the valley of Gideon [Alma 2:24](#) [6](#) because the Amlicites joined forces with the Lamanites in Minon the day after fighting with the Nephite troops who overnighted in the valley.
- The land of Minon, near the valley of Gideon, lay between the local land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi [Alma 2:24](#). [7](#)
- This means the valley of Gideon was near the southern boundary and east of the local land of Zarahemla. [8](#)
- The Amlicites, in league with the Lamanites, had set a trap for the Nephites, hoping to pin the Nephite army down in the hill Amnihu area east of Sidon while the Lamanite army marched down the west bank of river Sidon toward the city of Zarahemla [Alma 2:25](#). This means the valley of Gideon is less than 1 day's travel from river Sidon [9](#) because the Amlicites crossed the river and joined the Lamanites on the west bank [Alma 2:34](#).
- The valley of Gideon was prominent because it had a name. Many valleys are mentioned in The Book of Mormon text. Only seven valleys are referenced by name - Lemuel [1 Nephi 2:14](#); Alma [Mosiah 24:20](#); Gideon [Alma 2:20](#); Nimrod [Ether 2:1](#); Gilgal [Ether 13:27](#); Corihor & Shurr [Ether 14:28](#). Only two of these named valleys (Alma & Gideon) are in the Nephite New World. Most toponyms in the text refer to large or distinctive features. We would expect the valley of Gideon to be large & conspicuous. [10](#)

- From the valley of Gideon, there was another way to the city of Zarahemla that was shorter than the route the Amlicites & Lamanites took through the land of Minon [Alma 2:26](#) **11** because Alma's advance troops arrived in the local land of Zarahemla ahead of the enemy [Alma 2:27](#). The Nephites in Minon were not offering any resistance to the huge Amilicte + Lamanite invasion force [Alma 2:25](#).
- The valley of Gideon was east of river Sidon [Alma 6:7](#). **12**
- The city of Gideon was the principal population center in the valley of Gideon [Alma 6:7](#). **13**
- In addition to a city and a valley, there was also a land of Gideon adjacent to the local land of Zarahemla [Alma 8:1](#). **14**
- From the land of Gideon to the land of Manti is not south but southward [Alma 17:1](#). **15**
- By the time of Alma II, a standard route existed between the local lands of Zarahemla and Nephi. Captain Zoram and his armies used this route [Alma 16:7](#) which went through both the lands of Gideon **16** and Manti. Alma II and his boyhood friends, the four sons of Mosiah II, met while travelling in opposite directions along this path [Alma 17:1](#). From the perspective of the local land of Zarahemla, the land of Gideon was a place of departure toward points south along the river Sidon.
- The land of Gideon was also an interface with points east. **17** Captain Moroni's trip from the cities near the east coast took him west to the land of Gideon [Alma 62:3](#).
- The lands of Gideon & Jershon have similar average elevations with higher ground in between **18** because Korihor went from Jershon over into Gideon [Alma 30:21](#).
- The land of Gideon was a junior partner to the local land of Zarahemla. The lands were geographically proximate. Parhoran (critical text orthography) fled to Gideon and set up the Nephite government in exile there during the time Pacchus and his kingmen controlled Zarahemla [Alma 62:6](#). The people in the land of Gideon were less cosmopolitan & more religiously orthodox [Alma 7:3](#); [Alma 30:21](#) than their brethren in the big city Zarahemla. Like Utah County compared with Salt Lake County, we would expect to see a lower population **19** with less cultural diversity and more social conservatism in Gideon than in Zarahemla.
- The second Lamanite invasion in 87 B.C. ended in a battle in the land of Minon where the Nephite army again defeated the Lamanite aggressors [Alma 3:20](#). After their victory, the Nephites drove the Lamanite survivors out of the borders of their land [Alma 3:23](#). This means the valley of Gideon, just across the river from the

Amlici - Lamanite rendezvous point, was not far from the borders of the Nephite nation [20](#) in 87 B.C.

- The local land of Zarahemla and the Land of Gideon are at similar average elevations because one goes over into Gideon from Zarahemla [Alma 6:7](#) [21](#). There is also a major topographical feature one has to cross over to travel between the local land of Zarahemla and the land of Gideon [22](#).
- On the other hand, some parts of the land of Gideon are higher in elevation than the area around the city of Zarahemla, because the combined armies of Captain Moroni and Parhoron (critical text orthography) went down from Gideon into the local land of Zarahemla [23](#).

Our candidate for the valley of Gideon in the land of Gideon is shown on the map below. As with all graphical images in this blog, click to enlarge.



Potential lands of Zarahemla, Gideon & Minon with wilderness of Hermounts to the northwest

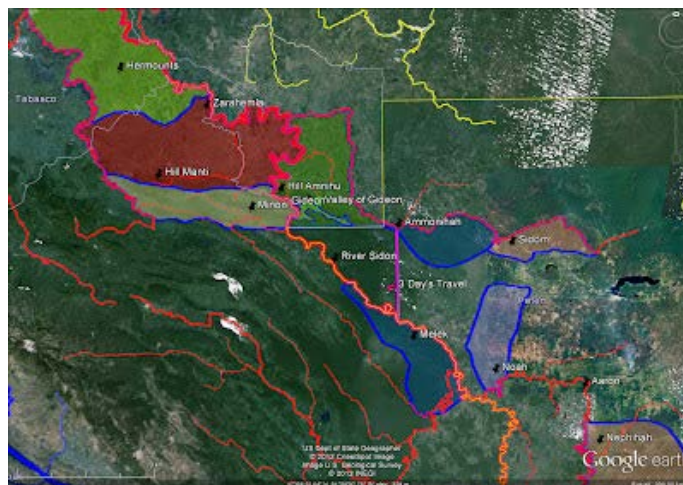
It may help to see the proposed land of Gideon in its larger context in The Book of Mormon land southward.



Lands around Zarahemla & Nephi with Manti in between

Let's now compare our thesis with The Book of Mormon text using the 20 criteria specified above for the city, valley & land of Gideon.

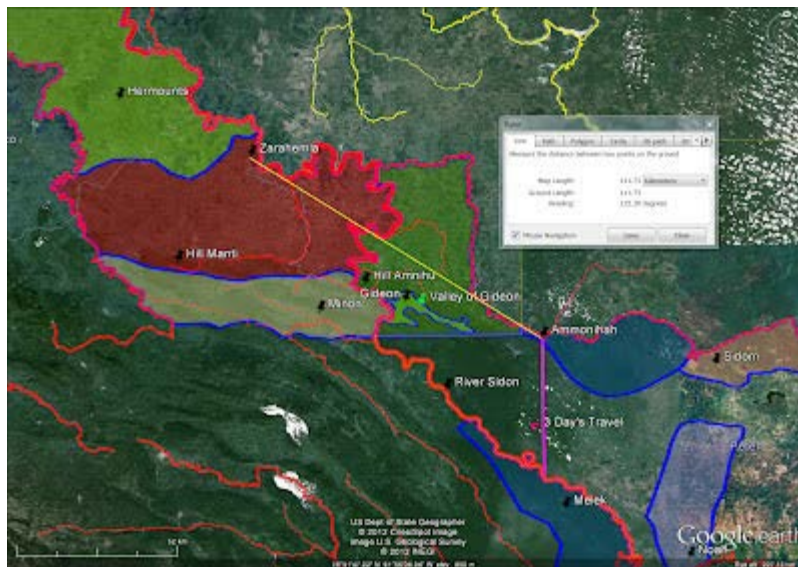
1. From the local land of Zarahemla, the valley of Gideon was on the way to the city of Ammonihah. The best current thinking on the local land of Zarahemla places it south of the permanent Usumacinta flood plain and north of the highlands beyond the piedmont, west of the Usumacinta River and east of the Chilapa River. See the article entitled "[Zarahemla](#)" in this blog. The best current thinking on the land of Ammonihah places it on the San Pedro River around the area of its confluence with the Escondido. This map shows the relationships:



Proposed land of Gideon between the lands of Zarahemla & Ammonihah

Nehor was traveling through the valley of Gideon headed toward his followers in Ammonihah when he contended with and slew the aged Gideon. Siting the land of Gideon along the San Pedro River east of the local land of Zarahemla, and siting the land of Ammonihah further upstream along the San Pedro River east of Gideon fits this textual scenario precisely. For more insights on the textual requirement that Ammonihah is east of Sidon, and the problems caused by the false tradition that Ammonihah is west of Sidon, see the blog article "[The Usumacinta/Sidon Correlation](#)." Criterion 1 satisfied.

2. Amlici, Nehor's successor, seceded from the Nephite nation, had himself crowned king [Alma 2:9](#), and raised an army to attack the Nephites [Alma 2:14](#). At the same time, the Nephites in the local land of Zarahemla and in the territory still loyal to the Nephite republic headquartered in the city of Zarahemla were equipping their troops and preparing for war [Alma 2:12-13](#). The land of Gideon was always loyal to the Nephite republic. In the days of the king men under Pachus, the Nephite nation was temporarily governed from Gideon [Alma 61:5](#). Amlici's power was centered in Ammonihah as Nehor's before him had been [Alma 2:1](#) and [Alma 15:15](#). With all of this military preparation going on, the local land of Zarahemla must have been some distance from the land of Ammonihah, with Gideon in between. This map shows the proposed relationship:



111 kilometers from the proposed city of Zarahemla to the suggested city of Ammonihah

With the 50-kilometer-wide land of Gideon in between, there is enough distance between the local land of Zarahemla and the land of Ammonihah for large scale

concurrent military preparation, but they are close enough to have been together at one time as sister lands under the authority of the young Nephite republic. For insights into the expansion of Nephite lands over time, see the article "[Expansion of the Nephite Nation](#)" in this blog. Criterion 2 satisfied.

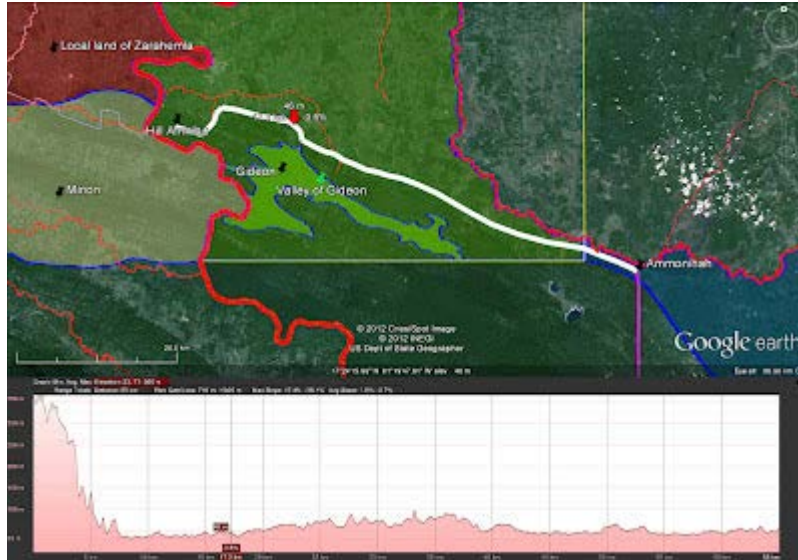
3. This map shows the likely route the Amlicite army followed from Ammonihah to engage the Nephite forces at the hill Amnihu east of Sidon:



Likely Amlicite route from Ammonihah to hill Amnihu

This correlation has the Amlicite forces coming from the east, skirting around the more populated areas in the valley of Gideon. Criterion 3 satisfied.

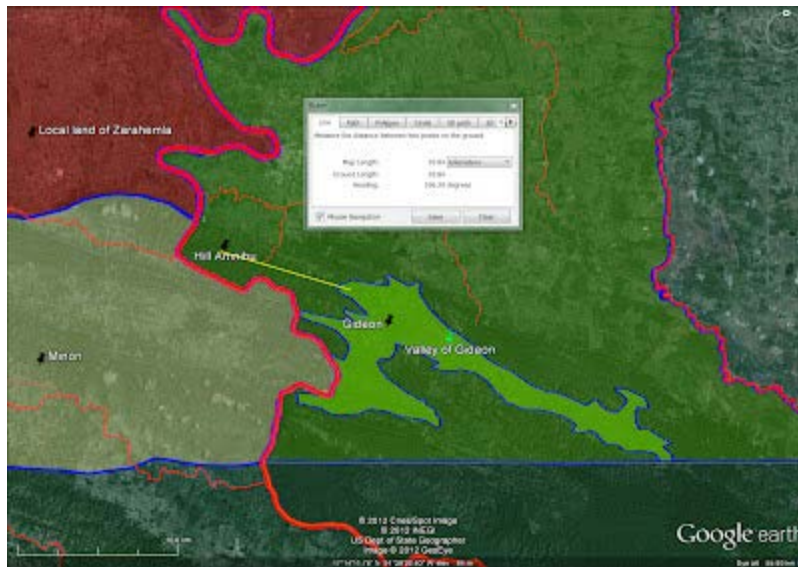
4. Asking Google Earth to show the elevation profile of our path, we see that if this was indeed the Amlicite army route, they traveled 65 kilometers and went up in elevation from 50 meters to over 350 meters.



Elevation profile of proposed Amlicite army route

With a vertical rise of over 300 meters, this terrain qualifies for the textual description "up" to hill Amnihu. Criterion 4 satisfied.

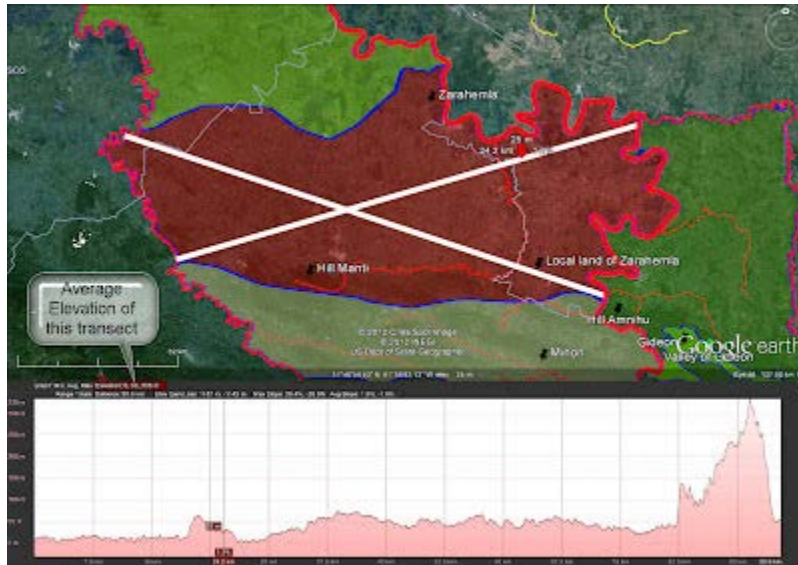
5. Our proposed hill Amnihu is very close to the valley of Gideon.



Short distance from proposed hill Amnihu to valley of Gideon

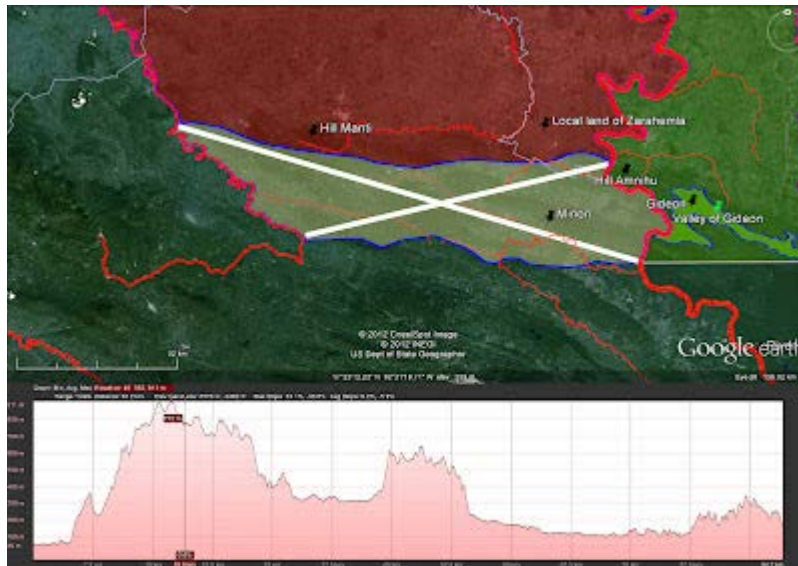
The distance shown is under 11 air kilometers, a reasonable number according to our rule of thumb metric for travel distances (See the blog article "[Land Southward Travel Times](#)"). Criterion 5 satisfied.

6. In our proposed correlation, the land of Minon is indeed higher than the local land of Zarahemla. To demonstrate this, we first establish two transects across the local land of Zarahemla and ask Google Earth to compute the average elevation of each.



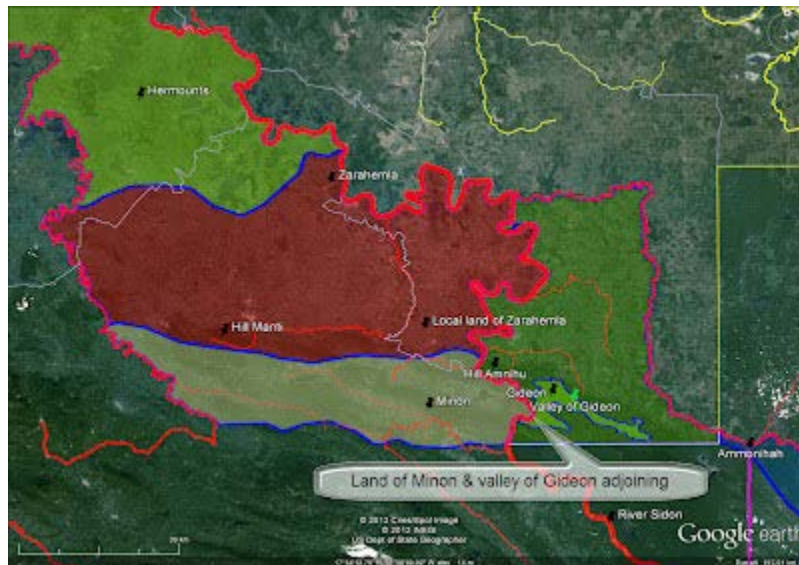
Average elevation of the northeast to southwest transect across the local land of Zarahemla (with the elevation profile inverted right to left)

Both Zarahemla transects average 53 meters elevation, so our quick and dirty average elevation of the proposed local land of Zarahemla is 53 meters above sea level. Analyzing our land of Minon in the same way shows a much higher average elevation:



Average elevation of the northwest to southeast transect across the proposed land of Minon

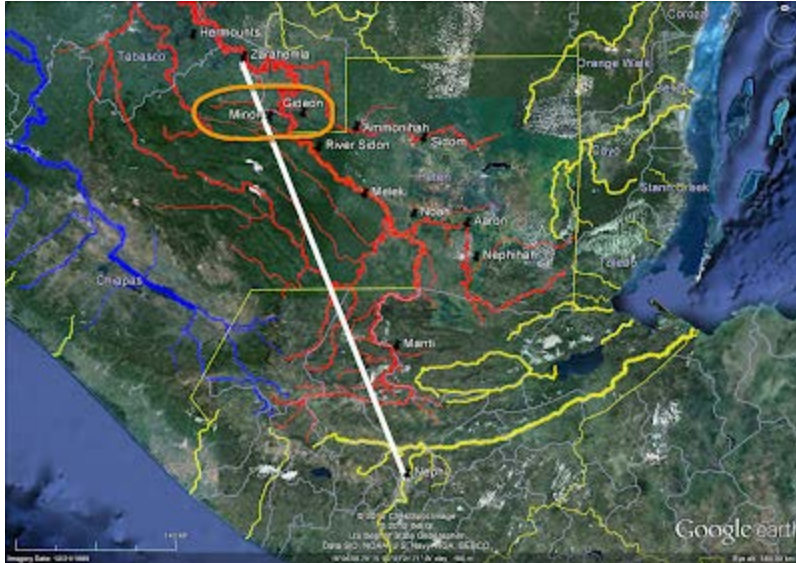
The NW to SE transect across the land of Minon averages 335 meters in elevation. The NE to SW transect across Minon averages 164 meters elevation. $(335 + 164) = 499$. $499/2 = 249$ meters average elevation for our proposed land of Minon. An average vertical rise of just under 200 meters qualifies this terrain for the textual description that Minon was "above" Zarahemla. And of course, our Minon is upstream from our proposed Zarahemla. Right across the river Sidon, our proposed land of Minon is close enough to the valley of Gideon to fit the text in Alma 2.



Land of Minon just across the river Sidon from the proposed valley of Gideon

In this terrain, the Amlicite army could plausibly evade Alma II and his Nephite army bivouacked in the valley of Gideon, cross the river Sidon, and join up with their Lamanite allies the next day in the land of Minon. Criterion 6 satisfied.

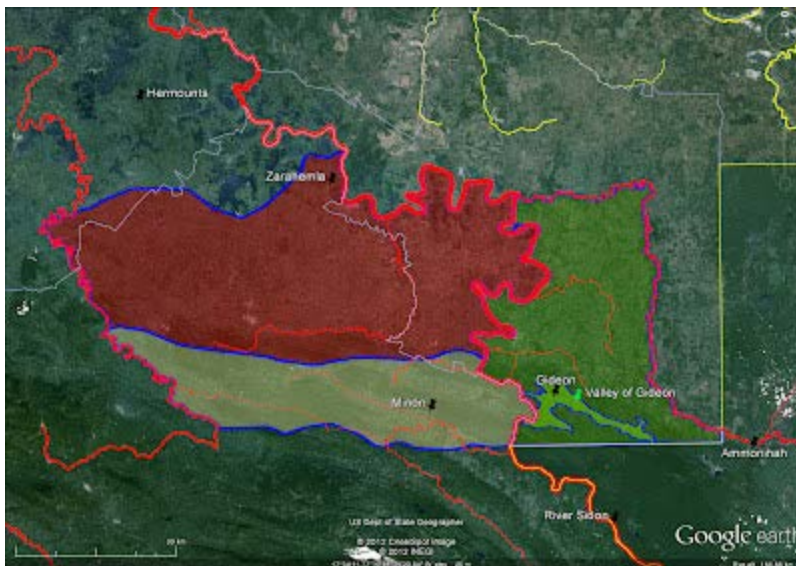
7. Our land of Minon, adjacent to the valley of Gideon, clearly lay between the local land of Zarahemla and the distant land of Nephi far to the south.



Proposed land of Minon between the local land of Zarahemla and the distant land of Nephi

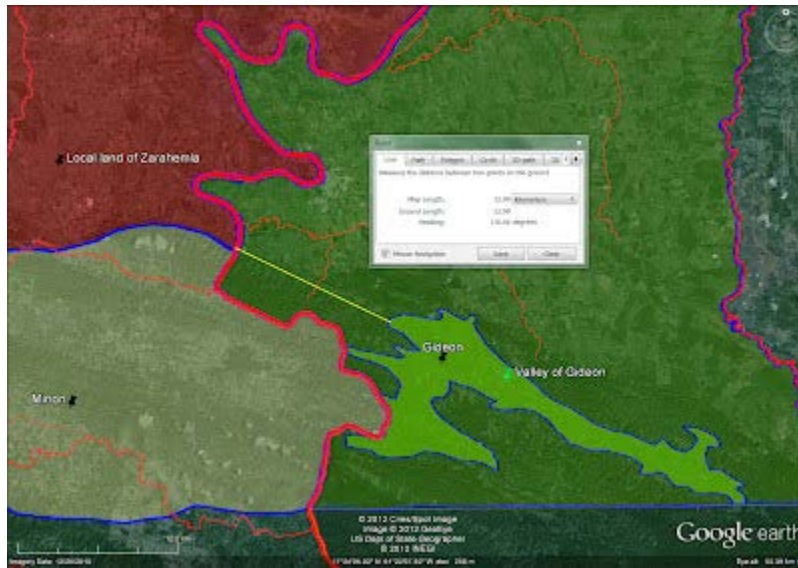
Obviously, this does not mean the Nephites and Lamanites followed our straight line. It does mean that our proposed correlation precisely fits The Book of Mormon text which describes the land of Minon in the course of travel between Zarahemla and Nephi. Criterion 7 satisfied.

8. We would expect to find the valley of Gideon across the river Sidon, eastward from the southern boundary of the local land of Zarahemla.



Relative locations of proposed Zarahemla, Minon, Gideon and valley of Gideon

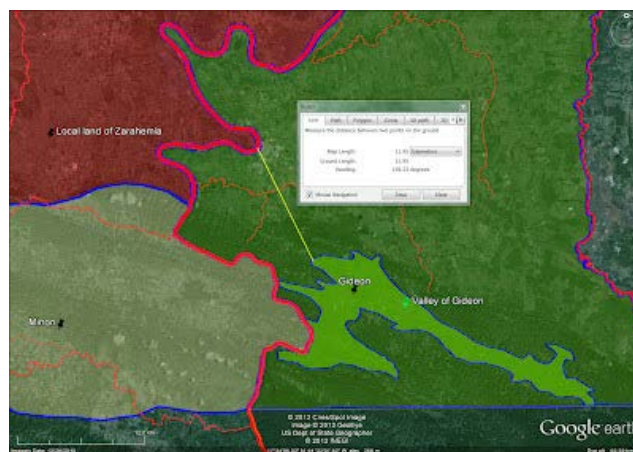
In our proposal, the southeastern boundary of the local land of Zarahemla is Boca del Cerro where the Usumacinta River makes its dramatic entrance from the highlands to the coastal plain. Our choice for the valley of Gideon is the only significant valley east of the river downstream from the Yaxchilan oxbow and upstream from the permanent flood plain in the delta, a distance of 135 air kilometers but 325 river kilometers. The fact that these two points are only 13 air kilometers distant fits the text beautifully.



Short distance from local land of Zarahemla to the valley of Gideon

From both directionality and proximity standpoints, criterion 8 satisfied.

9. From the valley of Gideon, it must be less than 1 day's travel to the river Sidon.



Distance from valley of Gideon to river Sidon

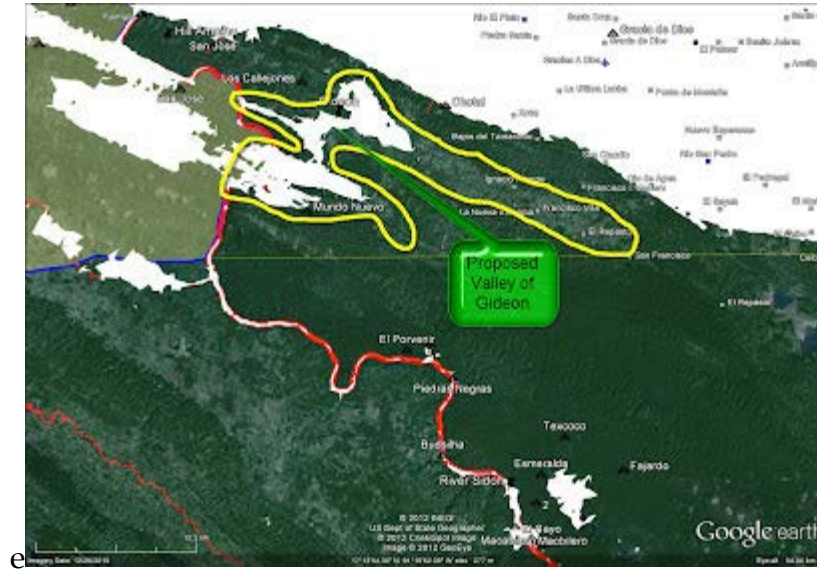
Obviously, the valley of Gideon adjoins the river across from the land of Minon. The shortest distance from the valley of Gideon to the river Sidon across from the local land of Zarahemla is just under 12 air kilometers. This is well within the bounds of reasonableness for a partial day's travel according to our rule of thumb metric referenced above. Criterion 9 satisfied.

10. Looking at the 325 kilometer stretch of river from the Yaxchilan oxbow on the south to the edge of the permanent flood plain on the north, there are several large valleys west of the Usumacinta. There is only one east of the river. It is clearly visible in Google Earth.



Setting for the proposed valley of Gideon

This valley is a major topographical feature, strategically located as a gateway from the local land of Zarahemla to points east. The fact that its southeastern edge helps define the border between Mexico and Guatemala is a modern echo of the ancient boundary between the Maya city states of Piedras Negras in the western Peten and Pomona in the coastal plain. Several small streams and the Laguna San Marcos are hydrographic features. Average elevation of this valley is slightly above 100 meters, compared with 45 meters in the nearby coastal plain. The mountains rimming the valley rise to heights of 300 - 400 meters.



Terrain plane set to show elevations lower than 100 meters in white

Our proposed valley of Gideon was indeed prominent and distinctive. Criterion 10 satisfied.

11, 12. After the fighting on hill Amnihu, Alma camped with his army in the valley of Gideon, east of Sidon. His spies came back in a panic the following morning. The Amlicites had crossed the Sidon from east to west, joined forced with a very large Lamanite army, and the combined horde was marauding through the land of Minon, driving terrified Nephite settlers before them. The Lamanite - Amlicite objective was subjugation of the city of Zarahemla and the local land of Zarahemla. Clearly, the Amlicite battle on hill Amhihu the day before had been a ploy to pin down the Nephite fighting forces east of the river so the Lamanites could enter Zarahemla without organized resistance. The Lamanites + Amlicites had a head start. How were the advance elements of Alma's army able to reach the battleground in Zarahemla on the west bank of Sidon ahead of the enemy? As in most battles, the lay of the land can tell us a great deal about likely troop movements. The following map shows 3 proposed key points in this battle:



Proposed locations of key points in the Alma II/Amlici battle

- Alma's camp in the valley of Gideon
- Amlici's rendezvous point with his Lamanite allies west of the Sidon in Minon
- The battleground in Zarahemla on the west bank of river Sidon

Now we add a terrain plane at an elevation of 110 meters. The Lamanites - Amlicites could not just drop down into Zarahemla. The river gorge is narrow and the flanking mountains are quite high (over 350 meters elevation) on either side of Boca del Cerro. The invaders would have likely gone around the obstructions following the Chiniquita River.



Amlici, Alma routes to battle

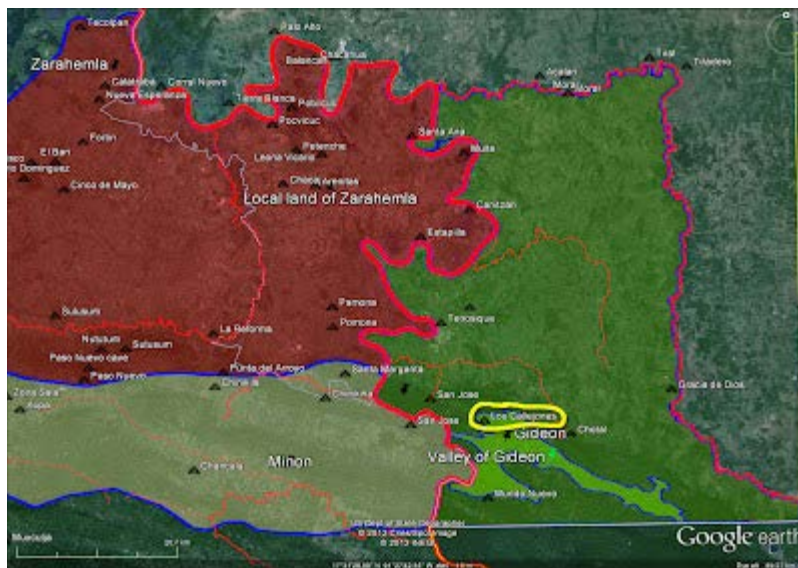
In our proposed scenario, Alma & his troops had to travel 25 trail kilometers and then cross river Sidon to reach the battlefield. But, Amlici & his men had to travel 43 trail kilometers after they crossed the river. Those 18 additional kilometers were what gave Alma's advance units time to reach the battlefield just ahead of the Lamanite - Amlicite army. Criteria 11 & 12 satisfied.

A side note.

Q. How did all these fighting men get across the river?

A. They paddled or poled across in canoes or other small water craft that went back and forth shuttling men and materiel. That is why the battle on the west bank of Sidon had been going on for some time before the last Nephite warriors finally joined in the fray [Alma 2:35](#).

13, 14. Our proposal for the land of Gideon south and west of the San Pedro River does adjoin the local land of Zarahemla. We superimpose [EAAMS](#) data on top of our map of the area which shows the archaeological site of Los Callejones in the likely valley of Gideon.



The site of Los Callejones in the proposed valley of Gideon

Archaeological reconnaissance to date has only produced one site clearly in the valley. This supports the textual implication that the city of Gideon was the largest population center in the valley of Gideon. Criteria 13 & 14 satisfied.

b) The river was generally placid in the Zarahemla coastal plain area. After it makes its dramatic entrance at Boca del Cerro, the Usumacinta runs for 363 kilometers to the sea but it only drops 17 meters in elevation. It has a very gentle slope after it leaves the mountains. Upstream from Boca del Cerro there are some narrow canyons and rapids where crossing the river is more challenging.

c) Elevations are generally lower east of the river as the following map illustrates. We place a terrain plane at an elevation of 300 meters and then raise the line representing the Usumacinta so it displays above the white plane:



300 meter elevation plane shows extensive highlands west of the Usumacinta, lower lands to the east

d) As we showed graphically in the blog article "[The Usumacinta/Sidon Correlation](#)" point 25 and the article "[Expansion of the Nephite Nation](#)", the Nephites in Alma II's time had founded more settlements east of Sidon than west. Traveling east of the river one would have been more likely to encounter hospitality en route. There are many other reasons why the textual descriptions of Zarahemla - Manti travel make sense in this terrain. One modern example will further illustrate the point. In the 1950's and 60's, the New World Archaeological Foundation [NWAFF](#) was quite interested in the site of El Cayo west of the Usumacinta upstream from Piedras Negras. M. Wells Jakeman thought El Cayo might be Zarahemla. Many expeditions reached the site from the east, traveling overland from Tenosique to Piedras Negras and then crossing the river near El Cayo itself. Other expeditions reached the site by floating to it on river rafts. One expedition in 1962 was unsuccessful and never reached El Cayo. On that trip, Bruce W. Warren and

Maximo Prado tried to reach the site coming overland from the west. They found the terrain and the ground cover so difficult to traverse that they eventually abandoned their expedition altogether. See Thomas A. Lee, Jr. and Brian Hayden, Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation Number Fifty-three *San Pablo Cave and El Cayo on the Usumacinta River, Chiapas, Mexico*, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1988). Criterion 16 satisfied.

17. The proposed land of Gideon was well positioned for communication with points east in the Nephite nation, all the way to the east coast. The reason is obvious - the San Pedro River was and always has been a major east - west artery of trade, travel and communication.

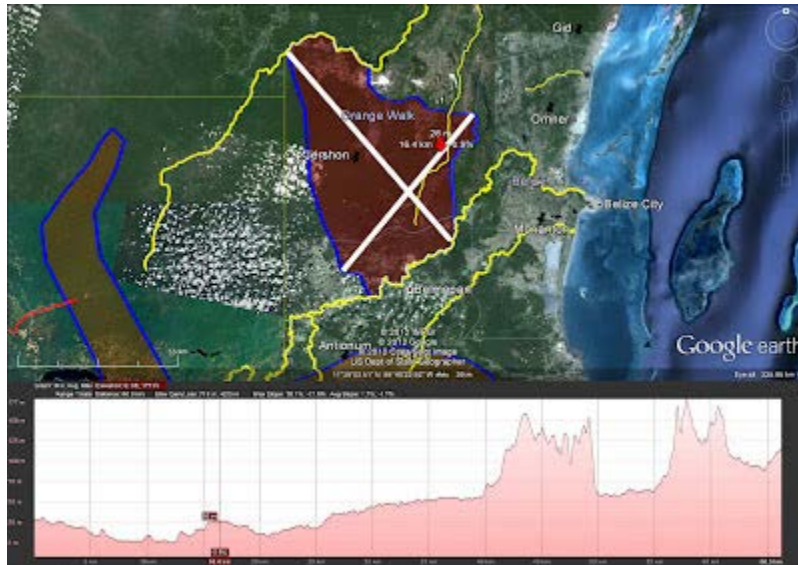


San Pedro River flowing westward to the proposed land of Gideon

The brown polygon near the Caribbean represents the Maya Mountains and the upland region that forms the continental divide between the Usumacinta and the Belizean drainages. In the general vicinity of Tikal, the headwaters of the San Pedro flowing west and the Azul/Hondo flowing east are only 24 air kilometers apart. And the San Pedro is only 53 air kilometers north west of major tributaries of the Belize River. Rivers were the highways of the ancient world. Our land of Gideon is strategically located to support the kind of east - west travel described in the text. Criterion 17 satisfied.

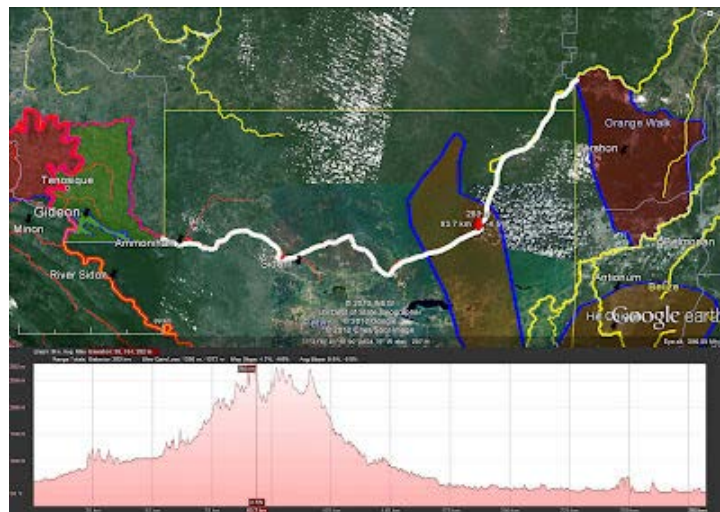
18. Our proposed land of Jerushon is between the Hondo River on the north and the Belize River on the south in the districts of Cayo and Orange Walk in Belize. Placing

northeast to southwest and northwest to southeast elevation transects, letting Google Earth calculate average elevation along our transects, then averaging the averages, we determine that this territory has an average elevation of 61 meters above sea level.



Proposed land of Jershon with elevation transects

Doing the same thing with the land of Gideon yields an average elevation of 59 meters. So, our lands of Jershon and Gideon are at similar elevations. Following the rivers, Korihor's route from Jershon to Gideon would have been similar to the white line traced below. Notice the upland region Korihor would have gone over as he traveled between the two lands. With this correlation, the text and the map fit precisely.



Korihor's proposed route from Jershon to Gideon

The distance from the battle sites at Hill Amnihu and the land of Minon just across the river from the valley of Gideon south to the proposed borders of Nephite territory (ca. 87 B.C.) was 15 - 20 air kilometers. This is entirely consistent with the text of Alma 3. Criterion 20 satisfied.

21. We have elsewhere calculated (point #6 above) the average elevation of our proposed local land of Zarahemla: 53 meters. We have also calculated (point #18 above) the average elevation of our proposed land of Gideon: 59 meters. The two lands were at similar elevations. Criterion 21 satisfied.

22. It is obvious from the maps above that the river Sidon (Usumacinta) was the significant terrain feature one went over to travel from the local land of Zarahemla to the land of Gideon. Criterion 22 satisfied.

23. In the southern part of our proposed land of Gideon, surrounding our valley of Gideon, higher elevation territory does exist. We have identified the hill Amnihu in this area, for example, and it reaches an elevation of 400 meters. We place a terrain plane over our proposed land of Gideon at an absolute elevation of 100 meters so lower elevations show in white and ground higher than 100 meters shows in green.



Southern portion of proposed land of Gideon showing elevations higher than 100 meters in green

There is enough higher elevation territory in the southern part of our proposed land of Gideon to justify the textual use of the term "down" in [Alma 62:7](#). Criterion 23 satisfied.

Have we found the land of Gideon? We have a viable candidate. The text and the terrain are an excellent fit. With the other correlations listed in the article "[The Usumacinta/Sidon Correlation](#)" point 26, The Book of Mormon picture is coming into sharp focus.