



Type: Magazine Article

The Lands of the Nephites: Land of Zarahemla (Concluded)

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1 February 1881), pp. 26–27

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: A series of essays on Book of Mormon geography. To the earlier Nephites “the whole of North America was known as the land of Mulek, and South America as the land of Lehi.” From the period of Mosiah until Christ South America was “divided into two grand divisions”: Zarahemla and the land of Nephi.

THE LANDS OF THE NEPHITES.

LAND OF ZARAHEMLA.

BY G. R.

(Concluded.)

MINON is mentioned but once in the Book of Mormon. Its location is then directly stated. It is spoken of as "the land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of the land of Nephi" (*Alma ii. 24*). Elder Orson Pratt, in a note to this chapter, places Minon at "about two days' journey south of the city Zarahemla." This is the obvious conclusion to be drawn from the details contained in the chapter; from these details and the above quotation, we also judge it to have been on the western banks of the Sidon, and in the direct road between Nephi and Zarahemla. At this date (B. C. 91) it was inhabited by an agricultural population, who, at the approach of the Lamanites fled before them into the capital city.

As the course of the River Sidon was from south to north, it is but reasonable to conclude that when the words "above" and "below" are used, when reference is made to places on its banks or in its neighborhood, that above means south and below, north. This is a very common mode of expression in such cases.

MELEK.—The boundaries of this land are very indistinctly stated by the inspired writer of the Book of Alma, for it is in that book alone that it is mentioned. However, two things are positively stated (*chapter viii.*), namely, that it was west of the River Sidon, and that it extended westward as far as the narrow strip of wilderness which ran north and south between the mountains and the Pacific Ocean. We imagine that its eastern borders touched the land of Zarahemla and from thence it stretched out as far as the country proved habitable, as it appears to have had a large population, judging from the account given of Alma's ministrations (B. C. 82). That it embraced a large district of country is proven by the fact that when Alma had finished his labors in the city of Melek, he "traveled three days' journey on the north of the land of Melek" before he came to the city of Ammonihah (*Alma viii. 6*). In later years, when it was considered unsafe for the Ammonites to remain longer in Jerushon they were removed to Melek, the proximity of which to Zarahemla, as well as its remoteness from the lands of the Lamanites, rendered it admirably adapted as a place of safety for that persecuted people.

AMMONIHAH.—When Alma had made the three days' journey spoken of above, he reached Ammonihah, the country around which city was called by the same name. From the text of the passage some conclude that Alma traveled northward from Melek, but to us it conveys the idea that the prophet journeyed three days westward along the northern boundary of that land. We are confirmed in this opinion by the statement made in another place regarding Ammonihah's proximity to that portion of the wilderness which ran along the sea shore (*Alma viii. 27*). In *Alma (xvi. 2)*, it is stated: "The armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah." If Ammonihah had been situated three days' journey north of Melek, we suggest that it could not have been near that portion of the wilderness which the Lamanites so easily reached without discovery; for a march due north would have taken them close to, or actually through the lands

of Minon, Noah, Melek and Zarahemla, the most thickly populated portions of the country, or to have avoided these, they must have taken a circuitous route of immense length and great danger. Then when they attempted to retire, their retreat, owing to their great distance from Nephi, would have most assuredly been cut off, as was the case with the Lamanite general Coriantumr under these conditions.

NOAH.—Of this land we simply know two things: First, that it was west of the Sidon; second, that it was not far distant from Ammonihah and Melek.

SIDOM is only mentioned in the 15th chapter of Alma. When the persecuted members of the true church were driven out of Ammonihah by its vicious citizens, they fled to Sidom. It is not supposable that these persecuted people were in a condition to travel far. They would necessarily gather to the first available place of refuge. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Sidom was not far distant from Ammonihah.

AARON.—When Alma was first cast out of Ammonihah he turned his face towards a city called Aaron (*Alma viii. 13*). It is natural to suppose that Aaron was not far distant from Ammonihah, at any rate, not on the other side of the continent. Yet the only other time when a city called Aaron is referred to, it is spoken of as adjoining the land of Moroni, which was the frontier district in the extreme south-east of the lands possessed by the Nephites. Our only way out of this difficulty is to suggest that there were two cities called Aaron; not at all an unlikely thing, when we reflect how important a personage Aaron, the son of Mosiah, was among his people. When chosen to be king he declined this great honor and the republic was established. It requires no stretch of the imagination to believe that a free and grateful people would name more than one city in honor of this self-denying prince. When we consider how many places there are in these United States called Washington, Lincoln, etc., our only wonder is that we do not find more than two cities called Aaron.

This same difficulty exists with regard to NEPHIHAIH. We fancy there were also two cities of this name; one situated on the southern frontier some distance east of Manti and the Sidon (*Alma vi. 25*), the other, on the Atlantic sea-board north of Moroni (*Alma I. 14*). Of this latter city it is written, that in the year B. C. 72, the Nephites "began a foundation for a city between the city of Moroni and the city of Aaron, joining the city of Aaron and Moroni; and they called the name of the city or the land, Nephihah." This is the region again referred to in chapters 51, 59 and 62 of the Book of Alma. Elder Orson Pratt, in a foot note to chapter 56, draws attention to the fact that the Nephihah there mentioned is not the one spoken of in the other chapters.

THE ATLANTIC SEA-BOARD.—It appears, though it is not altogether certain, that the lands and cities of the Nephites on the Atlantic sea-board were situated in the following order, commencing at the north: Melek, Gid, Oanner, Moreanton, Lehi, Aaron, Nephihah and Moroni (*Alma ii. 26*).

MORONI was situated by the sea-shore, on the borders of the great wilderness, being the farthest from the city of Zarahemla of all the settlements of the Nephites in the south-east. Or, to use the language of the inspired historian, "It was by the east sea; and it was on the south by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites" (*Alma I. 13*). As the wilderness ran in a straight line from east to west, and the Sidon arose near its northern border, on which border Moroni was also situated, if the convulsions of the time of the crucifixion of our Lord did not so alter the face of the country as to change

the locality where this river took its rise, then Moroni was in the country now called Guiana, or in the extreme north of Brazil. The city Moroni now lies covered by the waters of the Atlantic (*III Nephi viii. 9*). In Guiana there is a river still called Moroni, or, as it is generally printed on the maps, Maroni or Marony. There is also a river Morona in Ecuador.

LEHI.—The land of Lehi on the Atlantic coast must not be confounded with the whole of South America, also called the land of Lehi by the Nephites. This lesser land of Lehi was the district surrounding the city of Lehi, and immediately adjoining the land of Moreanton, whose people indeed claimed, though unjustly, a portion of its territory.

MULEK was the most northern of the settlements of the Nephites south of the land Bountiful, close to the borders of which it was built. It is positively stated to have been located on the east sea (*Alma li. 26*); west of it was a wilderness, or uninhabited region (*Alma lii. 22*).

BOUNTIFUL.—We believe that there is an idea held by some that the city Bountiful was situated on the Pacific shore. This opinion, we think is not warranted by the statement in the Book of Mormon. Mulek, as we have already shown, was on the Atlantic, or east sea; Bountiful was northward of Mulek. When Teancum retreated before the hosts of the Lamanites, who poured out of the city of Mulek to capture his small force, "he began to retreat down by the sea shore northward" (*Alma lii. 23*). This course brought him to Bountiful. From the details contained in this chapter we are forced to the conclusion that he and his soldiery reached that city on the same day that they started from outside Mulek. Now, without the configuration of the coast line has been entirely and completely changed, no march of one day, or indeed of any length of time along "the sea shore northward" would bring a person to the Pacific Ocean. Our only conclusion can be that Bountiful was situated on the sea-shore on the eastern side of the Isthmus, if on the Isthmus at all. Other passages than the one above quoted show that Mulek and Bountiful lay in close proximity.

We fancy the reason why some suppose that the city Bountiful lay on the west coast, is because Hagoth built his ship yards there. But the record does not say he built them in or near the city Bountiful. What is stated is that Hagoth "went forth and built him an exceeding large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck of land which led into the wilderness northward" (*Alma liii. 5*). This narrow neck of land was the dividing line between the land Desolation to the north, and the land Bountiful to the south. We think it is evident, from the above, that the city Bountiful and Hagoth's settlement lay at entirely opposite extremes of this land, the first, in the south-east near Mulek, the second, in the north-west near Desolation.

Before the land Bountiful was settled by the Nephites, it was a wilderness "filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind; a part of which had come from the land northward for food" (*Alma xcii. 31*). But the Nephites, to prevent the Lamanites creeping up through the wilderness along the coasts, east and west, and thus gaining a foothold in the land northward, at as early a date as possible "inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east to the west sea" (*Alma xcii. 33*).

The city called Bountiful is not mentioned until B. C. 64 (*Alma lii*), though the land of that name is frequently referred to at earlier dates.

THE SOUTH-WEST BORDER.—All we know of the cities and lands in the south-west is contained in Helaman's report to Moroni of the military operations in that department (*Alma lvi. lviii*). Four cities are mentioned west of Manti: Judea, Antiparah, Zeezrom and Cumeni. Of these, Antiparah appears to have been situated nearer the coast than Judea, while there was yet another city still nearer the ocean, and apparently to the north of Antiparah. But we can simply guess at their relative positions, no positive information being given us.

A DIALOGUE.

John Howard, and George Morgan meet on their way to School.

BY M. J. T.

JOHN.—Good morning, George. Where are you going?

GEORGE.—To school, of course. Aren't you?

J.—No, indeed, I'm not! I'm going to have some fun.

G.—Yes, your father will give you fun, when he finds out you have been playing truant.

J.—Oh, father is an old muff! He would keep a boy cooped up in school from morning till night, all the week, and then send him to Primaries and Sunday school, and never give him any time to play. But I am getting tired of those stupid books; I never could see any good in them any way. I'm going to have some fun, and father will never be the wiser if people will mind their own business.

G.—I should think you would be ashamed to treat your father in that way. It was only last week you were out all day, and I don't know how many half days you have been out.

J.—Well, you know that stupid teacher has a spite against me, and always gives me hard lessons, or keeps me in after school, or some such foolery; and I'm not going to stand it much longer. I won't go to such a school where the teachers all show partiality.

G.—You know very well, John, the teachers do not mean to show partiality; but when boys are all the while doing something to aggravate them, how can they help scolding?

J.—Oh, you're such a saint, the teachers never find any fault with you. They have not kept you in after hours once this term. But Tom Jenks is monitor of our class, and he is always telling some confounded yaru about me, or giving me points of order, and it isn't fair. I'll serve him out some day if he don't mind his p's and q's.

G.—I tell you what it is, John, you do not take an interest in school, or you wouldn't always be in such scrapes. You know you did not have a single lesson yesterday that did you any credit. You missed in your geography, and didn't say half your grammar; and if you had not copied from Jim Daniels' slate you could not have spelled at all. How can the teachers help punishing you, if they undertake to make you learn? And you know your parents pay them to teach you, and hold them responsible for your progress.

J.—I would have had my lessons, for I studied hard enough; but I was out the afternoon before, and I did not know which they were until it was too late to get them.

G.—If you had come to me in the evening I would have shown you the lessons.

J.—I would have come, but I went down to Tom Rogers, to have a smoke, and, as we were out of tobacco, we had—to—go out—and—get—some.*

*To be spoken in a halting manner, which arouses George's suspicion.