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Nephite Culture and Society: Collected Papers

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Abstract: While the topics covered by this book are varied, they share one characteristic that I seek to instill in all my work. They depend on fine-grained analysis of the text of The Book of Mormon. While some of my writing has featured comparisons with data from outside the scripture, these pieces consist almost entirely of internal analyses. I am of the opinion that it is important at this point in time for scholars to study the Nephite volume by analyzing its text intensively. Students of the ancient book need to put themselves as thoroughly as possible into Nephite settings and modes of thinking before trying to translate the ancient writings to modern-day terms.

For me, developing further knowledge of the contexts of the ancient book requires drawing upon models that have been derived from studying other unfamiliar cultures and their records. Seeing how other peoples and their cultures have been elucidated by scholarly analysis can provide fuel to Fire up more scholarly study of Mormon's book. My background in the field of anthropology has provided me with stimulating new approaches to understanding The Book of Mormon as a record of ancient peoples. One might think that what I consider new approaches refers to archaeology, since that is the scientific field particularly concerned with ancient life, but I have benefited in my work from many other aspects of anthropology. Archaeology is the sub-field of anthropology by which I entered the discipline, and the ideas and data from archaeologists remain very helpful. But my experience has been eclectic, involving work in the social, cultural, linguistic, psychological and applied branches as well as archaeology.

The articles published in this book are contributions to my long-term aim to apply anthropology in the widest possible sense to elucidating The Book of Mormon. I hope to accomplish still more toward that end and hope that others will also pursue the task.

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Nephite Culture and Society

Collected Papers

by John L. Sorenson

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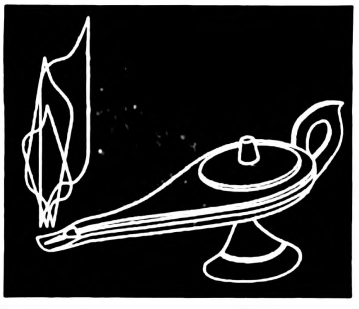

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Author's Introduction

For many years I have devoted time and energy to analyzing *The Book of Mormon*, especially to learn what it says about the ancient peoples it describes. One criterion I have striven to apply to my work is to be as attentive as possible to details in the text about the setting in which events in the scripture were played out. In that spirit my 1985 book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies) compared the internal picture of life in *Book of Mormon* times that I had derived from study of the text with the large body of data that scholars and scientists have accumulated about the area where the scriptural peoples probably dwelt. That is Mesoamerica (central and southern Mexico and northern Central America).

Since 1985 I have completed further studies along the same lines. A number of the writings that resulted have been published but have not been conveniently accessible to nonspecialists. Other pieces have not been published at all. This collection of papers makes available for general readers further materials that can increase their understanding of the Nephite record beyond what is available in *An Ancient American Setting*.

While the topics covered by the present articles are varied, they share one characteristic that I seek to instill in all my work. They depend on fine-grained analysis of the text of *The Book of Mormon*. While some of my writing has featured comparisons with data from outside the scripture, these pieces consist almost entirely of internal analyses. I am of the opinion that it is important at this point in time for scholars to study the Nephite volume by analyzing its text intensively. Students of the ancient book need to put themselves as thoroughly as possible into Nephite settings and modes of thinking before trying to translate the ancient writings to modern-day terms.

For me, developing further knowledge of the contexts of the ancient book requires drawing upon models that have been derived from studying other unfamiliar cultures and their records. Seeing how other peoples and their cultures have been elucidated by scholarly analysis can provide fuel to fire up more scholarly study of Mormon's book. My background in the field of anthropology has provided me with stimulating new approaches to understanding *The Book of Mormon* as a record of ancient peoples. One might think that what I consider new approaches refers to archaeology, since that is the scientific field particularly concerned with ancient life, but I have benefitted in my work from many other aspects of anthropology. Archaeology is the sub-field of anthropology by which I entered the discipline, and the ideas and data from archaeologists remain very helpful. But my experience has been eclectic, involving work in the social, cultural, linguistic, psychological and applied branches as well as archaeology.

The articles published in this book are contributions to my long-term aim to apply anthropology in the widest possible sense to elucidating *The Book of Mormon*. I hope to accomplish still more toward that end and hope that others will also pursue the task.

Additional materials have resulted from my research that cannot be put in this book because they do not exist in a suitable format. Serious students of *The Book of Mormon* may wish to keep an eye open for some of them for additional insights they may provide into issues relevant to the scripture. For instance, the topic of transoceanic voyaging, an introduction to which is given in Chapter 3 below, has led me to much more extensive handling of the matter. With the assistance of Martin H. Raish, I issued in 1990 *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Ocean: An Annotated Bibliography* (Research Press: Provo). A revised and expanded edition appeared in 1996. This two-volume, 1200-page work annotates some 5100 bibliographical entries; it constitutes the foundational professional treatment of the subject to date. The subject is potentially important to *Book of Mormon* studies, of course.

Another relevant project that cannot be introduced here, given the format of the present book, is *Images of Ancient Mesoamerica: An Illustrated Companion to The Book of Mormon* (working title), slated to appear in mid-1997 from Research Press. Through aesthetically superior pictures accompanied by brief, professionally-responsible text, this large-format work will set a standard for the visualization of Nephite life and its setting by reference to faces, landscapes, sites, structures, art and other visual materials. Those who find value in the present set of papers will probably wish to see the *Images* book too.

Five of the articles included in this book are reprinted. I am grateful to those who saw to their original publication and am pleased with their willingness to allow New Sage Books to reprint them. Two articles have not been published before.

I owe a special debt and give sincere thanks to the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and to Research Press, a publishing arm of FARMS. The people involved there have consistently encouraged, facilitated, and supported my work, although they are not responsible for anything I say. If there are faults in these writings, they are due to my failures. I would like to see them corrected.

It is my desire that the contents of this book stir and assist readers to think more penetrating thoughts about *The Book of Mormon*. I consider this book given to us by Mormon and Moroni to be of profound significance. It deserves our closest attention and best scholarship. To me it is both the sacred, ancient record that it purports to be and a challenging puzzle that will reward the exacting attention of scholars. I hope others see it in the same ways. "Blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light" (Mormon 8:16), whether prophet, scriptorian or anthropologist.

John L. Sorenson

The Composition of Lehi's Family

2

A characteristic of Hugh Nibley's study of the *Book of Mormon*, which he has urged others to emulate, is close study of the scriptural text to reveal information which myopia had previously led readers to ignore. In that spirit, this chapter reports my microanthropological examination of what the text reveals regarding the composition and demography of Lehi's party from the beginning of their sojourn in the Arabian wilderness to their arrival in the promised land.

The family members most often referred to were the father Lehi and three sons—Nephi, Laman and Lemuel. In most discussions of the events reported in 1 Nephi, Latter-day Saints have generally acted as though these four men were the only significant actors. Others specifically mentioned as being in the traveling party—but apparently of little consequence to the history—were the mother Sariah; sons Sam, Jacob and Joseph; Zoram; Ishmael and his unnamed family members (at least a wife, two sons and five daughters); and Nephi's belatedly mentioned "sisters" (1 Nephi 7:6; 16:7; 2 Nephi 5:6). We shall see, however, that others surely were along.

A first order of priority must be to establish the ages of the *dramatis personae*. The oldest four sons of Lehi were, from eldest to youngest, Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi (see heading to 1 Nephi). The four were with their parents when they departed Jerusalem. Jacob and Joseph were later born in the Arabian wilderness.

The four oldest sons were of marriageable age at the time of departure, for each "took...to wife" a daughter of Ishmael soon after the latter arrived at Lehi's camp (1 Nephi 16:7). Furthermore, Ishmael's two sons evidently married daughters of Lehi. Nephi's cryptic mention of his sisters going with him when the colonists split into two factions in the land of promise (2 Nephi 5:6) implied to Sidney B. Sperry that they had left their husbands, sons of Ishmael.[1] I agree. Professor Sperry supported this idea by citing a statement

made by Erastus Snow in an address printed in the *Journal of Discourses*.[2] Apostle Snow said, "The Prophet Joseph Smith informed us that the record of Lehi was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen...[and] that Ishmael['s] sons married into Lehi's family, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters."

The composition of the party begins to look complex. Rather than to pursue it discursively, I shall sort out the tangled strands of social relationships and ages by initially considering all the personnel more or less in order determined by the amount of information given about them.

1. Nephi

Nephi describes himself as being "exceeding young, nevertheless...large in stature" (1 Nephi 2:16). In 1 Nephi 4:31 he says again that he was "a man large in stature," in the context of seizing a much older Zoram to keep him from fleeing. Both his use of the expression "a man" and his ability to act like one in handling Zoram allow us to suppose that he was already taller than most men of his society and probably as heavy as the average person despite his chronological youth. Again, where he donned Laban's gear (1 Nephi 4:19) and successfully impersonated him, we get a picture of a fully grown male. In manner too, he was socially and linguistically sophisticated enough that he could act in Jerusalem with confidence. Taking into account his own characterization ("exceeding young"), a reasonable guess is that he was coming up on his seventeenth birthday when his account starts.

2. Lehi

The indicators of Lehi's age are paradoxical. By the time the story begins he already has had what we might term a "successful career" managing the "land of his inheritance" (1 Nephi 2:4; 3:16,

22-25). It has been suggested that he was a merchant,[3] and indeed he may have been engaged as such at times, trading on his capital. Others think he was a metalsmith.[4] However, the linkage Nephi makes between his father's wealth and the "land of his inheritance" suggests that his primary economic activity probably was husbandry, chiefly in the sense of being a landlord. As for metalworking, it would be highly unlikely that a man who had inherited land and was considered very wealthy (1 Nephi 3:25) would have been a metal-worker, for the men in that role tended to be of lower social status and were usually landless.[5]

With a son aged twenty-two or twenty-three at the time he departed from Jerusalem in 597 B.C. (see Post script below), he would have married Sariah around 621 B.C. As we shall see, the sequence of her at least eight births requires that she be young—perhaps still sixteen—at her marriage. Lehi probably was a little older, though coming from a family of substance, Lehi would not have had to delay his marriage for economic reasons. I would guess that he was eighteen. If so, then he was born around 639 B.C., although he could have been a few years older. Thus, at the beginning of the *Book of Mormon* record, Lehi was approximately forty-two or perhaps a bit older.[6] (Latter-day Saint illustrators who depict him only as an aged patriarch should, rather, show him in the early chapters of 1 Nephi at mature middle age.)

He would still sire two sons, plausibly born around his ages forty-five and forty-seven (1 Nephi 18:7; see the discussion below about Sariah's births). On board ship, he, at age fifty-four, and Sariah are both characterized by Nephi as "stricken in years," having "grey hairs," and about to enter a "watery grave." Still Nephi indicates that this was because of grief brought upon them by their children more than because of age *per se* (1 Nephi 18:17-18).

The construction of their ship likely took more than a single year, and the voyage (of up to 20,000 miles) could hardly have consumed less than two years (see Chapter 3).

Lehi survived the voyage, of course. First Nephi 18:23-19:2

reports the group's initial pioneering in the new land, which need not have consumed more than a single year (the activities are less comprehensive and time-extensive than those reported by Nephi when his party settled in the land of Nephi—2 Nephi 5:11, 13). Second Nephi opens with Lehi teaching his family. His historical resume in 2 Nephi 1:1-5 sounds like only a short time had passed since the landing, for he speaks entirely about what had transpired *en route*. His valedictory continues through chapter 3. In 2 Nephi 4:12, the record abruptly states that after Lehi had spoken those things to his household..."he waxed old" and died. My impression is that Lehi lived no more than a couple of years in America and perhaps less than one. His age at death could have been as low as fifty-seven. Considering the arduous circumstances he faced in the last dozen years of his life and especially the intimation in 1 Nephi 18:17-18 that he was viewed as being somewhat sickly, this seemingly premature death is not really surprising.

3. Laman

We may ponder why this eldest son was not married previously. Being a number of years older than Nephi, he would normally have had a wife by the time they left Jerusalem. Lehi was a man of wealth, so the family's socioeconomic position should not have hindered his obtaining a wife but likely enhanced the options. One wonders why, if Ishmael and his family became willing to marry into Lehi's family under the difficult circumstances they did, no marriage had been contracted between members of the two families *before* their departure. But perhaps Laman had been married, the wife having died (the death rate was relatively high, after all, in the ancient world). If so, the deceased spouse could have been a daughter of Ishmael (sororatic marriage, in which a man took as second wife the sister of his first, was a known practice in Israel). Or, possible disorder(s) in Laman's personality, of which there is considerable evidence in Nephi's descriptions of his older brother's behavior, had made it

impossible for the family to persuade any father to give him a daughter for his wife.

Nothing is said directly about Laman's physical characteristics, but the fact that the two eldest brothers could "smite [Nephi and Sam]...with a rod" and that later they "did lay their hands upon [Nephi]" and "bind [him] with cords" (1 Nephi 3:28; 7:16) could suggest that the older pair were no less strong than Nephi. As the eldest son, and a proud and self-centered one at that, Laman comes through in the record as being somewhat haughty and probably pushy among his lessers but, as in dealing with Laban, lacking confidence, being frustrated and unstable in the face of determined opposition (compare 1 Nephi 2:9; 17:55).

Inasmuch as Nephi appears to have been near seventeen, his eldest brother very likely was not younger than twenty-two. I should think twenty-three more likely. It might be suggested that he was considerably older; but that would only make more difficult accounting for the already long period of fertility indicated for his mother, so that seems unlikely.

4. Lemuel

Lemuel seems to have been thoroughly dominated by Laman while possessing many of the same personality characteristics (see their pairing in Lehi's lament, 1 Nephi 2:9-14). Little is said about him as an individual, and never is there an indication that he stood up to or disagreed with Laman (compare 1 Nephi 3:28, "for he hearkened unto the words of Laman"). His age must have been about twenty-one.

5. Sariah

In the sixth century B.C. (as throughout most of human history), the timing of births was considerably different than what prevails today. Philip Houghton has conveniently summarized scientific findings on fertility and survival as a result of many studies of both

skeletons and living humans in pre-modern societies.[7] For one thing, diet was usually less nutritional and a good deal less consistent than we enjoy. Both minor and major illnesses were common. As one result of such conditions, women typically did not become fertile until around age nineteen, even though they might marry younger than that. The same biological problems decreased the likelihood that a wife would become pregnant. Miscarriages and stillbirths were not uncommon, and even after a successful birth, infants had much smaller chances of survival in their first few years. Obviously most women nursed their babies, and lack of alternative foods meant that each child would (must) be nursed for two years or more, which further limited fertility. Houghton suggests that women in "tribal societies" (which would surely cover at least the eight years in the wilderness for Lehi's women) "bore children at perhaps four-year intervals." And of those, probably every mother in her lifetime had lost one or more to early death.[8]

In the case of Sariah, numerous questions arise about her birth history. This is so because two sets of facts press credibility toward two limits when they are compared: (1) on the one hand, the oldest four sons were all of marriageable age at the time of the family's departure from Jerusalem. Given Nephi's apparent age the eldest, Laman, could not plausibly be less than twenty-two or twenty-three as the story begins; yet, (2) Jacob and Joseph were born "in the wilderness," and the probable timing would make Joseph approximately twenty-four to twenty-eight years younger than Laman. For one woman to have had such a long birth career is sufficiently unlikely that we should examine whether Sariah was the sole mother of all Lehi's mentioned offspring.

Hypothetically, some of the four brothers might have been born to an earlier, deceased wife, But the text leaves little question that Sariah was the mother of all four. The heading to 1 Nephi begins, "An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi." (We may think it odd that Nephi did not write this statement as "...and *their*

four sons," but in an Israelite cultural context, the reference is not strange.) The mention of "his wife" as well as the continuity in the listing of parents and sons strongly imply that Sariah was the only mother. The words of 1 Nephi 5:2, 8, pretty much put the issue to rest, as Sariah expresses fear that Lehi's visionary notions have caused the deaths of "my sons" who had gone up to Jerusalem; and when they return safely, she rejoices that the Lord has protected "my sons."

We cannot be immediately certain that Sariah was the mother of Jacob and Joseph. Nephi says that "my father had begat two sons in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 18:7) but does not mention the mother. Ten verses later, Nephi, during his brothers' rebellion on board ship, refers to "*my* parents being stricken in years" and down on their sickbeds; 1 Nephi 18:19 then mentions that young Jacob and Joseph were "grieved because of the afflictions of *their* mother." This phrasing removes almost all doubt that Sariah was the mother of the last two of Lehi's sons and also assures us that she lived until they were on the boat (she likely died before Nephi left his brothers, for 2 Nephi 5:6 makes no mention of her going with him). Any uncertainty remaining seems to me eliminated at Jacob 2:23-34 where Jacob makes clear that Lehi was opposed in principle to plural marriage, except under very exceptional circumstances, thus the possibility of his having a second wife seems nil.

So we can be confident that Sariah bore six sons. Then, as mentioned above, she also had at least two daughters, based upon Nephi's reference in 2 Nephi 5:6 to "my sisters," although there is no other mention of them. While Sperry held out the possibility of as many as four daughters, there were at least two, to account for Nephi's plural reference. Thus we can be quite certain that Sariah was the mother of at least eight children who survived to adulthood. In addition, it would be likely that she had unmentioned, unsuccessful pregnancies. While this may not be an unprecedented record of fertility and survival in the ancient world, it is highly unusual. (In the *Old Testament*, a notable fertility record drawing particular mention is that of Leah, wife of Jacob, who bore six sons and one daughter in

less than twenty years—Genesis 30:19-20; 31:41.)

It is not the number of these births as much as their spacing that poses the problem under discussion. We are faced here with a sufficiently improbable situation that we should consider whether Sariah's record is reasonable in terms of nature and culture or whether divine intervention must be appealed to. The dire picture of childbirth and survival in simpler societies that Houghton has painted should alert us to the fact that, unlike in modern times, anciently it was not birth prevention that occupied couples' minds but anxiety *for* the bearing and rearing of children. Statistically, conception, pregnancy, birth and the nurturing of children were all fraught with uncertainty and danger, and a large surviving posterity was exceptional.

Still, statistics do not tell us about individuals. In the first place, the Israelites might not have been "typical" of the peoples Houghton was talking about. We do not have enough specific demographic information on them in ancient times to know for sure how they might compare with Houghton's "tribal societies." And then I suppose that the Lord could have picked out of Israel a particular family (Lehi's) to take to the promised land who had biological and spiritual qualities substantially different than "average." So in Sariah's case Houghton's "typical" age of nineteen for the beginning of fertility might not be correct.

The text implies that Sariah lived her first quarter century of married life in circumstances of wealth (see 1 Nephi 3:24-25) and that she was also likely to have been born into a social situation considerably better than average. She thus could have enjoyed a more favorable dietary and health regime than in "tribal societies." Certainly she held up well physically in the wilderness, all things considered (see 1 Nephi 17:2), although eventually the hardships and stress caught up with her, seemingly before she was chronologically "old" (1 Nephi 18:17). Finally, the relatively advantaged circumstances under which Lehi's family lived in the land of Jerusalem likely reduced the mortality dangers to the children once they were born.

Divine intervention could have extended her period of fertility, but nothing in Nephi's record supports that idea. Nephi credits the Lord with strengthening "our women" in the difficult wilderness years through unusual metabolism, but not in regard to fertility (compare 1 Nephi 17:1-3). Still, in Lehi's record, the translation of which was lost by Martin Harris, perhaps there was an indication that Lehi and Sariah considered something miraculous about her final births. Her name, Sariah, hints of a possible typological linkage to Abraham's wife, Sarai/Sarah, who bore Isaac at age ninety. A number of studies have recently shown that Nephi construed his family's life-saving "Exodus" to a "promised land" as symbolically parallel to the original exodus of Israel from Egypt. Other studies have shown that the meaning of names of certain *Book of Mormon* characters seem to tie to events in their lives or to their characteristics.[9] That Lehi and Sariah named their last two sons after their ancestral patriarchs Jacob and Joseph may tell us that they had patriarchal parallels in mind and may have considered Sariah's late pregnancies somehow comparable to Sarai's exceptional bearing of Isaac.

Let us suppose for now that Sariah's first birth occurred when she was seventeen. This seems not likely but possible. Is it plausible for her to have had eight births[10] in an interval of under thirty years? The answer is yes. A tabulation will be presented later that demonstrates that possibility. But first, relevant facts about other family members need to be laid out.

6. Jacob and Joseph

Earlier discussion established with high probability that Sariah, not another wife, was the mother of Jacob and Joseph, and I assume that here. The only substantive clue about when these two sons were born comes from 1 Nephi 18:19. On board ship, when Laman and those who sided with him rebelled against Nephi's leadership; the statement is made that Jacob and Joseph, "being young, having need of much nourishment, were grieved because of the afflictions of their mother."

What ages for the boys may we infer from this way of speaking?

What is said about "nourishment" might be thought to refer to being nursed by their mother, but that makes no sense when the expression is applied equally to both, as it is. But the boys were likely far from infancy, so the "nourishment" may refer primarily to fixing appropriate food (no doubt a difficult task at best on the ship). Their aunts or sisters might have taken up the slack for their mother/mother-in-law, but life probably was hard for all of them. (Particularly if there were pregnant women on board the tossing ship, which is likely, there could have been a considerable sharing of child care quite apart from the case of Sariah.) But "nourishment" refers to more than food. While on forty-three occasions in the *Book of Mormon* "nourish" or a variant term primarily denotes a physical process, two other uses are metaphorical. Probably two senses were intertwined in Nephi's usage—a combination of providing food and emotional nurturance.

The boys may have been "delicate" as a result of wilderness malnutrition, or they may have been seasick-prone. They may have been particularly dependent psychologically on their mother and distressed by her evident weakness. We do not know of any of those matters. But regardless of what the boys felt about their mother as an individual, a child's life on a smallish, probably crowded, ship with little room to move about and a host of other youngsters always present would have been stressful and demanding of a mother's direct attention. Given the many possibilities, we cannot determine the ages of Jacob and Joseph from the statement on nourishment.

From another angle, however, we note that the younger brothers were born "in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 18:7; compare 17:1), which presumably means prior to their arrival at Bountiful. That tells us a bit, but the biggest piece of information in this particular puzzle has to be Sariah's age. Her two births make most sense coming early in the trek, when she was in her best health. I can imagine that Jacob's birth came in the first year after the departure from Jerusalem and Joseph's two years thereafter. In that case, supposing

two years in Bountiful, they would have been respectively nine and seven on boarding ship. The "nourishment" statement need not contradict those ages.

That the late-born sons married and had offspring after their arrival in the promised land is established by a later reference to Jacobites and Josephites as tribes affiliated with the Nephites (e.g., Jacob 1:13). Whom the men might have wed is not indicated, but the close relations of Nephi with Jacob and Joseph—the older brother no doubt became a foster father to the two boys after the death of Lehi (2 Nephi 5:26, Jacob 1:18) suggest that they married daughters of Nephi, or perhaps of Sam. (They could not have married Lamanite, Lemuelite or Ishmaelite cousins because the two boys would have separated from them before reaching marriageable age, as a result of moving to the land of Nephi.)

7. Ishmael and his wife

Ishmael was the first of the trekking party to die, according to the record. Presumably he was older than Lehi. That is supported by the fact that his eldest daughter was apparently too old to marry any of Lehi's sons (she ended up marrying Zoram, the former servant, 1 Nephi 16:7; this was definitely a second-class marriage for her, though better than none).

Ishmael also had four younger daughters, none of whom was married earlier. No hint is given that the father had mentionable wealth, only a "house" (1 Nephi 7:4). Nibley suggested that Ishmael was "connected with the desert."[11] But a desert man settled into a "house" was usually of somewhat marginal social status in the Near East. In the course of normal events, the prospects for a man of modest means and well along in life to arrange marriages for so many daughters would have been limited. So the appearance of four known young suitors at the door, even if they had not previously made any courtship moves, must have stirred interest in the family even before "the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael, and also his household"

(1 Nephi 7:5). Had the family been prosperous, likely they would not have been so willing to head off into the desert. As it was, they could see advantages.

Still, we must recognize Ishmael as a man of considerable courage and faith to agree to go off into the wilderness when his own chance for arriving at and enjoying the "land of promise" in the flesh was questionable. Surely it was blessing his posterity that concerned him the most. Once he had made the commitment, he held to it. Only a few days from home (the distance was not great; compare 1 Nephi 2:4, 6), his resolve was tested by the first rebellion of his two sons and two of his daughters (1 Nephi 7:6), but Ishmael and his wife supported Nephi and were willing to press ahead.

Nibley observed that Lehi and Ishmael were probably related, "since it has ever been the custom among the desert people for a man to marry the daughter of his paternal uncle."[12] That Lehi and Ishmael were somehow kin indeed seems likely, but what that relationship was is not clear. Had they been brothers, as would have been the case for the cited custom to prevail, something might well have been said about that fact. Furthermore, had the brother-brother ("parallel cousin") relationship been as obvious and patterned as Nibley supposed, we would be hard put to explain why marriages had not previously been contracted, under normal instead of these urgent conditions. In any case, socioeconomic distinctions between the families probably played a part. Furthermore, the supposition that Lehi and Ishmael were closely related goes contrary to the LDS tradition that the former counted descent from Manasseh but the latter from Ephraim (see below, Chapter 2, page 29).

Age differences could also have been a hindrance to contracting marriages under pre-flight conditions, for it is evident that the eldest daughter was too old to marry any of Lehi's sons, and perhaps it was still customary for the eldest to be married before the younger ones could be betrothed (compare Genesis 29:26). With Zoram now on the scene, however, the matchup may have made more sense.

If, as I suspect, Ishmael's daughters were not quite good

enough a catch to interest Lehi's menfolk while they were at home, under extreme conditions the fact that the numbers of Ishmael's daughters and the eligible men in Lehi's party worked out exactly right perhaps made the alliance suddenly both feasible and desirable. We have no warrant, however, for supposing that "love" played much if any part in the arrangements; the relationships were practical, a least in the beginning.

When we consider the interrelations between Ishmael's and Lehi's families, the age distribution of the former's offspring probably was about like this:

Table 1.1 Ishmael's family

Child	Age on Leaving Jerusalem
Daughter 1 (married Zoram)	31
Son 1	29
Son 2	26
Daughter 2 (married Laman)	24
Daughter 3 (married Lemuel)	21
Daughter 4 (married Sam)	19
Daughter 5 (married Nephi)	16

(The order and ages of Daughter 1 and Son 1 might be reversed.)

In the absence of any evidence that Ishmael had inherited social and economic advantages, we may suppose that his own marriage had been at a later age than for Lehi, say about age twenty-one, when his wife was about nineteen. Ishmael might then have been fifty-three or fifty-four when his family departed from the Jerusalem area; his wife could have been between fifty-one and fifty-three. In the absence of definite statements about how long it took the party to move down the Red Sea margin to Shazer and then to Nahom, we cannot be sure of Ishmael's age at the time of his death in Nahom (1 Nephi 16:33-36), but it could have been some five years into the journey. If he died under sixty years of age, this would explain some of the anger of his

daughters about what they considered his early demise caused by following Lehi's difficult wilderness agenda. (Incidentally, did the "daughters" who "did mourn exceedingly" include the wives of Nephi, Sam and Zoram, or only those married to Laman and Lemuel? And since there is no mention of his wife's mourning, was she already dead?)

8. The sons of Ishmael

These two were probably older than Lehi's sons. Yet their willingness to be led by Laman and Lemuel in rebellion indicates that they were still on the younger side of adulthood, for married men of, say, more than thirty would be unlikely to follow readily much younger single men of twenty-three and twenty-one as Laman and Lemuel were. Both Ishmael's sons had "families" (1 Nephi 7:6) who accompanied them. The term "families" implies a wife and at least one child each, but there likely were more children, considering the fathers' ages. (Had one or both of the wives been childless, the expression "and their wives/his wife" would likely have been used instead of "...and their families.") As noted above, it may be that at some point the daughters of Lehi became wives of the sons of Ishmael (see also below).

In later *Book of Mormon* history, the descendants of both men were incorporated into a single tribe (Jacob 1:13) for reasons not apparent now. Since Lamoni, local king over "the land of Ishmael" in Lamanite country in the second century B.C. was a descendant of Ishmael (Alma 17:21), his father, who was king over all the Lamanite lands, presumably also counted his lineage to Ishmael. Thus the Ishmaelite tribe came to play a prominent part among "the Lamanites."

9. Sam

Sam was the shy and retiring one of the four brothers, it appears. Though older than Nephi, he followed him consistently (1

Nephi 2:17). He may not have been very assertive; at least one would have thought that when Laman and Lemuel "did smite us [two] even with a rod" (1 Nephi 3:28-29) that he could have combined efforts with Nephi (who was "large in stature") to prevent the beating. Furthermore, Sam was as frightened as Laman and Lemuel when Nephi, dressed in Laban's clothes and accompanied by Zoram, approached them at night (1 Nephi 4:28).

Perhaps his retiring if not passive nature is why his father in his final blessing (2 Nephi 4:11), while saluting Sam's good heart and behavior, could see that his descendants would not survive as a distinct entity but would be incorporated into Nephi's tribe.

10. Zoram

Zoram had been Laban's servant. At the time when he promised to accompany the party and be granted nominal equal status with the brothers, he must have weighed in his instantaneous calculation of the costs and benefits the fact that as a servant of Laban in Jerusalem, he would always be a third-class citizen and bound to an unadmirable master. Of course, had he not agreed to go with them, they would have killed him—a rather strong determinant in his decision!

A man as trusted as he was, with access to Laban's treasury, would have been of some maturity, for he would have had to prove faithful to Laban over a period of years before being given such trust by his master. That he was in his thirties would be reasonable and such an age agrees with his marrying the daughter whom Ishmael's family may have considered by then their "old maid." Later he had his own tribal descendants (1 Nephi 18:6; Jacob 1:13), so his wife apparently had fertile years remaining after their marriage.

We learn nothing about his nature, physique or bearing, although he was probably a thorough-going city fellow. Since Laban seems to have played some military role at Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:31), Zoram likely was also part of the Jewish military apparatus, which

may in part account for the military role his descendants later played (Alma 48:5).

He aligned himself with the Nephi faction in subsequent disputes (2 Nephi 1:30; 5:6), and a generation or more later his descendants formed one of the small tribes within the broad Nephite category (Jacob 1:13). Still, a tradition among part of his descendants centuries later (Alma 54:23) suggests that he had been "pressed and brought out of Jerusalem" against his will by Nephi. Perhaps in weak moments, he confessed privately to his children that, like the Mormon pioneers from Nauvoo, he "went willingly, because he had to."

Nothing is said about Zoram's ancestry, but it seems statistically likely, given his bureaucratic/military role in Jerusalem, that he was a Judahite, while both Lehi and Ishmael counted descent from Joseph.

11. Others

As we have seen, there were minor characters in the drama who were considered by Nephi insignificant enough not to mention by name. Let us consider each in turn, presenting what we know and can infer about their ages and social positions.

"My sisters"

The two (or more) daughters of Lehi and Sariah I presume, on the basis of Erastus Snow's statement, to have become wives of Ishmael's sons. They were minors at the beginning of the account, otherwise there would be no way to place them in Sariah's birth history. I suppose that one was around twelve and the other around nine. When they arrived in Bountiful they would have been twenty and seventeen.

It is logical that in the intimate circumstances of the camp, youths approaching sexual maturity would be in a socially awkward position. Likely, the adult role of wife would be arranged for the two daughters as soon as feasible, say around age sixteen for each in turn,

but whom would they marry? The sons of Ishmael alone seem of an age to be possible husbands. Lehi's first daughter may then have become the second wife of Ishmael's first son at about the time they were in Nahom. The second daughter could have become the second wife to Ishmael's second son no later than the time the party reached Bountiful.

This scenario takes the Erastus Snow statement at face value. I realize that to suppose that the daughters became second wives appears to contradict Jacob 2:34 and 3:5, where it is said that Lehi was commanded that there should be no plural wives. But perhaps Lehi received that commandment only in the promised land after, and partially because of, bitter experience with the second wifehood of his two daughters, which had led to their separation from Ishmael's sons. Or, these cases may have been covered under the "escape clause" of Jacob 2:30 ("For if I will...raise up seed unto me, I will command my people" to make polygamous unions), the daughters having no other prospect of marriage within their party.

Still another possibility is that the arduous wilderness experience had caused the (unmentioned) death of the original wives of the sons of Ishmael, whereupon Lehi's daughters were taken as replacement spouses. A final possibility is that the Snow statement was in error in the recollection of the detail about the daughters and that they never married at all due to lack of partners of a suitable age. Obviously, we cannot settle these details on the basis of so few bits of information given us by Nephi in his record. We may wonder about such matters but must restrict our guesses to fit what hints the text gives us.

Wives of Ishmael's sons

Our recognition of the existence of these wives depends completely on the phrasing of 1 Nephi 7:6: "the two sons of Ishmael and their families." No clue is provided about the age or origin of the women. Given patterns of marriage in preexilic Israel, it would be likely that they were kin to their husbands through their fathers, but

that was only an Israelite preference, not an absolute rule. As to their ages, we can only suppose that they were slightly younger than their respective husbands, that is, about twenty-eight and twenty-five at the one time when their existence is implied (1 Nephi 7:6).

Original children of Ishmael's sons

As noted earlier, since both sons had "families," we must suppose that children were involved. Given the probable ages of the parents, two or three each would be plausible, for a plausible total of five Ishmaelite grandchildren as the story opens.

Children born during the trip through the wilderness

Nephi says in 1 Nephi 17:1, "our women did bear children in the wilderness." No numbers are included, nor are any exclusions mentioned. Two of these births, Jacob and Joseph, have already been discussed. If we presume that all the younger married women bore children during the eight years, the median number would likely be two, given the rigors of the circumstances—some may have had but one, others three. During the two or more years in Bountiful while they were building the boat, there could have been an additional three born within the group. A distribution like this would be reasonable:

Table 1.2 Children born in the wilderness

Sariah (Jacob and Joseph)	2
Laman's wife	2
Lemuel's wife	2
Sam's wife	2
Nephi's wife	2
Zoram's wife	2
Wife of Son 1 of Ishmael	2
Wife of Son 2 of Ishmael	2
Total of those born in the wilderness	16
Plus those born in Bountiful	3

Were there servants?

No mention is made of male or female servants, yet it is possible that there were some. At first glance, 1 Nephi 2:4 would seem to rule that out, since reference is made only to Lehi's taking "his family." Yet Near Eastern usage would not rule out including servants under that heading without specifically distinguishing them. Lehi's "great wealth" would seem to have called for at least female servants in the household. Nephi's hesitancy about even adding Zoram to their party would not apply in the case of family retainers, who would have known no other life than service to Lehi and Sariah and had no alternative in society in the land of Jerusalem even if they dreamed of defecting. I do not consider it likely that there were such people along, but the door should not be shut on the possibility, for they might account for some genetic variety in the colony as well as providing additional hands for the preparation of the ship when they reached Bountiful.

Finally, I note that Lynn M. Hilton has proposed in an unpublished paper that Laman and Lemuel took dark-skinned South Arabian women as second wives during the sojourn in Bountiful, thus accounting for the skin color attributed to the Lamanites in the promised land in America. This is an interesting idea, however, I am not persuaded by his arguments. That the party had social interaction with local inhabitants in Bountiful on the south Arabian coast does seem likely, in fact inevitable. Among other things, Nephi claims "neither did I build the ships after the manner of men" (1 Nephi 18:2), strongly implying that he had knowledge of other ships which almost certainly would have existed on that coast and had been examined by him. However, Jacob 3:5, which credits the Lamanites with a tradition of monogamy, weighs against the Hilton suggestion.

Now that we have recapped the possible personnel, let us see how Sariah's birth history plausibly went. It does seem possible, barely, to accommodate all her children in an atypical but feasible birth sequence.

Table 1.3 Sariah's birth history

Child	Age on Leaving Jerusalem	Sariah's Age at the Birth
Laman	23*	17
Lemuel	21	(early) 20
Sam	19	22
Nephi	(late) 16	25
Daughter 1	12	29
Daughter 2	9	32
(Departure from Jerusalem)		(41)
Jacob		43*
Joseph		45*
(Arrival in Bountiful)		(49)

** By supposing Laman was twenty-two instead of twenty-three and that Joseph was seven at the time of the shipboard need for "nourishment"—and these are the reasonable extremes—Sariah's age at Joseph's birth could have been as low as forty-two.*

One implication of the composition of the group

Assuming the correctness of these calculations, there would have been some seven vigorous adult males, perhaps supplemented by three of the adult females on any given workday, available for the tasks of gathering materials, constructing the ship, and outfitting and testing it. Assume further that other necessary tasks such as obtaining food and camp maintenance consumed a third of the working days of those eleven souls. If the ship took about two years to build and get ready to sail, then a maximum of around 5,000 person-days of (inexperienced) labor were available. Half that much labor might today construct a house of moderate size, but of limited quality, in perhaps a year. Since, however, Nephi's crew had no lumberyard nor hardware store to draw on, about as much time would be consumed in preparing materials as in actual construction of the vessel. Obviously

the only ship they could construct within these constraints would be quite small. Perhaps some servants were available as a supplement to the labor force, or perhaps some local inhabitants might have been used (which raises the question of how they might have been paid).

Recasting the demographic information, we see that the group who boarded the vessel would have been distributed something like this (excluding any possible servants):

Table 1.4 Group that boarded the vessel.

Age Group	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Aged adults	1	2?*	3?
Vigorous adults	8**	7	15
Children	12	13	25
Totals	21	22?	43?

** We have no Idea how long Ishmael's wife lived.*

*** One of the children of Ishmael's first son may have been as old as eighteen by now so is arbitrary counted here.*

These observations may strike some readers as trivial, but I disagree. We have two choices in regard to context or setting as we read the scriptures (or any ancient document): (1) We can impose our own historical and cultural preconceptions on the text (there is no such thing as simply reading a text "literally," in a cultural vacuum); or (2) we we can read it in the best light available to us about the actual, realistic setting. If we do the first, we run the risk of misconstruing the words and subverting the intent of possessing written scripture at all. Truth-lovers take the latter course every time, in my opinion.

Post Script

My calculations of the age of some individuals in the paper are linked to the date of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem, which I supposed at the time I wrote to have been about 597 B.C. Since then, as noted elsewhere in this volume, I have become persuaded that a later date, perhaps 587 B.C., is likely, based upon the arguments in Spackman (1993). I have not here revised this paper to reflect any changes this modified assumption might entail.

Notes
To Chapter 1

[1] Sidney B. Sperry, "Did Father Lehi Have Daughters Who Married the Sons of Ishmael?" *Improvement Era* 55 (1952), page 642.

[2] *Journal of Discourses* 23:184.

[3] Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites, vol. 5, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley,* John W. Welch, editor, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988, pages 34-35. The arguments presented favoring the merchant role are insufficiently persuasive precisely because they do not follow the text closely nor exhaustively enough.

[4] Samuel E. Shepley, "Old World Metal Workers," paper given at Annual Symposium, Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Provo, Utah, 22 October 1983; John A. Tvedtnes, "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?" FARMS Preliminary Report, 1984.

[5] As I observe in Chapter 3 "Transoceanic Crossings," had Lehi been a skilled metal-worker, Nephi would hardly have worked up ore into tools by himself when he prepared to build the ship; he could more economically have relied on Lehi's skills (1 Nephi 9:11). However, Nephi might well have observed

metalworking repeatedly back on his fathers estate, where itinerant smiths probably stopped periodically to construct or repair tools, and thus have been familiar in general with the required steps and paraphernalia.

[6] John W. Welch, "Longevity of Book of Mormon People and the 'Age of Man,'" *Journal of Collegium Aesculapium*, 1985, pages 35-45, and "They Came from Jerusalem," *Ensign* 6, 1976, pages 28-29, both available as FARMS Reprints, argues for the birth of Lehi around 655 B.C. His assumption that Nephi was Lehi's sixth child (two sisters being older than he) is highly unlikely, for that would stretch out Sariah's fertility history to an unbelievable and unnecessary length. As I show below, even by making Nephi the fourth child, the problem of Sariah's births is barely manageable in natural terms. Moreover, Welch supposes that Lehi must have been of a certain adult age in order to have been affected by King Josiah's reforms and that this fact requires an age for him older than Sariah. But Lehi only had to be aware of those reforms subsequent to their imposition, not to have been an active observer of their application, in order for them to have influenced his own views about the law, the scriptures, and ritual. Contrary arguments about Lehi's age are evident to me, for example, both Lehi and Sariah show the effects of age simultaneously (1 Nephi 18:17), which suggests that they were nearly the same age.

[7] Philip Houghton, *The First New Zealanders,* Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980, pages 96-100.

[8] The original pioneer cemetery in downtown Salt Lake City excavated by Brigham Young University's Office of Public Archaeology in 1986 revealed a substantial number of infant burials for whom there was no historical record of either birth or death. The evidence strongly indicated malnutrition as a major cause of the deaths.

[9] Cf. George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in Neal E. Lambert, editor, *Literature of Belief,* Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981, pages 245-62. Still unpublished studies are by S. Kent Brown, Alan Goff and Terrence L. Szink.

[10] As already mentioned, Lehi and Sariah may have had more than two daughters, but lacking any hint of the actual number, I have assumed from this point on the minimum textually satisfactory number—two.

[11] Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, pages 260-61.

[12] Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, page 40.

The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship

One of the notable intellectual activities of the nineteethth and early twentieth centuries was the development of the view that the *Old Testament* was a composite of ancient documents of varied age and source. Although the origin of the view in western European thought goes back over two hundred years, it was not until the early decades of the twentieth century, with the triumph of an evolutionary view of history, that the logical extreme of the position was attained. Some version of Julius Wellhausen's phrasing of the "classical documentary hypothesis" then became orthodox for virtually all well-educated divines and secular scholars on antiquity.[1]

Four major strands of tradition—or early sources—were thought distinguishable, particularly in the Pentateuch (the first five books). These were, by some, considered actual original documents, or by others, distinct revisions by later editors, or at least to be manifestations of separate traditions, first oral and then written. The earliest, or "J" strand was seen as fundamental, from which an "E" tradition diverged. Each had telltale stylistic differences and theological biases, especially in the preference for a different name for divinity—"J" deriving its designation from its common use of *J*ehovah (Yahweh), and "E" from *E*lohim. A third source, "P" (for Priestly), was held to present a tradition-conscious picture of a God distant from the lives and immediate concerns of men. The fourth source, "D", was identified as that emphasizing the *D*euteronomic law.[2] The *Old Testament* was seen as an intricate composite of all these separate sources or traditions.

In its extreme form, the logic of documentary analysis on the basis of lexicon, style and content eventually led to distinguishing many more than four sources, all supposedly based on peculiarities detected in the text by one or more analysts. At this extreme the analysis becomes so detailed and subjective that the entire enterprise tended to be unbelievable.

Some critics, while they consider fine-grained stylistic distinctions unreliable and logically untenable, concede that the evidence indeed seemed to demonstrate that the *Old Testament* account did not derive from a single original source. Fundamentalist Christians looked on Wellhausen and his scholarly peers as "a cunning enemy,"[3] along with Darwin, for the multi-traditionary view seemed to them to challenge the historicity of the *Old Testament* as much as they thought "evolution" did.

Scholarly skepticism about the classical documentary view of the scriptures arose when the findings of modem biblical archaeology in the 1930s began to show that Hebrew religion had a complex history rather than being a simple development from tribal lore. The discovery and translation of ancient texts further demonstrated the untenability of many methods and conclusions of Wellhausen's era. The Dead Sea Scrolls showed, for example, that the ancient sources of the *Old Testament* were far more complex than was allowed in the evolutionism of the older critics.[4] In the words of H.D. Hummel:

> ...In all likelihood, the original tradition was richer than any of its three major later derivatives (the Septuagint, Samaritan and Masoretic texts)....it now seems likely that [our present] text has suffered more from losses than from glosses.[5]

Today no one interpretation prevails among the scholars, yet a general tendency is clearly discernible. As John Bright has observed, "Even those who announce their abandonment of the methods of literary criticism for those of oral tradition still feel obliged to work with blocks of material corresponding roughly to what is designated by the symbols J, E, D, and P."[6] William F. Albright was, characteristically, more blunt: "There can be no doubt that nineteenth-century scholarship was correct in recognizing different blocks of material in the Pentateuch."[7] Umberto Cassuto, an Israeli, claimed that the divergences in the text which critics have attributed to multiple documents "do not prove the existence of documents such

as J, E and P, and they contain nothing that could not be found in a homogeneous book," yet even he spoke of J, E and P as differing "sources" and supposed them to "indicate the different types of tradition that have been absorbed into the various sections."[8] Clyde Francisco, from a rather conservative stance, quotes approvingly C. R. North's statement that, "It seems quite clear that if we bury the 'documents,' we shall have to resurrect them, or something very much like them."[9]

The general position of Latter-day Saints on the *Old Testament* has been defensive and apologetic, somewhat along the lines seen in the more traditional Christian denominations. The task for the rare LDS biblical scholar seems to have been to defend unexamined Christian tradition about the text (e.g., that a single Isaiah produced the book that bears his name). Yet concern has been less with the *Bible* as such than with its relationship to the *Book of Mormon,* where extensive quotations are made from the *Old Testament.*[10]

Although the "brass plates" referred to in the *Book of Mormon* are said to have much in common with the *Old Testament,* their nature has received little attention from Mormon scholars.[11] Nonetheless, the hint has long been there that these plates contain a variant *Old Testament* text comparable to what scholars have considered one of the basic "documents" or "texts" from which the *Old Testament* was compiled. The thesis of this article is that the brass plates are related to the "E" source. Mormon scripture may thus support rather than challenge the notion that more than a single source underlies the *Old Testament.*

The Brass Plates

Near the beginning of the *Book of Mormon* we read of Nephi and his brothers being sent back to Jerusalem to obtain a record particularly desired by their father Lehi.[12] This record was in the possession of one Laban, whose ancestry Lehi shared and who possessed significant power and influence in Jerusalem shortly before

the Babylonian captivity.[13] The content of the plates had two aspects: (1) "The record of the Jews," including "the law of Moses," and (2) "also a genealogy of (Lehi's) forefathers."[14] Upon the sons' obtaining the plates, a fuller description was entered in the Lehite record:

> Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which give an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; and also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph....And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers.[15]

Amulek in the *Book of Mormon* reports (Alma 10:3) that Lehi counted his descent from Manasseh. Joseph Smith also stated that according to the first portion of the *Book of Mormon* record (the transcript of which was lost by Martin Harris) Ishmael (who accompanied Lehi) was a descendant of Ephraim.[16]

The description of the contents of the brass plates indicates that they contained a record essentially similar to the *Old Testament* as we are familiar with it, but with an expanded text (1 Nephi 3:3), including a genealogy going back through the tribe of Joseph rather than Judah. This points to an origin in the Northern Kingdom, rather than in the Judaic South. This impression is further supported by a number of citations from the brass plate record scattered through the *Book of Mormon. Book of Mormon* writers mention five prophets whose words appear in the brass plates: Zenos, Zenock, Ezias, Isaiah and Neum (the last might be Nahum). Of the first four only Isaiah is surely known from existing biblical texts. Internal evidence suggests a

reason why: All four direct a great deal of attention to the Northern Kingdom. Since the Masoretic text, which lies behind our King James version, came out of the South, omission of three of the four (or four of the five, counting Neum) is explicable. Zenos is quoted as saying, "And as for those who are at Jerusalem..."[17] Nowhere else in the extensive quotes from Zenos does he mention Judah or Jerusalem. This in context strongly suggests that he was not located in the territory of Judah. (It is implied in 3 Nephi 11:16 that Zenos and Zenock were of a Joseph tribe, although nothing is said of location.) The reference to Jerusalem implies a date after David's capture of the city and quite probably after the division of the monarchy (about 922 B.C.). Careful reading of the allegory of the olive tree, from Zenos,[18] as well as Alma 33:3-17 concerning both Zenos and Zenock, further confirms a context of a sinful Israel more reminiscent of the time of Amos (mid-8th century B.C.) than earlier or later. Moreover, Zenock was said to be a "prophet of old,"[19] a chronological term not used regarding Jeremiah or even Isaiah. The probability is high, therefore, that the prophets cited from the brass plates date between 900 B.C. and the end of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.

Lehi's connection with the Joseph of Egypt is emphasized in the blessing he pronounced on his own son, Joseph.[20] When Lehi there asserts, "For behold...I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt," there can be no question that his information was derived from the brass plates, for it was his first inspection of them which revealed to him that he was a descendant of Joseph.[21] He then continues on to communicate additional information about Joseph, finally quoting at some length a prophecy credited to that patriarch.[22] This added information and the genealogical tie again point our attention to the Northern Kingdom, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The emphasis on Egyptian tradition and language manifest in the *Book of Mormon* is also coordinate with the Joseph element in the brass plates. Nephi's statement that his record consisted of "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians"[23] could equally

be said of the inscription on the back of one of the carved ivories from Samaria, where Egyptian glyphs were used in a cartouche apparently to spell out the sounds in a Hebrew name (A-L-Y-W-Sh-B or *Eliashib*).[24] Hugh Nibley's *Lehi in the Desert*[25] documents extensive Egyptian cultural ties among the Nephites which seem to support a far more fundamental connection than mere trade exposure in the time of Lehi. Lehi's purpose in obtaining the record was "that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers," not merely the language of Lehi's trade transactions.[26] It is also to be noted that Lehi, according to Nibley's analysis, was trade-, international- and desert-oriented. Such characteristics, we shall see below, are congruent with the Northern-centered E tradition.

Other significant data on Northern Kingdom Ephraimitic inclusions and orientations in the *Book of Mormon* deriving from the brass plates will be pointed out later. It is already evident, however, that the record obtained from Laban's treasury included a version of the *Old Testament* with special Northern Kingdom characteristics.

The E Source and the Northern Kingdom

The preferences in deity names between J and E sources have been demonstrated to be consistent and significant, not mere literary quirks.[27] They reflect different traditions transmitted through regionally distinct "schools" of scribes which existed from the tenth century onward.[28] E source was fundamentally a Northern Kingdom expression. According to Albright, E gives strong indications of being an official rewriting of J intended for the Northern Kingdom and produced in the century following division of the Kingdom (about 922 B.C.). J itself could not date later than the division, and its formation under the United Monarchy (about 1000 B.C.) is highly probable. After the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. "faithful worshippers of Yahweh fled to Judah and there cultivated a number of their own traditions."[29] There in the first half of the seventh century J and E were woven together...into a single narrative (JE)." J was the

main source used, with E materials occasionally used in parallel or, more often, in replacement.[30]

Albright noted that differences between J and E already existed in the Pentateuchal poems dating between Exodus and the Monarchy, thus the later "schools" had a prior basis.[31] Such distinction could have had both a regional and a cultural basis, for the El names which characterize the E materials tended to be more popular on the edge of the desert, as a heritage from nomadic times.[32] Cassuto's observation also may be related. He noted that in *Old Testament* situations where God is represented as a universal or international deity, rather than as God of Israel, an El name occurs. For example, in all the sections of Genesis pertaining to Egypt, including the entire story of Joseph, El names are used exclusively.[33] The universalizing influence, the desert influence and the Joseph influence in northern Israel all reinforced the separateness of deity names and motifs of the sacred tradition found in E, as against the more nationalistic J source preferred by the Jews at Jerusalem.

Other indications of E in the Book of Mormon

Details not mentioned above further evidence possible E effects on the *Book of Mormon*, either through the brass plates or through the family tradition in which Lehi was reared.

1. The *Book of Mormon* virtually ignores the Davidic covenant, which is a J element. David is mentioned but six times (twice only incidentally in quotations from Isaiah). Two instances involved strong condemnation of David.[34]
2. Instead, considerable attention is paid to the Abrahamic covenant and to the patriarchs. All 29 references to Abraham are laudatory. Jacob is also so named, a positive E characteristic, whereas J uses "Israel" as his personal name.[35]

3. The Jews, particularly the inhabitants of Jerusalem, are branded as evil in the strongest terms.[36]
4. Emphasis is placed on Joseph being sold into Egypt, his saving Jacob's house, and the Lord's special covenant with Joseph which is not attested in the *Old Testament.*[37] The coat of Joseph is a topic specific to E on which the *Book of Mormon* adds data not found in the Jewish version (J).[38]
5. The name "Jehovah" (Yahweh), the preferred J title of deity, occurs only twice in the *Book of Mormon* (once in a quote from Isaiah 12—with one word changed—and again in the very last sentence in the volume). The name "Lord" is usually used for divinity in the *Book of Mormon* (almost 1400 times).[39]
6. Unmistakable El (E source) names do occur in the *Book of Mormon*, notably "Most High God" (Hebrew *"El Elyon")* and "Almighty God" (the Septuagint's term for *"El Shaddai"*),[40] the former six times and the latter eleven.

In addition to these points, which are sufficiently specific that they strike me as probably based on the brass plates text, other characteristics of E of more generic nature are found in the *Book of Mormon.* We might suppose them to result from the early *Book of Mormon* writers' carrying on a record-keeping tradition or scribal "school" which had a strong E ingredient in it. The *Book of Mormon,* at least in its first portion (the small plates), could plausibly be considered a manifestation of that scribal tradition, on the basis of the evidence offered above.

E's focus on events, in contrast to J's remarkable characterizations of persons, fits the *Book of Mormon,* which is annalistic and for the most part limited in its treatment of characters. At least the text of the small plates, like E, is abstract, tending to be removed from mundane life. E's tendency to turn attention back to ancient times likewise fits. The Elohistic (E) tendency to refer to

dreams and angelic messengers rather than to direct appearances by God (a J feature) is similarly apt for the Nephite volume. Other E features include greater concern with moral issues, and a relatively spiritualized, distant and abstract conception of God (as against J's picture of a God treading the earth and concerning himself with specific human events).[41]

Latter-day Saint scholars should especially consider whether the international or desert influences suggested in E could reflect the situation indicated in *Doctrine & Covenants* 84:6-13, which asserts that a line of priesthood and sacred knowledge related to but distinct from that in Israel persisted in the desert from the time of Esaias, a contemporary and associate of Abraham, at least until Moses and Jethro. The last is an E name, in contrast to J's Hobab; of course Jethro's father was Reu'*El*.[42] (It is doubtful that the Esaias of D&C 84:11-13 is the same as the "Ezias" mentioned in Helaman 8:20, given the differing spellings of the names both of which came to print through Joseph Smith.)

Some may suggest that the Elohistic features noted above occur in the *Book of Mormon* as pure happenstance—that Joseph Smith in authoring or translating the *Book of Mormon* phrased the book in biblical language familiar to him, some of which would necessarily be similar to E elements preserved in the King James' version. Chance seems ruled out, however, by Robert F. Smith's finding that the Book of Abraham in the *Pearl of Great Price* appears to show J and P characteristics but no E.[43] Thus Joseph Smith's style is a doubtful explanation for E features in the *Book of Mormon*, there being no reason to think the language used by him would be any different from one volume to the next—except as the original sources differed.

A plausible synthesis

The record engraved in Egyptian characters on the brass plates had its origin long before Lehi's day.[44] Strong emphasis in this account on Abraham and Joseph hints that this usage could have begun as

early as the visit of the former to Egypt and certainly no later than the time of Joseph, the Egyptian vizier. The record probably reached Palestine via the tribe of Ephraim, Joseph's son. The lineage maintaining this particular account probably continued living in Ephraimitic territory in northern Israel throughout the time of the Divided Monarchy, until the 721 B.C. destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians. At that point the plates likely were brought south to Jerusalem by a relatively wealthy and influential descent group.

Maintaining the brass plates required becoming literate in the writing system, which was no mean task in itself,[45] and then adding to it sacred materials, history and genealogy as this information developed through time.[46] Although the lineage record was privately held and controlled, it was known and available to the leading Jews in Jerusalem.[47] No doubt records kept by other groups were in turn known to the scribes keeping the plates of Laban. Comparing, editing and making new copies would have been among the scribal functions. At least two branches of the kinship unit having custody of the brass plates had developed by the time of Lehi in the latter half of the seventh century B.C. His family had lost direct contact with the scribal branch but were aware of some connection.[48] The scribal branch was both wealthy and powerful within the Jerusalem establishment.[49] Lehi's branch was also in a substantial status though not prominent.[50] Upon Lehi's determining to leave the kingdom of Judah in anticipation of coming disaster at the hands of the Babylonians, he had his sons seek the plates of brass from Laban, the record custodian for the related group. They did obtain them—with great difficulty—then departed into the desert, eventually reaching the New World.

Lehi had lived all his life at Jerusalem, yet he found himself antipathetic to the Jews there, and they to him.[51] His personal characteristics in some ways stood against those common in the Jerusalem hierarchy in ways parallel to how the E source differed from J. Lehi was moralistic, a dreamer, archaistic, with a rather abstract view of God, and more concerned with historical events and

sacred principles than with personalities or the concrete present.[52] Judging by his son Nephi he liked to contemplate the complex symbolism and distant prophecy of an Isaiah rather than the concreteness of Jeremiah's burdens against his contemporaries at Jerusalem.[53] He preferred the clarity of Abraham's and Joseph's god El (*Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon*), over a Yahweh encumbered and obscured by pagan cult practices of the Jerusalem of his day.[54]

The record-keeping tradition begun among the Nephites took its form out of the character and cultural background of Lehi and Nephi, the two pivotal persons in the transfer. While we expect some changes took place between the form and process of tradition-keeping manifest in Lehi's line in Palestine and that by which the Nephite scribes carried out their responsibilities, a great deal of continuity is also evident. Nephi, a culture hero, was followed by his brother, Jacob, who confirmed the religious and literary tradition which his elder brother had implemented. Both of them preferred prophets who dealt at length with the Northern Kingdom—Isaiah on the one hand and Zenos on the other.[55] Then later keepers of the Nephite records followed implicitly the pattern set by these early leaders.[56] In this manner an Old World scribal tradition was transplanted to the New World where traces of it might still be seen two millennia later.[57]

Conclusion

There appears good evidence that the *Book of Mormon* contains elements which are congruent with what scholars on the *Old Testament* distinguish as the E or Elohistic source. To biblical scholars this congruence should invite serious attention to the *Book of Mormon* for what it may reveal to them about *Old Testament* sources.

To Latter-day Saints, the presence of E materials in the *Book of Mormon* should serve as a challenge and stimulus to examine more carefully the scriptures entrusted to them, and to participate actively and cooperatively in elucidating both the texts and their interpretations.

Notes To Chapter 2

[1] Luke H. Grollenberg, *A New Look at an Old Book*, Newman Press: Paramus, N.J. and New York, 1969, pages 11-28, or any standard encyclopedic source.

[2] E. A. Speiser. "Introduction," *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1964.

[3] Grollenberg, *A New Look at an Old Book*, page 21.

[4] William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths,* University of London, The Athlone Press: London, 1968, pages 25-6.

[5] Horace D. Hummel, "Bible: Bible Research and Criticism," *Encyclopedia Judaica,* volume 4, Keter Publishing House Ltd.: Jerusalem, 1971, page 93; compare Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 32; Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1967, pages 26, 30.

[6] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, second edition, Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1972, page 69.

[7] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 26-27.

[8] Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures,* Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961.

[9] Clyde T. Francisco, "Genesis. Introduction," *The Broadman Bible Commentary,* volume 1, revised edition, Broadman Press: Nashville, 1973, page 104.

[10] Nibley's *Since Cumorah*, pages 130-152, is somewhat more ambitious, but more typical are Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon,* Stevens and Wallis: Salt Lake City, 1947, chapters 14-16; *Book of Mormon Compendium*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1968, pages 177, 508-512; and H. Grant Vest, *The Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, Masters thesis, BYU, 1938. Kent Robson, "The Bible, the Church, and its Scholars," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 2 No. 1 (Spring 1967), pages 85-90, hopes for better days but makes no substantive contribution.

[11] Nibley's *Since Cumorah*, page 131-134.

[12] 1 Nephi 3:3-4, 19-20.

[13] 1 Nephi 5:16, 4:1, 9, 22.

[14] 1 Nephi 3:3, 4:15-16.

[15] 1 Nephi 5:10-16.

[16] Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions,* Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1967, page 10.

[17] 1 Nephi 19:13.

[18] Jacob 5.

[19] Alma 33:15. Nibley thought 'Zenock' to be an Egyptian name, *Lehi in the Desert*, page 30.

[20] 2 Nephi 3:4; compare 1 Nephi 5:14-16.

[21] 1 Nephi 5:16; compare 1 Nephi 5:14-16.

[22] 2 Nephi 3:6-22.

[23] 1 Nephi 1:2; compare Nibley's *Lehi in the Desert*, pages 13-17.

[24] J.W. and G.M. Crowfoot, "The Ivories from Samaria," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly*, Q.S., 1933, pages 12-13, Plate 11; compare Mormon 9:32 on "reformed Egyptian" as a phonetically-related script.

[25] Hugh Nibley's *Lehi in the Desert*.

[26] See 1 Nephi 3:19, and compare Mosiah 1:2, 4, which seem to me to indicate that "language of the Egyptians" refers to "engravings" of the glyph system, used to represent Hebrew speech. Others disagree with this view.

[27] Robert J. Boling, "Synonymous Parallelism in the Psalms," *Journal of Semitic Studies 5*, 1960, pages 221-225, cited in Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 27-28.

[28] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 25-26.

[29] Grollenberg's *A New Look at an Old Book*, page 33.

[30] Bright's *A History of Israel*, pages 71-72. *Westminster Introduction to the Books of the Bible*, Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1958, pages 32-33, Anthony Phillips, "Commentary," in *Deuteronomy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1973, page 6.

[31] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 29.

[32] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 30.

[33] Cassuto's *The Documentary Hypothesis*, page 61.

[34] Jacob 1:15, 2;23-24, 31-33.

[35] On the covenant with Abraham: 1 Nephi 15:18, 17:40; 2 Nephi 29:14. On Jacob/Israel: Speiser's "Introduction," pages 293-294.

[36] For example, 1 Nephi 1:19, 17:42-44.

[37] 1 Nephi 5:14-15, 17-40; 2 Nephi 3:4-5, 9-10, 16-17; 4:1-3; 10:3.

[38] Speiser's "Introduction," pages 289-293. Nibley's *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pages 186-8. I am indebted to Benjamin Urrutia for drawing this to my attention.

[39] Robert F. Smith (personal communication) has suggested that this title may represent the Tetragrammaton, and thus be equivalent to Yahweh or Jehovah. That may be so, but then it is difficult to see why Joseph Smith, the translator, specifically used the term Jehovah at all.

[40] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 30, 94, 164.

[41] Speiser's "Introduction," pages xxx-xxxiii; Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, revised edition, Harper and Row: New York, 1948, pages 139-140. Grollenberg's *A New Look at an Old Book*, pages 19-20.

[42] Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 34 (N.Y. edition, page 38).

[43] Smith's comments and materials have been most helpful to me. See "A Documentary Analysis of the Book of Abraham," prepared for a festschrift honoring Hugh Nibley.

[44] 1 Nephi 3:19; Mosiah 1:2-5. Nibley, in *Lehi in the Desert* pages 15-16, over-simplifies here.

[45] Mosiah 1:2; compare 3 Nephi 6:12.

[46] 1 Nephi 5:12-13.

[47] 1 Nephi 4:20-27.

[48] 1 Nephi 3:2-5, 10-13. Apparently Lehi never connected Laban, who was a well-known figure (to judge by verses 3 and 31) with the plates or his ancestry until advised so in a dream.

[49] 1 Nephi 3:31; 4:20-22.

[50] 1 Nephi 3:22-25; yet note 3:13 and 4:36.

[51] 1 Nephi 1:4, 18-20.

[52] 1 Nephi 2:11, 5:2, 10; 2.

[53] Compare 1 Nephi 7:14.

[54] 2 Kings 23.

[55] 2 Nephi 25:5; Jacob chapters 5 and 6.

[56] Jacob 7:27; Enos 1:16; Jarom 1:1-2, 15; Omni 1:1, 3-4, 9, 11, 14, 17, 25; Mosiah 17:2, 25:1-3; 3 Nephi 5:20; Moroni 1:1; Words of Mormon 1:1-11. These passages demonstrate that all the Nephite record-keepers whose materials are incorporated in the *Book of Mormon* belonged to one or two descent groups (Nephi's or Jacob's) and followed similar procedures.

[57] See my "Social Structure and Cult among the Nephites," paper read to the Society for Early Historical Archaeology, Brigham Young University, October 26, 1974. Compare Robert Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972; and Lawrence H. Feldman, "Tollan in Central Mexico," *Katunob*, 8 No. 3 (February 1973), pages 1-6.

Transoceanic Crossings

The three crossings of the ocean to the New World reported in the *Book of Mormon* are treated in differing degrees of detail. Events of the earliest, by Jared's group, are recounted at considerable length but with little nautical information in Ether 2:13-25; 3:1-3 and 6:2-12. The voyage by Lehi's party is treated in 1 Nephi 17:5-18, 49-51 and in chapter 18. Concerning the voyage that brought Mulek, we have only two brief statements, Omni 1: 15-16 and Helaman 8:21.

The fragmentary information in the text has led Latter-day Saints to pay but cursory attention to the voyages and their significance for the history and culture of *Book of Mormon* peoples. This paper analyzes the Lehi trip, for which we have the most textual and external comparative information, and demonstrates how we can expand our understanding of such events.

A paradigm for voyages

The intent of this paper is to help us understand this voyage better. I consider that we understand an event when we have gained the widest feasible perspective on why and how it took place. This is akin to the aim regarding scripture in general urged upon us by Brigham Young.

> Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them, a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel this, it is your privilege to do so.[1]

To understand in this sense, we need to accumulate as much information as we can on the voyage that is described in 1 Nephi. An exhaustive set of questions will serve to alert us to new facts about

the event, jarring us out of the mental rut induced by simply reading the text again and again. Once we have obtained reasonable answers to our questions, we should then know enough either to compose a monograph-sized history of the voyage and its setting close enough to the way things really were to be free from anomalies, or to produce a plausible historical novel, a dramatic production, or a series of artistic representations. Even if certain questions remained unanswered, they would provide a guide to further research.

The brevity of the *Book of Mormon* prevents our getting all the data we would like firsthand, but we can still consult other sources about voyages comparable to Lehi's. Thus we need to phrase our questions in two forms: those addressed directly to the scriptural voyage, and those intended to elicit complementary data from parallel cases. In the following list, questions of second type are in parentheses:

I. Questions About the Origin of the Voyage

1. What historical and cultural factors led to this voyage? (What historical and cultural factors led to voyages in comparable cases?)
2. What did members of this party know about destinations, routes, and nautical technology? (What did comparable voyagers know of these matters?)
3. Was this voyage referred to in later history in the area of origin? (Were comparable voyages known to later history in their areas or origin?)
4. (What voyages can be usefully compared with this particular case?)

II. Questions About Preparations

5. What vessel technology was available to the voyagers in this case? What vessel technology was available in comparable cases?

6. Was a suitable vessel procured or procurable without new construction of one? In comparable cases was a suitable vessel procured or procurable without new construction?
7. What materials, tools, and knowledge were obtained in order to construct the vessel, and from where and how were they procured? (From this point on, the questions for comparable cases will be assumed.)
8. What was the design of the vessel, and how was it constructed?
9. How long did construction take?
10. What supplies and other materials were taken aboard in preparation for the voyage?
11. What training was necessary to prepare the crew for the voyage?
12. What port facilities were used for all the above actions?
13. What was the ethnic, social, and cultural composition of the group making this voyage?
14. What ritual, spiritual, psychological, ideological, etc., preparation of voyagers was carried out?
15. What seasonal timing was involved in preparation and departure?
16. How was the vessel launched?

III. Questions About the Voyage

17. How was a course laid and maintained, and how was the vessel operated?
18. What route was followed? Were other routes to the same destination feasible? What natural conditions were met and would likely have been met on alternate routes?
19. What were living conditions and routine aboard ship?

Did these change during the voyage?

20. What emergencies occurred, and how were they met?
21. What stops were made, why, and for how long?
22. How long did the voyage take? Was this normal?
23. How were the personnel on board organized?
24. What effects on mortality, health and psychological or spiritual outlook did life on board have?
25. Where did the vessel land, and what environment did the voyagers encounter at the landing place?

IV. Questions About Consequences of the Voyage

26. What happened to the vessel after the landing?
27. How did their social organization change when from the parties moved from ship to land?
28. How did the environmental situation ashore change the party's patterns?
29. What elements of the group's original culture were filtered out, newly emphasized, or otherwise modified by the voyage and the new settlement?
30. What, if any, other people interacted with the immigrants soon after the landing, and what was the nature of the interaction?
31. Did the newcomers move from the landing site? If so, to where, when and why?
32. What biological effects did the setting(s) in the new land produce in the newcomers, and they in their neighbors?
33. What spiritual and psychological effects did the new scene(s) produce in the newcomers?
34. What traditions about the voyage did descendants or neighbors maintain or construct in later generations? Was the landing area later perceived in any special manner?

35. How was voyaging as an activity viewed once the incoming group was settled in the land?
36. How did remembrance of the voyage enter into subsequent social, cultural, and political life (for example, as validation of leadership or rivalry)?

My queries lack the advantage of direct shipbuilding and sailing experience. Surely blue-water sailors would revise and rephrase my list to some advantage and might be alert to better answers.

Answering the questions

Several types of sources in addition to the scriptures deserve consideration as we search for answers. In descending order or value, the types are:

1. The scriptural text itself
   a. relatively unequivocal statements
   b. straightforward inferences from scriptural statements
2. Reports of premodern voyages that are
   a. comparable in time and location to Lehi's trip
   b. indirectly comparable, that is, at another time but over the same route and under like conditions
   c. not comparable in time or space but comparable in some ways in technology, sociology, meteorology, oceanography, etc.
3. Reports of voyages in recent centuries
   a. routine voyages under conditions similar to those of ancient times
   b. experimental voyages using replicas of early vessels
4. Inference from indirect evidence of voyaging established by archaeological, ethnological or linguistic parallels

5. Modern calculations and reasoning (for example, what volume of supplies can be accommodated on a vessel of such and such size?)

Space limitations permit me to treat only type 1 information here. However, a large bibliography is available [*see note 26*] of references to the most important literature in which information from source types 2 through 5 can be pursued.

The paradigm applied to the Lehi group's case

Here I address as many of the thirty-six questions concerning this voyage as the *Book of Mormon* deals with directly or by inference. The numbers introduce discussions of the corresponding questions in the list above.

1. According to the *Book of Mormon*, the historical and cultural factors involved in the departure of the Lehi group from the land of Jerusalem center in the fact that the sociopolitical establishment there had rejected Lehi's warning message and standing as a legitimate prophet. The reasons for his rejection are not expounded in the text, but 1 Nephi 7:14 implies that they were generally the same as for his contemporaries in the *Old Testament*—Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah (compare 2 Chronicles 36:11-16). The *Bible* indicates that it was their political impact that was most unwelcome, but spiritual ritual, cultural, and social implications of their criticism of rulers and people were, of course, also involved.[2] Beyond the pressures to flee, however, Lehi had a positive reason for departing—the Lord had given him a "land of promise" as a refuge and a reward (1 Nephi 5:5; compare 2:2. Hereafter, when only chapter and verse are cited, reference to 1 Nephi is to be understood).

This same question may also be asked in reference to the land of Bountiful as an origin area—What factors led to Lehi's departure from there? The record of Nephi before the eighteenth chapter does not make explicit but does imply that the Lord intended Bountiful to

be only a stopover on a longer journey. Lehi and Nephi understood that (10:13), but it appears that Laman and Lemuel and perhaps others in the party did not see it that way (17:5-18, especially verse 17). They seem to have expected to stay in Bountiful. Nothing is even hinted about conditions in that area that pushed them to emigrate; only the command of the Lord to Nephi is indicated as impelling their departure. It could be, however, that Laman's and Lemuel's perception that Bountiful offered only limited prospects for the prosperity and ease they hoped to attain could have persuaded the brothers that moving on might be better than staying where they were.

2. No hint can be found in the text that anyone in Lehi's party had any knowledge whatever of nautical matters, nor is it likely that any had even been on a vessel before. Upon arrival in Bountiful they were impressed by the green land, as most desert travelers would have been (1 Nephi 7:5-6), but they may also have been in awe of the sea. The waters off Arabia had high symbolic value. Note the brothers' unbelief that they could cross "these great waters." Nor did they manifest any belief or interest in the possibility of constructing a ship, even though the mercantile connections their father apparently enjoyed at Jerusalem could have acquainted them with the existence of commercial destinations around the Indian Ocean.[3]

3. Regarding the secrecy attending the group's flight from the land of Jerusalem, we are specifically told (4:36) that they did not want "the Jews" to know of their flight, for they might "pursue...and...destroy" the small party. But once they were at a substantial distance from Jerusalem, they were no longer likely to be concerned about what the Jews could do to hinder them. In the wilderness, the instruction of the Lord that they not use "much fire" (17:12) suggests a defensive tactic against desert raiders rather than against Jewish pursuers.[4] Their policy of secrecy probably ensured that no public record of their departure from the homeland was kept, although Lehi's or Ishmael's kin might have held a tradition of the event, and remaining prophets could have known of it by revelation.[5]

As to a tradition or record of their leaving the land of Bountiful, there is no apparent reason why local inhabitants of that area (who are not noted in Nephi's record but unquestionably were present in the general, if not the immediate, area, as archaeology and linguistics show[6]) would have known of their departure or would have paid particular attention to it. On the south coast of the Arabian peninsula where their vessel was built, the possibility is tiny that this one among a number of vessels constructed in that day would be specifically noted in local tradition or records. Nephi's record gives us no reason to suppose that the departure was noted by others.

5. At least some of the technology Nephi used on his ship differed from that used by contemporary shipbuilders (1 Nephi 18:2). His statement to this effect implies that he was sufficiently familiar with what those others did that he could clearly distinguish his techniques from theirs. Nevertheless, he used only tools he himself was capable of manufacturing and materials that his party could obtain by their own efforts. We have no reason to suppose that the repertoire of skills he and his family possessed were superior to or even different from those common among nonspecialists in the Jerusalem area in his day. So even though the Lord showed him the "manner" after which he was to build the ship, he and his brothers still "work[ed] the timbers" with those simple tools. Their technique would have to be broadly similar to that of other shipwrights of his era. The implication is that the chief differences were in quality of workmanship and some aspects of design. (Compare 2 Nephi 5:16 for a parallel situation in the case of the temple Nephi built. Although he constructed it "after the manner of the temple of Solomon," still "it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple" in certain aspects. Consider too the case of the Salt Lake Temple, for which Brigham Young reported visionary guidance as to its plan,[7] although the techniques, materials and architecture employed remained within a range not surprising to nineteenth-century American craftsmen.)

6. The text implies that no existing vessel was available, or suitable, for the party's use in or near the Bountiful area. The family

had been wealthy (2:4). Had the Lord desired that they purchase a ship, presumably they could have brought sufficient portable wealth through the desert to buy one. Moreover, they could have been led this way or that a few hundred miles from where they were to some other destination on the Indian Ocean coast that could have provided such a ready-made vessel, had there been a superior one about. Much time and labor would have been saved had they not had to build one, but perhaps they needed the experience to toughen them physically and spiritually for the arduous voyage and to enhance group cohesion.

Other vessels might indeed have existed, but the emphasis in 18:1-4 on the unusual and superior workmanship suggests that a vessel of more conventional design and technique might not have held up on such a singular trip as the one intended. (Compare 18:13-15 about storm stress on the vessel; and note that the answer to this question in the case of Mulek's party, which likely departed from Egypt via the Mediterranean Sea, could be quite different.)

7. We learn from 17:9-11 and 16 that Nephi began from scratch, personally locating and surface mining ore, constructing bellows and starting fire in order to manufacture woodworking tools. The ore seems to have been obtained and refined and the tools prepared while he was on "the mountain" (17:7) where he had gone for divine instruction. He showed his brothers the tools only after those were finished. And note that specification of "the" mountain intimates that only one rather obvious one was near or perhaps visible from their camp.

Copper hardened with arsenic or tin or simply by heating and hammering was the likely metal a lone worker could deal with successfully; its cutting edge would be suitable for the intended purpose. Iron is a less likely possibility. At least earlier on their journey Nephi was unable to repair his "steel"-backed bow and had to use an all-wood substitute (16:18-23). Samuel Shepley and John Tvedtnes have each proposed that Lehi was a smith, not a merchant as proposed by Hugh Nibley; or perhaps he was both.[8] The evidence is not decisive. If Lehi possessed metallurgical skills, it seems odd that a

much less experienced Nephi would go off alone to do a task with divine help that his father could have carried out routinely. But Nephi must have been acquainted with the basic skills of the craft, as evidenced by the fact that he did not have to ask the Lord what tools to make nor how to make a workable bellows (17:9-11). In the New World, moreover, he immediately sought out and recognized various ores and confidently made plates for record-keeping (19:1). In favor of the notion that the whole family was familiar with metal work is the fact that even his brothers showed no surprise at his ability to make tools, although they did scoff at his ability to build a ship.

Adequate timbers likely would not have been available to them on the immediate coast, only back in the hills a certain distance.[9] Probably not more than five or six men in such a small group would be available to "go forth" (18:1) to the hills for timber. Hauling it would have been arduous and time-consuming, as would sawing planks. (Given the relatively short trees available in that part of Arabia, a boat of suitable size for their purpose probably had to be made of planks.) Saws, mauls or hammers, axes, chisels or adzes, and awls would also have been required. What the sails (implied by 18:8-9) and cordage were made of we cannot guess from the text. Nothing hints other than that the party made all their tools and did all the construction by themselves, perhaps because their poverty did not allow paying local craftsmen.

8. Questions of the ship's design cannot even be approached from the text, aside from a few generalities. First, because the vessel was sail-powered, it had to have at least one mast, sail(s) and rigging, and it probably was keeled and had some type of rudder (18:13). Second, given the amount of stores implied (18:6), it is likely to have been decked, with supplies secured below from storm (18:15; compare verse 6: "we did go *down into* the ship, with all our loading"; italics added). Third, we can suppose, given the effective limits on the number of workers available to them, that no larger ship would be built and thus no more time wasted than would be just adequate for the small group. The Hiltons estimate that the party by this time

consisted of around seventeen adults and thirty-two children, requiring a sixty-foot ship.[10] Perhaps, but it could have been smaller. Note that Columbus's *Nina* may have been only sixty feet long.[11]

9. The length of time it took to build the vessel can only be surmised. The Hiltons[12] suggest under two years. Given the builders' inexperience and small number and the necessity of carrying out other routine tasks simultaneously, it could well have taken more.

10. At first glance, the phrasing of 18:6 seems to indicate almost overnight preparation of stores for the voyage, but that would be impossible. The expression "after we had prepared all things" must point to a period of at least weeks during which hunting and collecting were pursued intensively. (No indication is given that the party cultivated crops while in Bountiful, although a point is made of such activity immediately upon their arrival in America—see 18:24. The silence is significant.) "Fruits and meat from the wilderness" could not have been obtained without a good deal of time, effort and movement within the region. Given their Arabian coastal location, dates were probably an important item in the category "fruit." Honey is specifically mentioned; presumably they could only have obtained their large supply of it at a certain season.

Finally, it is likely that the catch-all term "provisions" referred to grains, for fruit, meat and honey would not constitute an adequate diet. Olive or another oil would also be probable. These "provisions" may have been obtained by trading surplus wilderness products such as skins to local inhabitants. If the group had succeeded in bringing camels or asses with them all the way from Jerusalem, those might have been traded, but it seems unlikely that they had survived beyond the time of extreme hunger described in 16:18-20. Of course they had taken "provisions" with them upon leaving their first major camp at the river Laman (16:10), but these were apparently being consumed continuously from Jerusalem on, for verse 11 speaks of "the remainder" of the provisions left to them at that juncture. They likely arrived at Bountiful with little stock of food.

They still did have "seeds" intentionally saved to carry to the

New World (16:11). In addition to the seeds brought from the Jerusalem area, probably more were added from Bountiful. (Smith discusses crops probably present in that area.[13])

A final item of provisioning would obviously be a supply of fresh water and perhaps wine (compare 18:9) in either pottery vessels or skin bags.

11. People of the desert would certainly require training in even the most rudimentary management of a vessel before they set sail. The most plausible way to get that knowledge would be instruction by sailors on boats already in that vicinity. One can imagine also a combination of inspiration and trial and error as a means, particularly if Nephi's ship was of novel design.

13. The text seems clear enough that apart from Zoram, only Lehi's and Ishmael's family members were in the voyaging party. All were Hebrew-speakers and at home with cultural ways of the Jerusalem area and not ethnically or socially varied among themselves, however cosmopolitan some of them might have been due to travel or learning.

14. They adhered to a version of Mosaic ritual (for example, 1 Nephi 2:7; 4:16; 2 Nephi 25:24), although their practices probably were different from the semi-pagan ways then prevalent in Jerusalem (compare 2 Chronicles 36:14). At least they likely carried out sacrifice and prayer before embarkation. The voice of the Lord to Lehi (18:5) was itself also preparatory in the sense of this question. Moreover, the language in 18:6 about entry into the vessel—"every one according to his age"—implies a special ritual. Further, the whole set of experiences, practical and spiritual, of the ten years since they had left Jerusalem, constituted a preparation for the voyage in the same sense that Zion's Camp proved a preparation of early Latter-day Saint leaders for their trek to the Great Basin.

15. Being "driven forth before the wind" (18:8) implies dependence on the monsoon winds from the west to bear the vessel across the Indian Ocean (see the answer to question 9 above).[14] Typically, ships left the Arabian coast on that wind between

mid-March and early May, although a date a bit later or in late August-early September cannot be ruled out.

16. All that is said about launching is that "we did put forth into the [i.e., out to] sea" (18:8). I suppose that the sizable vessel had already been put into the water from the beach (on rollers?) and had undergone shakedown sailing off the coast even before provisioning, let alone departing.

17. A course was laid by observing one of the spindles inside the Liahona or "compass," which "pointed the way whither we should go" (16:10; 18:12, 21). I see no reason at all to suppose this device was magnetic, despite the term "compass." Rather it was faith-operated. When Nephi was tied up by his brothers, the pointer would not function, but when he was unloosed, he "took" the compass and "it did work whither I desired it," so that he could know in what direction to "guide the ship" (18:21-22). This language about how the device served to point out the course is operationally enigmatic, but that the vessel was actually kept on course by a combination of adjustments to rudder (?) and sails is obvious.

18. The most economical explanation of the course followed depends on the idea that the Lord typically uses natural forces familiar to us to accomplish his ends. In this case, he would have directed the party over a course where winds and currents would carry any vessel toward the intended spot in America with a minimum of miraculous intervention. No doubt other seafarers would already have passed over certain legs of the same route, though probably not the whole of it. (Compare the LDS pioneers of 1847 crossing the plains to the Great Salt Lake via the well-known North Platte River valley, and so on, rather than through, say, mountain-cluttered New Mexico, Colorado or Montana.)

Across the Indian Ocean the traditional course taken by sailing ships in premodern times followed near 15 degrees north latitude, which carried them straight east to the Malabar coast of India. From there they would round Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and sail east near 10 degrees north latitude to the Straits of Malacca and past the site of

modern Singapore.[15] Or they may have gone around the south and east coasts of Sumatra. One feasible course thereafter would wend between major islands of today's Indonesia to the Admiralty group north of New Guinea, thence past Tonga and through Polynesia near the Marquesas. Recently scientists have discovered that every dozen years or so what is known in meteorology as the "*El Niño* condition" develops in the eastern Pacific, in which unusual winds from the west replace the typical trade winds. At such time sailing eastward across the mid-Pacific and even on to America is feasible.[16] However, this was not the only possible route, for sailing from the sea off China and across the north Pacific between 25 and 40 degrees north could also have served.[17]

The *Book of Mormon* is silent about conditions encountered after the ship met with the tropical storm (18:9-21), which probably occurred in the Indian Ocean or the Bay of Bengal. Failure of the record to mention other difficulties on the voyage may imply that no life-threatening situations were encountered after the one great storm, or at least none significant enough for Nephi to describe on the small plates. Either route suggested would offer, but not guarantee, the possibility of a safe trip across the ocean. (Contrast the vivid language about the continuously stressful Jaredite journey in Ether 6:5-11, which seems to fit conditions only on a north Pacific route around 45 degrees north.) Nephi simply said that "after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land" (18:23).

21. Arab ships on the Indian Ocean route typically stopped ashore to repair storm damage, such as obtaining a new mast, as well as to scrape speed-impeding barnacles off the hull.[18] Especially after the one almost disastrous storm, the need to stop for repairs seems likely, perhaps in Sri Lanka or Sumatra. Another reason for stops would be to take on a new supply of water and fresh, anti-scurvy foods. Also, they may have spent periods in port, waiting for seasonal winds to turn the right direction or to avoid a storm. Some of the waits could have been fairly long. After all, if the journey through Arabia consumed eight years, we need not suppose the Lord would

hasten the party across the ocean, more than ten times as far, in hasty, uninterrupted fashion. Stops would also have broken the tedium of the long voyage for those aboard the ship and given them (especially the children!) a welcome opportunity to escape the psychological and physical confines of their small vessel. In addition, being on land could give them a chance to conduct Mosaic sacrificial ceremonies impossible on the vessel because of lack of animals.

22. No information is given about duration, but the distance alone allows us to estimate time. This distance traveled would have been on the order of seventeen thousand miles. We get valuable comparative data about rates of travel in the mid-Pacific by examining a recent voyage under pre-European conditions by the reconstructed Polynesian double-hulled canoe named *Hokule'a*. The vessel traveled eight thousand miles in six legs, ranging from three hundred to three thousand miles: Hawaii to Tahiti, Tahiti to the Cook Islands, on to New Zealand, then Tonga, Samoa, and back to Tahiti and Hawaii. Total sailing time was nearly eighty-two days, for an average of ninety-eight miles per day. Surprisingly, the speed sailing east "against the trade winds" was twice what it had been going west.[19] This practical experience confirms warnings by nautical experts that maps that show "average" wind velocities and directions are meaningless as predictors of what may happen on any particular voyage.[20] Had Lehi's ships been able to travel continuously at the same rate as *Hokule'a,* the entire voyage would have taken only about half a year. But we cannot assume any such thing. The storm mentioned in 1 Nephi 18 drove them "back" for four days, meaning an overall loss of at least eight days; that did not happen to *Hokule'a*. Thereafter surely the winds were not always with Lehi's group, so delays due to weather alone must have caused significant waits; we know that for the Indian Ocean portion of the route, Arab, Chinese and Portuguese ships sometimes waited for months for desired winds. Also, as mentioned in the answer to question 21, stops to maintain the vessel and restock food and water could well have consumed considerable time. *Hokule'a's* eighty-two days at sea actually stretched over more than a

year, as crew members flew home to Hawaii for rest after each leg of the trip! Moreover, the Polynesian crew already had accumulated a large body of lore and expertise about sailing in that particular part of the Pacific, while Nephi was always traveling under unfamiliar conditions. And his vessel almost certainly would not have been designed like the Polynesian vessel, likely being slower.[21] Given these conditions, a full year seems a minimum period to accomplish the long voyage from Arabia to (Central) America. Two years are not unlikely.

23. What was the social organization aboard the ship? All we know is that Nephi, the nominal captain, proved to have limited power (18:10 and following) during his brothers' mutiny. But a ship simply could not be operated without regular tasks such as helmsman and watch being performed. The overall success of the voyage assures us that the men aboard did carry out at least minimal routine tasks. Studies of parallel situations could no doubt tell us more about this subject as well as about shipboard routine of concern in question 19.

The reference in Mosiah 10:12 to a tradition among the Lamanites that their ancestors "were also wronged while crossing the sea" may have reference to the occasion when Nephi retook control of the ship (1 Nephi 8:20-22) during the great storm, or it might refer to another incident, but likely the issue was one of power and control, whenever the event. (Note 2 Nephi 1:2 which refers to "their rebellions [*plural*] upon the waters.")

25. Nephi does not give us useful information about where the ship landed, but two later statements in the scripture do. Mosiah 10:13 mentions "the land of their [the Lamanite's] first inheritance, after they had crossed the sea." Then Alma 22:28, as part of a comprehensive description of geography in the land of promise, speaks of Lamanites spread in the wilderness "on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers' first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore." When this information is put together with other geographical statements, it becomes clear that the land referred to was on the "west sea" coast at the southern extreme of the territory spoken of in the Nephite record. In the first century

B.C. it was considered part of ("in") the land of Nephi (whose primary area was in the highlands), hence the coastal zone must have been thought of as a mere wilderness adjunct to Nephi, a hint that the land of first inheritance was not a very large or important region in its own terms. We learn from 18:25 that the area was dominated by forests.

The most plausible correlation of *Book of Mormon* geography with today's map identifies the land of first inheritance or initial landing zone with a stretch of the Pacific coast a few score miles on either side of the Guatemala-El Salvador border.[22] That zone features swamps and lagoons just inside a sandbar and beach, mixed with areas of seasonal forest. Within a couple of miles of the beach, taller forest is found, interspersed with grassland (conditions anciently could certainly have been somewhat different). Rainfall, is light to moderate (increasing markedly inland as the land rises), but temperature and humidity are quite high year-round. The zone is uncomfortable for human habitation but at times has been productively farmed. Except for a few periods of fairly heavy inhabitation, the area can truly be called jungly wilderness.

26. After leaving the ship (18:23), the group paid no attention to it again, it appears. Likely this was in part because they were delighted to be free from its confines. Nothing is said later to suggest that seafaring was attractive to any of the Nephites, for over five hundred years at least, although, of course, a fuller record might give a different picture. One supposes that the vessel was in pretty poor condition by the moment of landing, and with all attention necessarily given to pioneering agriculture and exploration (18:24-25), it is no wonder that nobody looked to the sea again.

27. The routine tasks upon which members of the party had settled during the voyage were now a thing of the past. New problems and a new division of labor were suddenly thrust upon them. The pattern of organization among them must have changed; however, the nominal pattern still held Lehi to be dominant (for example, see 2 Nephi 4:10). The relationship between the challenges of the new environment and the issue of rulership precipitated by Lehi's death is

not clear. It is implied in 18:24-25 that at least one crop was harvested and considerable exploration done even before Nephi made his plates, and by then he had a good deal to record (19:1). Lehi might have lived ashore for at least one and perhaps several years, thus the events of 2 Nephi 4:13 and 5:1-5 could have been so far removed from the time of landing as not to deserve consideration in this analysis.

28. At the least, the daily routine of all the ship's party would have been totally restructured on land. Preparation of fields, the planting, care and harvesting of crops, and exploration tasks are mentioned or implied. Even before crops were harvestable, however, the settlers had to feed themselves currently. Hunting is indicated (18:25) and various foods such as shellfish could have been gathered in this tropical coastland; processing would require new skills and perhaps new equipment on the part of both men and women. Also implied is the need for different forms of shelter constructed from the newly available materials, as well as a fresh supply of clothing and household goods.

29. Despite silence in the record about explicitly cultural changes, it is apparent that the conditions the group had endured during eleven or more years since they had lived in the Jerusalem area would have changed some of their ways drastically. This is confirmed in 2 Nephi 25:2 and 6 where Nephi says that he had allowed his people's poor recollection of the Old World ways to wipe part of the slate clean, permitting him to create a new, modified form of Israelite culture (compare 2 Nephi 5:14-19). Recall that among his group, only he, his brother Sam, Zoram, and perhaps their wives, had experienced the Old World culture as adults. The same limiting situation must have prevailed among the Lamanite faction.

30. Nothing is said in the record about interaction between the immigrants and possible inhabitants of the land found by them on arrival, just as it is silent about relations with inhabitants in the south Arabian Bountiful. That such people were present in both areas in general is beyond question.[23] A sure evidence of that fact for the Nephites is the later reliance on "corn" (maize) documented for the

land of Nephi in Mosiah 7:22; 9:9. Maize is a native American plant "so completely dependent on man that it does not grow in the wild."[24] Hence the immigrants had to have received the seed and instruction about how to cultivate it from people already on the scene.

31. Since we do not know how long it was before they moved from the landing area, we cannot be sure of impelling factors, but discomfort due to the climate could easily have been one.

32. That biological changes would have been entailed in Lehi's descendants on the new scene is obvious from the point of view of biological anthropology. Exposure to new diseases, foods, climate, pests, etc., would have had immediate effects, although generations would probably have had to pass for the full range of consequences to become apparent. Also, we can reasonably suppose that they themselves imported Old World diseases to which they had developed immunity but which could have had serious consequences for any peoples whom they contacted. Their imported plants could also have brought along damaging plant diseases.

33. Two documented results on spirit or psychology are noted. According to Nephi's perception, the Lamanites "did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety" (2 Nephi 5:24). We cannot tell what if any connection there might been between the curse put upon them and the conditions of life in the new natural setting. As for the Nephites, a long generation later they were characterized thus: "Our lives passed like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren...wherefore, we did mourn out our days" (Jacob 7:26). But we remain unclear how these characteristics might relate to question 33.

If we consider the *Book of Mormon* a real book, the kind of exercise this paper constitutes could be repeated a hundred times.[25]

Post Script

Comments in the original article reprinted here regarding chronology were subsequently modified in the author's published note "Comments on Nephite Chronology,"[26] The most significant portion of that piece makes the point that a key calendrical assumption followed in this chapter now appears to be erroneous. The discussion about the time involved in Nephi's building his vessel supposed (above) that "Lehi probably left Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah. The fall of Jerusalem occurred something more than ten years into that reign." In "Comments," I state that, to the contrary, "Spackman appears to be right that the departure took place shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, over a decade later, because assumptions I made about the timing of events reported in 1 Nephi 1-18 are less likely than those he advances."

My conclusion now is that probably no knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem reached the party from outside sources at all. Had it done so, it would have happened during their stay in Bountiful. Had such word reached them, very likely it would have affected the behavior of Laman and Lemuel, who seem to have considered that they had the option of returning to Jerusalem up until Nephi's ship was well under construction, if not right up to launch time. Thus there is no reason from the chronological point of view to suppose that the group could not have spent more years on the construction project than the one to three that I considered the limits.

Notes
To Chapter 3

[1] John A. Widtsoe, editor, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941, page 128.

[2] Hugh Nibley, "Two Shots in the Dark," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1982, pages 110-11.

[3] The symbolism associated with "Irreantum" or "many waters" can be glimpsed in citations in *Book of Mormon Critical Text, Volume 1, 1 Nephi-Words of Mormon*, second edition, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986, page 94, note 787. Robert R. Stieglitz, "Long-distance Seafaring in the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47, 1984, pages 138-39, points out the overseas connections of that day.

[4] Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites,* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952, pages 72-77. A fuller and more up-to-date picture of "the Arabian nexus" of Lehi's journey is given in Robert F. Smith, "Book of Mormon Event Structure: The Ancient Near East," FARMS Preliminary Report SMI-84, Provo, Utah, 1984 (revised in 1986), pages 23-30.

[5] Orson Pratt believed that Ezekiel, in Babylon, knew of Mulek by revelation; I agree in Chapter 5, which was originally published as "The Twig of the Cedar," *Improvement Era* 60 (May 1957) page 330; reprinted under the title "Bible Prophecies of the Mulekites," in *A Book of Mormon Treasury*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959, pages 229-37.

[6] Smith's "Event Structure," pages 26-28.

[7] *Discourses of Brigham Young*, page 410.

[8] Samuel E. Shepley, "Old World Metal Workers," paper given at Annual Symposium, Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Provo, Utah, 22 October 1983. John A. Tvedtnes, "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?" FARMS Preliminary Report TVE-84, Provo, Utah, 1984.

[9] Lynn M. and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976, page 106.

[10] Hiltons' *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, page 113.

[11] José María Martinez-Hidalgo, *Columbus' Ships*, edited by Howard I. Chapelle, Barre, Mass: Barre Publishers, 1966, page 93, for that estimate. The data are not firm; Martinez prefers a length ten feet greater—see pages 93-100.

[12] Hiltons' *In Search of Lehi's Trail,* page 114.

[13] Hiltons' *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, page 141, reprinting Pliny the Elder, Part XXXII.

[14] Smith's "Event Structure," page 27.

[15] G. R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese,* Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Oriental Translation Fund, n.s., volume 42, London, 1981, pages 360-77.

[16] Tibbetts' *Arab Navigation*, page 360 and following.

[17] *FARMS Update*, April 1986; Ben R. Finney, "Anomalous Westerlies, El Niño and the Colonization of Polynesia," *American Anthropologist* 87 (1985), pages 9-26.

[18] Thor Heyerdahl, "Feasible Ocean Routes to and from the Americas in Pre-Columbian Times," *American Antiquity* 28 (1963), pages 482-88, and his *Sea Routes to Polynesia*, Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1968, pages 37-50. Joseph Needham and Lu Gwei-Djen, *Trans-Pacific Echoes and Resonances; Listening Once Again*, Singapore and Philadelphia: World Scientific, 1984, pages 5-6, agree with Heyerdahl. Compare Needham alone in his magnum opus *Science and Civilisation in China*, volume 4, part III, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pages 547-48.

[19] Tibbetts' *Arab Navigation*, page 49.

[20] "Wind and Stars Guide Polynesian Voyagers on Year-long Exploration," Provo (Utah) Daily Herald, 5 October 1986, page 42 (Associated Press dispatch).

[21] Clinton R. Edwards, "Commentary: Section II," in *Man Across the Sea: Problem of Pre-Columbian Contacts*, edited by Carroll L. Riley et al, Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1971, page 302. Finney's "Anomalous Westerlies," pages 9-26.

[22] Ben R. Finney, *Hokule'a: The Way to Tahiti*, New York: Dodd Mead, about 1979.

[23] John L. Sorenson *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985, page 138 and Map 5.

[24] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 83-87.

[25] *An Ancient American Setting*, page 139.

[26] John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography,* vol. 2, Provo: Research Press, 1990. This bibliography of about 5,000 titles on pre-Columbian ships, voyaging and other culture contacts—of what I have called sources of types 2 through 5 was issued in a revised second edition by the same publisher, 1996; it is also available on computer disk.

When Lehi's Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?

Several puzzles about the history of the Nephites and Lamanites are linked to the question of whether they found others already living in their promised land. It seems important enough to call for serious examination of the text of the *Book of Mormon* for all possible evidence. Let us first look at what the Nephite writers say about their own group. Then we will see what we can learn about other groups described or mentioned in the record. In each case we will not only look for direct data on population size, ethnicity, language and culture but also will draw plausible inferences about those matters.

Population growth among the Nephites

Two questions about Nephite population size are of major concern. First, how fast did the Nephite group grow as a result of the natural fertility and mortality of the original party? We need to examine whether the numbers attributed to them at various points in their history can be accounted for in terms of natural increase by the Nephite portion of Lehi's group. If the numbers cannot be explained by that means, then recourse to "others" is required to account for the apparent excess. The second question concerns the relative size of the Lamanites and other groups compared with the Nephites.

An analysis has already been published of the age and gender of the personnel in Lehi's party.[1] Nephite demographic history obviously begins with that information. My reading of the text puts about eleven adults and thirteen children in Nephi's group when they split with the faction of Laman and Lemuel. However, the adults included only three couples. None of the unmarried persons, including Nephi's brothers Jacob and Joseph and, probably, their sisters, would have had marriage partners available until nieces or nephews came of age, so for some interval the group's reproduction rate would have been even

lower than those numbers seem to suggest. The Lamanite faction I estimate to have included four couples with the likelihood that the oldest grandchildren of Ishmael were just coming into the age of reproduction.[2] Within a few years the Lamanites should have had on the order of half again as many persons as the Nephites, and that size advantage should have continued thereafter.

Within a few years Nephi reports that his people "began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land" (2 Nephi 5:13). When about fifteen years had passed, he says that Jacob and Joseph had been made priests and teachers "over the land of my people" (2 Nephi 5:26, 28). After another ten years, they "had already had wars and contentions" with the Lamanites (2 Nephi 5:34). After the Nephites had existed as an entity for about forty years (see Jacob 1:1), their men began "desiring many wives and concubines" (Jacob 1:15). How many descendants of the original party would there have been by that time?

We can safely suppose that adaptation to foods, climate, disease, and natural hazards would have posed some problems, although we cannot quantify those effects. Let us at least start to bracket the possible growth in numbers by setting an upper limit that is at the edge of absurdity. Assume a birth rate twice as high as in today's "less developed countries," a rate perhaps not even attainable by any population. Let us also suppose no deaths at all! Under those conditions, if the initial Nephite group was comprised of 24 persons, as I calculate generously, by the time of Jacob 2, they would have reached a population of 330, of whom perhaps 70 would be adult males and the same number adult females. Of course the unreality of that number means we must work downward. Using a more reasonable figure for the birth rate and factoring in deaths, we see that the actual number of adults would be unlikely to exceed half of what we first calculated—say, 35 males and 35 females. Even that is far too large to satisfy experts on the history of population growth.[3] With such limited numbers as these, the group's cultural preference for "many wives and concubines" would be puzzling. The fact that the plural marriage preference for the early Nephites is reported as a

cultural fact seems to call for a larger population of females. Male casualties in battles involving such tiny numbers could hardly have been very many. The only alternative explanation for a female surplus would have been the incorporation of "other" people.

The account of Sherem's encounter with Jacob reiterates the question. "Some [*ten more?*] years had passed away," and Jacob was now verging on "old" (compare Jacob 7:1, 20-26). At that time "there came a man among the people of Nephi whose name was Sherem" (Jacob 1:1). Upon first meeting Jacob, he said, "Brother Jacob, I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you; for I have heard...that thou goest about much, preaching" (Jacob 7:6). Now, the population of adult males descended from the original group could not have exceeded 50 at that time. This would have been only enough to populate one modest-sized village. Thus Sherem's is a strange statement. Jacob, as head priest and religious teacher, would routinely have been around the Nephite temple in the cultural center at least on all holy days (see Jacob 2:2). How then could Sherem never have seen him, and why would he have had to seek "much opportunity" to speak to him in such a tiny settlement? And where would Jacob have had to go on the preaching travels Sherem refers to, if only such a tiny group were involved? Moreover, from where was it that Sherem "came...among the people of Nephi" (Jacob 1:1)? The text and context of this incident would make little sense if the Nephite population had resulted only from natural demographic increase.

The reports of intergroup fighting in these early generations also seem to refer to larger forces than growth by births alone would have allowed. At the 25-year mark of their history, Nephi already reported that they had had "wars" with the Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5:34), yet the male descendants of the original Nephites could not reasonably have numbered more than a score by the time these "wars" are mentioned. Later, in Jacob's old age, the "wars" mentioned in Jacob 7:26 would have been fought with a maximum of 50 on his side and not dramatically more for the attackers. Either the expression "war" was being used loosely at this point in the account

or else the population springing from the original Lehites had already been augmented by "others," it appears to me.

Cultural adaptation and "others"

The point about "war" opens up the larger issue of cultural learning and adaptation in the new land by both Nephites and Lamanites. A pair of telling passages in the book of Mosiah lets us know that some "native" New World people or other had to have provided at least one direct, crucial cultural input to the immigrantsat some point in time. Not long after 200 B.C., Zeniffite King Limhi reminded his people in the land of Nephi that "we at this time do pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites, to the amount of one half of our corn, and our barley, and even all our grain of every kind" (Mosiah 7:22). Note that Limhi mentions "corn" first in the list of tribute crops. In Mosiah 9:14 it is the only crop mentioned at all: "Lamanites began to...take off...the corn of their fields."

Now, "corn" is clearly maize, the native American plant that was the mainstay of the diet of many native American peoples for thousands of years. There is no possibility that Lehi's party brought this key American crop with them or that they discovered it wild upon their arrival. Maize is so totally domesticated a plant that it will not reproduce without human care. In other words, the Zeniffites or any other of Lehi's descendants could only be growing corn/maize because people already familiar with the complex of techniques for its successful cultivation had passed on the knowledge, and the seed, to the newcomers. Notice too that these passages in Mosiah indicate that corn had become the grain of preference among the Lamanites, and perhaps among the Zeniffites. That is, they had apparently integrated it into their system of taste preferences and nutrition as a primary food, for which cooks and diners in turn would have had familiar recipes, utensils, and so on. This situation reminds us of how crucial the natives of Massachusetts were in helping the Puritan settlers in the 1600s survive in the unfamiliar environment they found upon

landing. The traditional American Thanksgiving cuisine of turkey, pumpkin and corn dishes—all native to the New World—is an unconscious tribute to the gift of survival conferred by the Amerindians by sharing those local foods with the confused and hungry Europeans. Did an equivalent cultural exchange and unacknowledged thanks-giving process take place for Lehi's descendants in the *Book of Mormon* land of first inheritance or land of Nephi?

Since it is certain that "others" passed on knowledge about and a taste for corn to the Nephites and Lamanites, it becomes likely that other cultural features also came from them. The keeping of "flocks," for example (Mosiah 9:14; compare Enos 1:21), was not a pattern which Lehi's folks are said to have brought with them. No animals are mentioned in Nephi's Old World record (it is purely speculation that they utilized camels or any other animals in their trek from Jerusalem to Bountiful). Even if they started out with animals, these would not have survived the party's famine-plagued journey through western Arabia (note, for example, 1 Nephi 16:18-32). Moreover, no hint is given that any were taken aboard Nephi's boat (in specific contrast to the Jaredite case—see Ether 6:4). So how would they have obtained native American fowls or other animals to keep in "flocks," or, more importantly, how would they have discovered techniques for successfully caring for and utilizing them? Discovery or invention of a major cultural feature like the domestication of animals is rare enough in human history that it is highly unlikely that these newcomers could simply have pulled themselves up culturally "by their bootstraps" in this way in a generation or two.

We will see below that significant, specific cultural features of obvious Jaredite origin appeared later among the Nephites without any explanation of how their transmission was accomplished down through time. It is a safe presumption, however, that some groups existing at the time when the Jaredite armies referred to in Ether 15 were destroyed simply refused to participate in the suicidal madness of Coriantumr and Shiz. They would have ensured their own survival

by staying home and minding their meek business in this or that corner of the land. Such minor peoples might hardly even have noted the distant slaughter of the Jaredite dynasts, so absorbed would they have been in their local affairs. The likelihood is that more than a few such groups continued past the time of the "final destruction" of the Jaredite armies at the hill Ramah, and some could well have been living in the land southward as Nephi and Laman built up their small colonies.

Lehi's final prophecy to his children foreshadowed this happening. He said,

> It is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance.... But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord...I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them. Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among them. (2 Nephi 1:8-12)

How much time can we suppose elapsed between the time when Lehi's descendants "dwindle[d] in unbelief" and when the Lord

brought "other nations unto them"? How distant were those "other nations" at the time Lehi spoke? Latter-day Saints generally have supposed that the "other nations" were the Gentile (Christian) nations of Europe who began to reach the New World only 500 years ago. To believe so requires limited imagination.

As for the Lamanites, they dwindled in unbelief within a few years. Alma said that "the Lamanites have been cut off from his presence, from the beginning of their transgressions in the land" (Alma 9:14). How then could Lehi's prophecy about "other nations" being brought in have been kept long in abeyance after that? Furthermore, the early Nephites generally did the same thing within a few centuries. Their wickedness and apostasy culminated in the escape of Mosiah and his group from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla (see Omni 1:13-14). And if the Lord somehow did not at those times bring in "other nations," then surely he would have done so after Cumorah, 1100 years prior to Columbus. Even if there were no massive armed invasions of strange groups to be reported, we need not be surprised if relatively small groups of strange peoples who were neither so numerous nor so organized as to be rivals for control of the land could have been scattered or infiltrated among both Nephites and Lamanites without their constituting the "other nations" in the threatening sense of Lehi's prophecy. Thus in the terms of Lehi's prophecy, "others" could and probably even should have been close at hand and available for the Lord to use as instruments against the straying covenant peoples any time after the arrival of Nephi's boat.

Archaeology, linguistics and related areas of study have established beyond doubt that a variety of peoples inhabited virtually every place in the Western Hemisphere a long time ago (with the possible exception of limited regions which may have been more or less unpopulated for the period of a few generations at certain times). The presence of over 1500 different languages belonging to dozens of major groupings which were found in the Americas when the Europeans arrived can be explained only by supposing that speakers

of the ancestral tongues had been in America for thousands of years. The notion that "the Indians" constituted a single ethnic entity is a totally outdated one which neither scholars nor lay people can justifiably believe nowadays. Abundant facts are contrary to the idea. The most that is possible is that in some limited territory in a part of America Lehi's people and those who came with Mulek had their chance to establish their own niches where they could control their own fate. But they were not given thousands of years of isolation to play with. (The Latter-day Saint pioneers in Deseret were allowed only a single generation, from 1847 until the railroad came in 1869, to do the same. After that, competing economic, social, political, and ideological systems directly challenged them and nearly swallowed them up.)

It seems unavoidable that other peoples were in the land, somewhere, when Nephi's boat landed on the shore of the "west sea," and quite certainly some of them were survivors from the Jaredite people, as indicated in the book of Ether.

Internal variety among the Nephites

We are not left only to supposition and inference in this matter. There are statements in the Nephite record that positively inform us that "others" were on the scene and further passages that hint at the same thing. One of these statements occurs during the visit by Alma and his seven companions to the Zoramites. "Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites" (Alma 31:8). As Alma prayed about this group, he said, "O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren" (Alma 31:35). We may wonder about those whom they considered not their "brethren." Apparently he was speaking of those who were neither Nephites, Lamanites, nor "Mulekites." People in all those three categories are referred to in the text by Nephites as "brethren" (see, for example, Mosiah 1:5 and 7:2, 13 and Alma 24:7-8).

Another statement indicates that even the Jaredites were counted as "brethren." In Alma 46:22, captain Moroni has his

followers "covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression." Unquestionably, the reference is to the Jaredites. The only reason apparent to me why the term "brethren" would be applied by Nephites to Jaredites is because the former recognized that some of the people living with them were descended from the Jaredites. Interestingly, Anthony W. Ivins, who later became a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, speculated ninety years ago that Coriantumr, the final Jaredite king, survived among the people of Zarahemla long enough to sire descendants.[4] (Incidentally, in Hebrew the name Moroni means "one from Moron," which was the Jaredite capital.)

An odd bit of behavior involving the younger Alma on his teaching tour seems to alert us to the presence of "others" at the city of Ammonihah. At that time this was a rather remote part of the land of Zarahemla in the direction of the west sea and the narrow neck of land. At first discouraged at the hostile reception he received, Alma departed, only to be ordered back by an angel (see Alma 8:14-17). When he returned he asked food of a stranger. This proved to be Amulek, whose odd reply was, "I am a Nephite" (Alma 8:20). Why would he say that? Wasn't it obvious? Clearly Amulek had recognized Alma as a Nephite, either by his speech, his appearance, or perhaps the way he had referred to God when he opened the conversation. But to what other social or ethnic category might Amulek have belonged? His abrupt statement makes sense only if most of the people of the place were not Nephites and also if Amulek's characteristics did not make it already apparent to Alma that he was a Nephite.

The incompleteness of our picture of social and population history is further shown in the story of the entry of Ammon's party to Zeniffite King Limhi's territory. The Nephite explorers stumbled upon the king outside the walls of his beleaguered city, Lehi-Nephi, and were rudely seized and thrown into prison. Only after two days did they get a chance to identify themselves and explain their presence. We might have supposed that their cultural status as Nephites and

strangers, if not their protestations (was there a language problem?) would have alerted Limhi and his guards as to their identity—Nephites from Zarahemla. Had the initial encounter gone as we might have thought, Ammon's belated explanation (see Mosiah 7:13) and Limhi's surprise when Ammon finally got through to him (see Mosiah 7:14) would both have been short-circuited. Why were Ammon and company not recognized immediately as Nephites? Was their costume and tongue or accent so much different than what Limhi's people expected of a Nephite that this put them off? Ammon was a "descendant of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 7:13), a point that he emphasized in his introduction to the king. Does this mean that he somehow looked different than a "typical" Nephite? Or had the Zeniffites had encounters with other non-Nephite types in their area which might have prompted Limhi's cautious reception? And what personal relationship had Ammon to the Zeniffites, after all? As a person descended from Zarahemla, that is, a "Mulekite," why did he refer to Zeniff's presumably Nephite party as "our brethren" and show them so much concern that he would lead this arduous expedition to find out their fate? The social, political, ethnic, and language relationships involved in this business are not straightforward, to say the least.

An analysis of the terminology applied to peoples in the *Book of Mormon* could reveal useful information on this subject. This is not the place to do that fully, but the approach can be sketched and some of the results anticipated. References to the key people of the record vary: (1) "Nephite(s)" or "the Nephites" occurs 339 times; (2) "people of the Nephites," 18 times; (3) "people of Nephi," four times; (4) "children of Nephi," twice, and (5) "descendants of Nephi," twice. Usage of the second and third expressions gives us something to ponder about the composition of the people referred to.

The meaning of the first expression is made clear early by Jacob when he says, "those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites." Then he continues the definition in an interesting way: "...or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings" (Jacob 1:14). A

few lines earlier Jacob had reported that when Nephi anticipated his own death, he had designated "a [successor] king and a ruler over his people...according to the reigns of the kings....And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever [personal] name they would" (Jacob 1:9, 11). Jacob here makes clear that his definition of "Nephites, or the people of Nephi" hinges on political allegiance to a king, a king who always bore the title "Nephi." This definition does not depend at all on whether "Nephites" were or were not literal descendants from Nephi, nor whether they had Sam, Jacob, Joseph, or Zoram, the founding fathers of the group, among their ancestors. In fact Jacob's terminology may refer to the original father Nephi only indirectly. What he says in verse 11, where the term "Nephites" is first used, is that those classified under that term were simply all who were ruled by the existing monarch, the current "Nephi." No reason is evident to me to believe that in the 338 usages after Jacob begins the practice that "Nephite(s)" means anything else. It is essentially a sociopolitical, not an ethnic or linguistic, label.

Cases where the text reports that political allegiance changed are consistent with this notion. Thus the children who had been fathered, then abandoned, by the renegade priests of Noah chose to "be numbered among those who were called Nephites" (Mosiah 25:12). That is, when they came under the sovereignty of the current head of the Nephite government, they both gave their allegiance to him and changed their group label to "Nephites." In a parallel case earlier, "all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites, and this because the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi" (Mosiah 25:13). Conversely, when Amlici and his followers rebelled against Nephite rule and "did consecrate Amlici to be their king," they took a unique group name to mark the political rebellion, "being called Amlicites" (Alma 2:9). Meanwhile "the remainder—those loyal to Alma, the continuing official ruler—were [still] called Nephites" (Mosiah 25:11). Again, when the Zoramites

transferred allegiance from the Nephite government to the Lamanite side, they "became Lamanites" (Alma 43:4, 6). We see, then, that the Nephites constituted those governed by the ruling "Nephi," who was always a direct descendant of the original Nephi. But the label does not of itself convey information about the ethnic, linguistic, or physical characteristics or origin of those called Nephites.

It is true that the name "Nephites" sometimes connotes those who shared culture, religion, and ethnicity or biology.[5] But every rule-of-thumb we construct that treats the Nephites as a descent unit ends up violated by details in the text. Variety shows through the common label, culturally (e.g., Mosiah 7:15; Alma 8:11-12), religiously (e.g., Mosiah 26:4-5 and 27:1; Alma 8:11), linguistically (e.g., Omni 1:17-18), and biologically (e.g., Alma 3:17, note the statement concerning Nephi's seed "and whomsoever shall be called thy seed"; Alma 55:4). "Nephite" should then be read as the generic name designating the nation (see Alma 9:20) ideally unified in a political structure headed by one direct descendant of Nephi at a time.[6]

Even more indicative of social and cultural variation among the Nephites is the usage by their historians of the expression "people of the Nephites." It connotes that there existed a social stratum called "the Nephites" while another category was a "people" who were "of," that is, subordinate to, those "Nephites," even while they all were under the same central government and within the same broad society. Limhi was ready to accept such a second-class status for his people, the Zeniffites, and assumed that the dependent category still existed as it apparently had when his grandfather had left Zarahemla (see Mosiah 7:15). The Amulonites operated a similar system in the land of Helam, where they held Alma's group in effective serfdom (see Mosiah 23:36-39 and 24:8-15). (At the same time the privileges of the Amulonites themselves were at the sufferance of the Lamanite king, as shown in Mosiah 23:39; power in Lamanite society was also heavily stratified.) Generally, similar stratification is evident in the account of the Zoramites where the powerful segment succeeded in expelling those of the deprived poorer element who did not toe the line (see

Alma 32:2-5; 35:3-7). The dominance of a powerful Nephite establishment over subordinate groups is shown dramatically in Mormon 2:4. There we read that Nephite armies under Mormon "did take possession of the city" of Angola, obviously against the resistance of the local inhabitants who were only nominal "Nephites." Hence, some were more Nephite than others, in a sense. A socially complex society is also reflected in Alma's expression, "all [God's] people who are called the people of Nephi" (Alma 9:19). This subordination and potential variety within the society seems plainer in the expression "the people of the Nephites" than in the more usual "Nephites." If we look closely, then, it seems that we can detect in the "nation" centered at Zarahemla an ability to incorporate social and ethnic variety greater than the title "Nephites" may suggest on surface reading.

Also of interest is a statement by the judges in Zarahemla to $Nephi_2$ when he prophesied the destruction of the Nephites because of wickedness. At Helaman 8:6 they reply, "we are powerful, and our cities great, therefore our enemies can have no power over us." The surprising thing is that nominally the Nephites and Lamanites were at this time were reported to be in an unprecedented condition of peace (see Helaman 6:34-37). So who were the "enemies" that those Gadianton-linked judges had in mind? Could they have been non-Lamanites (rival secret groups?), some of whose descendants in the final period of Nephite history constituted a third, non-Lamanite force (see Mormon 2:10, 27)?

The People of Zarahemla

The people of Zarahemla keep turning up when we consider possible "others." Characterizing them adequately is difficult because of the brevity of the Nephite-kept record, which is, of course, our only source about them. In Chapter 5 I present a rather comprehensive body of data and inference about them.[7] But my special concern now is the question of unity or variety in the composition of this element within Nephite society.

How uniform a group was their ancestral immigrating party? It is very likely that non-Jews were in the crew of the vessel that brought Zedekiah's son Mulek to the New World (see Omni 1:15-16). A purely Israelite crew recruited in the Palestine homeland would have been possible during some periods, but at the time Mulek's party left, the only Mediterranean ports of the kingdom of Judah were in Babylonian hands. Most likely the crew of the ship (there could have been more than one, of course) were "Phoenician," itself a historical category that was by no means homogeneous. Significant cultural, linguistic and biological variety could have been introduced into American *Book of Mormon* populations through such a mixed crew, about which, unfortunately, the text tells us nothing.

Our cryptic record tells of only one segment, those descendants from that shipload who ended up centuries after the landing under one Zarahemla. When Mosiah, the leader of the Nephites who had come from the land of Nephi, reached Zarahemla's city, the "Mulekite" ruler is not reported to have stood in the way of Mosiah's becoming king over the combined people. He put up a claim to only distant royal descent himself, but in his own land he was apparently not called a king. The name "the people of Zarahemla" carries their political standing no farther back than this living man. The fact that no ancestral name was applied to their city except that of the current leader, Zarahemla, indicates that they had no long history as a political entity. Probably they had arrived in the area of the city of Zarahemla not long before Mosiah found them, or at least the place had been insignificant enough that no one earlier than Zarahemla had named it. (Later Nephite custom named settlements after "him who first possessed them"; Alma 8:7.) They or their ancestors had come "up" the river to that spot from the lowland area near the east sea where they had earlier lived (see Alma 22:30-31). Furthermore, the area they now inhabited was small. When King Benjamin later called the assembly where he named his son as his successor, the call reached the entire area concerned in a single day (see Mosiah 1:10, 18).

Zarahemla's group could only have been one part of those descended from Mulek's party. No single ethnic label is applied in the record to everybody from the original ship, one hint of their diversity or disunity. Had all descendants of the immigrant party remained together as a single society, they would probably have been referred to by a single name, something like "Mulekites." (Latter-day Saints use that term as equivalent to the people of Zarahemla although it never occurs in the text; I usually put it in quotation marks to make clear that it is not an ancient term.) The statement that there had been "many wars and serious contentions" among those descendants underlines the lack of a unified history for them which is evident from the lack of a single name.

Another statement in the record impinges on this matter. When Mosiah 25:2 speaks of the subjects ruled by Mosiah, it contrasts two categories of the population. The first is, of course, "the children of Nephi...who were descendants of Nephi," that is, apparently, those who had arrived in the land of Zarahemla guided by the first King Mosiah. The second category is itself composite: "the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, *and those who came with him* into the wilderness" (Omni 1:13-14). Two readings of this statement make equal sense. If the comma after "Mulek" was inserted correctly (initially by the printing crew, who did most of the punctuation for the first English edition), then the meaning would be that the "Mulekites" consisted of people whose ancestors included both Mulek and others, "those who came with him." But an alternative reading would be possible if the comma after "Mulek" should be omitted; in that case, Zarahemla himself would be represented as descended from both Mulek and others of Mulek's party. I take the former meaning and suppose that other groups than Zarahemla's coexisted with them (though apparently not at the capital, the city of Zarahemla). This may be part of the reason the man Zarahemla is nowhere called king—because he had political authority only over one of those groups springing from the Mulek party and that one very localized. Consequently a lesser title—something like "chief"—would

have fitted him better. But the Nephite kings proceeded to extend their rule over a greater area. At least by the day of $Mosiah_2$, the borders of the greater land of Zarahemla had been greatly expanded compared with Benjamin's time.[8] I consider it likely that the expansion of their domain over the territory between the city of Zarahemla and the original settlement spot of the "Mulekites," probably the city of Mulek located near the east coast, came to incorporate additional settlements of "those who came with him into the wilderness" but who had had no political connection with chief Zarahemla.[9]

More evidence that the people of Zarahemla were not a unified group who followed a single cultural tradition can be seen in Ammon's encounter with Limhi. The Zeniffite king reported to Ammon that not long before, he had sent an exploring party to locate Zarahemla, but, it turned out, they reached the Jaredite final battleground instead. At the point when Limhi told about that expedition, Ammon was oddly silent on one related point. Since he was himself "a descendant of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 7:13), we might have anticipated that he would recall Coriantumr, the final Jaredite king as described for us in Omni 1:20-22. Why did Ammon not remember that chief Zarahemla's ancestors had this dramatic tradition of an earlier people, the Jaredites, who occupied the land of Desolation and who became extinct except for this wounded alien ruler who lived among the Jewish newcomers for nine months? Surely he would immediately have related the twenty-four gold plates and the corroded artifacts to the tradition to which Limhi referred. Instead, Ammon seems as ignorant of Coriantumr as Limhi was. This suggests that different segments of the "Mulekite" population did not all share the same traditions.

Further reason to see variety among the "Mulekites" is provided by the Amlicites (see Alma 2). In their rebellion against being ruled by the Nephites, they mustered a large rebel force, about the same size as the loyal Nephite army. They "came" from some distinct settlement locality of their own (surely from downriver, it turns out) to challenge Alma's army.[10] There can be little question, it seems to me, that they

constituted a numerous population with their own history and cultural features whom the intruding Nephite elite ruled only with difficulty. These Amlicites may have been ethnically categorized together with "the people of Zarahemla," although residing at a distance from the city of Zarahemla and so never headed by the chief whom Mosiah had encountered and co-opted. The Amlicites, like Ammon and the Zeniffites, seem not to have traced any connection with Mulek but set themselves apart only under their current leader's name, Amlici. Perhaps they were a local group or set of groups derived in part from Jaredite ancestry or perhaps from ancestors other than Mulek who arrived with his party.

The "king-men" of later days may have been composed of the same societal elements but without a leader equivalent to Amlici to confer on them a (his) distinctive name. The king-men, too, inhabited a distinct region, for when Moroni "commanded that his army should go against those king-men," they were "hewn down" and compelled to fly the "title of liberty" standard "in their cities" (Alma 51:17-20). This language confirms that they, like the Amlicites, had a base territory of their own and that it was a significant distance from the city of Zarahemla. Again, quite surely, it lay downriver.

Mulek's party likely settled first at "the city of Mulek," which was on the east coast very near the city Bountiful. During some period between the first landing of the Mulek party and Zarahemla's day, the descendants of the immigrants became "exceedingly numerous" —enough to engage in "many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time" (Omni 1:17). The departure of Zarahemla's faction upriver was plausibly a consequence of those wars. From the thumbnail sketch of their history in Omni we cannot tell much, but their becoming "exceedingly numerous" under such difficult pioneer circumstances sounds as unlikely on the grounds of natural increase alone as when the same expression was applied to the early Lamanites (see below). It is likely that they too incorporated "others" into their structure, probably seizing control, or trying to seize control, over relatively disorganized Jaredite remnants they

encountered. Perhaps the wars in which they became involved stemmed initially from the militarized chaos they may have found reverberating among those remnants following the "final" battle between the armies of Shiz and Coriantumr.[11]

Evidence from language

What Mosiah's record tells us about the language used by the people of Zarahemla deserves attention in this connection. "Their language had become corrupted" (Omni 1:17), the Nephite account says. Certain historical linguists have done a great deal of work on rates of change of languages, written and unwritten, and in both civilized and simpler societies.[12] What they have learned is that "basic vocabulary" changes at a more or less constant rate among all groups. In the course of the three or four centuries since the ancestors of Zarahemla and of $Mosiah_1$ shared the same Hebrew tongue in Jerusalem, how different could the two dialects have become, based on what linguists know? They should have been about ninety percent similar, so their separate versions of Hebrew would have remained intelligible to each other. But the text at Omni 1:18 says that they could not communicate until Mosiah "caused that they should be taught in his language." There are only two linguistically sound explanations why this difference should be. Either, (1) Zarahemla's people had adopted a tongue other than Hebrew (since we do not know the composition of the crew nor of the elite passengers who came with Mulek, but one possibility could be that Zarahemla's group spoke a non-Hebrew language from the Mediterranean); or, (2) more likely, one, or both, peoples had adopted non-Hebrew languages learned from some "other" peoples after arrival in America. The non-literate people of Zarahemla are more likely to have made a change than the Nephites, yet both could have done so. The text does not clarify the point. Considering that the "Mulekites" were present in the land in time to encounter Coriantumr, probably some unmentioned Jaredite survivor groups were also discovered by them and were the source for

linguistic change among the immigrants. If Mulek arrived with only a tiny party, they would have been a minority in the midst of those with whom they associated and so would have become subject to losing their original speech to the larger host group even if they came to rule over the locals.[13]

Although the scripture does not tell us much about the languages used among the peoples it reports, the topic is significant if we attempt to make connection with languages known from modern scholarly sources. In whatever region in America we place *Book of Mormon* lands, we find that numerous tongues were being spoken when Columbus arrived. Probably on the order of 200 existed in Mesoamerica alone. As modern languages have been analyzed, comparisons made and histories reconstructed, it has become clear that the ancient linguistic scene was also complex. The differences between those languages and even their family groupings are so great that no plausible linguistic history can be formulated which relies on *Book of Mormon*-reported voyagers as a sole original source tongue. The mere presence of Hebrew speech in Mesoamerica has yet to be established to the satisfaction of linguistic scholars, although there is significant preliminary indication. As with the diverse cultural or archaeological record, that from linguistics cannot accommodate the picture that the *Book of Mormon* gives us of its peoples without supposing that "others" were on the scene when Lehi's group came ashore.

The lingering Jaredites

There is conclusive evidence in the *Book of Mormon* text that Jaredite language affected the people of Zarahemla, the Nephites and the Lamanites. Robert F. Smith has pointed out that the term *sheum*, applied by a Nephite historian to a crop for which there was no Nephite (or English) equivalent (see Mosiah 9:9), "is a precise match for Akkadian (i.e. Babylonian) *še'um*, which means 'barley' (Old Assyrian, 'wheat'), the most popular ancient Mesopotamian cereal

name."[14] Its phonetic form appropriately fits the time period when the Jaredites departed from the Old World. The plant called *sheum* was being grown among the Zeniffites in the land of Nephi. We have already seen that the "corn" emphasized among the Zeniffites had to have passed down from pre-Lehite people. Still another of their crops, *neas*, bears an untranslated plant name and is mentioned along with corn and *sheum*, so it must also be of non-Nephite origin. The two names and three crops may plausibly be of Jaredite origin and likely came down to the Nephites and Lamanites via the people of Zarahemla, if not through some more exotic intermediary population.

There is also evidence from personal names that influence from the Jaredites reached the Nephites. Nibley identifies some of these and notes, "Five out of the six whose names [in the Nephite record] are definitely Jaredite [Morianton, Coriantumr, Korihor, Nehor, Noah, and Shiblon] betray strong anti-Nephite leanings."[15] [We should add to the list two more, Gadianton and Kishumen.] Their anti-Nephite bias may well reflect a viewpoint held by some among the people of Zarahemla or other groups of related origin that one of them, not any descendant of Nephi, ought by right to be king. Nibley also observes that terms in the Nephite system of money and grain measures described in Alma 11 "bear *Jaredite* names," obvious examples being *shiblon* and *shiblum*.[16]

Can we tell how these foreign words came into use among the Nephites? One possibility is that Coriantumr learned enough of the language of the "Mulekites" in the nine final months of his life which he spent among them to pass on a number of words. Another possibility is that the terms came from Mosiah's translation of Ether's plates (see Mosiah 28:11-13, 17). But Alma 11:4 makes clear that the names of weights and measures were in use among the Nephites long before Mosiah had read Ether's record. And the crop plants themselves, and especially the methods of cultivating them, must have come through real people, not through the pages of any book. Moreover we would not expect that a decrepit Jaredite king whose mind was on the history of his ancestors would have known about or

bothered with such mundane matters as seeds and the names of weight units. The people who passed on workaday items like those would have been commoners. And if they had time and opportunity to transmit agricultural and commercial complexes, surely they would have communicated other cultural features as well, probably including cultic ("idolatrous") items.

The idea that part of the Jaredite population lived beyond the battle at the hill Ramah to influence their successors, the people of Zarahemla and Lehi's descendants, is by no means new. Generations ago both B. H. Roberts and J. M. Sjodahl, for example, supposed that significant Jaredite remnants survived.[17]

So far four lines of evidence of Jaredite influence on their "Mulekite" and Nephite successors have been mentioned: the Coriantumr encounter; Jaredite personal names among the later peoples; three crops plus the names of two of them; and the names of certain Nephite weights and measures. A fifth type of evidence is the nature and form of secret societies.

The Nephite secret combination pattern is obviously very similar to what had been present among the Jaredites. Was there a historical connection? It is true that Alma instructed his son Helaman not to make known to their people any contents of Ether's record that might give them operating procedures for duplicating the secret groups (see Alma 37:27-29). A later writer says that it was the devil who "put into the heart" of Gadianton certain information of that sort (see Helaman 6:26). Yet an efficient alternative explanation of how the later secret groups came to look so much like those of the Jaredites is direct transmission of the tradition through survivors of the Jaredites to the people of Zarahemla and thus to Gadianton. This process probably would have been unknown to Alma or other elite Nephite writers, who must have had little to do directly with the mass of "Mulekite" folk. Support for the idea comes from a statement by Giddianhi, one-time "governor" of the Gadianton organization. Their ways, he claimed, "are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us" (3 Nephi 3:9).

Where the Jaredites lived gives us another clue that more of them than Coriantumr alone must have interacted with the later people of Zarahemla or Nephites. It is commonplace for students of the geography of *Book of Mormon* events to suppose that the Jaredites dwelt only in the land northward. True, at one point in time centuries before their destruction, during a period of expansion, the Jaredite King Lib constructed "a great city by the narrow neck of land" (Ether 10:20). At that time it was said that "they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness, to get game" (verse 21), but it is unlikely such a pattern of exclusive reserve could continue. The fact is that it makes no sense to build a "great city" adjacent to pure wilderness. Rather, we can safely suppose that, in addition to whatever limited area was kept as a royal game preserve, routine settlers existed southward from the new city and that they provided a support population for it. At the least there would have been peoples further toward the south with whom the city would trade whether or not they were counted as Lib's subjects. As population grew over the nearly thousand years of Jaredite history after Lib's day, more local settlements in parts of the land southward could have developed due to normal population growth and spread. Not all of those peoples would have shown up at the final slaughter at Ramah. Likely some of the survivors in the land southward became mixed with descendants of Mulek's group, thus accounting for part of their "exceedingly numerous" force and, of course, the presence of corn, *sheum* and *neas*.

But aside from the likely presence of Jaredite descendants incorporated into Zarahemla's group, entirely separate peoples could also have resided within interaction range. Archaeological, art, and linguistic materials make clear that ethnic variety is an old phenomenon everywhere in tropical America where the *Book of Mormon* groups might have been located (mainline archaeologists who have not carefully examined the literature on this topic continue generally to ignore that variety). Even Joseph Smith recognized such a possibility. He once "quoted with approval from the pulpit reports of

certain Toltec legends which would make it appear that those people had come [to Mexico] originally from the Near East in the time of Moses."[18] And why not, Nibley continued? "There is not a word in the *Book of Mormon* to prevent the coming to this hemisphere of any number of people from any part of the world at any time, provided only that they come with the direction of the Lord; and even this requirement must not be too strictly interpreted," considering the condition of the "Mulekites" after their arrival.[19]

A particularly interesting case of such external evidence involves a scene on a monument located at an archaeological site that I consider to be the prime candidate for the city of Mulek. As explained elsewhere,[20] the site of La Venta in southern Mexico qualifies remarkably well as the city of Mulek. It was one of the great centers of Olmec civilization, whose distribution and dates remind us of Jaredite society. Stela 3 at La Venta is a basalt slab fourteen feet high and weighing fifty tons.[21] It is thought to date to about 600 B.C., or a little later, at or just after the late Olmec (Jaredite?) inhabitants abandoned the site. Carved on the stone is a scene in which a person of obviouly high social status, whose facial features look like those shown in some earlier Olmec art, confronts a prominent man who appears to a number of (non-Mormon) art historians like a Jew. This scene has been interpreted by archaeologists as a formal encounter between leaders of different ethnic groups. For instance, the late expert on Mesoamerican art, Tatiana Proskouriakoff, considered that Stela 3 shows "two racially distinct groups of people" and that "the group of the [Jewish-looking] bearded stranger ultimately gained ascendancy." She concluded, thus, that "the culture of La Venta [thereafter] contained a strong foreign component."[22] Latter-day Saints may wonder whether Mulek or some other person in his party might even be the Jew represented on Stela 3, considering the date and the location at a site very suitable to have been the "city of Mulek." At the least we see that ethnic and cultural variety existed in Mesoamerica where and when we would expect evidence of Mulek's group to show up.[23]

Why the Nephite record does not comment on "others"

Why, given the points we have been examining, didn't Nephite historians mention "other" people more explicitly in their record? Several reasons may be suggested. First, note that the record does clearly mention the people of Zarahemla and the descendants of others who arrived with Mulek and even tells us that they outnumbered the Nephites by descent (see Mosiah 25:1). Yet these writers remain uninterested in the "Mulekites" as a group, not even offering a name for them in their entirety. The entire body of information on them would hardly occupy a single page in our scripture.

This lack of concern has to do with the fact that the focus of the record is the Nephites. To the Nephite record keepers, all other groups were insignificant, except as they challenged Nephite rulership. Apparently the "Mulekites" never did so as a group unified by their origin. Probably no such challenge occurred because they never saw themselves as a single group.

A comparison might be made to the descendants of the early American colonizing ship, the *Mayflower*. There is minor prestige in being a descendant of someone on that ship, but there has never been a *Mayflower* movement in our country's politics. Similarly, it appears that no powerful origin account or belief system united those on the ship that brought Mulek (as there was for Nephites and Lamanites). Instead they only constituted a residual category of interest to us in historical retrospect. When there was challenge to Nephite control, it is said to have come from "dissenters," or "Amlicites," or "king-men," some or all of whom might have been of "Mulekite" descent, but that fact was evidently incidental. No doubt a majority of the "Mulekites" went right on peacefully accepting domination by Nephite overlords, as Mosiah 25:13 makes clear.

What view of the Lamanites did the Nephites have that sheds light on the question of "others"? We may see a clarifying parallel to the Nephite-Lamanite relationship in how Mormons viewed "the

Indians" in western America during the nineteenth century. Pioneer historical materials mention "Indians" about the same proportion of the time as the Nephite record mentions the "Mulekites," that is, rarely. This was not because the natives were considered a mystery. On the contrary, Latter-day Saint pioneers had an explanation for "the Indians" which they considered adequate—they were thought to be generic "Lamanites." With a few exceptions at a local level, no more detailed labelling or description was ever considered needed. Overall, "Indians"/"Lamanites" were of only occasional, theoretical concern, as long as they did not make trouble. When they were a problem, the attention they received was, again, normally local. Periodic attempts to convert the Indians rarely had much practical effect, and this positive concern for them tended to be overwhelmed by the "practical" aim to put the natives in their (dominated) place.

Wouldn't the Nephites have dealt with their "Lamanites" about like the Latter-day Saints with theirs? (Notice that the mixed message—hope for converting the benighted ones but tough military measures, too—familiar in early Utah history, was also found in Enos 1:14, 20 and 24.) Thus Nephites in a particular area might have noted differences between one group or subtribe of "Lamanites" and another, while people who talked about the situation only from what they heard in the capital city would have generalized, with little interest in details. For example, it is only in the detailed account of Ammon's missionary travels that we learn that Lamoni and his people were not simply "Lamanites" in general but tribally distinct Ishmaelites inhabiting a region of their own (see Alma 17:19, 21). At the level of concern of the keepers of the overall Nephite account, nevertheless, one "Lamanite" must have seemed pretty much equivalent to any other "Lamanite," as Jacob 1:14 assumes. The Nephites' generic category of "Lamanite" could have lumped together a variety of groups differing in culture, language and physical appearance without any useful purpose being served, in Nephite eyes, by distinguishing among them. (Of course the original records may have gone into more detail, but all we have is Mormon's edited

version of those, plus the small plates of Nephi.)

A final reason why the scripture lacks more explicit mention of "others" may be that the writers did not want to waste space on their plates telling of things they considered obvious or insignificant. For example, they nowhere tell us that the Nephites made and used pottery. Any ancient historian would be considered eccentric if he had written, "And some of our women also made pottery." To anyone of his time it would seem absurd to say so because "everybody knows that." The obvious is rarely recorded in historical documents because it seems pointless to do so. "The people of Zarahemla," "the Lamanites," "the Amalekites" and the like get mentioned in the *Book of Mormon*, not because of who they were but because of particular things they did in relation to the Nephites. They were historically significant actors in some ways at certain moments from a Nephite point of view. But neither Mormon nor any other Nephite writer would waste time and precious space on the plates by adding pointlessly, "Incidentally, there were some other bunches of people around too."

"Others" among the Lamanites

We have already noted that the initial Lamanite faction had an edge in numbers when the Nephites' first split from them. We have also seen that the numbers of Nephites implied by statements and events in their early history was greater than natural births could have accounted for. Growth in population of the Lamanites is still harder to explain.

Jarom 1:5-6 tells us that not long after 400 B.C. the Nephites had "waxed strong in the land," yet the Lamanites "were exceeding more numerous than were...the Nephites." Earlier, Enos 1:20 had characterized the Lamanites as wild, ferocious, blood-thirsty hunters, eating raw meat and wandering in the wilderness mostly unclothed. Jarom echoes that picture (see Jarom 1:6). I suggest that we should discount this dark portrait of the Lamanites on account of its clear measure of ethnic prejudice and its lack of first-hand observation on

the part of the Nephite record keepers.[24] But regardless of qualifications, we are left with the fact that the Lamanites, who are said to have been supported by a hunting economy, greatly outnumbered the Nephites, who were cultivators.

This situation is so contrary to the record of human history that it cannot be accepted at face value.[25] Typically, hunting peoples do not capture enough food energy in the form of game, plus non-cultivated plant foods they gather, to feed as large or as dense a population as farmers can. Almost invariably, settled agriculturalists successfully support a population a number of times greater. It would be incredible for Lamanites living only under the economic regime reported by Enos to have supported the superior population he credits to them. How can we explain their numbers?

Only one explanation is plausible. The early Lamanites had to have included, or to have dominated, other people who lived by cultivation. Their crops would have been essential to support the growth in overall "Lamanite" population. Such a situation is not uncommon in history; predatory hunter/warrior groups often enough have come to control passive agriculturalists off whose production they feed via taxation or tribute. Given the personal aggressiveness of Laman and Lemuel, it would be no surprise if they had immediately begun seizing power over localized populations of "other" farmers if they encountered any. After all, that is what the Lamanites later did to the Zeniffites, taking a "tax" of up to half their production (see Mosiah 7 and 9). But this scenario works only if a settled, non-Lehite population already existed in the land of promise when Lehi came.

The text goes on to tell us that by the first century B.C. Lamanite expansion had spread "through the wilderness on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers' first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore" (Alma 22:28). Note that a phrase in this verse supports the picture of a Lamanite warrior element coexisting with settled people: "the more idle part of the Lamanites lived in the wilderness,

and dwelt in tents." Hence only part of the Lamanite population were hunters, while others were settled, presumably farming, people. The latter group would have been of relatively little concern to the Nephites and thus would not be further mentioned by them because it was the wild types who spearheaded the attacks on the Nephites.

Confirmation of the pattern of dominance of subject groups comes from the mention of cities and other evidences of a civilized way of life among the Lamanites. The brief Nephite record does not bother to tell how the transition from the early nomadic Lamanite pattern to settled life occurred, but the text assures us that change they did, at least some portions of the Lamanite population did. By the time the sons of Mosiah reached the land of Nephi to preach, about 90 B.C., "the Lamanites and the Amalekites and the people of Amulon had built a great city, which was called Jerusalem" (Alma, 21:2). However, the Amalekites and Amulonites are pictured as exploiters of others, not as basic builders of advanced culture. They could not have flourished had there not been an infrastructure of agricultural producers to support them. Other cities, too, are mentioned among the Lamanites—Nephi, Lemuel and Shimnilom by name, plus others unnamed (see Alma 23:4, 11-12).[26]

The Nephites kept on reporting the daunting scale of Lamanite military manpower (see Alma 2:24, 28; 49:6; 51:11; Helaman 1:19). This implies a base population from which the Lamanites could keep drawing an almost inexhaustible supply of sword fodder.[27] Such a large population is even more difficult to account for by natural increase of the original Laman-Lemuel faction than in the case of Nephi's group, for the eventual Lamanite absolute numbers are disproportionately high. None of this demographic picture makes sense unless "others" had become part of the Lamanite economy and polity.

Beyond warfare, other unexpected developments among the Lamanites also demand explanation. Comparative study of ancient societies tells us that their relatively complex system of rulership, where a great king dominated subordinate kings whom he had

commissioned, as reported in Alma 20-22, would be unlikely except among a fairly populous farming people. Also, note that a "palace" was used by the Lamanite great king (see Alma 22:2; perhaps the same structure Noah had earlier built as reported in Mosiah 11:9), but no such building is indicated for the Nephites. The institution of kingship was obviously highly developed among the Lamanites. Moreover, the logistics of Lamanite military campaigns, which they carried on at a great distance from home territory (see, for example, Alma 50:11-32), calls for considerable technological and sociocultural sophistication as well as a large noncombatant population. It is true that dissenters from among the Nephites provided certain knowledge to the Lamanites (compare Alma 47:36), but local human and natural resources on a large scale and a fairly long tradition of locally adaptive technology would have been required in order to bring the ambitions of the dissenters to realization. As we saw in the case of the crops passed down from earlier times, it is quite unthinkable that all this cultural apparatus was simply invented by the reportedly backward Lamanites within the span of a few centuries. Some, perhaps most, of the required cultural background had to derive from pre-Lehite peoples.

As we saw above, Lehi's prophecy in 2 Nephi 2 called for "other nations" to be near at hand and influential upon the Lamanites after their rebellion against Nephi and the Lord became obvious. The point is recalled here in connection with our discussion of the growth in Lamanite numbers.

Despite the brevity of the text about Lamanite society there are specific statements and situations that alert us to the presence of "others" among them. Two key cases involve those identified as the Amulonites and the Amalekites.

The Amulonites originated when the fugitive priests of Noah captured 24 Lamanite women as substitute wives (see Mosiah 20:4-5, 18, 23). From that small beginning, within fifty or sixty years their numbers rose to where they "were as numerous, nearly, as were the Nephites" (Alma 43:14). Since the Nephites commanded tens of

thousands of soldiers at the time, the Amulonites would have had almost the same number. Using a common figure of one soldier for each five of the total population, this would put their entire group at 100,000 or more. But by natural increase the 24 priests and their wives could not have produced even a hundredth of that total in the time indicated. Moreover they had had their own demographic difficulties, for we learn from Alma 25:4 that at one point in time "almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren, who were the priests of Noah," had been "slain by the hands of the Nephites." So who were left to constitute this large people?

The only possible explanation for their dramatic growth in numbers is that they gained control over and incorporated "other" people. (These were not Lamanites *per se,* it appears from Alma 23:14 and 43:13.) We see how this was done through the political pattern sketched in Alma 25:5. Amulonite survivors of their wars with the Nephites "having fled into the east wilderness...usurped the power and authority over the Lamanites [*in Nephite terms*]" dwelling in that area. They had already had a lesson in usurpation when they got control over Alma and his people in the land of Helam. "The king of the Lamanites had granted unto Amulon that he should be a king and a ruler over his [*own Amulonite*] people, who were in the land of Helam," as well as over subject Alma and company (Mosiah 23:39). In the eyes of the rapacious priests and those who followed and modelled after them, political and economic exploitation of subject populations must have seemed a much superior way to "earn" a good living than the humdrum labor they had had to resort to in their original land, where they "had begun to till the ground" (Mosiah 23:31). We cannot say definitely what the origins of the subjects were who ended up under Amulonite control, but their startling numbers indicate that Lehi's descendants alone cannot account for them.

More mysterious are the Amalekites. They are first mentioned at Alma 21:1-8 where a tiny window on their culture and location in a part of the land of Nephi is opened for us. The time was approximately 90 B.C., but they were already powerful, being mentioned on a par with the

Amulonites. Nothing is said about when or under what circumstances they originated. Alma 21:8 has an Amalekite speaker contrast "thy [Aaron's, and thus Mosiah's] fathers" from "our [Amalekite] fathers." This seems to set their ancestry apart from that of the core Nephites in Zarahemla, but neither were they from the Lamanite side, for Alma 43:13 calls them dissenters from the Nephites.

The Amalekite questioner further implies that his forebears included men who spoke prophetically. Could they have been of Mulek's group, or of the Jaredites, or of still another people? At least the presence of the Amalekites assures us that the *Book of Mormon* text as we now have it does not include all the information it might have about peoples in the land of Nephi lumped together by the Nephite writers as "Lamanites."

Alma 24:29 raises the possibility of still another group being present. It says that among those converted by the Nephite missionaries, "there were none who were [1] Amalekites or [2] Amulonites or [3] who were of the order of Nehor, but they [the converts] were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel." This phrasing leaves unclear whether those "of the order of Nehor" were merely Amalekites or Amulonites who followed the Nehorite persuasion, or whether, as seems equally likely, the Nehorites constituted a group of their own. Nehor was, after all, a Jaredite personal name; that "order" may have been particularly oriented to Jaredite survivors.

The expression "Lamanitish servants," applied to certain of King Lamoni's servants (Alma 17:26), invites our consideration in this connection. Why not merely "Lamanite servants?" What is the significance of the "-ish" suffix? The English dictionary sense that is most applicable would be "somewhat, approximate." How might those servants have been only "somewhat" Lamanite?

The enigma arises again in a statement in Alma 3:7 referring to "Ishmaelitish women." We are told there that "the Lord God set a mark upon...Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women." Of course the wives of Nephi, Sam and Zoram

were all Ishmaelite women (see 1 Nephi 16:7). Does "Ishmaelitish women" mean something else here? If so, what, in terms of ethnicity and descent?

In at least two other places in the text I see possible evidence of "others." Mosiah 24:7 reports the Lamanites' practicing "all manner of wickedness and plunder, *except it were among their own brethren.*" Now, given this verse's context, those plundered do not appear to have been Nephites. Who is referred to? Possibly the statement means that the Lamanites considered it acceptable to plunder any community other than those involving immediate relatives or neighbors, but such a limited sense of "their own brethren" is without precedent in the text. Rather it seems to me that this expression tells us that certain portions of the Lamanites classified other segments of the population in their lands as being of different origin and thus subject to less protection. That is, Mosiah 24:7 could mean that Lamanites were plundering "Lamanites" not of that bloodline, and vice versa. Amulonites and Amalekites could have fallen into the target category as well as the Zeniffites, who certainly were "plundered" (see Mosiah 9:14). Yet it seems to me that plunderable "others," of non-Lehite stock, may have been at odds with "the [real] Lamanites" and thus have come into conflict with them (compare Mormon 8:8). That could explain Helaman 5:21, where there is mention of "an army of the Lamanites," whose existence in their homeland is strange since no war against the Nephites was going on or threatened at that time.

When we consider the obvious question of what language was used among the Lamanites, we learn nothing useful about "others." No indication is given of the use of translators or of problems in communication resulting from language difference. When Lamanites and Nephites are described as talking or writing to each other, nothing is said or hinted about what tongue they used. Their dialects that had diverged separately from the Hebrew which Nephi and Laman shared back in Jerusalem, if still spoken centuries later, might have been similar enough to permit everyday communication (although conversations about conceptual topics like religion would fare worse).

Note, however, that "the language of Nephi" which Mosiah 24:4 and 6 report as beginning to be taught by Nephite dissenters "among all the people of the Lamanites" was a writing system, not a spoken tongue as such, which verse 6 makes clear. Whether speakers of "other" languages were present or involved we simply cannot say on the basis of the brief record.

The dark skin attributed to the Lamanites has been interpreted by some readers of the *Book of Mormon* as indicating that Laman, Lemuel and those of Ishmael's family had mixed with "others" bearing darker pigmentation. The problem with that view is that the first mention of it is by Nephi himself (2 Nephi 5:21) shortly after the initial split in Lehi's group. The abruptness of the appearance of this "mark" upon the Lamanites cannot be reconciled with genetic mixing with a resident population for that would have required at least a generation to become evident in skin coloring. Again, near the time of Christ those Lamanites "who had united with the Nephites" had the curse "taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites" (3 Nephi 2:15). The idea that those changes had a genetic basis is not sustainable. However, it is indeed possible that "others" who, we have seen, must have been nearby, were more heavily pigmented than the Lehites, and they may have mixed with the Lamanite faction. If that were the case, it might have appeared to a Nephite observer, from the outside, that statistically "the Lamanites" had become darker. But we cannot confirm this possibility from statements in the record we currently possess.

"Others" among the Jaredites?

The major focus of this paper, as well as of the *Book of Mormon*, is the Nephites. A brief look at the Jaredite record is nevertheless worthwhile for what it seems to tell us about demographic processes comparable to those we have discovered in the Nephite record. Moroni's summary of Ether's Jaredite history is so concise that it is difficult to say much about their population history in relation to

Jared's original party, yet a few points stand out. It appears that for this earlier people, too, we must look to "other" groups to account plausibly for the indicated trends and numbers.

Figuring the demographic growth of Jared's party requires that we establish how many there were initially. Ether 6:16 indicates that the founding generation consisted of 24 males. The brother of Jared sired 22 sons and daughters, while Jared had twelve (see Ether 6:20). We can be confident that they had multiple wives. Estimating on the basis of these figures, the original party reasonably could have numbered on the order of 80 adults.[28]

Not many decades later, when Jared's grandsons, Corihor and Kib, were vigorous political leaders, we read of a "city" in a land, "Nehor," not previously mentioned (see Ether 7:9). This is the earliest "city" in the entire *Book of Mormon* record, yet no city is ever mentioned in the land of Moron, the capital "where the king [in Jared's line] dwelt" (Ether 7:5). Even if half the descendants from those on the eight barges had inexplicably settled in Nehor, the highest number we can imagine for them at this early date would be, say, a hundred people in the "city" and its land. That number could not have made much of a "city." Then one generation later, "the people [as a whole] had become exceeding numerous" (Ether 7:11). The scale of population suggested by these statements calls for "other" groups to have been incorporated under the Jaredite rulers.

Continued extraordinary population dynamics followed. In the next generation war resulted in destruction of "all the people of the kingdom...save it were thirty souls, and they who fled with the house of Omer" (Ether 9:12). Yet two kings later we read of the building of "many mighty cities" (Ether 9:23). Before long, drought caused the death of the king Heth "and all his household" except Shez (Ether 10:1-2). Quickly they again built up "many cities...and the people began again to spread over all the face of the land" (Ether 10:4). Centuries later, two million "mighty men, and also their wives and their children" (Ether 15:2) were slain while further warring armies and civilian supporters yet remained.

I find it not credible that these roller-coaster numbers could result strictly from the demographics of an original party of 80 adults. As with the groups reported in the Nephites' own record, a simpler and more compelling explanation is that groups not descended from the immigrant party were involved. If so, "the Jaredites" would have consisted of a combination of groups with cultures and languages beyond those that originated from the settlers on the first barges. But the picture is left unclear because Ether, a direct descendant of Jared, gives us only his line's history rather than an account of all the inhabitants of the land (consider, for example, Ether 10:30-31).[29] Furthermore, we have access only to Moroni's summary covering Ether's necessarily short history of thousands of years.

When all the considerations we have reviewed are weighed, I find it inescapable that there were substantial populations in the "promised land" throughout the period of the Nephite record, and very probably in the Jaredite era also. The status and origin of these peoples is never made clear because the writers never set out to do any such thing; they had other purposes. Yet we cannot understand the demographic or cultural history of Lehi's literal descendants without taking into account those other groups, too.

Hereafter, readers will not be justified in saying that the record fails to mention "others" but only that we readers have hitherto failed to observe what is said and implied about such people in the *Book of Mormon*. This is one more instance in which we see that much remains in that ancient record which we should try to elucidate by diligent analysis.

Notes To Chapter 4

[1] John L. Sorenson, "The Composition of Lehi's Family," printed as Chapter 1 in this volume, originally in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, editors, *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, 2 volumes, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990, 2:174-96.

[2] The numbers are in question particularly because we are not told how many years elapsed between the party's arrival in Bountiful and their splitting apart in the land of first inheritance in America. Before his death Lehi said of his son Jacob, "thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory" (2 Nephi 2:4). The probable Hebrew expression translated to English as "youth" indicates an age between ten or twelve at the low end ranging into the twenties. Given the fact that Lehi was already "aged" aboard ship, during which time Jacob was still a child needing to be "nourished" (1 Nephi 18:19), it seems unuely that Lehi's statement to Jacob in 2 Nephi 2 would have been many years later. Supposing two years aboard ship and two at the original landing site—they planted and harvested at least one crop—then Jacob could plausibly have been about twelve in Lehi's reference to his "youth."

[3] Compare, for example, George Cowgill, "On Causes and Consequences of Ancient and Modern Population Changes," *American Anthropologist* 77 (1975), pages 505-25: "Surges implying rates of natural increase of from 3 to 7 per 1000 per year over regions up to some tens of thousands of square kilometers, sustained over two or three centuries...have not been uncommon during the past few thousand years, but they are interspersed with periods of very slow growth or decline. Overall regional trends spanning a millennium or more show net population gains that are rarely more than what would have resulted from a steady rate of increase of 1 or 2 per 1000 per year.... It seems that rates of natural increase greater than about 6 or 7 per 1000 per year have occurred only very briefly and locally." At a rate of natural increase (births minus deaths) of a phenomenal 7 per 1000 population, the original 24 in the Nephite group would have doubled to 48 in 100 years, long after Jacob's death. Using the same rate, by the time of Jacob's encounter with Sherem the total number of adult Nephite males would not have exceeded ten—all of whom would have been relatives and all of whom would have known each other intimately. Of course Cowgill's numbers could be wrong, but where are the historical cases for colonizing groups under similar conditions that might contradict his findings? Without such cases we are left to pluck numbers out of the air.

[4] Anthony W. Ivins, "Are the Jaredites an Extinct People?" *Improvement Era* 6 (November 1902), pages 43-44; compare Omni 1:21.

[5] *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, page 54.

[6] The position of chief judge no doubt continued many of the key political functions of the former kings and perhaps in some form even the regal title "Nephi." Note that the chief judge was said to "reign" (Alma 7:2), and as head of state he personally led the Nephite armies (compare Alma 2:16 with Words of Mormon 1:13). Some of the trappings of the monarchy likely also continued under the system of judges, considering the reference to "thrones" (reflected in Alma 60:7, 11, and 21, and likely Helaman 6:19). Consider also the telling title applied in Alma 60:24 to the chief judge: "the great head of our government."

[7] John L. Sorenson, "The 'Mulekites,'" originally published in *BYU Studies* 30 (1990), pages 6-22.

[8] The argument and citations are in the section called "The Expansion of Zarahemla," in my *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 190-97.

[9] The Nephites had "taken possession of all the northern parts of the land...even until they came to the land which they called Bountiful" and then had "inhabited" that area as a strategic measure (see Alma 22:29, 33). But some remnants of the "Mulekites," though not of "the people of Zarahemla," must already have lived there, for that would be the general area where they encountered the wounded Jaredite ruler, Coriantumr. See Chapter 5, pages 117-120. The city Bountiful, like the cities of Mulek, Gid and Omner, was apparently in existence before the Nephites cleared out the Lamnanite squatters in that section of wilderness and fortified the zone (see Alma 50:13-15). They founded garrison cities which the text names, but Bountiful, Mulek, Gid and Omner, the cities nearest to the land northward, were evidently already in place, for their founding is not mentioned. Instead "the land Bountiful" was already a fact in Nephite geography (Alma 50:11).

[10] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 196-97, and *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, Provo: FARMS, 1990, page 245.

[11] As I pointed out in "The 'Mulekites,'" (Chapter 5 page 112) it is likely that there would not have been women aboard for most or all of the crew. For those men to reproduce, as is implied in the expression "exceeding numerous" in Omni, they would have had to find and take "native" or "other" women.

[12] See, initially, Morris Swadesh, "Linguistics as an Instrument of Prehistory," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959), pages 20-35; Dell Hymes, "Lexicostatistics So Far," *Current Anthropology* 1 (1960), pages 3-44, and also 5 (1964), pages 324-26. For later critiques and modifications, consult "lexicostatistics" and "glottochronology" in the index to John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, revised edition, vol. 2, Provo: Research Press, 1996.

[13] Historical cases are numerous, but the most obvious may be the Manchu rulers over China, who became completely Sinicized, and the Nahuatl-speaking "Toltecs" who invaded highland Guatemala as reported in the *Popol Vuh*. See Robert M. Carmack, "Toltec Influence on the Postclassic Culture History of Highland Guatemala," in *Archaeological Studies in Middle America*, Tulane University Middle American Research Institute Publication 26, 1970, pages 49-92.

[14] Robert F. Smith, "Some 'Neologisms' from the Mormon Canon" in *Conference on the Language of the Mormons*, May 31, 1973, Brigham Young University Language Research Center, 1973, pages 64-68; and personal communication.

[15] Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, page 245. The name Kishkumen should be added to Nibley's list. One wonders what considerations led Alma the younger to give two, and perhaps all three, of his sons Jaredite names: Shiblon and Corianton are unquestionably so, and Helaman could be. Perhaps they had been born and received their names during Alma's "idolatrous" phase (see Mosiah 27:8). I suppose that the idolatrous cult in which he was involved was old, ultimately Jaredite-derived, and common in Nephite society, in the broad sense, thanks to transmission through elements among the people of Zarahemla.

[16] Nibley, *Collected Works*, volume 5, page 246.

[17] B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 volumes, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1909, 3:137-38; J. M. Sjodahl, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927, pages 77-78.

[18] Nibley, volume 5 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, page 250-51; compare Joseph Fielding Smith, editor, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938, page 267.

[19] Nibley, *Collected Works*, volume 5, page 251.

[20] See my article "The 'Mulekites,'" page 12, reprinted here as Chapter 5 (see page 114) as well as *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 18-19.

[21] It is best viewed in an artist's reconstruction of the scene on the presently damaged stone pictured in Michael D. Coe, *America's First Civilization*, New York: American Heritage, 1968, pages 58-59.

[22] Tatiana Proskouriakoff, "Olmec and Maya Art: Problems of Their Stylistic Relation," in Elizabeth P. Benson, editor, *Dumbarton Oaks Conference on the Olmec, October 28th and 29th, 1967*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1968, page 121.

[23] For additional relevant material, see Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces*, New York: St. Martin's, 1963; Alejandro von Wuthenau, *Unexpected Faces in Ancient America, 1500 B.C.-A.D. 1500*, New York: Crown, 1975; and L. Gonzalez Calderón, *Cabecitas Olmecas*, Coatzacoalcos, México, privately printed, 1977.

[24] See my *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 90-91. The prejudice is clearly seen in Mosiah 9:1-2, Alma 26:23-25, and Helaman 14:10.

[25] See, for example, C. Daryll Forde, *Habitat, Economy and Society: A Geographical*

Introduction to Ethnology, 8th edition, London: Methuen, 1968.

[26] Nibley's picture of Jaredite nomads running around North America while also building cities (see Nibley's *Lehi in the Desert,* pages 225 and 419-20) may be cited against the picture here presented. But it is based on a selective and incomplete reading of the book of Ether and has no factual basis in history, tradition, or archaeology anywhere in the pre-Columbian New World; compare Bruce W. Warren's review of Hugh Nibley's *The World of the Jaredites,* in *University Archaeological Society Newsletter* 27 (June 1955), pages 1-6. In fact, Nibley grants that his paradigmatic "heroic city" of the nomads or Central Asia depended on settled populations of farmers (Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert,* page 226).

[27] *An Ancient American Setting,* pages 193-94.

[28] That comes out to only three men (founders) per "barge," which says something about how small the vessels were. Of course some of their sons might also have been physically adult while not fitting into the social classification of the generational peers and thus qualifying as full "friends" of Jared and his brother.

[29] *An Ancient American Setting,* pages 52-53.

The 'Mulekites'

The "people of Zarahemla" referred to in the Nephite record remain enigmatic to Latter-day Saint readers. Although they were more numerous than their neighbors, the Nephites-by-descent, only a handful of statements in the scripture give explicit information about them. No one has attempted to combine these into a systematic picture of who these people were and what their role in Nephite history was. This article redresses that lack.

Their origin: Zedekiah

Omni 1:15 and 18 provide our earliest information on this people's origin: "The people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon." When they were discovered by the Nephites, Zarahemla, the leader of the group, "gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory." (The recalled genealogy was written but is not in the record we have). According to Mosiah 25:2, Zarahemla asserted his descent from Zedekiah through Mulek, and that linkage is supported by Helaman 8:21: "Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us?" We must understand Zedekiah's background in order to picture the origin of Mulek's group.[1]

In the decade before Nephi's account opens, the small kingdom of Judah and her kings were tossed about by the winds and currents of politics and war among her three major neighbors—Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. The first two were allied against the newly resurgent Babylonians. Jehoiakim became king of Judah at age twenty-five in the fall of 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:36) at just about the time when Assyrian power was destroyed. In 606 and 605 B.C. the Egyptian army alone faced the Babylonians and in the latter year suffered a disastrous defeat at Carchemish in northern Syria on the Euphrates River.

Subsequently (through 601 B.C.) the Babylonians under Nebuchadrezzar II (Nebuchadnezzar in the *Old Testament*) battled the Egyptians in Palestine and Egypt without decisive results, while maintaining dominance over Judah. Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon in 598 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1). A Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem from December until 16 March 597 B.C. when they captured the city. Jehoiakim was slain during the siege and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who reigned only about three months before being exiled by Nebuchadrezzar II. On 22 April 597 B.C., the Babylonians replaced him with his father's brother, Zedekiah (earlier called Mattaniah, 2 Kings 24:17), who was then twenty-one years of age.[2]

Zedekiah eventually threw in his lot with the Egyptians under Apries/Hophra, contrary to Jeremiah's warnings (see, for example, Jeremiah 21:28). As a result, Nebuchadrezzar's army besieged Jerusalem from 15 January 588 to 7 January 587 B.C., when the approach of an Egyptian army caused the Babylonians to withdraw temporarily. They returned on 29 April. Finally, the walls of Jerusalem were breached on 19 July 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:3, Jeremiah 52:6-7). Massive looting followed and most of the population was deported to Babylonia. The temple was destroyed in mid-August (2 Kings 25:8-9).

During the fall of the city or soon afterward, some Jews escaped (see 2 Kings 25:4, 26), particularly to Egypt (Jeremiah was among the refugees, see Jeremiah 40:2-5, 43:7-8, 44:1), while others reached nearby Moab, Ammon and Edom (Jeremiah 40:11). Zedekiah attempted to escape but was captured, and before Nebuchadrezzar, he saw his sons slain then had his eyes put out before being taken to Babylon to captivity for the rest of his life (2 Kings 25:7).

The books of 2 Kings and Jeremiah picture Zedekiah as a second-rate king. First, he was a puppet imposed by the hated Babylonians. His eleven-year reign proved a time of general disaster for the nation, despite the fact that some people of the upper strata of society prospered temporarily. He was indecisive and two-faced in his dealings with Jeremiah and other prophets (for example, see Jeremiah 37:17-21). Jeremiah implies that he was an adulterer (Jeremiah

29:22-23). Overall he was adjudged an evil-doer in the eyes of the Lord, according to the Masoretic version of the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 52:2).

His own descendants may have put a positive face on his deeds, but the Nephites could have had access to enough information about Jeremiah's negative opinions of the king (Lehi probably knew that prophet personally—compare the easy reference to him in 1 Nephi 7:14) or at least through his writings (1 Nephi 5:13) to know that Zedekiah was under a moral cloud. To be his descendant, as Mulek was, may not have been considered commendable among either his descendants or the Nephites. That belief could have been a contributing reason why chief Zarahemla acceded to the appointment of Mosiah as ruler when the latter showed up among the people of Zarahemla.

Their origin: Mulek

"Mulek" appears as "Muloch" in the printer's manuscript of the *Book of Mormon* and as "Mulok" in printed editions from 1830 to 1852; the name then became "Mulek."[3] However it was pronounced, the name comes to us of course as Nephite ears heard it from the people of Zarahemla, and their pronunciation could have changed it somewhat from the Old World Hebrew familiar to us. What is clear throughout these variations in the spelling of the name is that we have here a reflex of the Hebrew root *mlk*, as in Hebrew *melek*, "king."

Nowhere in the Bible are the children of Zedekiah enumerated, let alone named, although we are told that he had daughters as well as sons (Jeremiah 43:6, 52:10). He was twenty-one on his accession to the throne. Being a noble, he already had the economic resources to have possessed a wife and child(ren) at that time. After his accession, he took multiple wives in the manner of the kings of Judah before him (Jeremiah, in 38:22-23, refers to Zedekiah's "wives") so that when he was captured at age thirty-two, he might have had a considerable progeny.

Robert F. Smith has mustered evidence[4] that a son of Zedekiah with a name recalling Mulek may actually be referred to in the Bible. Jeremiah 38:6 in the King James translation speaks of Jeremiah's being cast into "the dungeon [literally, "pit"] of Malchiah the son of Hammelech." The last five words should be rendered more accurately, "*Malkîyahû*, the son of the king." This personal name could have been abbreviated to something like "Mulek." Thus Jeremiah might have been put into "the [very] dungeon of Mulek[?], the son of the king [Zedekiah]" referred to in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 38:6. If Mulek was Zedekiah's eldest son, he could have been as old as fifteen at the time Jerusalem fell and as a prince may have had his own house, wherein there could have been a dungeon (Jeremiah 37:15-16 mentions one in a private house).

On the other hand, we do not know that Mulek was more than an infant. The younger he was, it would appear, the greater the likelihood that he could have escaped the notice of the Babylonians and subsequent slaughter at their hands. Whatever his age, he may have been secreted away to Egypt by family retainers and close associates of the king along with "the king's daughters" (Jeremiah 43:6-7).[5] At least it is obvious that in order to leave by sea for America, he would have had to reach a port. Since the Babylonians controlled the ports of Israel and Phoenicia at the time, going south to Egypt (among his father's allies) would be about the only possibility.[6]

Their history: Journey to the New World

Nothing is said about how much time intervened between the flight from Jerusalem of the party that included Mulek, which must have occurred at the time of the fall of the city, and their arrival in America. They are only said to have "journeyed in the wilderness" before crossing the ocean (Omni 1:16), but that "wilderness" journey may not have been more than weeks in length, say between Judah and Egypt. They had probably landed in the New World by 575 B.C.

The premier sailors of that era were the Phoenicians, who

frequented Egyptian ports and were familiar with the waters of the entire Mediterranean. Since they possessed the finest seafaring vessels and the widest knowledge of sailing conditions, it is reasonable for us to suppose that one or more of their vessels became the means (termed "the hand of the Lord" in Omni 1:16) by which Mulek and those with him were "brought...across the great waters." (Israel had only a minor seafaring tradition of its own, and there is no hint that the Mulek party received divine guidance in constructing a ship of their own as Nephi did.) Or "the hand of the Lord" could have meant his guiding them by means of the Urim and Thummim which they brought from the temple in Jerusalem.[7]

If we suppose that Phoenician or other experienced voyagers were involved, we can inquire why such sailors would be willing to sail off into "the unknown." In the first place, as professional seamen, they would normally be willing to undertake whatever voyage promised them sufficient compensation (Mulek's party of refugees from the royal court could well have had substantial wealth with them). Furthermore, the Phoenicians had confidence in their nautical abilities; where they were told they should sail may not have seemed as dauntingly "unknown" to them as the term implies to us. Herodotus tells that a few years earlier Necho II, Egypt's pharaoh in Mulek's day, had sent an expedition of Phoenicians by ship from Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea completely around the continent of Africa.[8] A hint of Phoenician influence among *Book of Mormon* peoples might be seen in two place names used in the American "promised land"—those of the dominant river, the Sidon, and of the land of Sidom; the latter was plausibly on the river (in addition to the near congruence of the names, compare Alma 15:14 and its possible implication of a riverine location, "they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized").[9]

The route followed by Mulek's vessel most likely would rather obviously have gone west through the Mediterranean and past the "pillars of Hercules" (strait of Gibraltar), an area familiar to Phoenician sailors. From there the prevailing winds and current

almost inexorably bear simple craft (for example, Columbus' ships, Thor Heyerdahl's *Ra II* raft, and many others) past the Canaries to the Caribbean. Significant cultural, historical and physical evidence for ancient one-way crossings exists, even though it is generally ignored by conventional scholars.[10]

There remains a slight possibility that they could have come via the Pacific, since neither a route nor a coastal landing point is specified in the *Book of Mormon*. But textual indications argue strongly for the Atlantic. First, the immigrant group's discovery of the last Jaredite survivor could only have been near the east sea (Ether 9:3 puts the position of the final battleground near that sea). Second, the "city of Mulek" was located only a few miles from the east sea (Alma 51:26), and we may suppose that this was where the newcomers settled first (compare Alma 8:7). Third, the Sidon River probably entered the east sea no great distance from this city of Mulek,[11] suggesting a plausible route along which the ancestors of Zarahemla and his people "came...up into the south wilderness" (Alma 22:31) to their city on the upper river where the Nephites later found them. To this evidence may be added two historico-geographical facts external to the scripture—the distance from Palestine to the American narrow-neck promised land was shorter via the Atlantic than the Pacific, and the expertise of Mediterranean mariners was oriented westward, not eastward into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In my view, that they traveled via the Atlantic is certain.

The size of the party accompanying Mulek is not even hinted at. However, we are justified in making some fairly firm inferences. Even if only a single vessel made the trip—and there might have been more than one—a substantial crew would have been involved (Phoenician ships could be large as those used by Columbus). The number would likely have been more than twenty. A ship with a predominantly Israelite crew probably could not have been found; the people of Judah were largely landlubbers, with minor exceptions. In terms of culture, ethnicity and language, the crew would likely have been a heterogeneous, mixed-Mediterranean lot, for the term "Phoenician"

often did not signify an ethnically uniform group. And since we know nothing of who might have been passengers (Mulek was one, though clearly he must have had attendants along, in view of his relative youth), we cannot tell if women were brought. There could have been some, but the common crewmen would have been single. Their genes would have continued only by their finding native women in the new land. Nibley saw Greek names in the Nephite record;[12] it would not be surprising for certain Greek (or Egyptian, for that matter) influences to have reached America via men in the crew of Mulek's ship.

If a Phoenician vessel was used, those aboard it quite surely would have been socially and culturally diverse. In the first place, those surrounding Mulek would have been from Zedekiah's court, the very crowd whom the Lord, speaking through Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Lehi, frequently attacked as being wayward, disobedient and semipagan. Many of the elite of Jerusalem were worshippers of alien gods, as shown for example by the condemnation heaped on their heretical rites in Jeremiah 7 (compare 2 Kings 23). Likely no Levitical priests were among them, "and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator" (Omni 1:17). We can suppose that beliefs and ways of worship contrary to the words of the prophets and the law of Moses brought along by any sample of Judahites from Zedekiah's circle who managed to get away would contribute to their heretical condition. There could have been even more divergent practices among the crew of the vessel.

After arriving, descendants of the group "had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time" (Omni 1:17). The members of the original party would have had mixed motives in making the voyage in the first place—some would simply have been doing a nautical job, after which they hoped (vainly it appears) to return home. Some may simply have been adventurous. Certain ones may have been merely political and economic refugees from the Babylonians. A few, perhaps, had a sense of divine mission although the *Book of Mormon* gives us no hint of it. Upon landing, these differing agendas could have led to conflict, perhaps not least

over the limited number of women, if any.

"Their language had become corrupted" (Omni 1:17), as Mosiah saw things. This plausibly had to do with the voyaging group's speaking more than one tongue to begin with, rather than their having a single original language, the Hebrew of Mulek, as the Nephites seem to have thought. Based on what historical linguists know about language change, it is highly unlikely that if Hebrew had been the exclusive tongue of Mulek's party, their idiom would have changed in three hundred years so as to be unintelligible to Mosiah. (By the time of their meeting with the people of Zarahemla, Mosiah and his people as well may have come to know a second tongue from their centuries of dwelling in the land of Nephi.)

Also relevant to the language question is the scientifically established probability that other peoples already inhabited virtually every area in the New World near a narrow neck where Mulek could have arrived. I suppose, as virtually all competent LDS scholars of the subject do, that the land in question was in Mesoamerica (southern Mexico and northern Central America). Still, we do not know how numerous the inhabitants might have been in any particular region in the early sixth century B.C. when Mulek and company arrived. The "Olmec culture" known from archaeology, which plausibly constituted or involved the Jaredites, for the most part disintegrated dramatically around 600-550 B.C., although population fragments clearly continued on bearing basic elements of the old culture to future generations.[13]

In *Book of Mormon* terms it is extremely unlikely that the entire Jaredite population showed up to be exterminated at the hill Ramah, as Latter-day Saints sometimes have inferred from the words of Ether. All in the organized armies may have done so, but inevitably there would have been those unwilling to be a part of the conflict, in remote byways at least. I presume that the Mulek party came ashore under war-disintegrated social conditions in which after a time they met and amalgamated with (perhaps even dominating) local fragments of the earlier society which they encountered at the margin of the central arena of the "final" battles. In the course of

amalgamation, the newcomers probably adopted the local tongue (likely a version of an early Mixe-Zoquean language). The subsequent wars among the immigrants reported in Omni 1:17 could well have been complicated by historical quarrels among the local survivors with whom they had become involved.

The geographical correlation of *Book of Mormon* and American landscape features that I follow tentatively places the city of Mulek at the site of La Venta in the southern Mexican state of Tabasco.[14] Most of this spectacular ruined place dates to Olmec times, but evidence also exists of later (re)inhabitation.[15] One of the most interesting items found there is Stela 3, a huge carved basalt slab. It is not clear when the piece was executed, but likely it was at the very end of the Olmec era or very soon after the site was abandoned not long after 600 B.C.[16] Some see it as a new style more than a continuation of the old "Olmec" one.[17] Stela 3 has carved on it a scene in which a person of evident high status, whose facial features find parallels in surviving people in the area as well as in Olmec art, is shown facing another prominent man who looks to a number of art historians like "a Jew." His striking beard and beaked nose are so prominent that he has been dubbed "Uncle Sam" by some observers. This scene has been viewed as a formal encounter between the leaders of two sharply different ethnic groups, one seemingly "Semitic."[18] Although a long shot, it is possible that we are viewing a "Mulekite" leader (even Mulek) together with a local chief from a group of folk survivors after the Jaredite debacle.[19]

"Mulekite" history from arrival to discovery by Mosiah

We are informed in Alma 22:30-31 (confirmed in Helaman 6:10 that the Mulek party touched first in the land northward before going south to where the Nephites found them. The reason for their not settling in the north is unclear in the scripture. A Mexican tradition reports such a group arriving by sea (when is unclear) guided by a stone through which their deity spoke to them.[20] They were said to be

seeking a destination that had been revealed to them. They first touched the coast on the northern Gulf of Mexico but did not settle until reaching a place south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Whether this tradition refers to the Mulek group or not, the Mexican party followed a remarkably similar set of movements, from landfall north of an isthmus, past that neck, then to a coastal zone in the land to the south, finally ending up inland.

The experience of the Mulek group in the land northward was presumably brief, yet it raises the question of interaction with the Jaredites. The eastern lowlands of the land northward had long been a stronghold of that people, and their very final battles took place there (Ether 9:3, 9; 10:20; 14:12; 15:8, 15). The chances are reasonable (though not certain) that the seaborne newcomers touching in the land northward would have encountered some Jaredites, if the latter were still engaged in their normal lifeways at the moment when the Judahite/Phoenician party arrived. It is possible, of course, that the newcomers did detect signs of population in the land northward and that this was why they chose to move on, but the scripture gives us no indication of that. Or perhaps the Jaredites were not oriented to life upon this stretch of coast and the new party did not explore inland. Thus the two peoples might at first have missed each other by sheer accident.

I consider it likely that the Jaredites at the moment of the "Mulekite" arrival were in the throes of civil war, unable to pay attention to what was happening along their coast involving the appearance of a small band of strangers (if they were seen at all). A long period of overlap between the two groups strikes me as highly unlikely. The Jaredite civilization, involving millions of people (Ether 15:2), would surely have come to the attention of the Mulek group had the latter lived only around a hundred miles away for decades, let alone centuries as some have supposed. Yet had the "Mulekites" arrived significantly prior to the struggle at Ramah, they would have become aware of or fatally involved in the extermination instead of fulfilling Ether's prophecy about entertaining Coriantumr (Ether

13:20-21). After all, the land Desolation, where the Nephites saw abundant evidence of the Jaredite final wars, abutted on the small land Bountiful, which in turn was only a few miles from the city of Mulek (Alma 22:29-31; 51:26, 32; 52:15-17, 22-23).

The newcomers are said to have discovered Coriantumr, not vice versa. Where might that contact have taken place? He could not have been a young man (note Ether 13:16-17), he had been very severely wounded in the final battle (Ether 15:28-32), and he had earlier suffered at least one serious injury in war (Ether 15:1) as well as probably others. With such physical limitations as these scriptures imply, it would be remarkable if he made more than a partial recovery from his near death at Ramah. Ether's prophecy to the king had indicated only that he would "receive a burial" by the new people. This statement, together with the fact that he lived only nine lunar months with the new group before passing away (Omni 1:21), can be seen as supporting the view that he was infirm when found.[21] Thus he is not likely to have traveled far on his own from the hill Ramah area. Yet he would surely have moved some distance, for the effects of the carnage in the final battle area would have been unbearable for him.

It seems to me most likely that, at whatever point Coriantumr was found between the hill Ramah and, probably, the city of Mulek, his discoverers transported him to their settlement base, and that there is where he executed the engraving on the "large stone" which eventually was borne to Mosiah's hands. (One wonders whatever happened to it at Zarahemla; it is mentioned only the once.) Several scenarios are possible to account for where and when he might have been discovered by the new group, but we have inadequate information to evaluate their relative likelihood.[22]

Nothing is said about how much time passed before the immigrants left their landfall to move "up into the south wilderness" (Alma 22:31), perhaps travelling approximately along the river Sidon, for they settled beside it in their city of Zarahemla. They may not have stayed long near the sea, where it could be oppressively hot and humid (as in Alma 51:33) compared with their Old World source area.

Or the wars said to have occurred among themselves (Omni 1:17) could have driven part of them inland. However, it could have taken decades if not centuries for sufficient population to grow and organize to permit a level of conflict deserving the name war. It seems to me likely that there was no substantial movement of Mulek's descendants to the uplands for a considerable period.

The *Book of Mormon* conveys nothing contrary to the view that Zarahemla's group had coalesced as a political unit only within his lifetime and shortly before Mosiah's arrival among them. If Zarahemla had had a long, strong tradition of rulership behind him, Mosiah likely would not have gained the king role over the combined society as readily as he seems to have done. Zarahemla is not said to have borne the title of king, though he ruled his group; given no title for his role, something like "chief" seems suitably descriptive considering the small scale of his polity, which may have numbered only a few thousand. (To Mosiah's group, they seemed "exceedingly numerous," but that expression is relative, for the refugee Nephites were themselves probably an exceedingly small group.)

Nowhere do we get a hint that the descendants of the people on the ship(s) that brought Mulek constituted a single political/ethnic unit prior to Zarahemla's day. No comprehensive term such as "Mulekite" is used to label them, suggesting that not all of those descended from those immigrants recognized Zedekiah's son as their head, nor perhaps any other one person. There may have been differences among the group over authority from the first, resulting ultimately in political fragmentation, with Zarahemla's group just one tribelet among a number tied only loosely together by economic links.

An interesting bit of evidence that there may have been varying traditions about what had happened among the Mulek group, and thus more than one social entity involved, comes from the account of Ammon. In Mosiah 7 we learn of his leading a party to locate "their brethren," the Zeniffites (even though Ammon was a "descendant of Zarahemla" [Mosiah 7:3, 13]),[23] who had earlier gone up to the land of Nephi in order to reoccupy the cities of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom. When

King Limhi reported to Ammon that he had sent out an exploring party which had discovered ruins and gold plates on a battleground to the distant north, one would think that Ammon would say something like, "Oh, yes, that would be the people who were destroyed, except for this one old man who lived among my ancestors, the descendants of Mulek." But Ammon gives no hint of making any such mental connection, either to the Coriantumr tradition or to Mulek. Perhaps he belonged to an element of Zarahemla's people who had simply never heard about Coriantumr's survival. Nor had Limhi any previous knowledge of the Jaredites, it appears, even though his grandfather had dwelt at Zarahemla when Coriantumr's stela had been brought there and read by $Mosiah_1$.

When the forefathers of Zarahemla's people reached the area that would become the land of Zarahemla, they likely had left others of their tradition behind in the lowlands where they originated. But at least by the time the stone of Coriantumr was fetched (Omni 1:20), these folks on the upper river must have had peaceful relations with those others for a party would have had to make a lengthy trip back down by the east sea to obtain the artifact and bring it to Mosiah to be read (Zarahemla was many days from the city of Mulek where the stone probably was worked—compare, for example, Alma 52:15-18).

Even with the addition of $Mosiah_1$'s contingent of Nephites to Zarahemla's people, the combined body was still not very numerous nor widespread. When King Benjamin assembled them all a generation later, it was still possible for all to gather at the city's temple on one day's notice (Mosiah 1:10) and for the planners to anticipate that the combined body would be able to hear the aged king's voice (Mosiah 2:1-8).[24]

Relations with the Nephites

It is difficult to interpret the extremely brief and one-sided account we have in Omni 1:13-19 of the joining of Mosiah's group with the people of Zarahemla. The story from the Nephite side represents

the event as not only peaceful but enthusiastically welcomed by the locals. From the point of view of some of the resident people, however, the transition may not have seemed so pleasant. The key reason why they "rejoiced" is said to have been that Mosiah brought sacred records when they had none. The impressive fact of literacy itself could have combined with possession of the mysterious sacred relics in Mosiah's possession—the plates of Nephi, the brass plates, Laban's sword, the Liahona—to confer an almost magical aura on Mosiah that validated his deserving the kingship. Besides, he may well have had the right of kingship by descent from the royal "Nephi" line among the original Nephites (Jacob 1:11); I doubt that he would have presumed to accept the kingship in Zarahemla—he was a sober man, not an opportunist—unless he qualified for the king role as a (the senior?) direct descendant of Nephi. Without a strong leadership mantle of such a sort, the people in his party might well not have accompanied him out of the land of Nephi, nor would he have had possession of the large plates, the official history of the kings.

In terms of the Old World tradition of the Judahite fathers of the "Mulekites," while Mosiah was not of the preferred royal line through Judah, at least he had major appurtenances of kingship that Zarahemla lacked. Zarahemla had only two qualifications—his current chiefly role and descent from Mulek, who, though of Judah and a descendant of David, was never himself king of Judah. Furthermore, even Mulek's father Zedekiah was king in Jerusalem only by virtue of being installed by the Babylonians as their puppet ruler. His qualifications apparently were not enough to prevail against Mosiah's strengths. (Since nothing more is heard about Zarahemla after Omni 1:18, he may have been less than vigorous by then and perhaps died soon after.)

Political amalgamation did not erase the ethnic distinction between the two groups. Mosiah 25:4 reports that in the time of $Mosiah_2$, the people of Zarahemla were numbered, for some purposes at least, separately from "the children of Nephi," that is, from "those who were descendants of Nephi." In their combined political

assembly, the two groups were separated "in two bodies." Obviously they spoke different everyday languages, although some became bilingual. Given these evidences of separateness, they probably also lived in different sectors in the city and land of Zarahemla. (The mass arrival of the Nephites could hardly have been accompanied by their simply settling haphazardly among those already present.)[25] How subsequently they may have come to interrelate through marriage is not indicated.

It is plausible that later "contentions" and "dissensions" in Nephite society were in part led by unhappy descendants of Zarahemla who considered that they were not given their due when Mosiah became king. At least one man who "was a descendant of Zarahemla," the Coriantumr of Helaman 1:15, "was a dissenter from among the Nephites" and came close to conquering the Nephites.[26] (Although if there were such unhappy descendants of Mulek who claimed special status because of "the blood of nobility" [Alma 51:21], they were less likely to have been the instigators of the "king-men" movement of later times than descendants of $Mosiah_1$, Benjamin or $Mosiah_2$, whose claims would have been much more immediate and documentable than in the case of descent through Zarahemla —compare Mosiah 29:7-9.)

A fascination with the extinct Jaredites was manifest among the Nephites from time to time, as in Mosiah 28:12. Mosiah translated the twenty-four gold plates of the Jaredites "because of the great anxiety of his people; for they were desirous beyond measure to know concerning those people who had been destroyed." Nibley identifies a number of names used among the Nephites that were clearly derived from the Jaredites and notes, "Five out of the six whose names are definitely Jaredite betray strong anti-Nephite leanings."[27] This permanent cultural impression on the Nephites he believes was made through the Mulek group. This unacknowledged influence from the Jaredites may have come via cultural syncretism between members of the Mulek group and local survivors from the Jaredite tradition. That process could have been so subtle (in the absence of written records)

that generations later the descendants either did not recognize that they were related to the extinct civilization and were curious about the mysterious ruins and artifacts left or else suspected that they were related and wished to know more.

The initial political amalgamation reported in Omni seemingly did not lead to genuine cultural integration but masked a diversity in lifeways that sometimes came forth as conflict in beliefs and behavior. Non-Nephite ways seem to have kept bubbling up from beneath the ideal social and cultural surface depicted by the Nephite elite record keepers. After all, the descendants of the people of Zarahemla probably always constituted a majority of "the folk" ("the people of the Nephites" in the record?).[28]

There are other evidences of this underlying influence. For example, the younger Alma, apparently like his cronies the sons of Mosiah,[29] "became a very wicked and an idolatrous man" and also "was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people" (Mosiah 27:8). This phrasing describes not just one personality but a distinct tradition of belief and rites. The study of culture history teaches us that one man or even one generation is most unlikely to independently originate a systematized pattern of belief and behavior involving idolatry, but rather that such a pattern draws on and incorporates past tradition.

The continuation of this cult might be seen a few years later in Alma 1:32, for many among the Nephites engaged "in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings...wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes...and all manner of wickedness." By the time of Mosiah 26:4-6, we learn that a sizable group constituted "a separate people as to their faith." Again it is plausible that they followed a preexisting tradition likely to have been related to the idolatrous beliefs mentioned earlier and which ultimately came from the people of Zarahemla. Three generations later "the more part of [the Nephites] had turned out of the way of righteousness, and...did turn unto *their own ways*, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver" (Helaman 6:31,

italics added). It seems probable to me that "their own ways" which involved idolatrous rites had a historical background most logically tied to the old cult of Zarahemla's people. As an anthropologist, I suspect that this pattern stayed on beneath the surface piety directed to Jehovah/Jesus Christ. The periodic reemergence to public view of the "old-time religion" with strong "Mulekite" elements in it may have constituted a large measure of the "falling away" so often lamented by the *Book of Mormon* leaders.[30]

The "Mulekites" in later Book of Mormon and post-Cumorah times

The last reference to this people (as "the seed of Zedekiah") occurs in Helaman 8:21. But they are not distinguished in any way in 3 Nephi or 4 Nephi, nor do the books of Mormon or Moroni refer to them. The revived division of *Book of Mormon* society into seven tribes reported in 4 Nephi 1:37-38 omits any indication of these people. I presume that they had become so amalgamated with the more prestigious Nephites (i.e., Lehi's descendents) that they no longer had a separate status worth mentioning.

Doctrine and Covenants 19:27 refers to the word of God going in modern times "to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant." Orson Pratt's note in the former edition of the scripture at that point cites Omni 1:14-19. Pratt and subsequent commentators assume that descendants of Mulek are to be found today indistinguishably mixed among "the Lamanites." *Doctrine and Covenants* 3:17-18 prophesies that the *Book of Mormon* will go forth to the Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites and Ishmaelites, making no distinction of Mulek's descendants.

While little is explicitly stated in the *Book of Mormon* about Mulek and those who came to America with him, what there is provides leads that permit constructing a broadened characterization of the group. It is clear that simply accepting the version of ethnic history written for us by the prophets in Nephi's line obscures

significant aspects of the role of those people whose ancestors were in Mulek's party.

Since ferreting out the details of what the *Book of Mormon* tells us about this particular "minor" group proves enlightening, we should also consider every detail told or implied about each other "minor" people. Doing so we can more fully appreciate their roles in that great history. Only by minute and informed scrutiny of the scriptural text on every subject can we prepare ourselves to grasp and appreciate new information that revelation may provide for us in the future.

Notes To Chapter 5

[1] Robert F. Smith summarizes the chronological and historical background in "Book of Mormon Event Structure: Ancient Near East," Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies Study Aid SMI-84, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985. Extensive references to standard popular and scholarly sources are given there. See also John W. Welch, "They Came from Jerusalem; Some Old World Perspectives on the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* 6 (September 1976): pages 27-30.

[2] Zedekiah was not officially crowned until at least 6 October or perhaps 1 April 596 B.C. Thus, as with other kings of that era in Judah, there were two overlapping "first years," and we cannot be sure which one Nephi referred to in 1 Nephi 1:4. All we know for certain is that his account opens sometime between about May 597 and April 596 B.C. See Smith's "Event Structure," pages 14-15; Jay H. Huber, "Lehi's 600-Year Prophecy and the Birth of Christ," FARMS, Preliminary Report HUB-82, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1983, pages 2-4; in particular Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 45,* 2nd edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946. The "about B.C. 600" which has appeared for years as a chronological

footnote to 1 Nephi in the *Book of Mormon* has proven to be in error, according to scholarship on Near Eastern history. The error was continued in the 1981 edition, despite the fact that the 1979 *LDS Bible Dictionary*, which obviously followed later but still outdated scholarly sources (as shown in the "B.C." entry on Chronology by comments under the "External History" column between 772 and 609 B.C.), inconsistently lists Zedekiah's reign as beginning in 598.

[3] *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference, volume 2: Mosiah-Alma*, 1st edition, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986, page 483.

[4] Smith's "Event Structure," page 16-17, where citations to the scholarly literature are given. Also, *FARMS Update*, February 1984, "New Information about Mulek, Son of the King." Nibley includes speculation about Mulek in his unique interpretation of the Lachish letters ostraca: *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, volume 8 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deeret Book and FARMS, 1989, pages 397-400.

[5] See again Smith's "Event Structure" for literature citations. He notes on page 18 that Benjamin Urrutia believes there is textual evidence that not necessarily every one of the king's sons was slain. For example, in 2 Kings 25:1-10 the Hebrew includes the word "all" five times (all his host, all the houses, etc.), yet when speaking of the princes, verse 7 says only that "the sons" of Zedekiah were slain, not "all" the sons. Ariel Crowley, "The Escape of Mulek," in his *About the Book of Mormon,* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961, pages 86-90, contains additional data and suggestions. According to a Jewish tradition (cited as Ginzberg, *Legends* IV:293; VI:382-83), Zedekiah had ten sons slain by Nebuchadrezzar. Also, examples cited from the *Old Testament* demonstrate that little ones, including male offspring, were consistently distinguished from sons, hence survival of an infant Mulek would not conflict with the statement in 2 Kings 25:7 about the slaying of the king's "sons." Examples are also given from the *Old Testament* where statements about the extermination of a descent line represents hyperbole, not fact (for example, see 2 Kings 11:1-3), so even a statement about all being slain could only be considered an approximation.

[6] Perhaps travel through the desert to reach Egypt constituted the journeying "in the wilderness" spoken of in Omni 1:16 (evidently prior to the voyage), or perhaps a longer, more arduous trip was required to reach Carthage or other Phoenician cities of the western Mediterranean from which the actual voyage may have departed for America.

[7] The history of what has been called Urim and Thummim is not clear. The Brother of Jared received one such device and brought it to America; it ended up in Moroni's hands, then it passed to Joseph Smith along with the plates of Nephi (*Doctrine & Covenents* 17:1). Abraham had a different one (Abraham 3:1, 4), which could have been passed down to his descendants, although we are

nowhere told what happened to it. Exodus 28:15-21 and other scriptures through 1 Samuel 28:6 witness that a different version of Urim and Thummim was constructed by Moses and used by him, by Aaron and by subsequent priests. It was remembered but not possessed by the Jews under Ezra following the Babylonian exile (Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65). $Mosiah_2$ had an interpreter device (Mosiah 8:13), which earlier may have been in the hands of his grandfather, the first king Mosiah, who perhaps used it to translate Coriantumr's engravings (Omni 1:20). We cannot be certain this was the Jaredite instrument, although it seems likely on the basis of Mosiah 8:12-15 (especially, "prepared from the beginning" and "who should possess this land") and Mosiah 28:11-17. Limhi's explorers could conceivably have found the interpreter, which had been left by Ether with his plates (Ether 15:33). But that could not be if $Mosiah_1$ and $Mosiah_2$ already had the interpreters; Ammon in Mosiah 8:13 indicates that the latter king did have the instrument, and his grandfather had apparently used it to read Coriantumr's engraving (see Omni 1:20). Mosiah 8:12-14 makes it quite clear in any case that Limhi had been given no such instrument by his search party when they got Ether's plates. Perhaps "Mulekite" explorers had found the Jaredite interpreters on the battlefield near the hill Ramah (while missing the twenty-four gold plates?). There was some early exploration because they found Coriantumr. Another possibility is that Mosiah might have received the Urim and Thummim that originated with Moses from the people of Zarahemia, who had retained it as a sacred relic since Mulek's time without being able to make it work. Perhaps someone in Mulek's party had been inspired to carry it from the temple in Jerusalem immediately before that structure was destroyed by the Babylonians. ("T.W.B." in the Millennial Star [76:552-57], speculated that Mulek's party took the Urim and Thummim from the temple and brought it to America.) If the Mexican tradition cited below refers to Mulek's group, then the "oracle" mentioned there might be from Jerusalem. Other explanations are possible. For example, might the Liahona have served as an interim interpreter for $Mosiah_1$ and $Mosiah_2$, with the interpreters from Ether actually being with the twenty-four gold plates but its nature unrecognized by either Ammon or Limhi?

[8] Herodotus, *The History*, translated by David Gene, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, IV:42. This Greek historian/geographer described the crew's observations on the sun as they completed the voyage around the continent, observations which now can be seen as demonstrating that the voyage was accurately recorded but which Herodutus thought were outright errors. See Smith's "Event Stucture," page 13, or the discussion by Cyrus H. Gordon in *Before Columbus: Link between the Old World and Ancient America*, New York: Crown Publishers, 1971.

[9] Janet Jensen in "Variations between Copies of the First Edition of the Book of

Mormon," *BYU Studies* 13 (Winter 1973), pages 214-22, observed that Sidon, the river, appears as "Sidom" once in the first (1830) edition (on page 226, line 5, now Alma 2:17). *Book of Mormon Critical Text* 2:526, observes that this spelling instance appeared both in the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition, then was changed in 1837 to Sidon. In my *An Ancient American Setting*, page 205, I discuss Sidom and note that at the time of the Spanish conquest, a name given by nearby Indians to the key site in the area I consider probably Sidom was *zactan*, "white lime" while the Semitic name Sidon, in Phoenicia, may be derived from "lime."

[10] Constance Irwin's *Fair Gods and Stone Faces: Ancient Seafarers and the World's Most Intriguing Riddle*, New York: St. Martin's, 1963, contains surprisingly substantial evidence, considering that it is a popular book, for her proposal that Phoenicians influenced early Mesomerica. But the scholarly work of Spanish archaeologist José Alcina Franch has the most impressive data. See particularly his three works: *Las 'Pintaderas' Mejicanas y sus Relaciones*, Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Institute "Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo," 1958; "Origen Transatlántico de la Cultura Indigena de America," *Revista Española de Anthropología Americana* 4 (1969), pages 9-64 [Madrid]; and *Pre-Columbian Art*, New York: Abrams, 1983. For Phoenician nautical technology as well as for a valuable summary of further provocative data supporting a connection to Mesoamerica, see a monograph by one of the participants in Heyerdahl's *Ra II* raft project, anthropologist Santiago Genovés T.: *Ra, una Balsa de Papyrus a través del Atlántico*, Cuademos: Serie Antropológica 25, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1972.

[11] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 25, 27.

[12] Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Co. and FARMS, 1987, volume 6, page 290.

[13] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 108-21, 249-51. Compare Philip Drucker and Robert F. Heizer, "Commentary on W. R. Coe and Robert Stuckenrath's Review of Excavations at La Venta, Tabasco, 1955," *Kroeber Anthropological Society, Papers*, no. 33 (Fall 1965), pages 52-53, and the comment by Paddock, *Dumbarton Oaks Conference on the Olmec, October 28th and 29th, 1967,* edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library Collection, 1968, page 39.

[14] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 120, 249-50. See also map 5, opposite page 36, and map 12, opposite page 240.

[15] Philip Drucker, Robert F. Heizer, and Robert J. Squier, *Excavations at La Venta, Tabasco, 1955,* Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 170, Washington D.C., 1959, page 215 and following. Robert F. Heizer, "New Observations on La Venta," in *Dumbarton Oaks Conference on the*

Olmec, pages 32-36.

[16] Elizabeth P. Benson, "Some Olmec Objects in the Robert Woods Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks," in *The Olmec and Their Neighbors: Essays in Memory of Matthew W. Stirling*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1981, pages 97-98; John F. Scott, "El Mesón, Veracruz, and its Monolithic Reliefs," *Baessler-Archiv* 25 (1977), page 103, citing in support literature by Pelliza, Bernal, Coe, Clewlow, Proskouriakoff and Smith.

[17] Tatiana Proskouriakoff, "Olmec and Maya Art: Problems of Their Stylistic Relation," in *Dumbarton Oaks Conference on the Olmec*, page 121, says: "The [three late stelae [of La Venta] represent a radical innovation in the mode of sculpture, and in the character of its themes." One of the altars, showing the presentation of a baby by an adult male could represent child-sacrifice (a prominent feature in Phoenician religion), or perhaps it represents an infant ancestor (Mulek?).

[18] Philip Drucker, "On the Nature of Olmec Polity," in *The Olmec and Their Neighbors*, page 44, mentions "he of the Uncle Sam chin-whiskers." Compare John F. Scott, "Post-Olmec Mesoamerica as Revealed in Its Art," *Actas, XLI Congreso International de Americanistas, Mexico, 2-7 September, 1973*, volume 2 México, 1975, page 385. A carving from El Mesón, Veracruz, and another from near there now moved to Alvarado, "show men in tall headdresses reminding one of the so called Semitic type on late La Venta reliefs."

[19] Proskouriakoff, "Olmec and Maya Art," pages 122-23, also considers that "two racially distinct groups of people" are shown on Stela 3, and that "the group of the bearded stranger ultimately gained ascendance," hence "the culture of La Venta contained a strong foreign component."

[20] John L. Sorenson, "The Twig of the Cedar," *Improvement Era* 60 (May 1957), pages 330-31, 338, 341-42. Reprinted as "Bible Prophecies of the Mulekites," in *A Book of Mormon Treasury*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959, pages 229-37. For more information on traditions, see my "Some Mesoamerican Traditions of Immigration by Sea," *El México Antguo* 8 (1955), pages 425-37 [México], available as FARMS Reprint SOR-55.

[21] Coriantumr was probably infirm despite the unique argument by Anthony W. Ivins in "Are the Jaredites an Extinct People?" *Improvement Era* 6 (November 1902), pages 43-44, that Coriantumr may have sired offspring while among the "Mulekites."

[22] Corianiumr might have been discovered by the Mulek group on or near the battleground during an exploratory probe inland as they paused briefly while coasting southward tovard their final destination; in that case Coriantumr made his final move via their vessel to a landing probably near "the city of Mulek." Other possibilities come to mind, however. One is that Coriantumr did travel by himself toward a location where he thought he might find some remnant population to give him succor. The site of the city of Mulek in my

geographical correlation, La Venta, was or had been one of the major centers of Jaredite-era settlement at this time, yet it as in a peripheral position in relation to most of the Olmec (Jaredite?) areas to the north of it. At La Venta a person like Coriantumr might hope to find people not totally caught up in the final struggle. If Coriantumr actually reached the place on his own (I estimate the distance at ninety beeline miles from Ramah but at least double that on the ground), the Mulek party could have found him almost where they abandoned their ship. It is no more than barely possible that La Venta Stela 3 was intended to picture the meeting of Mulek and Coriantumr. Another possibility is that Mulek's group, within a few years after settling on land, set out to search through the space separating them from the final battlefield, drawn onward by the fascinatingly fresh ruins of the just-dead civilization, only to find the single survivor. Finally, it is also possible that the "Mulekites," having happened to miss seeing signs of the Jaredites on the inhospitable coastal strip of dunes and estuaries in the norlh—which was all they saw of the land northward—settled down in the land southward for a decade or so of intensely localized pioneering concern, essentially ignorant of the old culture, before sending out an exploring party which then happened to come across the king. (I suppose that other survivors existed, as mentioned above, but not within the disrupted, depressing area of the last area where thousands of bodies/skeletons lay about. I think that zone must have been empty for a number of years.) Also, the "large stone" needs to be considered in relation to this geographical puzzle. The farther south the point where Coriantumr worked that stone in his last months, the more reasonable that it could have been carried from that point to Mosiah up in Zarahemla.

[23] It is not clear what is implied in descent and kinship terms by the fact that Ammon counted himself descended from Zarahemla while also considering Zeniff among his "brethren" who had gone to inherit the "land of our [Zeniff's] fathers first inheritance" in Lehi-Nephi (Mosiah 9:1). This combination seems to imply some sort of descent for Ammon both from the Nephite ancestors and from Zarahemla. If intermarriage between Nephite and Zarahemla-descended lines was involved, however, he could hardly have counted both as signifying patriarchal descent.

[24] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 155-57, for a discussion of the population and size of the land at this time.

[25] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 155-57, describes a bimodal settlement pattern which could reflect this distinction and which was found at the site of Santa Rosa, Chiapas, Mexico, which I consider the best candidate for Zarahemla; see also pages 190-91 and 315-16, on further settlement and social distinctions within the city. Social anthropologist Meyer Fortes, in "An Anthropologist's Apprenticeship," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (1978), pages 8, 14-15, describes an interesting parallel to the social setting, from a

modern scene, among the Tallensi in Africa:

> "We were from the begining confronted with the basic division between the Namoos, who claim to be immigrant Mamprussi by origin and have exclusive hereditary rights in an office generally glossed as the chiefship, on the one hand [compare Mosiah's Nephites], and the 'real Tallensi,' Talis as they called themselves, on the other, who claim to be the autochthonous inhabitants of the country with exclusive rights to the office of Tendaana or 'Custodian of the Earth' [compare the people of Zarahemla]. It did not take long to discover that, totally identical as were the ways of life of these two sections of the tribe, and intimately interconnected as they were by kinship, marriage, and residence, the division was deep and fundamental."

[26] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 161-65, discusses "dissensions." See also pages 195-7 on the Amlicites, whom I suggest to have been of the people of Zarahemla.

[27] Nibley, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, page 245. See also John A. Tvedtnes, "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," *Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Newsletter and Proceedings* 141 (December 1977), pages 1-8, reprinted as FARMS Reprint TVE-77.

[28] A careful study needs to be made to detect differences in usage in the text of the Book of Mormon among the expressions "Nephites," "people of Nephi," "people of the Nephites," and "children of Nephi." Note the puzzling use of terms in Helaman 1:1.

[29] The name of one of the close associates of the sons of Mosiah in this business, Muloki (Alma 20:2), could mean "from Mulok (Mulek?)" or *Mulekite* in Hebrew. Meanwhile, Alma had two sons with Jaredite ("Mulekite?") names—Shiblon and Corianton.

[30] The seemingly anomalous Zoramite worship was actually "the virtual counterpart" to a Jewish prayer rite (*Book of Mormon Critical Text*, 2:639-40), suggesting that other religious activities that seemed scandalous to the orthodox Nephite prophets might have a similar source. Compare *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 216-19.

The Settlements of Book of Mormon Peoples

A neglected aspect of *Book of Mormon* studies is analyzing what the text says about the patterns of settlement of its peoples. To understand an ancient document, its authors, and its history requires asking where the groups it describes lived on the face of their lands, for the life of any people depends to an important degree on how many of them there are and on their space-determined interactions with each other and with outsiders. We cannot grasp what was going on among them unless we can characterize how houses, neighborhoods, communities and lands were arranged. Questions about Nephite, Lamanite and Jaredite settlement patterns have not previously been addressed. The aim of this article is to lay out some of the relevant questions and to search the text for preliminary answers.

The study does not aim to settle questions of exactly where in the Western Hemisphere *Book of Mormon* groups dwelt. Rather, we shall be mainly reconstructing part of the "ethnogeography" of the Nephites, that is, how they themselves conceptualized the divisions of their living space.

The Nephite record provided for us by Mormon and Moroni is our main source of information. Most of the data on settlement forms that it contains we have received via the mind and language of Mormon, who lived in the fourth century A.D. He was the recipient of a long tradition of geographical thought and recording by his predecessors. This accumulated knowledge of his people reached him through the official national archive, which he controlled (see Mormon 1:2-4; 2:17; 6:6). Moreover, he personally travelled throughout most of Nephite territory (see Mormon 1:6-7; 2:3, 16, 27-9, etc.) He was, therefore, able to provide us with excerpts from the earlier records which were in his hands, as well as to give us interpretive statements of his own that reflected cumulative Nephite knowledge and ideas on settlement matters.

What we learn about Lamanite settlements is more limited. It comes from a few eyewitness accounts of visitors among them (for example, the sons of Mosiah who served as missionaries to the Lamanites). Mormon abstracted and sometimes quoted from those sources.

At hundreds of points in the scriptural text we find information spelling out or hinting at settlement patterns. Taking them all into account, we learn that Nephite (and probably Lamanite) thought crystallized at several analytical levels.

Level 1: The earth as a whole

Their ancestral traditions and recorded prophecies made their descendants aware of places as diverse as Jerusalem in the land of Israel (see, for example, 1 Nephi chapters 1, 3-4, 5:16), Egypt (see, for example, Alma 36:28), Arabia (see 1 Nephi chapters 16-17), the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (see 1 Nephi 13:10-12 and chapters 17-18), and the lands of "the Gentiles," that is, Europeans of the Christian tradition (see, for example, 1 Nephi chapter 13; 3 Nephi 28:27-32). Indeed, they had a mental model of the earth as a planetary globe that was part of the solar system (see Helaman 12:15).

Level 2: The promised land as a unit

The lands inhabited by the Nephites and Lamanites were considered one unit, in stated or implied contrast to more distant lands (see, for example, 1 Nephi 13:10-12; 2 Nephi 1:5-11; Alma 22:27-34). The "land of promise," or "this land," as announced and blessed by $Lehi_1$, was still a conceptual unity at the moment when the Savior appeared, for his announcement of the destruction of the wicked cities (see 3 Nephi 9, compare 8:11-12) refers to areas and cities whose names and geographical relationships belong within the territory already referred to as the promised land (see, for example, 3 Nephi 8:11-12).

Beyond the historical and prophetic statements about the Old World mentioned above, the only statement in the text that refers to lands beyond the conceptual bound of "our land" is by $Lehi_1$ in 2 Nephi 1:11. He prophesied that at some point in time the Lord would bring "other nations" upon them and that these would "take away from them the lands of their possessions." This statement makes clear that geographically those nations would exist outside Lehi's promised space, although not necessarily at a great distance. With that one exception all statements in the scriptural record are about the delimited territory entitled "the land of promise."[1]

Later, a good deal of emphasis was put on the distinction between the land northward and the land southward (see below), yet the integral nature of the promised land as a whole was not lost. Thus, following the advent of Jesus Christ at the city Bountiful, we are told that the church of God was established "in all the lands round about" (that is, round about centrally-located Bountiful) and then "upon all the face of the land" (4 Nephi 1:1-2). Again, in the final days of the Nephites, the overall territory involved remained essentially the same as it had four centuries previous. Lamanite armies once more came from the land of Nephi, which had always been their homeland, to attack the Nephites, first "in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon" (Mormon 1:10). Soon afterward the Lamanites pressed the attack to the narrow neck itself, again repeating what had happened in the first century B.C. (see Helaman 4:5-8 and Mormon 4:1 ff.) Clearly the land of promise ("the lands of our inheritance," Mormon 2:27) was the primary settlement bloc in Nephite tradition from first to last.

Level 3: Land southward and land northward

Details and terminology of the mental map held in Nephite culture (and also that of the Lamanites) of course developed over time. In early Nephite days, their area of concern was strictly the land of Nephi (up to Omni 1:12, possibly about 230 B.C.) Later, when $Mosiah_1$ had moved to the local land of Zarahemla (see Omni 1:13),

they still seem to have had no basis for realizing that there was a narrow neck of land or a land northward. (Perhaps the land southward/land northward dichotomy had not yet been conceptualized, at least among the provincial Zeniffites, at the time when king Limhi's exploring party traveled from Nephi to the final Jaredite battleground, on the order of 80 B.C., which would explain their failure to grasp the fact that they had passed through a narrow neck; see Mosiah 21:25-6). But among the literate elites by about 75 B.C., it is evident that both Amalickiah in Nephi and captain Moroni in Zarahemla were aware of the land northward as a distinct feature (see Alma 50:29; 51:30). At about the same time this conceptual distinction is laid out clearly in the geographical summary given in Alma 22:27-34 (although perhaps the clarity about the north-south division shown there owes partly to the fact that it was Mormon who wrote it in the fourth century A.D.)

By the fourth decade before the time of Christ, the division of the promised land at the isthmus had become conceptualized in terms of history—"the land of Lehi" (the land southward) was where the Lord had brought that founder/patriarch, while "the land of Mulek" or land northward had been where the Jewish prince's group had first landed (see Helaman 6:10).

Level 4: Extended lands, or realms

A more detailed level of geographical reference in the Nephite mind was the extended land, or realm. The basis was political in one sense—a realm was a sector ruled consistently by a Nephite or a Lamanite king.

For the first few centuries of the presence in the promised land of Lehi's descendants, as far as the text indicates, only two realms existed. The local land of Nephi was Nephite occupied, while the coastal lowlands between highland Nephi and the "west sea"—"the land of first inheritance" (Alma 22:28)—was the home and realm of the Lamanites.[2] A strong topographical and ecological contrast—hot,

humid lowland vs. cooler highland—backed up the distinction in rulership for the first three centuries or so.

After Mosiah$_1$'s flight from Nephi to Zarahemla, the Lamanites gained control over the former Nephite realm in the uplands and combined it with the west coast littoral. In time, the city of Nephi (renamed by the Lamanites Lehi-Nephi) became the capital of a greatly expanded Lamanite realm which combined both the old west coastal territory with upland Nephi; this was supplemented by lowland areas toward the east sea (see Alma 22:27).

The land of Zarahemla of Benjamin's day was strictly local (see below). But in only a few decades its power came to extend over virtually the whole northern portion of the land southward, to which the same name, the land of Zarahemla, was then extended (see Alma 22:29-32).[3]

For generations thereafter a fundamental contrast existed in the mental maps of both Nephites and Lamanites according to which "the land of Nephi" stood against "the land of Zarahemla"—the southerly portion of the land southward versus the northerly portion (see Alma 22:27-9, 34). During the period recorded in the most detailed portion of the *Book of Mormon* (the books of Mosiah through the first section of 3 Nephi) this opposition dominated strategic thinking in both realms. Late in B.C. times the Nephites expanded into the land northward, but the lands they possessed still formed a consistent major bloc which overlapped the narrow neck, in conceptual contrast to Lamanite territory to the southward (see, for example, 3 Nephi 3:21-4).

Level 5: Quarters of the land

Another Nephite geographical concept was expressed in terms of a "quarter of the land." A fourfold quartering of the land of Zarahemla in the days of the Amalickiahite wars was based on east-west and north-south axes (although those axes did not necessarily coincide with the axes we use today[4]). Mosiah 27:6 speaks

of "all quarters of the land." Three of the quarters were subsequently identified. The quarter that was centered on Manti (see Alma 43:26; 58:30) was referred to as "on the south by the west sea" (Alma 53:22). Another quarter was based on the city of Bountiful (Alma 52:10; 61:15). "Quarter" was also applied to the area called "the borders by the east sea," which was adjacent to Lamanite lands on the east and south. Apparently this segment was anchored by either the city of Moroni or the city of Nephihah, and it was conceived to be in direct contrast with the Manti quarter (see Alma 59:6).

The quarters were thought of as peripheral units surrounding a "heart" land consisting of the zone around the city of Zarahemla (Alma 60:19; Helaman 1:18). There in "the center" was where the political headquarters resided, as well as "the most capital parts" of the Nephite possessions in the land southward (Helaman 1:18, 24-27; compare Alma 60:19, 22). These statements account for three peripheral quarters in addition to the "heart."[5] That leaves only the north and west quadrant unnamed. Probably that area centered on Ammonihah.

The record is too succinct to discern specific quarters in Lamanite territory, although in principle it seems likely there were such, inasmuch as the concept was Hebraic and thus probably was part of the thinking of Laman and Lemuel. A hint comes from the discussion in Alma 23:8-15 about the cities and lands where Lamanites were converted by the Nephite missionaries. It mentions Amulonite anti-missionary influence being concentrated in "that part of the land wheresoever they dwelt" (verse 14), while their opponents were concentrated in another part.[6] Also, indication of at least a twofold division of the Jaredite realm may suggest that the concept of quarters existed among that earlier people (see Ether 8:2-3; 10:32; 11:15).

Level 6: Local land

A most fundamental spatial division was the local land. Its status and size are illustrated clearly in the case of early Zarahemla.

When king Benjamin chose to inaugurate his son $Mosiah_2$ as his successor, he instructed the latter to "make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people...that thereby they may be gathered together; for on the morrow, I shall proclaim...that thou art a king and a ruler over this people" (Mosiah 1:10). It is evident that the distance to which a proclamation could be sent on one day announcing a gathering for the next had to have been limited. I have estimated that this "local land of Zarahemla" is unlikely to have exceeded twenty miles along the (Sidon) river from the center and probably was less.[7] A confirmation of this order of dimension for a "land" comes from the account of the appearance of the resurrected Christ. He appeared among Nephites gathered at the temple "in the land Bountiful" (3 Nephi 11:1). Word of his intended visit again the following day "was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark," and "even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people that there were many...did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself" (3 Nephi 19:2-3). Despite the exceptional communication effort involved in this unique situation, it is obvious that the normal pattern was for people to assemble on overnight notice, the same as at Benjamin's Zarahemla.

Another account that speaks to the question of dimensions comes from the story of $Alma_1$ and his people in the land of Helam. "It came to pass that while they were in the land of Helam, yea, in the city of Helam, while tilling the land round about, behold an army of Lamanites was in the borders of the land.... The brethren of Alma fled from their fields, and gathered themselves together in the city of Helam" to where $Alma_1$ was located (Mosiah 23:25-6).[8] The fact the land and city were almost coterminous and that the fields were "in the city" clearly demonstrates the limited scale of the settlement. Since the land was located in mountainous wilderness, where even the Lamanites and Amulonites involved had lost their bearings, and since the number of $Alma_1$'s people was only in the hundreds, the

implication is that the "land of Helam" consisted of a small-scale mountain valley. Similar terminology has the Nephites "digging a ditch round about the land, or the city, Bountiful" (Alma 53:3). It is reasonable that physical configurations determined the extent of most of these lands (for example, $Alma_2$ went "into the valley of Gideon, there having been a city built, which was called the city of Gideon"; from there to Zarahemla was "down"; Alma 6:7; 62:7).

Many other textual statements imply that a local land consisted of that territory administered politically, economically and ecclesiastically by a single significant settlement, usually a "city." Typically the radius of the territory would not have exceeded the distance that could be traveled on foot in a day, say 15 or 20 miles. Examples of local lands/cities in the *Book of Mormon* are Ammonihah, Gideon, Nephihah and Ishmael.

Sixteen lands are mentioned for which no central settlement is mentioned. Examples are Sidom, Melek, Antionum, Shemlon and Cumorah. Some of them may have had a dispersed or fully rural pattern of settlement, at least early on, yet lack of mention of a city does not necessarily mean no city existed; it may merely reflect the writer's emphasis at that point in the record. For example, the land of Middoni had a king (Alma 20:4) and a prison, so while no city is mentioned, it is plausible that the king's ruling seat was in fact at a significant settlement in that land that could have been called a city.

It should be noted that not all territory of concern was included in a land. Rarely, of course, would such indeterminate places be worthy of mention. One instance is at Alma 21:13, where some in the party of Nephites that included the sons of $Mosiah_2$ had to flee the land of Middoni "unto the regions round about." Again mention is made of their preaching "in the land of Ishmael, and in all the land round about" (verse 21; compare 20:30, "from place to place"). While these examples are in Lamanite country, we also read concerning the Nephite land of Melek that $Alma_1$ preached to and baptized not only the inhabitants of that land but also dealt with people from "all the borders of the land which was by the wilderness side" (Alma 8:5). See

further on "un-land" territory in the discussion below about wilderness.

Level 7: Cities and their domains

At least three types of cities are indicated in the *Book of Mormon*. The first is a city that is the administrative center for a local land, as mentioned just above. The second is a city without any significant amount of dependent land. The third is a "great city."

The city of Jerusalem in Israel was termed a "great city" by Nephi (1 Nephi 1:4; 10:3). Nazareth, the place where Jesus Christ grew up, was called merely a "city" (1 Nephi 11:13). The distinction strikes me as significant. The terminology applied by Nephi to Jewish Jerusalem and Nazareth gives us an idea about the size and function of the settlements called cities in *Book of Mormon* terminology.

Research on cities in the ancient Holy Land helps us grasp the meaning of Nephi's use of the term "city," and thus too of later usage of that word in the *Book of Mormon*.[9] Six types of cities have been distinguished for the Iron Age II archaeological period, which extended down to Nephi's day.

(1) The royal capital cities, Jerusalem and Samaria (compare Zarahemla, "the capital city," in Helaman 1:17), had a unique status. The former is estimated to have ranged from about 32 acres and 5000 inhabitants in Solomon's day to well over 25,000 on at least 125 acres in Lehi's day. Samaria may have encompassed 170 acres, with a 6.4 acre rectangular acropolis at its center as the formal royal seat. For a comparison in scale, note that Temple Square in Salt Lake City is ten acres in extent.

(2) Also called "cities" in the Jewish record were major administrative centers, each over a district of the kingdom; these ranged from 12 to 17 acres in size with

population a maximum of a couple of thousand; much of the space was occupied with administrative structures.

(3) Secondary administrative centers constituted smaller "cities."

(4) Fortified provincial towns were smaller still but boasted a defensive wall, which qualified them as "cities."

(5) Fortress outposts were also called "cities," although they were so condensed that they typically included only dwellings for the commander and his staff, administrative buildings, storage space and a small temple (or shrine?).

In addition to these several types of settlements for which the term "city" is used in the *Old Testament*, there were of course smaller units such as villages.

Overall the meaning of the Hebrew word which has been translated as "city" probably centers on two functions—a site's having been established as a governmental center (including a temple or cult center as a symbol of royal patronage or presence), and its preparation to be defended militarily. Size had little to do with use of the label; many a "town" or even a "village" could have had more inhabitants than certain cities, but they lacked the crucial criteria to qualify for the name "city."

Nephi's referent for his category of "great city" would naturally be Jerusalem, for he personally had experienced it (compare 1 Nephi 4:5-7, 20). Meanwhile his use of the label "city" to apply to future Nazareth gives us a further clue to the settlement sizes in his nomenclature. Nazareth is estimated to have occupied less than 60 acres; however, much of that was empty space. When Jesus lived there, the maximum population would not have exceeded 500, according to archaeological data.[10]

With this information as background, we observe that six

"great" cities are specifically identified in *Book of Mormon* lands: Zarahemla (3 Nephi 9:3), Moroni (3 Nephi 9:4), Moronihah (3 Nephi 9:5), Jerusalem (Alma 21:2), Ammonihah (Alma 9:4), Jacobugath (3 Nephi 9:9), and the Jaredite city built by king Lib (Ether 10:20). In addition, when the Savior spoke to the people from above on the occasion of the great catastrophe, he referred to additional "great and notable cities" (3 Nephi 8:14) and "great cities" (3 Nephi 10:4) which had been destroyed (compare the "large cities" mentioned in Mosiah 27:6). Perhaps Bountiful was also "great" considering the statement about its special fortified status by which it "became an exceeding stronghold ever after" (Alma 53:5); of course it was not destroyed hence was not included in the list in 3 Nephi 9. The crowd gathered at Bountiful, presumably for a Jewish ritual occasion, numbered 2,500 (3 Nephi 17:25). They had probably assembled from the immediate sustaining area of the city, but the normal number would have been reduced due to casualties. The next day an "exceeding great number" (3 Nephi 19:3) assembled from an area of wider extent. For special ritual occasions, it appears that a "great city" could host up to 20,000 or more residents and visitors, I estimate.

It is not unreasonable that each of the five sectors of the land of Zarahemla (four quarters plus the heartland) was conceived of as dominated by a great city. At least Zarahemla, Moroni and Ammonihah (and Bountiful if we include it) are strong candidates to have been the capital settlements of their respective sectors. (Note that all these cities were, eventually, fortified). Incidentally, two of the mentioned great cities may have claimed the appellation prematurely. Braggart political leaders at Ammonihah asserted that it was "great" (see Alma 9:4), but its greatness came to an end when a Lamanite army overran and destroyed it (see Alma 16:1-3). (Might the city Moronihah have replaced it as head city over the northwestward quarter, although the text is silent on Moronihah's location?) Similarly, Jerusalem was founded by Amalekites, Amulonites and Lamanites as their version of a great city (see Alma 21:1-2), yet the Savior's list of destroyed places calls it simply a city (see 3 Nephi 9:7). Jacobugath, of

course, was located in the land northward at a great distance from the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 7:12; 9:9).

Also apparent in statements in the *Book of Mormon* is the fact that certain cities took on that status from the very moment of their founding. Such instant cities must have been given that title because of their intended function, and perhaps because of their initial, ambitious site plan, not because of the size of their populations. The case of the purposeful founding of the Jerusalem in the land of Nephi as a great city has just been mentioned.[11] More dramatic, however, was the simultaneous launching of a whole series of new cities in the area known as "the borders by the east sea." Moroni had expelled Lamanite squatters from the zone as a military measure (Alma 50:9), then "began the foundation" of Moroni, Nephihah, Morianton and "many (other) cities" (Alma 50:13-15) as garrisons for the vulnerable area. (Recall the usage in Hebrew of the term for city to apply to remarkably small fortress sites.) They must have had only small sustaining areas around each of them, as suggested by the language concerning one, Nephihah, where city and land are equated (see Alma 50:14), the same as in the cases of Bountiful and Helam, mentioned above. The text makes the lack of surrounding lands especially clear in the case of two of these garrison cities; after only a single year's agricultural cycle, the colonists in the land/city Morianton found that they had insufficient cultivable land, so they "did claim a part of the land" of neighboring Lehi (Alma 50:25-6). After the dispute was settled, by force, "a union took place between them and the people of Lehi" (Alma 50:36), meaning that rebellious Morianton lost its independent administrative status. In other words, cities established by military fiat did not always make demographic or economic sense.

Other cities seemingly established for military ends were Zeezrom, Cumeni, Antiparah and perhaps Judea. The Nephite and Lamanite garrisons in those places were vulnerable due to lack of local food production and limited population—the non-military population seems to have been trivial (see Alma chapters 56 and 57). This is precisely the situation which has been found to characterize

many of the fortress cities of Judah that are listed in Joshua 15:20-62.[12] Whether it is true of *Book of Mormon* cities that are named without being put in the context of attached lands, we cannot tell (for example, Lamanite cities Shimnilom and Lemuel, see Alma 24:12; and Nephite Teancum, see Mormon 4:3).

Within many ancient cities certain areas (often "quarters") were occupied by different social groups. These might be lineages or clans, ethnic/linguistic groups, or craft specialists.[13] It would be quite expectable that Nephite and Lamanite cities would also be internally segmented. One definite indication of that situation is in the account of Zarahemla at the time when king $Mosiah_2$ spoke to his people about a change in the form of their government. "Now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla, and they were gathered together in two bodies" (Mosiah 25:4). Of course the languages of those two social segments were different.

There were other social enclaves present as well. After the king's speech, he had $Alma_1$ speak, during which "they were assembled together in large bodies, and he went from one body to another" (Mosiah 25:15). Groups present included the Zarahemla Nephites, the Zarahemla "Mulekites," "the people of Limhi," and "his ($Alma_1$'s) brethren" (verse 16). It is almost certain that in the capital city these four groups (and perhaps more; recall that there were "seven churches in the [local] land of Zarahemla," Mosiah 25:23) inhabited distinct areas.

Furthermore, when the people of Ammon (former Lamanites) were transplanted from dangerous Jershon near the east sea to out-of-the-way Melek on the west of Zarahemla, they would have been settled in some area distinct from the inhabitants already present, although not necessarily within a city (see Alma 35:13; 8:4-5). Another documented case was at the city of Jerusalem which had been built by the Lamanites, Amalekites and people of Amulon (Alma 21:2). When missionary "Aaron came to the city of Jerusalem," he "first began to preach to the Amalekites. And he began to preach to them in their synagogues" (verse 4). This probably means that the Amalekites

occupied a particular area of that city, as the Amulonites and the Lamanites, respectively, must also have done.

Of interest too is the statement that lands, cities and villages were called "after the name of him who first possessed them" (Alma 8:7). The important link between political control and economy involved in the term "possessed" will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Level 8: Town

"Towns" are mentioned twice. Both mentions date to about A.D. 375 (Mormon 4:22; 5:5). In the second instance towns are specifically distinguished from cities. These towns are reported only in the land northward, but there is no reason to suppose that the same category of settlement existed in the land southward also. We can only suppose that the distinctive sense of this settlement label is a community with a population too large to be comfortably called a village yet without being the seat of any regional administrative functions.

Level 9: Village

Villages in a generic sense are mentioned consistently (for example, Mosiah 27:6; Alma 8:7; 23:14; Mormon 4:22). In only a single case is the name of a village given in the text, and that is in Lamanite country; missionary Aaron "came over to a village which was called Ani-Anti," which lay between the city of Jerusalem and the land of Middoni (Alma 21:11). It is plausible that most inhabitants of every land lived in villages or smaller places, where they were near their cultivated lands. Despite their ubiquity their general sameness would have made them uninteresting to the elite Nephite record-keepers who had more striking scenes and events to record.

Level 10: Small village

Alma 8:7 also mentions "small villages" in addition to normal

villages. We would call the former hamlets. Again the total numbers resident in those truly rural places probably were substantial, based on what we know of agrarian societies throughout the world.

Another dimension: Wilderness vs. civilized

A culturally meaningful contrast is evident in the Nephite record between inhabited lands and "wilderness." The distinction was not unambiguous, of course. For instance, Helaman 3:23 speaks of "the more settled parts of the land," implying a gradation in the degree of "de-wildernessing." The same distinction is apparent in Alma 31:3 where we learn that a part of the wilderness was "filled with Lamanites." It seems that in Nephite thinking there was a transitional state of "less-than-wilderness" or "wilderness in the process of becoming settled." Nevertheless the normal contrast between settled area and wilderness had considerable power in the Nephite geographical paradigm.

Vast areas of wilderness were involved. Alma 22:27-32 tells of wilderness along both east and west sea "borders" as well as a "narrow strip" that connected the two coastal wildernesses. Yet that so-called narrow strip was not very narrow, for it took the Zeniffite party "many days' wandering in the wilderness" to cross the "strip" and reach the land of Nephi (Mosiah 9:4), while Ammon and his party years later who were traveling in search of the Zeniffites left Zarahemla and "wandered many days in the wilderness, even forty days" (Mosiah 7:4). The "east wilderness" too had to be extensive, for a Lamanite army which was frustrated in the land of Antionum near the east sea (see Alma 43:22) evidently traveled for weeks, if not months, "round about" in the east wilderness to reach the land of Manti. We know that because during the interval captain Moroni had time for a complex set of activities—to learn through spies where the enemy was headed, then to send from his base in Jershon to Zarahemla to obtain an oracle from $Alma_2$, to get that word back to Jershon by messenger, and then to travel with part of his army all the

way to the Manti area and set up an ambush—all this while the Lamanites were *en route* "round about."[14] Another large-scale wilderness consisted of the greater land of Bountiful, "it being the wilderness which is filled with all manner of wild animals" (Alma 22:31). The journey of king Limhi's exploring party from Nephi to the Jaredites' final extermination area (a trip on the order of 500 miles direct) apparently failed to encounter a single Nephite community (see Mosiah 8:7-11). This supports the picture from elsewhere in the text of vast areas of wilderness interspersed by limited civilized areas or "lands."

Specific areas within the generally settled lands were also considered wilderness and even were given names of their own. A notable example was "the wilderness, which was called Hermounts" (Alma 2:36-7). As I have explained elsewhere, the language of the text concerning movements touching that piece of wilderness demands that it lie no more than 20 miles from the capital city, Zarahemla.[15] So even the general land of Zarahemla included at least one enclave that remained wilderness (also compare 3 Nephi 4:1-3 and Ether 14:3).

Hierarchy of settlements

An important tool in interpreting the political and social significance of ancient ruins is to establish how settlements fit in a hierarchical order of size which relates to their relative power and prestige.[16] Scholars refer to two-tier, three-tier or four-tier hierarchies; each superior tier consists of a settlement or settlements whose population is of a different order of magnitude from that of settlements in the next lower tier. Thus in a three-tiered region excavators normally find a dominant city whose size was markedly greater than that of the subordinated villages around it, which in turn were larger than the even more numerous rural hamlets. A four-tier system would boast a single large metropolis with subject cities at some distance from it. In the ancient world a governmental system deserving the label "state" would have at least four tiers.

Archaeologists find consistently that major centers (presumed cities) included large public buildings that represented substantial investments of wealth, and they might have a fortification wall about them, too. Villages would show a few large structures—presumably houses of families of higher rank and political power than average—but no obvious public structures, that is, "temples" or "palaces." Also consistent would be the absence of all evidence of luxury goods in ruins and graves of the most rural settlements, a selected few such items in village remains, and numerous of these indicators of wealth within a city. Obviously, political, economic and religious functions were concentrated in the larger places.

This nesting of community size and power in a hierarchical whole is evident in the *Book of Mormon* text. In the beginning, Nephite sociopolitical structure in the land of Nephi had only a two-tier settlement system—the city of Nephi where the king dwelt and the temple stood (see the clear implications in 2 Nephi 5:8-17), and its rural environs. It is equally clear that in Benjamin's day a two-tier structure still prevailed (see Mosiah 1:10, and note the correlative fact that there was not even a tax system, as at Mosiah 2:14).

This pristine simplicity was complicated no later than the end of king Mosiah$_2$'s reign. By then "the people began to be very numerous, and began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west, building large cities and villages in all quarters of the land" (Mosiah 27:6). Shortly thereafter, Alma$_2$'s preaching circuit demonstrated that more complex structure in detail. He visited component lands which, in some cases at least, had their own cities—Gideon, Ammonihah and probably Sidom (see the heading to Alma 5; also 6:7; 8:3, 6; 14:23-4; 15:1). The Nephite polity would now qualify, according to criteria used by today's social scientists, as a chiefdom-becoming-a-state.

The administrative hierarchy is shown in the case of Korihor. When he made trouble among the inhabitants of the land of Gideon, "he was taken and bound and carried [*from some village*] before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land [*who obviously were*

located in the city of Gideon]." But "when the high priest and the chief judge saw the hardness of his heart...they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him up into the hands of the officers, and sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land" (Alma 30:21, 29). A state-level polity seems represented in this arrangement of power and settlement.

An even more complex hierarchy is suggested for the period of the great war against the Lamanites and dissenters led by Ammaron. At least captain Moroni$_1$'s language in his epistle to chief judge Pahoran indicates a large bureaucratic structure at the capital which would only occur in a sizable state: "...Sit upon your thrones" (Alma 60:7, 11); "...sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands...yea, and tens of thousands, who do also sit in idleness" (verse 22); all part of "the great head of our government" (verse 24). This picture of political complexity is underlined in 3 Nephi 6, a few generations later, where we learn that under a Nephite central government that now reached into the land northward, "there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired. And there were many highways cast up...which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place" (verses 7-8). Moreover, "there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers," as well as sharp differences in social rank (verses 11-12). No wonder Zarahemla, the capital, was termed a "great city."

The Lamanites and Jaredites

Information on Lamanite settlements is much more limited. At one point in time (early first century B.C.) a political hierarchy is disclosed in which subordinate kings, some of them located in cities, were subject to a king over all the land (see Alma 20:23-26; 22:1, 27; 23:8-14). He dwelt in the city of Lehi-Nephi. Its antiquity (it was the original Nephi's city) and the fact that it possessed a wall (see Mosiah 22:6) might have combined with the great king's residence there to

qualify it as a tier above other cities. The Lamanite capital might have been considered a great city, although the term is not used in our brief record. Interestingly, the record refers to king Lamoni, who ruled in the land of Ishmael where no city was reported to exist, as occupying a "house" (Alma 19:18), but his father, the great king, is said to have had a "palace" in his city, Lehi-Nephi, (Alma 22:2; though also called "the house of the king" in verse 1).

For the Jaredites, two facts about settlement stand out. The land where the Jared lineage ruler or king lived was called Moron, but no mention is ever made of a city there. This failure suggests that the polity of the Jaredites was modest in scale. Other Jaredite settlements were, however, called cities (Ether 7:9; 10:4, 9, 12; 14:17). One, built by king Lib at the narrow neck of land (in the second millennium B.C.), was pointedly called "a great city" when first built (Ether 10:20).

Mesoamerican settlement patterns

Various studies in recent decades have provided decisive evidence that "the land of promise," which was the scene of the events recorded in the bulk of the *Book of Mormon* account, was located in Mesoamerica (central and southern Mexico and northern Central America). Large numbers of geographical and cultural features have been identified that demonstrate that relationship.[17]

It should be of interest to know something of how Mesoamerican settlement patterns compare with those identified above from the *Book of Mormon*. A number of characteristics of settlements that are cited in the archaeological literature have direct parallels with statements and intimations about settlements in the *Book of Mormon*. This mere sampling of parallels points to the need for a more comprehensive comparison yet to be done.

1. Population size is not a vital consideration in whether a settlement is to be classified as a city. Political or military function or the status of being a planned city was instead determinative.[18]

2. City and land or surrounding area shared the same name and were not conceptually distinguished from each other.[19]
3. Ruler and place shared the same name.[20]
4. Fortified sites could also qualify as cities despite lack of other criteria.[21]
5. A city could accommodate various ethnic or linguistic groups, normally in different residential sectors.[22]
6. Unquestionable cities, and perhaps even great cities, existed throughout most of Mesoamerican history, even prior to 600 B.C.[23]

The *Book of Mormon* text manifests a hierarchy of Nephite settlements which makes functional sense in terms of what we know about the operation of ancient societies, as well as agreeing with the information the sacred book contains about demographic growth. Finer-grained examination of cases in the text should permit us to put the political, legal and economic arrangements in *Book of Mormon* lands in still clearer terms. In turn, we can then expect that nuances of language employed by persons in the record will also become clearer.

Notes To Chapter 6

[1] I realize that Latter-day Saint interpretation has traditionally construed statements in 1 Nephi 13 to apply to the territory of the United States of America. A full analysis of the geography and history of this prophecy will be presented elsewhere, but it is sufficient for the present to note that the "man among the Gentiles" (taken as Columbus by the Saints) of verse 12 "went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land." Where he went was, of course, tropical America, never North America. Thus when "the seed of my brethren" were "scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten," (verse 14), the fulfillment can be accounted for in terms of Spanish or Middle America. Similarly, when verse 17 speaks of "their mother Gentiles" being gathered to battle against the Gentile settlers of the "promised land," as well as the settlers' carrying forth the book from the Jews to the Lamanites, this could refer to Middle America which rebelled to gain independence from Spain in the early 1800s. Still this may not entirely exclude North America, which saw parallel depredations by English and French settlers of North America on the Lamanites-by-extension in that territory, for verse 13 speaks of "other Gentiles" who also "went forth out of captivity upon the many waters," in addition to the Spanish for whom Columbus was the specific forerunner. This limited "Middle American correlation" of 1 Nephi 13 concurs with the statement in 4 Nephi 1:1 that "the disciples of Jesus...formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about" the city Bountiful where the Savior appeared; the next verse adds that in the next (third) year, "the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land." Of course it is completely implausible that they would have done so throughout vast North America in the three years allotted for the task by the historical record.

[2] See the discussion in my *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, revised edition, FARMS: Provo, Utah, 1992, pages 250 and following, and compare pages 242-3.

[3] See *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 190-197, the section entitled "The Expansion of Zarahemla." The strip of coast "on the west of the land of Zarahemla" (Alma 22:28) and perhaps Bountiful—the matter is unclear (compare Helaman 4:5-8)—were alone excluded from the designation.

[4] See "Appendix C: The Problem of Directions," in my *The Geography of Book of*

Mormon Events: A Source Book, Provo: FARMS, 1992, revised edition.

[5] Note that when the Nephites extended their possessions into the land northward in the last half of the first century B.C., the location of "the 'center' of their lands" changed in their minds. 3 Nephi 3:21 and 23, which dates some 17 years after the birth of the Savior, has "the center of our lands" shifted to somewhere northward from the old "heart" around the city of Zarahemla.

[6] Compare Alma 24:5. The believers were in "lands round about" the king's capital in Nephi, while verse 20 mentions that the united antagonists "came up" against the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. See the discussion in *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events,* pages 250-1 and compare pages 242-3.

[7] *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, page 221.

[8] *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, page 227.

[9] "Cities: Cities in the Levant," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1:1031-1043, and Philip J. King, "Jerusalem," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 3:747-66, which relies on M. Broshi, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4 (1978), pages 10-15.

[10] James F. Strange, "Nazareth," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4:1050-1.

[11] Regarding the symbolism of this second Jerusalem, I continue to believe there is merit in a suggestion I made in note 32 on page 380 of *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon,* that its location was chosen to reflect certain cosmological connotations of the Palestinian Jerusalem.

[12] Zvi Greenhut, "City of Salt," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19 (July-August 1993), page 4 and following.

[13] See, for example, Joyce Marcus and Kent V. Flannery, *Zapotec Civilization: How Urban Society Evolved in Mexico's Oaxaca Valley*, Thames and Hudson: London, 1996, pages 233-4.

[14] *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, pages 267-8.

[15] *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, pages 232

[16] A classic treatment in these terms is Henry T. Wright and Gregory A. Johnson, "Population, Exchange, and Early State Formation in Southwestern Iran," *American Anthropologist* 77 (1975), pages 267-89.

[17] See, for example, my article, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997, pages 391-522.

[18] Joyce Marcus, "On the Nature of the Mesoamerican City," in Evon Z. Vogt and Richard M. Levanthal, editors, *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns: Essays in Honor of Gordon R. Willey*, Albuquerque and Cambridge: University of New Mexico Press and Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1984, pages 206, 239-42. On city planning, consider Teotihuacan, where the essential plan was laid out virtually from the first and then followed for many centuries; see George L. Cowgill, "Teotihuacan, Internal Militaristic Competition, and the Fall of the Classic Maya," in *Maya Archaeology and*

Ethnohistory, Norman Hammond and Gordon R. Willey, editors, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979, page 53.

[19] Marcus' "Mesoamerican City," pages 207-8.

[20] At least among Nahuatl speakers; see Marcus' "Mesoamerican City," page 207.

[21] Marcus' "Mesoamerican City," page 210.

[22] Edward E. Calnek, "The Internal Structure of Cities in America, Pre-Columbian Cities: The Case of Tenochtitlan," *Proceedings, 41st International Congress of Americanists (Mexico 1974)*, Mexico, 1975, pages 348-9. Rene Millon, *The Teotihuacan Map*, volume 1, Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1973, pages 40-1.

[23] On La Venta as an urban site of at least 200 hectares, see Rebecca B. Gonzalez Lauck, "Recientes investigaciones en La Venta, Tabasco," in *El Preclásico o Formativo: Avances y Perspectivas*, México: "Seminario de Arqueología Dr. Román Piña Chan," edited by Martha Carmona Macias, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1989, page 84. Compare the nearby site of Las Limas, again with such a high degree of nucleation that it can only be considered a city, of over 100 hectares: Hernando Gomez Rueda, "Nuevas exploraciones en la región Olmeca; una aproximación a los patrones de asentamiento," in *El Preclásico o Formativo*, pages 91-100. Also, Ann Cyphers Guillen, in a lecture at Brigham Young University in 1996, reported that current work at the Olmec site of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan, Veracruz, indicates that before 900 B.C. it was a huge place of at least 690 hectares, with many criteria for being considered a city, probably the first great city in Mesoamerica.

Seasonality of Warfare in the Book of Mormon and in Mesoamerica

When we carefully examine the accounts of wars in the middle portion of the Nephite record, we find that military action did not take place at random throughout the calendar year but at particular times. Whatever realistic scene we assume for the Nephite lands, we would expect to find a similar seasonal pattern in that area's secular historical sources. I consider Mesoamerica (central and southern Mexico and northern Central America) to have been the scene of the Nephite conflicts, but whatever plausible location one chooses will lie in the tropics because, among other reasons, only in those areas are there feasible isthmuses located that could correspond to the "narrow neck of land" of the Nephites. Everywhere in those latitudes, war was normally carried on by the pre-Columbian inhabitants during a limited annual period. This paper investigates the evidence for seasonality of warfare in the *Book of Mormon* account and compares it with what is currently known about the timing of warfare in Mesoamerica.

The Book of Mormon pattern

For only one period are we presented with sufficient information to detect a seasonal pattern for fighting—during the period beginning with the fifth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 2) and continuing for about 110 years. Other reports of war (in 2 Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon, Mosiah, Alma 24 and 27, Mormon and Ether) give us little useful data on the topic. I have listed in an appendix all "military actions" in the Nephite part of the record in order to allow readers to examine the data for themselves. I conclude that are remarkably consistent record of seasons for conflict emerges.

The first and probably prime determinant for scheduling wars was the primacy of the need to provide food according to a natural cycle. We learn quickly that the middle of the Nephite calendar year

was the growing season and that the primary harvest became available toward the end of the year. Since no army could operate effectively without a reasonably secure supply of food, this meant that wars had to await the completion of the crucial part of the agricultural year. This fundamental principle is clearly expressed in Alma 53:7, which says, regarding Moroni and his forces: "He did no more attempt a battle with the Lamanites in that year, but he did employ his men in preparing for war...and also delivering their women and their children from famine and affliction, and providing food for their armies."

The idea appears in other texts:

1. Alma 57:6; 58:4, 7: "We [Helaman's army] received a supply of provisions.... And...we were strong, yea, and we had also plenty of provisions." But later "we did wait to receive provisions...until we were about to perish for the want of food."
2. Alma 60:9, 25, 35: "Ye have withheld your provisions from them, insomuch that many have fought...when they were about to perish with hunger.... Except ye...grant unto them food for their support," Moroni and his soldiers would render foot-dragging officials "extinct"; "God will not suffer that we should perish with hunger; therefore he will give unto us of your food, even if...by the sword."
3. Alma 61:16, 18: Pahoran had "sent a few provisions unto [Lehi and Teancum], that they may not perish." He and Moroni aimed to "take possession of the city of Zarahemla, that we may obtain more food."
4. Alma 62:29: Lamanite prisoners joined the people of Ammon in a crucial task in which they "did begin to labor exceedingly, tilling the ground."
5. Alma 4:2: "But the people were afflicted...for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites." (The Lamanites

obviously had attacked near the end of the year, when mature grain was standing in the fields. Suffering would continue until the next annual crop was ready.)

In civilizations at such a level of technological development, armies were formed of nonprofessional militia. For example, Alma 44:23 says, "The armies of the Nephites...returned and came to their houses and their lands." The demand for manpower to carry on agriculture provided the most stringent limit on maintaining armies. The husbandry of those times simply could not provide sufficient reliable surplus to feed many soldiers who were not themselves involved in the seasonal work. When an army did have to be kept in battle readiness, an added burden fell on the men who were still cultivating; thus the pacifist people of Ammon were obliged to exchange the products of their labor, "a large portion of their substance to support our armies," in exchange for protection by Nephite soldiers (Alma 43:13). But unavoidably, most of those serving in the army had to meet farming's demands during the vital part of the growing year.

Another seasonal consideration was the weather. Anywhere in the tropics, rain characterizes approximately half the year—the same season when the crops are growing—with resulting muddy trails and swollen streams that armies would have to cross. In all likelihood, the only time when Alma and his forces could have waded across the river Sidon, fighting as they went (see Alma 2:27), would have been in the drier part of the year. Furthermore, had armies been fighting during the rains, they would have suffered significantly while traveling, camping or fighting, for that time can be uncomfortably cool and unhealthy for those who must live out in the open. Typically the Lamanites traveled virtually naked to reach the Nephites (see Enos 1:20; Alma 3:5; 43:20, 37). They would not have done so had protecting themselves against rain and cold been a concern. On the contrary, heat-caused fatigue was mentioned as a problem in the lowlands during battles (see Alma 51:33; compare 62:35). So the

scripture confirms logic and observations about the timing of warfare in tropical lands—the rainy season ruled out major campaigns, which took place in the dry season instead.

Of course, there could be exceptions. Regions varied in climate; certain places and times would have permitted at least limited fighting other than at the normal dry time, although we must assume that planned major campaigns had to follow the general rule.

The Nephite calendar

An entirely different matter concerns the translation of statements in the scriptural text from its calendrical terminology into climatic terms. The annals of the wars upon which Mormon relied in constructing his record were phrased in terms of "months" and "years"; at least that is how the terms were translated into English by Joseph Smith. But was a given numbered month hot or cool, dry or wet?

The world's peoples have used "years" measuring 260, 354, 359, 360, 363, 364, 365 and 400 days, among others. No calendar fits precisely the duration of the period it takes the earth to complete a revolution around the sun (the general current definition of "year"). Each system only approximates nature's periodicity, then either includes adjustments so that its count does not get far out of step with solar realities or else the system falls into increasing discrepancy. In the case of the Nephites, their record gives us insufficient information to permit us to describe their calendar with confidence. We can only make certain observations about it and then draw sensible inferences about the remaining features. We cannot clarify the matter decisively by citing Near Eastern precedents, for the *Book of Mormon* gives us no information about the calendrical knowledge possessed by Lehi's pioneering group.

In any case, the assumption that Leih's descendants knew only a single calendar might be misleading. Based on how peoples at the Nephites' level of civilization tracked time, we would be surprised if

the Nephites had not followed more than one system, perhaps one for ritual, another for agriculture, and at least one other for their political and historical annals. Also different localities could have followed differing systems. The checkered cultural history of Mulek's descendants (see Omni 1:17), the Ammonihahites' purposeful distancing of themselves from Zarahemla's ways (see Alma 8:11-12), and the Zoramites' divergence from Nephite culture (see Alma 31) hint at such potential diversity. A historical case illustrates how much variety is possible within a small territory: in and near the basin of Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest, there were at least twenty-one cultures present, only one of which, that of "the Aztecs," is well known; and many of those groups maintained differing calendrical systems and historical traditions.[2]

For the early people of Zarahemla (the "Mulekites"), Omni 1:21 refers to "moons" as a time measure, strongly indicating that they followed a lunar calendar. But "moon" is never again mentioned. Instead, the word "month" occurs throughout the text that Mormon edited, suggesting that the Nephites followed a different system. Mosiah may have imposed the alternate terminology as the norm for keeping historical records when he became king at Zarahemla (see Omni 1:18-19). Helaman 12:15 indicates that the Nephites, at least by Mormon's day, considered the earth to move around the sun, suggesting a solar calendar and system that was probably operational throughout at least the six-hundred-year period for which we have Mormon's abridgment.

Whatever knowledge of the calendar Lehi and Nephi brought with them is suggested, or at least limited, by what historical sources tell us of the pre-exilic Israelite calendars.[3] A solar calendar was used that apparently had Canaanite—and ultimately Egyptian—sources and was closely connected with the seasons, and thus the festivals, marking the agricultural year in Palestine. It had twelve months of thirty days each. Some method was also used for intercalating days to keep the count straight with the sun's year (probably by adding five or more days at the end or beginning of the year.)

A cultural revamping, termed the Deuteronomic reformation, is thought by scholars to have taken place beginning at the time of King Josiah of Judah (who died in 608 B.C., within Lehi's lifetime). This reform effort attempted to root out pernicious cultic influences from the Canaanites and other neighboring peoples (see particularly the list of ritual abominations in 2 Kings 23:4-20). The reform enhanced the role of the then-neglected temple at Jerusalem, eliminated or reduced local shrine-centered variations in worship, and officially adopted the Assyrian-Babylonian calendar, which emphasized the moon instead of the sun in year and month calculations. At the same time, it shifted about or amalgamated religious festivals to fit into the new calendar scheme and to break up the old Canaanite pattern.[4]

But it is likely that nearly all this concern for change was on the part of Jewish priestly reformers while most of the population preferred to continue with the old ways. Certainly two, and later at least three, calendar systems coexisted.[5]

It may be helpful to consider what might have happened to the Lehi colony upon leaving their homeland near Jerusalem. What happened with the colony of Jews that settled at Elephantine in Egypt around the same time, as well as the changes that occurred among the Jewish exiles in Babylon, must have been comparable in many ways to what occurred in Lehi's group. The cultural dynamics induced and required among each of these groups of resettled Israelites of the sixth century B.C. would likely be similar.

Like the Nephites, the Elephantine people built a temple modeled after the one at Jerusalem, but their calendar followed the local Egyptian one. The calendar they used to set their festivals had been heavily modified by the Babylonian and Persian conquerors of Egypt. In Babylon, too, the exiles quickly adapted to the local lunisolar calendar, which returnees in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra would later bring back to Palestine. Change was inevitable since, after all, in Judah knowledge of the calendar of the day must have been limited to courtly or priestly specialists. The resettled groups may not have included people who were highly informed in such matters. The new

conditions of seasons and ecology, as well as socio-cultural influences from neighbors, moved them to adapt their calendar from what in the Palestine homeland had been based on nature or imposed by Jerusalem to something simpler and surely more functional in the new settings.

With Lehi's people we may suppose in the first place that their arduous trek across western Arabia would have stripped them culturally of much of what they knew about calendrical matters at home. Crossing the sea to a different environment would have wiped their cultural slate even cleaner (compare Nephi's observations in 2 Nephi 5:7-16 and 25:1-6). For example, the Shavu'ot festival, which in the land of Israel had fallen in late spring, fifty days after the first grain was harvested,[6] could not have been carried on in tropical America without change, for there the late spring was exclusively a time for planting, not harvesting (fifty days after the first harvest in Mesoamerica would fall in December).

I consider it likely that the Nephites carried with them the basic twelve-month solar calendar of the old regime; after all. even during their travel in Arabia they continued to keep track of "years." Reasons for thinking this include, (1) Lehi was strongly opposed to the Jewish establishment of his day, certainly including the nationalistic, Deuteronomic reformer priests, hence he would have resisted following the Assyrian-Babylonian lunisolar count they urged; and, (2) his own Manassehite tribal background meant that he would have stayed closer to Egyptian and traditional Israelite ways rather than following the new-fangled Babylonian count.[7] (However, King Zedekiah's son Mulek and his company would have been more likely to follow the reformers' calendar, which emphasized "moons" as well as the naming rather than the numbering of months.)

The highest numbered month mentioned in the *Book of Mormon* is the eleventh (see Alma 49:1). (The highest day number is the twelfth—see Alma 14:23.) Still, two texts in the *Book of Mormon* point to the likelihood that the Nephites recognized twelve months. Alma and Amulek were freed from prison in Ammonihah on "the twelfth

day, in the tenth month" (Alma 14:23). The events reported to intervene between then and the end of the year (see Alma 15:16) can be accommodated very plausibly in the roughly eighty days remaining in a twelve-month solar year. The same kind of general confirmation occurs in Alma 49, which reports a Lamanite army approaching the land of Ammonihah on the tenth day of the eleventh month (see Alma 49:1). Subsequent action until year's end (Alma 49:29) would fit well into the remaining fifty days allowed by a solar year but could hardly have stretched much longer.

Incidentally, the old Israelite "Calendar I" quite clearly incorporated the necessary corrections by adding days to keep sun and day counts from getting out of step. Just how this was done is not clear, but the use of leap days is almost inevitable.[8]

In the present discussion, I assume that the dates mentioned in the period from Alma 2:1 to 3 Nephi 2:8, during which virtually all references to warfare in calendrical terms occur, were calculated on a 360- or 365-day solar-based calendar, though this was probably just one of the calendars the *Book of Mormon* peoples followed.[9] I further assume that the Nephites recognized twelve months of thirty days each, with a probable five-day intercalary interval at the end of the last month.

The Nephite Annals of Wars

This paper is based upon information laid out in the appendix at the end of the chapter. In every case where Mormon provides us with sufficient chronological information to be helpful, I have analyzed and presented the plausible duration and distribution of events within each year. Even where chronology seems limited or absent, I tabulate each "military action" for the sake of completeness and because others may see in the text things I have failed to see. In the first of four columns is a "military action reference number," beginning with the number 1. Omitted are the wars of the people of Zarahemla mentioned vaguely in Omni 1:17 and the purely Lamanite wars (in general at Mormon 8:8;

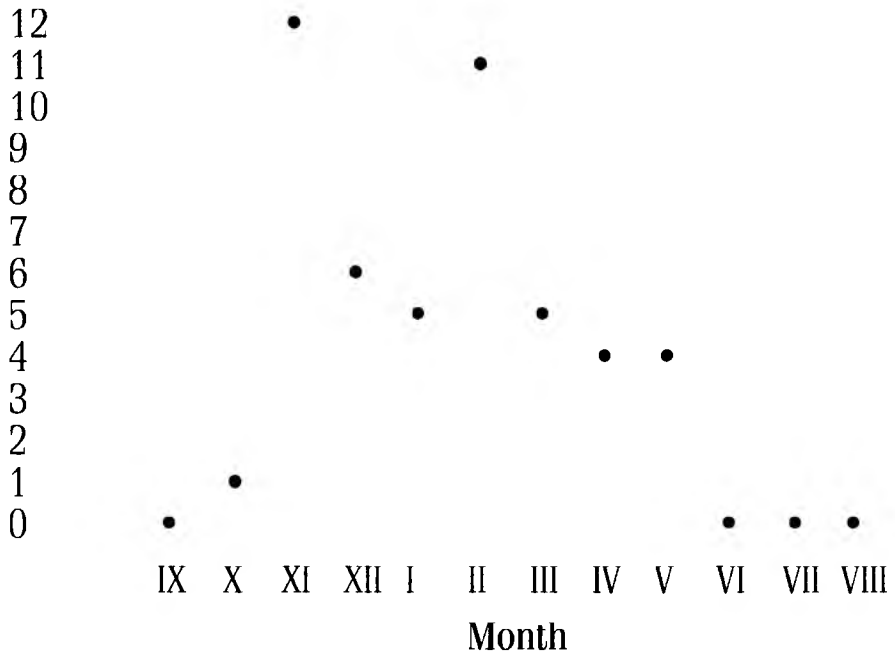
note also Helaman 5:21), but those reported by the people of Zeniff and the sons of Mosiah are included. The list thus includes all actions involving Nephites *per se*. Actions planned, though not consummated, are counted, for they suggest times perceived to be appropriate for war even if a conflict failed to materialize. Other significant information has also been included in the table.

Table 7.1 summarizes the information on the seasons in relation to war as presented in the appendix. There are forty-six months to which a military action has been assigned (if an action carries into a second month, each month is counted separately). For each I have indicated a date, by year, month and day as far as the record permits. Admittedly my assignment of months is subject both to the limitations of the data in the text and to my interpretations of it. Possibly I have skewed the months to fit my preconceptions, but not consciously. In any event, my month assignments are displayed so that others may check and modify my dates if they consider that necessary. Whatever bias may be involved, the pattern that emerges is too dramatic for me to have imposed it on the data. For each date given, I also show an indicator as to whether it was (a) derived from a specific statement of the month, (b) inferred from a textual statement about the commencement or ending of a year, or (c) simply plausibly inferred by interpolating the year's events reasonably across twelve months.

Table 7.1 vividly shows that wars did not simply happen at random but with striking seasonal variation. Twin peaks near the end and again near the beginning of the year are emphatic. If my assignments of just a few less-than-certain cases to the eleventh and the second months should be off by only a few weeks, the pattern might more nearly appear as a single four-month season. I consider it likely, however, that the decline in twelfth-and first-month activity is real. It is plausible that it reflects a Nephite pattern that avoided war at new years so as not to interfere with ritual observances of the year's end/beginning, or else it related to a concern with the "bad luck" tied in with the five intercalary days that in later Mesoamerica were considered unlucky. (Compare the implications of Alma

51:28-52:2 regarding the Lamanites who pressed their attack during their new year's eve day only to meet disaster.) It should also be noted that the comparatively few military actions in the third through sixth months tended to be minor. Major actions thus clearly were limited to the season between the end of the tenth and the start of the fourth month.

Table 7.1. Nephite military actions by month



When statements in the record about food or "provisions" are analyzed, a confirming pattern emerges. The second month is most frequently indicated as a time for re-provisioning (seven occurrences), with the third month next (four occurrences). Two cases may indicate logistical support somewhere between the fifth and tenth months. In addition there are single references for the twelfth, first and fourth months. These combine to form a consistent season for primary replenishment from, say, the twelfth through the fourth months. This is agreeable with the harvest falling primarily in the tenth through twelfth months. (After the crop was mature, actual harvest work would have required some time, followed by an administrative process of assessment or taxation, and then transport to the armies.)

Of course limited local supplies were no doubt furnished to the forces at almost any time of year, but I am talking about the primary supply effort. Moreover, three references to hunger conditions for soldiers are consistent in falling between the fifth and tenth months, that is the period when old supplies were most liiely to be running short, and also when the rains would hinder transport.

Seasons of war in Mesoamerica

Our information on the timing of warfare in this area has not been examined comprehensively by scholars. What is known is at least consistent. For example, in Yucatan, wars were usually fought between October and the end of January (or February in other Mesoamerican regions).[10] In that period, travel was rarely restricted due to bad weather; it was still relatively cool, and food was available either by supply from the logistical base or by taxing the subjugated.

The schedule varied slightly depending on local topography and climate. The corn crop, fundamental in the diet everywhere in Mesoamerica, was typically planted in April or May, just before the rains began and after the fields had been cleared and the rubbish burned. It could be harvested about the time when the clouds and rain taper off (the wettest months are July and September for most regions) and the temperature had risen because of greater sunshine. Harvest was from October to December, again depending on locality and crop variety. The crucial time for agricultural labor under this regime is, and was anciently, March through May. At other times, men's being away was inconvenient but not critical. Probably the segment of time freest from field work for the typical cultivator/warrior was November through February, which, of course, coincided with the war season. Under emergency conditions, naturally, some military action could go on, though hampered, throughout most of the year.

Comparing the patterns

The congruency of the two bodies of data is obvious in their division of the year into fighting and nonfighting times, the former during weather compatible with travel and the latter at planting season. This is so unmistakable that point-by-point comparison is hardly needed.

When we see in such marked fashion that the bulk of the military action for the Nephites took place during their eleventh through second months, while in Mesoamerica late October into February battle time, I must equate the two patterns broadly. If Mesoamerica is taken as the location of the *Book of Mormon* wars, as most Latter-day Saint students of the matter now believe, there is no alternative to concluding that the Nephite new year day during the first century B.C. fell late in December. The winter solstice is perceived by so many of the world's peoples as an obvious phenomenon of cosmic significance that December 22, give or take a day, is the favorite also to have been the Nephites' new year marker.[11]

Supposing that is the case, we find the following equivalences:

Table 7.2. Probable Nephite calendar during the Reign of the Judges

First month	About December 22 to January 20
Second month	About January 21 to February 19
Third month	About February 20 to March 21
Fourth month	About March 22 to April 20
Fifth month	About April 21 to May 20
Sixth month	About May 21 to June 19
Seventh month	About June 20 to July 19
Eighth month	About July 20 to August 18
Ninth month	About August 19 to September 17
Tenth month	About September 18 to October 17

Eleventh month	About October 18 to November 16
Twelfth month	About November 17 to December 16

Probably five extra days completed the year.

[*See now the Post Script at the end of this chapter.*]

Two possible exceptions to the pattern

But our comparison must consider a couple of possible exceptions to the generalization that major military actions fell at the year's end or beginning. One is the battle in which Helaman and his two thousand young warriors helped lure a Lamanite army out of Antiparah to its destruction. This event is said to have occurred early in the seventh month (see Alma 56:42). The other is the attack by robbers on the besieged Nephites under Lachoneus; it is placed in the sixth month, but under a different calendar system (see 3 Nephi 4:7; compare 2:8). In the first place, the accuracy of the seventh-month date in Alma 56:42 might be questioned. I have shown elsewhere[12] that Helaman's recollection of some dates was probably in error, for he omitted one entire year from his narrative. This is understandable because his record, an epistle to Moroni, was hastily written in the field immediately after concluding long, rigorous combat. A careful reading of Alma 56:27-30 indicates to me that Helaman's date for the battle near Antiparah may have been erroneous.

Consider the following statements: The text first reports the arrival of food and reinforcements for Helaman's and Antipus's army in the second month, "*thus* we were prepared" with both warriors and supplies (Alma 56:27-28). And, "the Lamanites, *thus* seeing our forces increase *daily*, and provisions arrive for our support, they *began* to be fearful, and *began* to sally forth, if it were possible to put an end to our receiving provisions and strength. Now *when* we saw that the Lamanites *began* to *grow* uneasy on this wise, we were desirous to bring a stratagem into effect upon them" (Alma 56:29-30; italics added). The expressions I have emphasized connote passage of only a short period of time. Despite Helaman's dating the subsequent

engagement to the seventh month, the phrasing and logic of these verses make it seem to me unlikely that the interval between the arrival of the food and the tactical action would encompass as much as five months. Moreover, it is somewhat doubtful that Helaman would carry, or credibly appear to carry, food to a neighboring city at the seventh month, an odd time for reprovisioning.

Also, an explanation can be offered for a dating error, although perhaps it is strained. Two comments made when this paper was read publicly suggested that Helaman might have miswritten the month number due to features of either Mesoamerican glyphic or Hebrew conventions for writing numbers. Professor John P. Hawkins suggested that perhaps Helaman made an arithmetical mistake while referring to calculations involving the Mesoamerican bar-and-dot system of numbers. There a seven would appear as two dots above a bar. A stray mark that was misread as a bar could produce a seven, from an intended two. On the same occasion, John A. Tvedtnes drew attention to the fact that in Hebrew mistakes sometimes occur among the numbers two, three, seven and eight due to confusion when those numbers are abbreviated. Either effect might have been involved for Helaman, although of course we are uncertain whether Helaman used either the bar-and-dot system or Hebrew in his epistle where he made the possible error.

On the other hand, if the conflict did take place as early as the third month, the account seems to get to the end of the year rather abruptly (see Alma 57:3-5). Hence one can argue pro and con without any way to settle the issue given the present limited text. (In Figure 1.7, I have simply not counted this incident, nor any others from the appendix that bear a question mark.)

Even if the seventh month should be correct, a unique geographical circumstance could mean that the "rainy season" would not have ruled out this particular action. The location of Antiparah in the geographical correlation I follow is near Motozintla, within a few miles of the Guatemalan border and almost at the top of the pass over the Sierra Madre de Chiapas linking the Central Depression of Chiapas

and the Pacific lowlands.[13] Peculiar geographical conditions affect rainfall there. A configuration of high peaks (the highest mountain in Central America is only a few miles away) makes the northeast versant of the mountains, including the little Motozintla valley, unusually dry by shielding it from moist air off the Pacific. The abbreviated wet season in this locality consists of two peaks each less than two months in length, April-May and September-October. Even then, annual rainfall in the valley is only a fraction of what it is on the peaks a few miles away. An early seventh-month battle would fall around June 21 on the Nephite calendar (see Table 7.1). This is within the annual period called the *canicula* ("dog days") or *veranillo* ("little dry season"), when in most years the rains let up for a period of one to three weeks.[14] Thus for good reasons, even if Helaman's battle was in the seventh month, the weather could have allowed such an event. Interestingly, on the calendar laid out above, a seventh-month attack would have taken place within a day or two of summer solstice, if not precisely then, and may have been planned to fall exactly on that auspicious day.[15]

Another problem in chronology occurs when the robbers in the time of the Nephite judge Lachoneus launched their main attack on the Nephites' refuge area in the "sixth month." But the event took place following the change in the era for reckoning the Nephite year, as reported in 3 Nephi 2:5-8. We are told there that when nine years had passed since the signs of the Savior's birth, the Nephites took that event as a beginning for their new system for calculating time.

As we look back at the record of that marker event, we learn that it did not take place at the new year but sometime afterward. Here is what 3 Nephi 1 reports about the timing. In "the commencement of the ninety and second year...the prophecies...began to be fulfilled more fully" with the appearance of greater signs and miracles among the people (3 Nephi 1:4). Some people began to say that the time was past for the prophecy of Samuel to be fulfilled and they began to rejoice over the fact (see 3 Nephi 1:5-6). "It came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout

the land" (3 Nephi 1:7). Believers, however, watched steadfastly for the day and night and day without darkness that had been prophesied (see 3 Nephi 1:8). "There was a day set apart" when believers would be destroyed if the prophesied event did not take place (3 Nephi 1:9). Note how many time-significant phrases occur in these verses—"began to be," "began to say," "began to rejoice," "and it came to pass," "began to be," "did watch steadfastly," and "now it came to pass"—all of which point to the passing of a considerable length of time between the end of the ninety-first year and the dramatic event of the light-filled night. An interval of months seems required by this language. (The statements about events during the remainder of the ninety-second year, in 3 Nephi 1:22, 23 and 25, are more obscure in regard to chronology.)

What we know from Palestine about the crucifixion sets the date in early April. (In light of the statements on chronology in the four Gospels, the only legitimate possibilities, it appears, are April 7, A.D. 30, or April 3, A.D. 33.)[16] If we suppose the old Nephite year ended around December 22, while the birth date of Jesus occurred in the beginning of April, we can accommodate the *Book of Mormon* statements about dating. The Nephite calendar adjustment would then have been about three-and-a-third months.[17] This would allow enough time to encompass the events reported in the text prior to the special day and would also fit the Palestine data.

In that case the beginning of the Nephite year in the new system would have been in the first week of April. The attack of the robbers reported in 3 Nephi 4:7 in "the sixth month" would then have fallen in September, as late as the twenty-seventh. In weather terms that would not normally be a good time for fighting, although in a particular year it might have been feasible. One explanation for this anomalous date is the robbers' desperate need for food. Given their evident extremity, that may be reason enough for hastening their campaign. (In the tabulation of military actions, I have marked this event with "VI," but I have not counted it in Figure 7.1.)

Conclusions

1. Nephite wars were typically carried out early in the dry season as permitted by the agricultural maintenance pattern and when weather conditions were most suited for military campaigns.
2. The Nephite calendrical system used to report their wars in the first century B.C. probably placed their new year day at or near the winter solstice.
3. Shortly after the birth of Christ, the Nephite calendar system changed to a base that seems to have put their new year near the beginning of April.
4. The Nephite seasonality pattern for warfare agrees remarkably well with what we know from Mesoamerica about seasons for fighting and for cultivation and harvest.
5. Two possible anomalies in the agreement between the two patterns exist, but reasonable explanations can be provided for each.

Post Script

Important points about chronology were modified from the original version of the preceding article in the author's "Comments on Nephite Chronology," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 2* (Fall, 1993), pages 207-11 on the basis of the paper for Randall Spackman, *Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Primary Prophecies,*

Calendars, and Dates, Provo: FARMS, 1993. The points of main relevance regarding seasonality are reproduced here.

> I had supposed that the Nephite new year's day referred to in Alma 51:37 and 52:1 (when captain Teancum killed king Amalickiah and so turned back the Lamanite military offensive that had reached as far as the land of Bountiful) fell near the winter solstice in December. Spackman calculates that in the year 69 *B.C.*, the Nephites' new year's day fell on February 25.[18] My analysis of the *Book of Mormon* text found that most references to warfare placed it near the end or the beginning of the Nephite year. I reasoned that these Lamanite and Nephite military campaigns would have been constrained by the same conditions that made most Mesoamerican warfare fall between late November and early February.
>
> Further investigation has persuaded me, however, that I generalized too much. The length and timing of the "dry season" and "wet season" vary substantially from region to region, which point I noted in my paper on "seasonality" but did not emphasize sufficiently. Much depends on specific local meteorological and topographic conditions. Generalizing for the entire area can introduce errors when comparison is made with *Book of Mormon* events.
>
> Particularly, in the region I recognize as the probable location of Bountiful—southernmost Veracruz and extreme western Tabasco states in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec—rains during the North American winter months are caused by massive incursions into Mesoamerica of cold air masses from higher latitudes. These result from the polar air masses that sweep southward through the Mississippi River valley, then out across the Gulf of Mexico

where additional moisture is picked up. When this air reaches southern Mexico, it is funnelled by the mountains on either side of the saddle-shaped isthmus so that it pours across that pass thus formed—the "bottom" of the Gulf of Mexico—out over the Pacific Ocean. On its way south up the Gulf Coast side, this air is orographically lifted by the mountains, causing it to drop much of its moisture on southern Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche and northern Chiapas. (As it descends down the Pacific slope, the consequent warming produces strong, dry winds along the Pacific coast of the isthmus, which means that agriculture along that strip is always a doubtful business.) The rains produced by these "northers" in December through February mean that on the Gulf side of the isthmus "the so-called dry season is not very dry."[19] Only March, April and early May have low rainfall. For instance, at Santa Maria Chimalapa, up in the mountainous spine of the isthmus, rain due to northers recurs with some frequency through early February and irregularly up to another month after that.[20] However, along the band of sand dunes "down by the seashore" (Alma 51:25) adjacent to the Gulf Coast ("the beach" of Alma 51:32), travel is usually feasible by February.[21]

Western highland Guatemala, which I consider part of the land of Nephi from which Lamanite soldiers would have been drawn, differs. Most of the northers are blocked by intervening high elevations; consequently, dry conditions develop months earlier than in the isthmus zone. The dry season in Guatemala begins in November; in late December the harvest begins and continues through the middle of February.[22] But again, local factors make a big difference; the dry season lasts substantially longer along the very coast, and also back in the highlands, than in the

intermediate zone—the foothills facing the Pacific Ocean.[23] Amalickiah's armies were recruited from "the land of Nephi," and he would have had to adapt his plans to the agricultural schedule of the Lamanite peasants who formed the "wonderfully great army" that he dispatched to attack the city of Moroni on the east sea (Alma 51:9, 11-12, 22-28). A plausible schedule would have been: (1) much of the harvest already gathered before the men departed from their home areas in the highlands (January?); (2) weeks of movement to a staging area (Antionum?) near Moroni on the east sea;[24] (3) one or two weeks to conquer the settlements near the seacoast, from Moroni to near Bountiful (see Alma 51:23-28). Given the dates for the harvest on the one hand and the dry period when military operations in the field could be reliably scheduled on the other hand, for both my land of Nephi (highland Guatemala) and the Moroni-Bountiful area (Gulf Coast), I believe that logistics, weather, trail conditions, etc., would not permit an attack on Moroni to be launched before mid-February.[25] Spackman's date of February 25 for the new year's day reported in Alma 52:1 is reasonable, as I now understand natural conditions in both contemporary Middle America and *Book of Mormon* lands. On the contrary, my earlier proposal for a date around the winter solstice now seems too early on climatic grounds. The correlation between the Nephite months and our current months which I proposed in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* thus needs to be revised by about two months.

Notes To Chapter 7

[1] The actual length of the solar year varies periodically between 365.242120 and 365.242877 days according to Leroy E. Doggett and George H. Kaplan, "Calendar Accuracy," *Sky and Telescope* 65 (1983), pages 205-6. Astronomically, the solar year's average length over a five-million-year period is about half a minute shorter than our Gregorian year.

[2] Charles Kolb's comment in Michel Graulich, "The Metaphor of the Day in Ancient Mexican Myth and Ritual," *Current Anthropology* 22 (1981), page 53. Pages 51-59 present information on the hotly debated subject of whether Mesoamerican calendars included intercalation mechanisms. Victoria Bricker in "The Origin of the Maya Solar Calendar," *Current Anthropology* 23 (1982), pages 101-3, has proposed that the southern Mesoamerican calendar did not adjust to keep seasons and calendar days in agreement. From a *Book of Mormon* point of view, it may be of interest that she calculates that the Maya solar calendar was first used "around 550 B.C.," at which time the seasons and the solar year would have been in full coordination. At that time 06 Pop, first day of the first month of the Maya year, fell at the winter solstice. Of course Lehi's party reached their land of promise, probably in southern Mesoamerica, around 575 B.C., although we do not know what relation his descendants may have had to the bearers of higher Maya culture.

[3] Useful basic sources include Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964; and Julian Morgenstern's trilogy, "The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel," *Hebrew Union College Annual 2* (1924), pages 13-78; "Additional Notes on 'The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel,'" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3 (1926), pages 77-107; and "Supplementary Studies in the Calendars of Ancient Israel," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935), pages 1-149. A similarity may have prevailed between the Near East and Mesoamerica in beliefs and customs regarding the beginning of the new year. The unlucky or "useless" days of the Aztecs and Maya immediately preceding the new year were a time of psychological tension and ritual uncertainty in the face of a possibility that the hoped-for renewal of the world at the moment of initiation of the new time period somehow might fail to take place (see, for example, George C. Vaillant, *The Aztecs of Mexico,* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1950). The similar five-day period in Egypt had some of the same connotations. Julian

Morgenstern, in his *The Fire upon the Altar,* Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963, pages 6-49, argues passionately, if not with complete persuasiveness, that similar beliefs and practices surrounded the Israelite new year celebration at the fall (changed later to the spring) equinox.

[4] Morgenstern's "Supplementary Studies," page 3.

[5] Morgenstern's "Supplementary Studies," page 3.

[6] Morgenstern's "Supplementary Studies," page 7.

[7] See my "The 'Brass Plates' and Biblical Scholarship," Chapter 2 in this volume, originally published in *Dialogue* 10 (1977), page 34; also available as a FARMS Reprint, SOR-77.

[8] Morgenstern's "Additional Notes," page 101.

[9] I consider it obvious that, at the very least, two calendars were in use among the Nephites, if only because the lunar system indicated for the people of Zarahemla would not have disappeared, considering how numerous they were in the Nephite-ruled society. We should also expect that at the least the Israelite immigrants would adapt or borrow, as did the Elephantine group in Egypt, a local, ecologically suited system of reckoning to govern their agricultural cycle. After all, whoever made them acquainted with native American maize (see Mosiah 7:22; 9:9,14) could not have made the transfer of the plant and the essential cultural knowledge of its husbandry without also sharing an appropriate calendar with the newcomers (on maize transmission, see my *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985, pages 139-40). Mesoamerica is, of course, famous for the number, variety and complex articulation of its calendrical systems (see, for example, Linton Satterthwaite, "Calendrics of the Maya Lowlands," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, 16 volumes, edited by Gordon R. Willey et al., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965, 3:603-31).

[10] Ralph L. Roys, "Lowland Maya Native Society at Spanish Contact," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, 3:671.

[11] A good source showing the time depth of solstitial reckoning is Vincent H. Malmström, "A Reconstruction of the Chronology of Mesoamerican Calendrical Systems," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 9 (1978), pages 105-16.

[12] John L. Sorenson, "The Significance of the Chronological Discrepancy between Alma 53:22 and Alma 56:9," available as FARMS Reprint SOR-90b.

[13] *An Ancient American Setting*, pages 35, 241.

[14] Jorge Vivó Escoto, "Weather and Climate of Mexico and Central America," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians,* Robert C. West, editor, volume 1, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964, pages 187-215. On rainfall in the Motozintla area, see Carlos Navarrete, *Un Reconocimiento de la Sierra Madre de Chiapas: Apuntes de un Diario de Campo*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Centro de Estudios Mayas, Cuadernos 13, México, 1978.

[15] Mesoamerican battles were sometimes scheduled for auspicious times, according to Michael D. Coe, "Skywatchers of Ancient Mexico," *Archaeoastronomy* 4/1 (1981), pages 39-40.

[16] Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, pages 298-301.

[17] In regard to the calendar in the new reckoning, 3 Nephi 8 forces me to reconsider a position I had previously taken. On the fourth day of the first month in the thirty-fourth year of the new era, the prophesied signs of the crucifixion began with the rise of a great storm and a "tempest" (3 Nephi 8:5-7). I suggested in *An Ancient American Setting*, page 322, that this referred to a tropical hurricane, but the season when hurricanes have occurred historically falls only between June and November. A hurricane would have been absolutely impossible, on natural principles, whether the old late-December new year had been referred to here or, as I now suppose, the new year fell over three months later. Rereading the text persuades me now that a hurricane probably was not referred to. The tempest, after all, arose abruptly, then ended after only three hours (see 3 Nephi 8:6, 19). This does not describe a typical hurricane coming out of the Caribbean. Something more like a set of super thunderstorms triggered by volcanism could account for the reported phenomena. Such thunderstorms would be quite possible in April.

[18] Compare John L. Sorenson, "Seasons of War, Seasons of Peace in the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991, pages 249-55.

[19] Randall P. Spackman, *Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Primary Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates*, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993, page 30.

[20] Michael D. Coe, "Photogrammetry and the Ecology of Olmec Civilization," paper read at Working Conference on Aerial Photography and Anthropology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 10-12 May 1969, page 8.

[21] Carlos Muñoz Muñoz, *Crónica de Santa Maria Chimalapa: en las selvas del Istmo de Tehuantepec*, San Luis Potosí: Ediciones Molina, 1977, pages 30-46, 59-74.

[22] Robert C. West and John P. Augelli, *Middle America: Its Lands and Peoples*, 2nd edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976, page 43, figure 2.18; Jorge A. Vivó Escoto, "Weather and Climate of Mexico and Central America," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, volume 1, *Natural Environment and Early Cultures*, edited by R.C. West, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964, figure 3, page 193, pages 201-3, figure 14 and page 213. This was confirmed by my personal experience with travel in the area between January and April.

[23] Charles Wagley, "The Social and Religious Life of a Guatemalan Village," *American Anthropological Association Memoir* 41 (1949), pages 110-118.

[24] Gareth W. Lowe, Thomas A. Lee, Jr., and Eduardo Martinez Espinosa, "Izapa: An Introduction to the Ruins and Monuments," BYU *New World Archaeological Foundation Papers* 31 (1982), pages 55, 61.

[25] On how we know this from the *Book of Mormon* text, see my *The Geography of Book*

of Mormon Events, revised edition, 1992, page 266.

[26] I may, of course, be reasoning circularly between the two sets of data, but being aware of that danger, I still believe that the conclusion seems right.

Appendix:
Annals of the Nephite Wars

Key

Sources:

#	= Nephite records
Z#	= Zeniffite record
SM#	= Sons of Mosiah record

Type of Conflict:

L	= Lamanite initiative
N	= Nephite initiative
NvsN	= Nephites vs. Nephites
LvsL	= Lamanites vs. Anti-Nephi-Lehies
Z	= Zeniffite initiative
0	= Intended action not carried out
A	= Multiple battles involved

Quality rating for date:

[a]	= specific month cited (3 occurrences)
[b]	= commencement or end of year specified or implied (32 occurrences)
[c]	= plausible inferential basis (11 occurrences)

1. Era: Since departure from Jerusalem

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
1	LA	2 Nephi 5:34		Within forty years, Nephites had already had wars and contentions with the Lamanites.
2	LA	Jacob 7:24	55-179	Lamanites delight in wars and seek to destroy Nephites continually.
3	LA	Enos 1:20	55-179	Enos sees wars in his lifetime; Lamanites continually seek to destroy Nephites.
4	LA	Jarom 1:7	179-238	Lamanites come many times against Nephites.
5	LA	Omni 1:2-3	ca. 238-320	Omni fights much against Lamanites; seasons of serious war.
6	L	Omni 1:24	ca. 440-460	A serious war in the days of Benjamin.
7	L	Words of Mormon 1:13-14	ca. 440-460	Lamanites come from land of Nephi; Benjamin's armies beat them back.
8	NO	Mosiah 9:1-2	ca. 405	Zeniff and a Nephite army go to land of Nephi to destroy the Lamanites, but do not act.

2. Era: Zeniff as king/Since departure from Jerusalem

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
Z1	L	Mosiah 9:14	13/ca. 445	Lamanites attack.
Z2	Z	Mosiah 9:16-18	13/ca. 445	Nephites counterattack, drive Lamanites out of their land.
Z3	L	Mosiah 10:3, 5, 8-10, 19-20	35/ca. 467	Lamanites attack Shilom from Shemlon after twenty-two years of peace, but are driven out.
Z4	L	Mosiah 11:16-17	40/ca. 472	Lamanites attack Zeniffite guards.
Z5	Z	Mosiah 11:18	40/ca. 472	Noah's army defeats Lamanites.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
Z6	ZO	Mosiah 18:33	ca. 43/ca. 475	Noah's army pursues Alma's people.
Z7	L	Mosiah 19:6-20	ca. 43/ca. 475	Lamanites attack Noah; he flees, dies.
Z8	L	Mosiah 20:7-11	ca. 45/ca. 477	Lamanites attack people of Limhi because of stolen maidens.
Z9	Z	Mosiah 21:7-8	ca. 46/ca. 478	Limhi and army attack Lamanites and are beaten.
Z10	Z	Mosiah 21:11	ca. 46/ca. 478	They renew the fight and suffer much loss.
Z11	Z	Mosiah 21:12	ca. 46/ca. 478	And still again, losing once more.
Z12	LO	Mosiah 22:15	ca. 53/ca. 485	Lamanite army pursues Limhi's people into the wilderness unsuccessfully.
Z13	L	Mosiah 23:25-29	ca. 53/ca. 485	Lamanite army that had chased Limhi enters Helam where Alma and his people dwell.
Z14	LO	Mosiah 24:23	ca. 55/ca. 487	Lamanite army pursues Alma's people, but cannot catch them.

3. Era: Reign of the Judges

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
9	NvsN	Alma 2:1	5.I.10-III.30 (= 514)	Contention begins; Amlici strives to be king.
		Alma 2:5-7	IV.1-VI.1	Voice of the people obtained: negative.
		Alma 2:8	VI.5-VII.30	Amlici stirs up followers.
		Alma 2:10	VIII.1-IX.30	Action 10 planned.
		Alma 2:12-14	X.1-XI.25	Mobilization of Amlicites and Nephites.
		Alma 2:15	XI.25-28	Amlicites move from homelands to hill Amnihu.
		Alma 2:17-19	5.XI.29[b]	Fighting.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
10	L	Alma 2:27-28	5.XI.30[b]	Amlicite-Lamanite combined army attempts to reach Zarahemla, but Nephites drive them away.
11	L	Alma 3:20-23	5.XII. 5-12[b]	A backup army attacks and is driven off.
		Alma 3:25, 27	XII.30 (+ 5?)	All these wars commenced and ended in fifth year. Thus ends the year.
SM1	LvsL	Alma 24:2	10.	Lamanites attack Anti-Nephi-Lehies.
12	L	Alma 16:1	10.XII.1-11.II.5	Lamanites prepare, march to target.
		Alma 16:2-3	11.II.5-7[a]	Attack at Ammonihah and around Noah.
13	LA	Alma 25:3	11.II. 7-23[a]	En route back, Lamanites had many battles.
14	N	Alma 16:8	11.III.7[a]	Battle above Manti; captives are recovered.
		Alma 16:9	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the eleventh year.
15	L	Alma 16:12	14.	Lamanites come to war this year; no details.
SM2	LvsL	Alma 27:2	14.	Lamanites again destroy Anti-Nephi-Lehies.
16	L	Alma 27:14	14.XII. 7-21	Anti-Nephi-Lehies flee to the borders of the land of Zarahemla.
		Alma 27:20	XII.21-25	Alma, Ammon consult the chief judge.
		Alma 27:21-26	15.I.1-II.1	Voice of the people obtained; leaders return; Anti-Nephi-Lehies go to Jershon.
		Alma 28:1	II-X	They settle, plant, build; Nephite armies placed.
		Alma 28:2-3	15.XI. 15-17[b]	Huge battle with Lamanites; tremendous slaughter on both sides.
		Alma 28:4-6	XII.1-30	Ritual mourning period.
		Alma 28:7	XII.30 (+5?)	Thus ends the fifteenth year.
17	LO	Alma 35:10	17.X-XII	Zoramites stir up their people and Lamanites against people of Ammon.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
		Alma 35:12	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the seventeenth year.
		Alma 35:13	18.I-II	Ammonites move to Melek (compare Alma 43:13), leaving Nephite army in Jershon to contend with Lamanites and Zoramites.
		Alma 43:4, 15, 22	18.II[b]	Nephites prepare for war; Lamanite armies want to attack but do not due to superior Nephite preparations.
18	L	Alma 43:22-33	18.III-X	Lamanite redeployment to Manti sector (via land of Nephi homeland?). Moroni spies on them, sends to Alma and receives prophetic assistance, marches to Manti, mobilizes locals, positions his men, waits.
		Alma 43:35-54	18.XI.25[b]	Battle; Lamanites defeated.
		Alma 44:23	XII.1-15	Nephite armies return to homes.
		Alma 44:24	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the eighteenth year.
19	NvsN	Alma 45:1	19.I	Fasting, prayer, thankfulness.
		Alma 45:2-18	I.15	Alma charges his son, leaves.
		Alma 45:20-22	I.25-III.25	Helaman preaches, organizes in all the land.
		Alma 46:1-7	III.25-IV.30	Sorting out of sides, arming, Amalickiah's "flattery," and gathering of dissident force.
		Alma 46:12-28	IV.1-IV.30	Moroni rallies the faithful.
		Alma 46:29-33	19.V.1-7[c]	Amalickiah departs; Moroni and posse pursue, intercept, slay some. Amalickiah escapes.
20	L	Alma 47:1.36	19.V.20-VIII.20	Amalickiah gains, consolidates power.
		Alma 48:1-5	VIII.20-X.10	Amalickiah stirs up Lamanites, prepares for war, staffs army with Zoramites.
		Alma 48:8-9	X-XI	Moroni fortifies Nephite sites.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
		Alma 49:1	X.10-XI.10	Lamanites on way to Ammonihah.
		Alma 49:3-24	19.XI.-10-15[b]	Lamanites are defeated at Ammonihah and Noah.
		Alma 49:25	XI.15-XII.15	Lamanites return to land of Nephi.
		Alma 49:29	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the nineteenth year.
21	N	Alma 50:1-6	20.I-II	Nephites fortify extensively.
		Alma 50:7	20.II.-10-30[c]	Lamanite squatters driven from east coastal area by Nephite army.
		Alma 50:9-15	III-XII	Settlers installed; Nephites construct cities and fortifications.
		Alma 50:16	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the twentieth year.
22	NvsN	Alma 50:25	24.II.1-III.15	Contention arises between peoples of Morianton and Lehi; legalistic jousting.
		Alma 50:26-27	III.15-IV.30	A warm contention; former take up arms; Lehi group flees to Moroni.
		Alma 50:28-29	V-XI	Morianton worries, determines to flee to north, sells his people on it.
		Alma 50:33-35	24.XII.-1-20[b]	Morianton group flees; Moroni pursues; battle occurs.
		Alma 50:36	XII.21-30	Moriantonites returned; lands united.
		Alma 50:40	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the twenty-fourth year.
23	NvsN	Alma 51:1	25.I-II	Peace.
		Alma 51:2-6	III.1-V.30	Contentions develop; petitions made; sides chosen.
		Alma 51:7	VI.1-VII.30	Voice of the people obtained.
		Alma 51:7	VIII.1-X.1	Political stalemate.
		Alma 51:14	IX.15-XII.1	Lamanite army on the way to east coast.
		Alma 51:15-21	25.IX.30-XI.30[c]	Moroni receives (emergency or partial?) approval by the voice of the people, subdues rebels.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
24	L	Alma 51:22-23	25.XII.1[a]	City of Moroni attacked, taken.
		Alma 51:25-37	XII.5-30 (+ 5?)	Lamanite army advances to near Bountiful. On new year's eve, Teancum slays Amalickiah in his tent on the beach. Lamanites hole up. Thus ends the twenty-fifth year.

The chronology from here to the beginning of the thirtieth year constitutes a revision of the literal dates in Alma 52-58, which contain contradictions likely due to errors of memory by Helaman. The revision is developed in my paper, "The Significance of the Chronological Discrepancy between Alma 53:22 and Alma 56:9," which can be requested from FARMS. The revisions do not change any seasonal information.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
25	L	Alma 52:2	26.II.1-III.15	Ammoron travels to Nephi.
		Alma 52:4-5	III.15-VIII	He consolidates power.
		Alma 52:12-13	26.IX-XI.15[b]	He raises a new (limited) army and attacks the west sea borders of the Nephites with little success but poses a threat.
		Alma 52:11, 15	XI-27.I.30	Moroni goes to the west sea front, organizes, recruits, establishes defenses.
26	NO	Alma 52:15-17	26.XI-XII[b]	Moroni has instructed Teancum to attack Mulek if possible and has sent some reinforcements, but Teancum lacks a tactical plan. Keeps visibly preparing for attack while fortifying.
27	L	Alma 52:19; 56:13-14	27.X.25-XI.15[b]	Lamanites capture Manti, Zeezrom, Cumeni and Antiparah.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
28	LO	Alma 56:9	XI.15-30	Helaman's two thousand sons march from Melek to Judea.
		Alma 56:10,18	27.XII-28.II[b]	They help fortify Judea; Lamanites dare not attack though expected to.
29	N	Alma 52:18	27.XI.1-XII.20	Moroni has been recruiting a large army and now leaves Zarahemla for Bountiful to join Teancum.
		Alma 52:19-20	28.I.8-30	Council of captains at Bountiful, then embassies to get Lamanites to come fight.
		Alma 52:21-26	28.II.5-6[b]	Stratagem leads to recapture of Mulek.
		Alma 53:7	III-XII	Nephites on the east fortify and farm.
30	LA	Alma 56:29	II.15	Food, reinforcements arrive at Judea.
		Alma 56:29	28.III.1-VI(?).30[c]	Lamanites, nervous about increased Nephite strength, sally out to intercept support.
31	N	Alma 56:30-34	28."VII" (III?).1-5[a]	Stratagem carried out near Antiparah to defeat Lamanites.
32	NO	Alma 57:3-4	28.X-XI[b]	Helaman prepares to attack Antiparah, but Lamanites abandon it.
		Alma 57:5	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the twentieth-eighth year.
33	N	Alma 55:7-24	29.II.14-15[c]	Gid is recaptured.
		Alma 55:25	II.16-III.15	Lamanite prisoners labor fortifying Gid.
34	LA	Alma 55:27	29.III.1-IV.30[c]	Lamanite tricks, minor attacks to free prisoners fail.
35	N	Alma 57:6	II	Supplies, six thousand more men reach Helaman.
		Alma 57:8-12	29.II.15-III.30[b]	Helaman's army besieges Cumeni; Lamanites surrender.
		Alma 57:13-16	IV.1-14	Large number of prisoners create a dilemma; they are sent toward Zarahemla.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
36	L	Alma 57:17-22	29.IV.15[b]	New Lamanite army attacks, but is defeated, retreats to Manti.
37	NO LO	Alma 58:1-2	29.V[c]	Stalemate at Manti, but tactical tricks by both sides tried with no real battle; Lamanites will not come out to fight.
		Alma 58:3-4	V-X	Helaman waits for food and men.
		Alma 58:5	V-X	Lamanites being reinforced and supplied.
		Alma 58:8	XI.1	Helaman receives some food, a few men.
38	N	Alma 58:10-30	29.XI.20-21[b]	Operation at Manti captures the city; Lamanites flee to the land of Nephi.
		Alma 58:41	XII.1	Helaman writes, sends his epistle.
39	NO	Alma 55:33-34	XI-XII	Lamanites fortify Morianton, bring in supplies, men.
		Alma 55:33	29.XII. 15-30[b]	Moroni prepares to attack Morianton.
		Alma 55:35	XII. 30(+5?)	Thus ends the twenty-ninth year.
		Alma 59:5	30.I[c]	Moroni continues preparation.
40	NvsN	Alma 61:5, 8	30.I.15[b]	Rebels in Zarahemla drive out Pahoran to Gideon; write to Lamanite king.
41	L	Alma 59:5-8	30.I.25[b]	Lamanites, including some from Manti, attack, capture Nephihah.
42	NvsN	Alma 62:3-6	III-V	Epistles having been exchanged in the wake of action 41, Moroni goes to Pahoran, recruiting as he goes.
		Alma 62:6	VI-X	In Gideon, loyalist forces are gathered, consolidated, armed.
		Alma 62:7-8	30.XI[b]	Moroni and Pahoran lead army against the king-men under Pachus, defeat them.
		Alma 62:9-11	XII	The disloyal receive trials; government functions are restored. Thus ends the thirtieth year.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
43	N	Alma 62:14-15	31.I.30-II.25[b]	Moroni leads a large army toward Nephihah. En route, they encounter a Lamanite force headed to Nephihah, capture them.
44	N	Alma 62:18-29	31.II.27-30[b]	Nephites take back Nephihah and pack prisoners off to Melek.
45	N	Alma 62:30-38	31.III.1-2[b]	Nephites attack Lehi, driving Lamanites to the city of Moroni, then out of the land.
		Alma 62:39	XII.30 (+ 5?)	Thus ends the thirty-first year.
46	L	Alma 63:10-15	39.XI?[c]	During the year, the chief judge dies, dissenters go to Lamanites and stir them up. They come against the Nephites.
		Alma 63:16	XII. 30(+ 5?)	Thus ends the thirty-ninth year.
47	LA	Helaman 1:14	41.I-X	Lamanites gather a well-armed, innumerable army.
		Helaman 1:15-34	41.XI-XII[b]	Lamanites come down, led by Coriantumr, take Zarahemla, and go through the center of the land toward Bountiful. But they are headed off, retreat, and are decimated. Thus ends the forty-first year.
48	NvsNA	Helaman 3:17-22	46-48	Great contentions and wars among the Nephites. Thus ends the forty-sixth year. In the latter end of the forty-eighth year, the wars and contentions begin to diminish a small degree.
49	NvsN	Helaman 4:1-2	54	Contention among the Nephites with much bloodshed; rebels are slain or driven out to Lamanite lands.
50	LA	Helaman 4:4	56	Dissenters and Lamanite armies prepare for war.
		Helaman 4:5-6	57	Dissenters and Lamanite armies come down, possess Zarahemla, and drive Nephites near to the land Bountiful.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
51	L	Helaman 4:8	58-59	Nephites are driven entirely out of the land southward.
52	NA	Helaman 4:9	60	Nephites regain many parts of the land.
53	NA	Helaman 4:10, 17	61	Nephites regain half their possessions. Thus ends the sixty-first year.
54	NA	Helaman 4:18	62	Nephites try but fail to gain more.
55	NvsNA	Helaman 11:1-2	72-73	Robbers cause a war that goes on all year and through the next.
56	NvsNA	Helaman 11:24-25	80	Dissenters, robbers war with Nephites, retreat to wilderness and mountains after murdering and plundering.
57	NvsN	Helaman 11:28-29	80.XI(?)	Nephites send an army to search for robbers, but it is driven back. Thus ends the eightieth year.
58	NvsN	Helaman 11:30-32	81.I-II[b]	At the beginning of the year, Nephites go against robbers and destroy many, but must return to their own lands because of robbers' numbers. Thus ends the eighty-first year.
59	NvsN	3 Nephi 1:27	93	During the year, Gadianton robber bands living in the mountains slaughter many.

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#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
60	NvsNA	3 Nephi 2:11-19	13-15	There begin to be wars through all the land. Before the thirteenth year has passed away, this war threatens Nephites with destruction. It continues for two years.
61	NvsN	3 Nephi 3:1, 13-26	16-17	In these years, the people gather in one place to starve out robbers.
		3 Nephi 4:7-12	19."VI" (?)[a]	In the nineteenth year, "sixth month," robbers battle Nephites, but are beaten and eliminated.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
62	LA	Mormon 1:8-12	322	In this year a war with multiple battles begins; Lamanites withdraw.
63	L	Mormon 2:1	326	A new war begins.
64	L	Mormon 2:3	327	Lamanites come against the Nephites, who retreat northward.
65	L	Mormon 2:4	327-330	Unsuccessful stand at Angola.
66	L	Mormon 2:5	327-330	Unsuccessful stand in land of David.
67	L	Mormon 2:9	327-330	At Joshua, Nephites defeat the Lamanites.
68	LA	Mormon 2:15	?-344	Implied slaughter of Nephites in wars.
69	L	Mormon 2:16	345	Nephites driven into the land northward to Jashon.
70	L	Mormon 2:20	345	Driven northward to land of Shem.
71	L	Mormon 2:22-25	346	Nephites defeat Lamanites.
72	NA	Mormon 2:27	347-349	Nephites attack, regain their old lands.
73	L	Mormon 3:4-7	361	Lamanites attack at the narrow pass, are beaten, and flee to their own lands.
74	L	Mormon 3:8	362	Lamanites return and are again beaten.
75	N	Mormon 4:1-2	363	Nephites attack Lamanites, then retreat to land of Desolation.
76	L	Mormon 4:2	363	Immediately a new Lamanite army arrives and beats Nephites, taking land of Desolation.
77	L	Mormon 4:7-8	364	Lamanites come against the city Teancum, but they are repelled.
78	N	Mormon 4:8	364	Confident Nephites retake land of Desolation.
79	L	Mormon 4:10-14	367.1?	The 366th year has passed away, and Lamanites come again, taking possession of lands of Desolation and Teancum.
80	N	Mormon 4:15	367	Nephites drive out the Lamanites once more.

#	Action	Text	Dates	Events
81	LA	Mormon 4:17-20	377	Lamanites mercilessly drive Nephites; in land of Desolation, Nephites lose and flee.
82	LA	Mormon 4:20	378?	At Boaz, the Lamanites must attack twice to win.
83	LA	Mormon 5:3-4	379	Two Lamanite attacks at Jordan fail.
84	L	Mormon 5:6-7	380	Nephites are beaten badly and flee.
85	L	Mormon 6:5-15	384	The final battle at Cumorah; tens of thousands destroyed; Nephites become extinct as a nation and people.

The Political Economy of the Nephites

Power was the most crucial theme in *Book of Mormon* history. The rivalry of Lamanites and Nephites began and ended as a fight over who should and would control Lehi's people. To grasp the bases of power, and thus of the nature of the conflicts that pervade Mormon's record, is necessary if we are to understand the lessons it holds for us. For us to grasp "what great things the Lord hath done" (Title Page) for the people of that book, we will find it necessary to come to a deeper understanding of why their history took the course it did. Only in the light of that deeper understanding will we be capable of fully appreciating the religious elements ("doctrine") that informed and resulted from their historical course.

The power issue arose through the reluctance of older brothers Laman and Lemuel to accept their father's leadership in the family. Immediately after the family's exodus from Jerusalem, because of their "stiffneckedness" they "did murmur against their father" and, according to Nephi, "sought to take away" his life (1 Nephi 2:11-13). Intimidated by a divine manifestation "they did as he commanded them" but with still-rebellious hearts (verse 14). Again and again in the following years their unwillingness was brought to reluctant compliance by events beyond themselves. But Nephi faithfully followed his father. The Lord turned the differing responses into a test of qualities for rulership. He told Nephi that "inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren" (1 Nephi 2:21-22). As Noel B. Reynolds has explained, a fundamental purpose in Nephi's reporting (in the books of 1 and 2 Nephi) the incidents of conflict between him and his brothers and their resolution in his favor was to justify to history that the Lord had legitimately conferred the rulership upon him.[1] Almost a millennium later, the dispute was finally resolved,

in mortality, at the hill Cumorah, where the Nephites were exterminated (see Mormon 6).

Nowhere are the underlying issues made clearer than in written arguments made by the leaders of opposing factions during the middle period of Nephite history. They were Moroni[1], the Nephite war captain in the first century B.C., and Ammoron, a Nephite dissenter who had become the Lamanite king. The former, in the face of what he considered recalcitrance and hypocrisy by the latter, angrily wrote, if you will not do thus and so, "I will come against you with my armies; yea, even I will arm my women and my children, and I will come against you, and I will follow you even into your own land, which is the land of our first inheritance; yea, and it shall be blood for blood, yea, life for life; and I will give you battle even until you are destroyed from off the face of the earth" (Alma 54:12). Ammoron's response was just as adamant: "Behold, your fathers did wrong their brethren [Laman[1] and Lemuel], insomuch that they did rob them of their right to the government when it rightly belonged unto them. And now behold, if ye will lay down your arms, and subject yourselves to be governed by those to whom the government doth rightly belong, then will I cause that my people shall lay down their weapons" (verses 17-18). If not, "we will wage a war which shall be eternal, either to the subjecting the Nephites to our authority or to their eternal extinction" (verse 20).

This struggle dominated the thinking of many of the leaders of both rival peoples. But the stakes were far greater than mere personal pride or political office. That can be seen in another exchange of letters eighty years later. There we detect more of the meaning behind the angry rhetoric. This time the conflict involved a confederation of Nephites and friendly Lamanites on the one hand versus a great robber combine on the other. The right to rule was again the crux. Giddianhi, "the governor of...the secret society of Gadianton" (3 Nephi 3:9), addressed Lachoneus, governor of the land of the Nephites, thus: "Yield up unto this my people, your cities, your lands, and your possessions, rather than that they should visit you with the sword...I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without

the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government" (3 Nephi 3:6, 10). It is apparent from the language in this epistle that the nub of the conflict was not just political control, as we today might infer from talk about "rights of government." Rather, "possessions"—the material perquisites that accompanied the ruler's office—were seemingly the key issue. To paraphrase a modern catch phrase, Ammoron and Giddianhi were each saying, "Its the economy, stupid."

We are on tricky semantic ground here. Rulership, wealth, and privilege were so wholly intertwined in the societies of *Book of Mormon* peoples (as in all civilizations in antiquity), that terms current in our discourse today, such as "political structure," "government," and "economy," fail to convey adequately the conceptual categories that were used in Nephite and Lamanite thinking. Our categories artificially separate institutions and functions in society in order to analyze them, but ancient thought did not aim to analyze. It was assumed by all that it was the right of the noble class—by virtue of divine approval—to control virtually all aspects and every instrument of wealth, power, decision-making, and social privilege. Fatalistically, commoners were considered to be simply "along for the ride." This distinction in thinking between ancient times and our day is so fundamental that it would be misleading to refer to the subject of this paper as, say, "Nephite government" or "Nephite economy."

There is one area of study in modern social science that provides a helpful label; it is "political economy." Studies conducted under that heading seek to understand how political and economic matters are intertwined with each other. Its attempt to explain governmental power on the one hand in relation to economic matters on the other makes it a suitable label to indicate what this article seeks to elucidate about Nephite society.

The basis of government according to Nephite thought

The background of Israelite thinking, and thus the background of the Nephites' view of their rulers, was, of course, the ancient Near Eastern civilizations. When it came to formulating the Nephite institution of kingship (and evidently parallel forms among the Lamanites), the model they relied on must have come from two sources: (1) personal experience in the Old World of the founding members of the immigrant parties, and (2) information recorded on the sacred brass plates which the Nephites carried to America (broadly equivalent to "the *Old Testament*"). For the Nephites, the experiential dimension would have come through Nephi and Zoram. They alone (among the males) had personally observed in Jerusalem public manifestations of Judahite rulership, and they would have absorbed some of the popular views in Israel of how kings and their cohorts ought to and did in fact function. (For the Lamanites, it would have been Laman, Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael who brought information about how governing was conceived; of course they did not have access to the brass plates.) There is a slight possibility that courtiers who perhaps accompanied the young prince Mulek from Jerusalem could also have had some influence on Nephite views about governance via Zarahemla, although the monarchical patterns were probably set before the "Mulekites" were ever encountered in the days of Mosiah$_1$.

According to the *Old Testament*, Israelite kingship took its basic form in the days of Saul and David.[2] According to the present text of 1 Samuel (which not all scholars consider historically accurate in regard to this matter), the Israelites specifically wanted to copy the governmental ways of their neighbors. "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Samuel 8:5, 20), they told the prophet Samuel. Perhaps from what he knew about the surrounding countries, he prophesied how such a system would work to their harm. His warnings were mostly about economic consequences. A king, he told them, would draft their sons and daughters for his personal service in

the royal court; he would appoint a large staff of military officers and administrators, who, along with junior royalty, would have to be supported by taxes or tribute payments; he would require his subjects to manufacture his armaments; he would make the people cultivate and harvest the royal fields; and he would appropriate the best of their lands, their grain, and their flocks as his own. Nevertheless, the forms and practices of kingship were adopted by the Israelites, and so were the concepts behind them. For instance, Solomon credited the Lord as the power by which he was established on the throne (see 1 Kings 2:23), mirroring the ancient Near Eastern concept that divine power authorized and supported the king.

A summary of several principles which scholars on the Bible have established to be central to the institution of Israelite kingship[3] will help ground our understanding of what the *Book of Mormon* means when it talks of monarchy.

- The king was the owner of the institutions of the state and as such held ownership, in a formal sense, of all agricultural land.
- In practice, lands specifically owned and controlled by him were granted to various royal functionaries, or to non-royal officials, as hereditary estates; in return they paid taxes to him and they were obliged to muster military and labor forces from their local subjects as the king required.
- These elite landlords extracted from the commoners who cultivated the land a substantial portion of their produce (perhaps as much as 50 percent) as tax and rent.
- This system of land tenure, taxation and furnishing of manpower reinforced the class structure of the society by ensuring that wealth, power and privilege were monopolized by the king and his supporters.
- A central bureaucracy was the king's mechanism for controlling the various levels of government responsible

for the military, economic, legal, and ritual activities of the network of cities and villages within the state. (That bureaucracy probably was modeled on Egyptian patterns.) At each level of community, of course, local rulers and their agents had to be supported out of the taxes collected. While "the will of the people" had a certain ultimate role to play in this scheme, it would be misleading to think of the arrangement as approaching "democracy."

- Widespread belief that the king's rule was legitimate, just, and effective was of paramount importance if the system was to keep running. Images, attitudes, and ideals associated with kingship were insistently communicated via myth, literary traditions, rites, and icons (such as the temple/palace complex, the scepter, and the throne). Ultimately, a king could be overthrown if enough of the people felt that he was not doing his job, or if he had betrayed his divine charter, or if they had sufficient grievances against the whole system of political economy. Thus those governed did not have a simple passive role in the scheme of rulership, however the only institutions by which the powers of the public could be decisively exercised were violent ones, a palace revolt by a dissatisfied noble who desired the throne enough to risk trying to slay the king, or sedition in which an unhappy sector of the population was mustered in direct revolt under a charismatic dissident.
- An organized system of religion—expressed particularly as a set of rituals—was crucial in legitimizing the king. The official priests were "his" priests, in theory; they were associated closely with the royal elite class, being supported by tax money or at least by those patrons who controlled major wealth.

It should be apparent that this form of kingly society was an integral whole, not divisible in practice among conceptual categories such as our terms "economics," "politics," or "religion" suggest. This pattern of rule was transferred to Lehi's New World promised land by Nephi himself (see 2 Nephi 5:18). While details of the system are not systematically sketched in the Nephite record, mention is made of a number of features that were derived from Old World kingship. Those features are made particularly visible in contrasts which the *Book of Mormon* text lays out for us between the pattern of rule by occasional righteous rulers versus the more typical unrighteous ones. Thus Benjamin made explicit how he considered himself different from run-of-the-mill rulers (see Mosiah 2:11-14): he did not tax his people, he did not demand their service to his court, etc. In addition the record of the kings of ancient Israel and Judah was documented on the brass plates of Laban, and that record evaluated the earlier kings according to Israelite cultural standards of rulership.

The discourse on the subject of kingship delivered by King $Mosiah_2$ further points up features of the conventional system of kingly rule, with which he saw many problems (see Mosiah 29:5-7, 13-19, 21-24, 33-35). He mandated a change in the Nephite system of rule, providing for a chief judge whose powers were more limited than those of a king. However, in many ways the old customs and notions surrounding the king as head of government continued under the "new" system. For instance, judges too were considered "rulers," who not only "reigned" and sat on "thrones" but controlled the distribution of the government's resources obtained by tribute or taxation. The chief judge also led Nephite armies in battle. (See Alma 12:20 on a judge as "a chief ruler" in the city of Ammonihah; Alma 35:5, 8, on "rulers" among the Zoramites; Helaman 7:4-5, judges "do according to their wills" and enrich themselves; Alma 60:1, 7, 11, 21, rulers "sit upon your thrones"; Alma 1:2, judges "reign," the same term used regarding kings; Alma 2:16, and compare Words of Mormon 1:14, the chief judge leads his forces into battle as had the king; Alma 60:19, 34-35, control of tax resources.)

Moreover, while in the modified system of rule under the judges the people are said to have "cast in their voices" (Alma 2:6) to choose the judges who would "rule" them, this would not have been anything like a "one-man, one-vote" election but probably was an expression of preference by the senior males who led the various kin groups (lineages) who would have arrived at their decision by consultation within their groups and spoke for their unit.

It must be realized that many political institutions familiar to us nowadays were in ancient times undeveloped. Concepts and cultural forms for managing issues of power and authority have been worked out slowly and painfully by the experience of many nations throughout history. Such commonplaces in modern thinking and political practice as career public servants, public record keeping, reliable reports, police, the accepted notion of "an opposition," elections, and widespread "rights" have allowed modern governments options for adjustment and continuity not feasible in early times.

It appears that the structure of Nephite government had only one solution when it was seriously challenged by opponents. That was military coercion. For instance, when the king-men challenged the system of government by judges, the only mechanism open to them and to their opponents to resolve the issue was organized armed violence. Thus $Moroni_1$ "commanded that his army should go against those king-men, to pull down their pride and their nobility and level them with the earth" (Alma 51:17). Or consider the later case where $Moroni_1$, out in the field with his troops and uninformed about the situation in the capital city, believed that Pahoran, the chief judge, and those with him in charge of the government were disloyal. The only option he could see was, again, violence. "I will come unto you," he wrote, "and...stir up [armed] insurrections among you, even until those who have desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct" (Alma 60:27-8).

"Power and authority" were on everybody's mind among the society's elite. Those who lacked them wanted to get hands on the levers by controlling the monarchy.

- "Amalickiah was desirous to be a king," and his most ardent supporters were "the lower judges of the land...seeking for power." They had been led by him to believe that "he would make them rulers over the people" (Alma 46:4-5). (Note that this ring leader wanted to become "a king," that is, any king!)
- Earlier, Morianton had tried his hand at setting up rule over an alliance of the lands Bountiful and adjacent Desolation (see Alma 50:29, 32). (Interestingly, this man with an old Jaredite name hoped to rule over an old Jaredite stronghold; compare Ether 10:19-21.)
- Later, one Jacob, head of a secret combination, was declared king by his band but could not get enough supporters to take over control of the Nephites which is what he wished. So they fled to the land northward to "build up unto themselves a kingdom" (3 Nephi 7:9-12).

And if the ambitious ones could not bring off monarchy in a single step, the ambition for "power and authority" drove them to try for initial control of the judgeship form of government—a kind of watered-down monarchy. The original Gadianton secret group wanted control of the chief judge's office, to be "placed in power and authority among the people" (Helaman 2:5), but their ultimate faith was in kings, for when the corrupt judges eventually did get control, their real aim turned out to be "to establish a king over the land" (3 Nephi 6:30, see also 21-29).

The evident rigidity or brittleness of the system of Nephite political behavior acted like a shackle to the people. Their devotion to the notions of kingship were so ingrained that, apparently, they were trapped by the institution and its cultural assumptions so as to preclude any other possible institutional forms for dealing with each other.

"Your lands and your possessions"

The concept that formal ownership of (or at least possession of certain legal rights over) lands and other property lay in elite hands is evident in language used in the *Book of Mormon*. The key words that alert us to how the Nephites thought about these matters are "possessions," "possess," and related terms. There may have been two senses of possess. Sometimes the word could be translated merely "occupy," as in Helaman 1:20 (an invading army "took possession of the city.") But a prime example gives us the more usual and pointed sense, which is that possession involves the right to exploit the resources of an area including its inhabitants. Consider Mosiah 23:29. Alma and his brethren "went forth and delivered themselves up into [the hands of the Lamanites]; and the Lamanites took possession of the land of Helam" where they and their Amulonite toadies then oppressively exploited the goods and labor of Alma's people for the economic support of the masters (see Mosiah 23:38-39; 24:9).

This pattern of exploitation of what was possessed was, however, not confined to the Lamanites. An event within the Nephite land of Zarahemla shows a similar general arrangement in the control of territory and power over its people. When captain Moroni$_1$ confronted the rebellious "king men" in order forcibly "to pull down their pride and their nobility" (Alma 51:17, 20), he first defeated them by military force, then he "compelled [their leaders] to hoist the title of liberty upon their towers, and in their cities" (verse 20). "Their cities" and "their towers" make clear that this was a rebellion based in a particular geographical area which the leaders "possessed," as indicated by the phrase, "their" cities.[4] This may look at first like a mere political showdown, but material measures were involved, for the aim and result was to make them "take up arms and support the cause of liberty" (verse 17). That is, the defeated leaders were forced to arm and muster their people and supply arms and provisions for the war. The rest of the Nephite people were similarly compelled by

their leaders to be economically and physically involved in carrying on the war, just like those in the cities possessed by the king-men. The demand for obedience and the production of resources for use by the central government was as firmly established and inescapable as in the case where Alma's people in the land of Helam were forced to answer the demands that their overlords placed on them. Whoever happened to be in charge, the pattern of compliance remained the same.

The fact that rulers held certain ultimate powers to demand land and other property, thus "possessing" it in a certain sense, does not mean that families and other elements of society (for example, a temple or shrine?) did not also hold certain rights of ownership. Note that when the people led by Lachoneus and Gidgiddoni had won victory over the robbers, they "did all return to their own lands...every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, all things whatsoever did belong unto them.... And they did return to their own lands and their possessions" (3 Nephi 6:1-2). Rulers held some, but not all, rights, and the same relationship between group and individual was true in lineages or families.

A series of additional texts moves us closer to seeing the meaning of what it meant to "possess." Tentatively, it appears that to possess means to control the use of, and take advantage of the benefits from, real or personal property, including the resources and labor of the inhabitants of the real property possessed.

Mosiah 7:22. Zeniffites were taxed, "one half of all we have or possess."

Mosiah 11:3. Noah "laid a tax of one-fifth part of all they possessed."

Mosiah 29:7. "My son, to whom the kingdom doth belong."

Alma 7:27. "Flocks, and herds, and all that you possess.

Alma 8:7. Lands, settlements were named "after the name of him who first possessed them."

Alma 22:15. The Lamanite king would "give up all that I

possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom."

Alma 47:31, 35. Amalickiah "entered the [Lamanite] city Nephi with his [Lamanite] armies, and took possession of the city," becoming the Lamanite king.

Alma 53:2. Moroni$_1$ "went to the [recaptured] city of Mulek with Lehi, and took command of the city and gave it unto Lehi."

Alma 58:10. "Our cities, and our lands, and our possessions."

Alma 58:32. "So great a number of cities, and so great possessions.

Helaman 5:52. Yielded up "the lands of their possession."

Mormon 2:4. Mormon's retreating [Nephite] armies "did come to the [Nephite] city of Angola, and we did take possession of the city."

To "get gain" is a related concept.

Alma 10:32. The object of contentious lawyers was to "get gain."

Helaman 6:17. "Set their hearts upon riches"; "to get gain, that they might be lifted up"; "to rob and to plunder, that they might get gain."

Helaman 7:5, 21. "They might get gain and glory of the world"; "to get gain, to be praised of men."

Among the things desirable to gain was "power."

Alma 43:5. In contrast to the worldly ambitious luminaries, Nephite loyalists claim not to be fighting for monarchy or power.

Alma 43:6-8. The Lamanite leader Zerahemnah strove to "bring [the Nephites] into subjection...that he might usurp great power over them, and...gain power over the Nephites by bringing them into bondage."

Alma 46:4. Amalickiah and his cohorts "were seeking for power."

Helaman 1:16. Another Lamanite king seeks to "gain power over the Nephites."

Helaman 2:8. The Gadianton band's object was "to murder, and to rob, and to gain power."

Repeatedly and clearly the text of the *Book of Mormon* lets us know that what Lamanites and Nephites alike termed the right of government integrally involved power, possessions, gain and social glory. But underlying the rhetoric, what the Lamanite aggressor leaders, Nephite dissidents, and the robbers really wanted under the banner of recovering "their rights of government" was to live in the manner of Noah, king over the Zeniffites. His pattern of government, like that prophesied by the ancient Samuel to Israel about kings in general, permitted him to be "supported in...laziness, and in...idolatry, and in...whoredoms," living in a "spacious palace" surrounded by ambitious public monuments and kowtowed to by dependent priests and courtiers (Mosiah 11:6-9). But, excluding only the factor of wisdom, he fit very much in the mold of Solomon, the landed king over combined Israel. Of course the pattern had been known in America earlier among the Jaredites (see Ether 10:5-7), as in many other historically unconnected lands around the world.

Nephite production and consumption

Among the Nephites "possessions" were accumulated primarily on the basis of the wealth produced by the majority agrarian population. The Nephites from the beginning were agriculturists:

- "We did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance" (2 Nephi 5:11).
- "The people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and of flocks" (Enos 1:21).
- The king of the Zeniffites (a Nephite branch) reported in

the second century B.C. that "I did cause that the men should till the ground, and raise all manner of grain and all manner of fruit of every kind" (Mosiah 10:4).

- In the land of Zarahemla the Nephite dependence on cultivation is emphasized in the account in and between Alma 3:2 and 4:2, where we learn that "many of their fields of grain were destroyed" by battling armies near the city of Zarahemla; the damage caused a severe, though temporary, famine.
- Military action was, of course, dependent on agriculture; "the people of Ammon did give unto the Nephites a large portion of their substance to support their armies" (Alma 43:13).
- The picture of continuing dependence on grain crops is provided by the report of two disasters, one natural, the other human.
- Helaman 11:5-6 reports a "great famine upon the land, among all the people of Nephi" in which "the earth...did not yield forth grain in the season of grain."

A generation later (3 Nephi 4:2-3) the Nephites abandoned their settlements in order to congregate in a refuge location to defend themselves against armies of robbers, whereupon the latter left their wilderness strongholds to occupy the formerly settled areas. "But behold, there were no wild beasts nor game in those lands which had been deserted by the Nephites, and there was no game for the robbers save it were in the wilderness. And the robbers could not exist save it were in the wilderness, for the want of food." The robbers "durst not spread themselves upon the face of the land insomuch that they could raise grain, lest the Nephites should come upon them and slay them" (verse 6).

The overall structure of the economy is laid out most clearly in a passage in Helaman 6.

> "They did raise grain in abundance, both in the [land] north and in the [land] south; and they did flourish exceedingly....And they did multiply and wax exceedingly strong in the land. And they did raise many flocks and herds, yea, many fatlings. Behold their women did toil and spin, and did make all manner of cloth, of fine-twined linen and cloth of every kind, to clothe their nakedness" (verses 12-13).

We see in the same description that the structure of commerce was built on the agrarian base: "The Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites. And...the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire. And...they became exceeding rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites" (Helaman 6:7-9).

Upon such an economic base it became possible for rulers to undertake the construction of substantial public buildings and to support a sizable population of non-producers as well as a military apparatus:

- King Laman and his "lazy and...idolatrous people" subjected the Zeniffites "that they might glut themselves with the labors of" their hands, it was said (Mosiah 9:12).
- King Noah "laid a tax of one fifth part of all" his people possessed "to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines" Mosiah 11:3-4, 6).
- Noah "built many elegant and spacious buildings....And

he also built him a spacious palace" and "a very high tower" near the temple (verses 8-13).

- Zoramite society displayed a similar structure; the poor complained about their leaders, "our priests...[who] have cast us out of our synagogues which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of our exceeding poverty" (Alma 32:5).
- The rebellious, newly-rich Nephites in the third century A.D. set out "to build up churches unto themselves, and adorn them with all manner of precious things" (4 Nephi 1:41).
- Commoners who ultimately produced the crops supported not only the elites but also craftsmen ("curious workmen," Helaman 6:11) who constructed buildings and made "precious things" or "riches" (Mosiah 21:21; Helaman 3:36) which they saw as the epitome of their culture.

It has been supposed by some readers of the *Book of Mormon* that the Lamanite economy differed markedly from that of the Nephites, but that is largely due to not reading the text with sufficient care. The Nephites display a prejudiced stereotyping of their enemies, claiming that they subsisted by hunting, in contrast to the Nephites' agrarian ways. The difference would have been only a matter of degree, however. As I have argued elsewhere,[5] the large numbers of Lamanites reported, including the existence of Lamanite cities, as against the Nephites' smaller population, can only be accounted for by a Lamanite economic system that was also basically agrarian. As shown by the lengthy quotation from Helaman 6 above, Lamanite economic activities were essentially like those of the Nephites.

The political structure of "possession"

By whom and how power was exercised is not explicitly described at any one point in the *Book of Mormon*. We must tease out the way possessors related to possessions from a variety of statements and descriptions in the text plus collateral information from other societies at a similar level of development. Nor is the Israelite pattern of land tenure and economic decision-making, which lay behind Nephite customs and law historically, clearly explained in the *Old Testament*. The picture in that case has to be based on a variety of sacred and secular texts which range from the *Old Testament* to Egyptian economic documents. Taken together, they show a partially feudalistic system that was anciently common throughout the Near East, with some national variations. For instance, King Solomon's economic transactions are mentioned in passing in 1 Kings 4:21-28 and 5:6-18, but the pattern of taxation and labor tribute is obscured by euphemisms such as "they brought presents" to him; of course that shorthand expression describes a system of taxation. He also "raised a levy out of all Israel" consisting of over 180,000 workmen drafted for his temple project! All told, the picture comes out that kings, their kin and their favorites controlled great possessions in the form of lands, rights to annual or seasonal tax payments ("gifts") in provisions and goods, and tributary labor. Sacred institutions run by priests were also involved in the economy by receiving payments for services and by owning land which was cultivated for the priests or temples by the farmers, "willingly because they had to." Families, lineages, and other kin-based units of several sizes also owned or controlled to varying degrees fields ("lands of their inheritance"), vineyards, herds, buildings and other means of production, but typically they had to scrabble hard to meet the demands put upon them by their elite, and ultimately royal, overlords in addition to supporting their own.

Recall relevant passages (cited above) from the Nephite record which agree with this picture:

Mosiah 7:22. Zeniffites were taxed by the Lamanite king, "one half of all we have or possess."

Mosiah 11:3. King Noah "laid a tax of one-fifth part of all they possessed."

Alma 8:7. Lands and settlements were named "after...him who first possessed them."

Alma 22:15. The Lamanite king possessed his kingdom and could give away control over such as he wished of it.

Alma 53:2. $Moroni_1$ "went to the [recaptured] city of Mulek with Lehi, and took command of the city and gave it unto Lehi."

King $Mosiah_2$ laid out vividly the dark side of this picture when he discoursed against monarchy among his people (see Mosiah 29:17-23). He told them that they would be at risk of being "brought into bondage" by one or another wicked king who "has his friends in iniquity," and "whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them." His people looked on $Mosiah_2$, as an exception, a monarch who knew the system yet was not "a tyrant[6]...seeking for gain...[nor one who] exacted riches of them" (verses 39-40). We may safely infer from various scriptural passages that fundamental control of lands was exercised by kinship units—probably most immediately and operationally by extended (three-generation) families. Not a single statement in the text when taken in context demonstrates strictly individual ownership. There may have been such a phenomenon, but no evidence for it exists in the record that I can discover. Beyond families lay "kindreds," which refers to kin-based corporate units presumably composed of multiple extended families with a connection to a common ancestor. (I use the term "lineage" to denote one organizational form of a "kindred.") A certain level of control of land and other legal rights was in the hands of kin units, however.

The modern term "to own land" often poorly translates arrangements occurring in other, especially ancient, societies. Several types or levels of control of resources were sometimes distinguished.

For instance, in some societies the right to harvest fruit from a certain tree might be independent of who "owned" the land on which it grew, and all formal members of a community might share the right to gather firewood from a tract of land held in common by the village. Or, operational decisions about who would cultivate a certain parcel of kindred-controlled land for a period of time might be announced by the senior male member of the group, but he would be acting on the basis of consensus in the group, not merely exercising his personal will as the arbitrary "owner." (Descent was reckoned exclusively in the male line in all instances where descent is alluded to in the *Book of Mormon*, as at Alma 10:2-3.) He would consult with the other kinfolk involved and would negotiate a compromise among competing concerns of members of the group; consideration would also have to be given to rights of surrounding groups, say within a village in which more than one lineage resided.

It would be a serious error for modern readers simply to suppose, as our notions and language about "rights" could lead us to suppose, that Nephite individuals were free to make their own decisions about any issue that was socially significant. An individual's position and security in ancient societies was assured only by participating in a network of associations, primarily with kinfolk. The individual alone was too vulnerable to stand isolated in a society that was built upon corporate kinship units and class relationships as that of the Nephites was. Thus the *Book of Mormon* correctly paints the picture that, "There was no man among them save he had much family and many kindreds and friends" (3 Nephi 7:4). For instance the ambitious, crooked judges described in 3 Nephi 6:27 "had many friends and kindreds; and the remainder, yea, even almost all the lawyers and the high priests, did gather themselves together, and unite with the kindreds of those judges."

Furthermore, since these men were of the social elite their attaining educational qualifications for their high role would have come because, as verse 12 reports, people then were "distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning."

That is, rich families produced the judges, lawyers, and high priests, who in turn ensured that their kin and friends—their supporters—received favors in return. Even King Benjamin reveals his dependence on a power base of kinfolk, or at least of subjects construed as kin, when he addresses his audience as, "My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people" (Mosiah 4:4). Where individuals were pried loose from their support units, for whatever reason, they found refuge if they could, in a new set of quasi-kin relations even to survive, let alone to flourish. Two instances reported in the *Book of Mormon* make clear how the system worked. Zoram, Laban's servant, could be persuaded to accompany Nephi and his brothers peaceably only when they exchanged oaths that assured that he would receive equal legal standing in the party—"thou shalt have place with us."[7] In fact the language used assured him that he would share in the kin/tribal structure equally with Lehi's sons.[8]

No doubt the same form of oath and relationship was established to induce Ishmael and his family to come along (see 1 Nephi 7:4-5.) In another instance, Amulek was deprived of his social and legal position in Ammonihah because he joined his fortunes with $Alma_2$. At first he had made assertions that sound to us as though he were the individual controller of his wealth ("I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry," Alma 10:4), although he carefully prefaced his statement with "I have many kindreds and friends." But after Alma and Amulek were imprisoned and then miraculously freed, they were expelled from the city, later to end up in the land of Zarahemla (see Alma 15:1, 18). We are told that Amulek had "forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah...being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred" (verse 16). In short the riches that he said he had "acquired...by the hand of my industry" were not truly his but were ultimately under the control of his kin group. Dislodged from his kin system, he was taken in by $Alma_2$, probably in the status of "friend." He thus likely became attached to the high priest's own kindred as quasi-kin: "He took

Amulek...to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations" (verse 18). In yet another case, when Ammon sought to establish a position within Lamanite society, he offered himself as a servant to King Lamoni. That role would offer him a livable socioeconomic situation for an isolated individual but with notable social disadvantages. The king, however, liked him enough to offer him a still better connection, as a son-in-law (see Alma 17:24-25). On the contrary, pitiful Korihor ended up without any support network, having to "go about from house to house, begging food for his support" (Alma 31:58).[9]

The principle of building supportive relationships applied to whole groups as much as to individuals. "Those who were the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi" (Mosiah 25:12). On the same principle, those rebellious fathers, having taken Lamanite women as wives, became elite Lamanites by getting themselves connected as teachers to the king (see Mosiah 23:33-34; 24:1, 4). It seems likely that the "people of Ammon" took upon themselves a quasi-kin relation with Ammon, the key person in their conversion and the leader of their flight to live among the Nephites; he, of course, was prominent, in fact probably the senior male in the powerful $Mosiah_2$ lineage (see Alma 27:7-15). Moreover, the relationship of the stripling Ammonite warriors to their commander, Helaman, was facilitated by another quasi-kin relationship permitted him to call them his "sons," and of course they would have termed him "father" (Alma 56:10).

As we have seen, among the Nephites key rights over land and other property were probably vested in kin units. These family lands, however, were controlled to a degree by more encompassing kin units. That is shown in the first century A.D., when the central government collapsed. "And the people...did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends"

(3 Nephi 7:2). "Now behold, there was no man among them save he had much family and many kindreds and friends" (verse 4). A pyramidal structure of kin associations must have existed in which extended families, no doubt with certain limited rights, were involved in units of larger scale, lineages or sub-tribes. The largest operational units reported for this time in the passage just noted, "tribes," were "exceeding great" in size. There is, however, no indication that these tribes reached the scale of the seven more comprehensive "super tribes" of longstanding reference among Lehi's descendants: Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites and Ishmaelites (see Jacob 1:13 and Mormon 1:8-9). The tribes which emerged from the breakdown of the Nephite central government controlled their own specific territories: "they did establish very strict laws that one tribe should not trespass against another" (3 Nephi 7:14). (Recall here the "king men"; they probably were "noble" lineages, again with their own territories, as discussed above.) No doubt the independent tribes of 3 Nephi 7 were composed in turn of a number of "sub-tribes," each of which traced its history to an intermediate ancestor who was claimed in common by the set of component extended families. Within a tribe's area no doubt the subunits, down to extended families, each exercised certain rights over their own "lands of inheritance." Their "chiefs and leaders" (3 Nephi 7:14) would have coordinated intertribal issues to resolve potential conflicts among them regarding land use. Perhaps it was a council of subtribal heads who "did establish their laws, every one according to his tribe" (verse 11).

This picture is not of some new-fangled structure of social affiliation and governance that emerged all of a sudden when the government by judges collapsed. These units already were deeply grounded in traditional Nephite society or they would not have emerged so universally; their existence is revealed at this point in time by default. Their earlier existence must have been limited by the national or state political structure; the previously limited powers of decision-making and social control that they had long exercised

suddenly now expanded to fill the political vacuum. Perhaps they had formerly concentrated on maintenance of ancestral tombs or other sacred structures and on keeping a tribal or sub-tribal historical record or tradition (compare Alma 10:2-3, a sketchy history of the kin group to which Amulek belonged). But now suddenly they faced weightier issues—such as war and peace—which had been ceded to the central system to deal with. Of course, that central system had entailed a cost in resources—taxes or tribute (compare the picture in Moroni$_1$'s epistle, Alma 60:19, 22, 24-25). Hitherto a regular schedule of tribute/tax payments would have gone up the chain of authority from local community leaders to regional rulers and ultimately to the control of the chief ruler in the Nephite capital, Zarahemla. After all, it took vast resources to support the "many lawyers, and many officers" in the political heart of the country (3 Nephi 6:11) who were said "to sit upon...thrones in a state of thoughtless stupor" (Alma 60:7) or "in idleness" (verse 22).

There is an aura of sheer democracy in referring to kinship units, but even they must have leaders. No society exists in which all decisions about divisive issues can be avoided. Tribal land had to be allocated to family units; families surely would disagree with other families over questions of fairness or historical rights. Conflicts over disputed agreements or transactions likewise demanded settlement. Ethical and value issues invariably would arise about how powerful people treated lessers or each other. "Foreign relations" must also have been dealt with, including heading up military defense. Benjamin, king over the Nephites, prided himself on being "just one of the folks," yet he too had inescapable duties as ruler which he considered onerous (see Mosiah 2:11-13).

More often than not tribal or lineage leaders would have been the oldest male or males in the leading ancestral line. While men in such a position typically tread lightly in making decisions, they do in fact have more power than most others in their unit. If they push their advantage, they may become local "rulers" in effect. (Their own people may see pushiness and accumulation of wealth and power on their

part, nominally in the name of the group, as bringing glory to all.) Thus the seeds of inequality and dominance would exist even in what looks, at first glance, to be an egalitarian structure based on "blood" relationships. While the Nephite record is all but silent on this level of organizational detail, the general principle must still have applied.

While basic rights of land tenure remained in the hands of the structure of kin groups, royalty or other privileged groups among Lehi's descendants tried to erode that basic control of the kin groups by pushing their own claims to special rights and enhancing their own power. The ambitious did not always "play by the rules" of the culture. For instance, King Noah went well beyond the norms of kingship in his demands to such an extent that his pattern of rule became notorious (see Mosiah 29:18). The word "usurp" signals other cases where someone was perceived as breaking the rules. Thus some Amulonites "usurped the power and authority over the Lamanites" in a certain area (Alma 25:5), and ended up by paying with their lives for going too far (verses 8 and 9). Amalickiah "usurp[ed] great power" over the Lamanites for his own ends (Alma 43:8), while Gadianton robbers at one time were "filling the judgment-seats, having usurped the power and authority of the land" (Helaman 7:4).

The structure of state rulership was, of course, layered. Any administration would obviously involve not only top-level authority but also dependent agents to take care of more localized matters. There could be several levels in such a structure, depending on how large and complex was the polity:

- Rebel Amlici, upon being consecrated king by his faction, immediately "appointed rulers and leaders over his people" (Alma 2:14).
- The king of the Lamanites, whose realm was far greater, "appointed kings" over the several lands which he had "taken possession" of (Mosiah 24:2).
- A later Lamanite king too had subordinate kings, including his sons (see Alma 18:9; 20:9; compare 61:8).

- Mosiah$_2$'s ideal pattern of rule by judges involved higher and lower judges appointed "to rule over them" (Mosiah 29:28-29, 41; compare Alma 62:47).
- The Zoramites and the people of the city of Ammonihah both had "chief rulers" in their regions and presumably, then, lesser rulers as well (Alma 12:20; 35:8).
- Amalickiah, desirous to be king over the Nephites, has his most ardent supporters in "the lower judges of the land" who had been led to believe that "he would make them rulers over the people" (Alma 46:4-5).
- The rebel "king men" "were supported by those [of lesser rank] who sought power and authority over the people" (Alma 51:8).

In some cases the regional or local rulers or judges would have been the "natural" leaders, that is, political bosses by virtue of their positions as heads of powerful local "tribes" or subtribes. A smart king or sub-king would appoint such persons to head local affairs in order to co-opt the support of their followers or power base. In other cases the appointees could have been kin or "friends," with or without "the blood of nobility" (Alma 51:21), who had curried favor to get the appointment from the key overlord with the appointive power. When the secret society of Gadianton was powerful, members who gained positions of authority appointed their fellow members to subordinate slots (see Helaman 6:38-39).

We might wonder whether Nephite military leaders constituted an independent political force. The structure of the armed force in *Book of Mormon* times makes that unlikely. A vast majority of the military personnel were simply militia, commoner men called up to serve as needed for a battle or campaign. (That had been the case in ancient Israel, of course.)[10] For example, we read that on one occasion "the Lamanites had come in...into the borders of the land...and began to slay the people and destroy the city" of Ammonihah. "Before the Nephites could raise a sufficient army to drive them out of the land,

they had destroyed the people" (Alma 16:2-3). There was no army at the ready; one had to be raised. Likewise, when chief judge Pahoran was driven out of Zarahemla by a royalist insurrection, he reported to $Moroni_1$ in a letter that "I have sent a proclamation throughout this part of the land; and behold, they are flocking to us daily, to their arms, in the defence of their country" (Alma 61:6). $Moroni_1$ himself "gained whatsoever force he could in all his march" to reach Pahoran and aid him; "thousands did flock unto his standard, and did take up their swords in the defence of their freedom" (Alma 62:4-5).

Appeal to tribal or national interests and pride, or to prejudice against the enemy (note the basic Nephite antipathy toward the Lamanites shown in Alma 26:24-25), was probably a common justification claimed by leaders seeking office. But personality-based desire for power and its privileges certainly drove others to leadership, both political and military. For instance, "as soon as Amalickiah had obtained the kingdom he began to inspire the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi; yea, he did appoint men to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers, against the Nephites" until "he had hardened the hearts of the Lamanites and blinded their minds, and stirred them up to anger, insomuch that he had gathered together a numerous host to go to battle against the Nephites" (Alma 48:1, 3). The central ruler had the authority to requisition force units, no doubt by sending mustering orders down through his administrative hierarchy (see Alma 60:1-2), however, local rulers might or might not respond. The possibility of their refusing to support a national-level conflict actually served as a quasi-democratic discipline against the ruler's too-easy decision to fight; he had to keep those below him reasonably happy in their relationship with him to guarantee their participation in the ultimate case. They were persuaded to join in when the prospects were positive. This is shown in the results of $Moroni_1$'s prudent fortifying of the land of Zarahemla against pending Lamanite attack: $Moroni_1$'s armies, "did increase daily because of the assurance of protection which his works did bring forth" (Alma 50:12).

On the contrary certain Lamanites resisted their king's order: "The king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation throughout all his land...that they should gather themselves together again to go to battle against the Nephites," but "they feared to go to battle against the Nephites lest they should lose their lives...being fixed in their minds with a determined resolution that they would not be subjected to go against the Nephites." Even though "the king was wroth because of their disobedience," they defied him and fled to a place they considered safe against his levy (Alma 47:1-2, 6). The turncoat Nephite groups who joined the Lamanites rather than fight with Mormon in the final wars display the same point (see Moroni 9:24; compare Mormon 2:21).

Rather than being a separate force in Nephite political activity, the armies were mainly the population writ large. It was the duty of rulers to lead their own people, formed into militia armies, probably one from each major area. (Local leaders here modeled on the joint civil/military leadership pattern of the king—see Words of Mormon 1:13 and Alma 2:14, 16). Those appointed captains[11] were likely people with demonstrated military experience and wisdom, yet there is little reason to believe that they had a permanent staff role. Note that chief captain $Moroni_1$, after the extended Amalickiahite war was over, "yielded up the command of his armies into the hands of his son...and he retired to his own house that he might spend the remainder of his days in peace" (Alma 62:43). No doubt he had been from a notable family when he was appointed 14 years earlier at the age of 25 (Alma 43:16-17), but he was not a career soldier. (Compare the completely inexperienced lad Mormon appointed to a similar role centuries later, quite certainly on the basis of his social position in the Nephi kin line; see Mormon 2:1-2.)

To all appearances, then, military leaders were simply appointees out of the major kin groups or from the ranks of regional rulers. The military as such was not a separate factor in the political economy apart from the general elite class.

A pattern of trade is revealed as part of the political economy

represented in the Nephite text. It is crucial to understand its nature and role since it turns out to have been the dynamic element in the generation of the "riches" sought by ambitious Nephite dissidents. Riches were as central to "the Nephite disease"—that cycle of wickedness and resultant decline in their society that repeatedly resulted from prosperity—as a virus is to influenza. From Mosiah 24:1-7 we see the role of trade among the Lamanites as stimulated by the influence of Nephite dissenters, the Amulonites. A political structure is described in which "the Lamanites had taken possession" of at least five local lands—Nephi, Shemlon, Shilom, Amulon and Helam—spread over an area perhaps a hundred miles in diameter.[12] The pattern of taking possession is revealed in the previous chapter where a Lamanite military force occupies Helam and begins to exploit the inhabitants, $Alma_1$'s people. The listed lands were located at different altitudes and represented varying ecological (resource) zones.[13] Hitherto they had apparently existed at a fairly rudimentary level of sociopolitical integration in which the several areas were only lightly in touch with each other. When the Amulonites emerged on this scene as a distinct group looking opportunistically to advance their fortunes, they possessed skills not previously apparent in the Lamanite realm. This coincided with the rise of an ambitious Lamanite king (functionally he was what would be called by social scientists today a chief rather than a true king).

The two ingredients triggered rapid social development. First, "the king of the Lamanites granted unto [the Amulonites] that they should be appointed teachers over his people" in all those lands (verses 1-2). "Thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites" (verse 4). That "language" quite certainly consisted of a system of writing, not the speech or tongue of the Nephites (which, of course, the Lamanites would have refused to accept); that script was capable of providing a common medium for written communication throughout the five lands.[14] "They taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another" (verse 6). The following verse then contains a telling

connective: "And *thus* the Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world."

The operative sequence is implied to be this:

peaceful travel
➥ shared elite writing
➥ trade
➥ riches
➥ worldly learning

It is immediately obvious that only a small proportion of the people under the Lamanite king would have become rich and thus partake of the educational process that permitted their acquiring the "cunning and...wisdom of the world" mentioned. That is, Lamanite nobles and the teacher priests were the ones who obtained the greatest benefits from the trading system.

What is most important for our immediate topic is to understand that the transformation of Lamanite society from relative simplicity to a new level of sophistication depended critically on trade (and literacy). This agrees with what we know about trade in other ancient societies; the object of trade was the acquisition of scarce items of high social prestige and symbolism connected with rule. Trade was carried on mainly for the rulers and by their agents. After all, it would only be those who already possessed substantial resources—in this case the old Lamanite elite—who had the wherewithal to capitalize and reward merchants. Capital and rewards they must have to be willing to invest in collecting local products of value ("precious things"?, Helaman 12:2), and then to send agents traveling through intervening wilderness to other lands (Mosiah 23:28-29 shows some of the hazard), where they had to deal with unpredictable persons and customs (compare Mosiah 7:6-11). There is no hint anywhere in the text, and this is true of nearly all ancient trade systems, that basic commodities were exchanged. Instead, it was luxury goods, to be used by the elite, that motivated commerce. In short, trade was promoted by and benefitted those who already had

wealth. Naturally they were the ones who "began to increase in riches...and wax great" (Mosiah 24:7).

A similar picture is given of later trade involving both Nephites and Lamanites. In Helaman 6:7-11, around 30 B.C., "there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites...and...the Lamanites did...go whithersoever they would [they were both already literate peoples]...and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain....And...they became exceeding rich" (verses 7-9). But again it is apparent that only a small proportion of the people could have become "exceeding rich" (the account is only talking about a three year period for all this to happen). The lot of the basic population is treated separately, and the phrasing is more modest; they "did flourish exceedingly" by raising grain in abundance, raising flocks and herds, and toiling and spinning "all manner of cloth...to clothe their nakedness" (verses 12-13). Nothing is said about riches for them, naturally.

The analysis of incidents and statements from the *Book of Mormon* which we have made to this point reveals a system of organization in which kin-based groups were fundamental in the structure of "possession." But typically superimposed upon that structure was an elite who were seen as playing a positive role in society as decision-makers; no normal society can do without the services they provide. Their ability to provide leadership was deeply dependent upon support of their role by sacred sanctions, which were mustered to communicate to all, "these our leaders are right and good." For their use as leaders, and as tribal or national icons, material resources were passed upward through the political-economic chain in the form of taxes, tribute or offerings. These came from the only place they could come from—the mass of people who worked the fields, tended the flocks and carried out the basic crafts. The distillation of wealth, power and privilege into the hands of the elite class occurred by processes so ingrained in the social system that the traditions normally make no mention of the mechanisms. "Everyone knew" how the system worked since they

were involved in it; they felt no need to explain the obvious. Do fish talk about the water? Furthermore, we should note that the historical record as we have it was recorded and phrased by men of the Nephite elite—kings, priests, high priests, chief judges and military leaders. They would necessarily tell the story and provide commentary in terms familiar to them as part of their lives in the dominant class. It could not have been otherwise. Thus much is left unsaid about their circumstances. Even more is left unsaid about the commoners. We are left to pick up what we can about conditions in their world, which were left largely undescribed.

Incidentally, it is common in various parts of the world for the ruling stratum to consist of people of a different ethnic background and language from the masses. Sometimes they attained their dominant spot because of conquest or intrigue. In any case, they would be insulated from inevitable long-lasting struggles among factions of the main population. Their foreignness would permit their exercising relatively even-handed judgment, where any local monarch would inevitably favor his own kin. We may wonder whether this phenomenon in part explains why the people of Zarahemla were willing to accept a stranger, $Mosiah_1$, as their king, and why dissenters from the Nephites could rise to power among the Lamanites.

In this type of system there was such an integration of decision-making power, ancestral rights, control over resources, and rank or class privileges that much involved in the amalgam escapes the attention of modern readers to whom such a system is strange. We need to recognize that we should keep our culturally unaware eyes open to detect, as far as we can, what they did not think to explain to us about their society and culture.

Dynamics of the political economy in Nephite history

In the *Book of Mormon* we learn that the political and economic situation did not remain static. For example, changes in population required accommodations in access to land and other resources, and

the rises and falls of particular tribes or kindreds demanded accommodation in power arrangements.

Lands were sometimes made available internally to accommodate growth and settlement. Thus when the robber armies besieged the rest of the population and then were defeated, a portion of them "entered into a covenant to keep the peace." At that point they were "granted...lands, according to their numbers, that they might have, with their labors, wherewith to subsist upon" (3 Nephi 6:3). (It is reasonable to speculate that one of the reasons those people had joined the robbers in the first place had been a shortage of land available for their use and a resulting sense in them of social isolation or even desperation.) Also, probably the periodic losses of men in armed conflict resulted in a certain reshuffling in the ownership of or at least accessibility to lands. For instance the slaughter of so many Zeniffite men in fighting against the Lamanites had to result in changes in their land use customs. "Now there was a great number of women, more than there was of men; therefore king Limhi commanded that every man should impart to the support of the widows and their children" (Mosiah 21:17). But seeking new lands for an expanding population might come at the cost of conflict with a neighbor. That happened between the peoples of Morianton and Lehi, two new cities founded in the "borders by the east sea" in part as garrisons to protect against a Lamanite attack (Alma 50:9-10, 14-15, 25).

More often there was expansion outward to new territory. The second and first centuries B.C. were a period of expansion of Lamanite population and land holding. When, around 200 B.C., the Zeniffites went to occupy a small part of the greater land of Nephi, the territory was controlled by the Lamanite king. The Lamanite hold there was recent and tentative, for the king agreed that he and his people would move out so that Zeniff "might possess the land of Lehi-Nephi, and the land of Shilom" (Mosiah 9:6-8). The Lamanite king's actual stronghold was probably the land of Shemlon or nearby, down nearer the coast, toward or in "the land of first inheritance"; it was to there

that he withdrew.[15] But by the time three generations had passed, the Lamanites had expanded to "taken possession of" the lands of Nephi, Shilom, Amulon and Helam (see above and Mosiah 23:35-24:3). By then the Lamanite population had expanded greatly (see Mosiah 25:3).

In about another half century the sons of Mosiah came into the land to find the Lamanite domain had further grown. They had now inhabited some of the wilderness area northward from Nephi in the direction of Zarahemla, occupying places like the lands of Ishmael, Middoni and Jerusalem, plus various other cities and "regions round about" (Alma 20:30-21:13; 23:9-13). Moreover, the expansive Lamanites, seemingly squatters in this case rather than organized colonists, had also occupied the strip of coastal wilderness "on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore" as well as "on the east [sea] by the seashore," reaching in two pincers virtually to the narrow neck of land until "the Nephites were nearly surrounded by the Lamanites" (Alma 22:28-29). Later $Moroni_1$ "caused that his armies should go forth into the east wilderness...and...drove all the Lamanites who were in the east wilderness [southward] into their own lands" (Alma 50:7). While this was partly a strategic military move, it allowed the settlement of significant numbers of people from the land of Zarahemla to gain lands to "possess" (verses 9, 14-15). In the same area the Nephite leaders decided to settle the people of Ammon, giving them the land of Jershon "for an inheritance" (Alma 27:22, 26). Meanwhile the Nephites had, in some manner not explained, come into control of territory north of the narrow neck and of Bountiful, "possessing all the land northward...according to their pleasure" (Alma 50:11). Still later, in the mid-first century B.C., systematic colonization of the land northward proceeded (Alma 63:3-9) "to inherit the land" (Helaman 2:3-5). There "they did multiply and spread...insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth," so to speak (verse 8). Obviously the need for new land was a driving force in both Nephite expansion and Lamanite aggression.

Overall there were centuries of Lamanite pressure upon the Nephites. A long sequence of wars originated in the Lamanite land of

Nephi and were directed against the Nephites in the land of Zarahemla intended to destroy them or push them farther northward. From at least the time of Benjamin until the time of Mormon and Moroni this recurrent conflict could have had as much to do with the desire or need for *lebensraum* (expansion territory) as of ethnic hate against the enemy. At the same time, of course, the Nephites were hedging their bets by keeping a northward avenue open for their own safety and, apparently, for economic expansion (note the strategic thinking in Alma 50:32).

A pattern becomes evident, when the entire Nephite text is studied, of an expansion of population which coincided both with the expression of dissidence internally and of expansion externally. It is plausible, even likely, that both processes were connected to the need for new land to cultivate. Rulers of various ilks among both Nephites and Lamanites were as much in favor of expanding their "possessions" as were politicians in the nineteenth-century United States in favor of "manifest destiny." In both cases there was a promise of political power to be exploited and of agrarian economic strength to meet the people's demands.

The point should also be made that politico-economic bosses, whether called kings, judges, rulers, or whatever, required a suitable ideology—a system of beliefs, cast in traditional religious terms if possible—to justify their desire to seize or to continue in power. Benjamin, the Nephite king, emphasized his divine calling as monarch (see Mosiah 2:11). When Amalickiah connived to take over rule of the Lamanites, he had his agents "inspire the hearts of the Lamanites" (Alma 48:1) against the Nephites in order to have a cause that would aid his aims. Moroni$_1$'s counter-ideology emphasized traditional Nephite values phrased particularly in terms of "liberty" (Alma 46:12-20). Giddianhi, the robber leader, had his own ideology expressed as regaining his peoples' "rights of government" and avenging the historic Nephite "wrongs" against them (3 Nephi 3:9-10). In fact, most prominent dissidents among the Nephites, such as Korihor, Nehor and Gadianton, raised economic, political and

ideological issues simultaneously, claiming that right and morality were on their side. As a matter of fact Abinadi was also a dissident, against the politico-economic system of King Noah (see Mosiah 12), and he too talked about all aspects of society (polity, verses 2-3, 12; economy, verses 4-7; ideology, verses 21-37). Further, when Nephites and Lamanites briefly shared their religion, a shared economy and cooperative intergroup relations resulted (see Helaman 6:1-14). In each of these cases, whatever the political and economic structures, a religious/ideological dimension provided support for the status quo. That is, cults and churches both shaped and were in turn shaped by the more materialist structures.[16] To borrow language from Mormon, "and thus we see" what may be obvious but needs to be underlined—political economy and religion tend to constitute a seamless whole in any society. Understanding Nephite society as fully as we can ought, then, to enlighten us about their "religion," which concerns Latter-day Saint readers most. Contrariwise, if the practical structure is unclear, our grasp of Nephite religion must lack something.

A brief discussion of the situation that prevailed following the great destruction at the time of the crucifixion of the Savior further serves to illustrate the dynamics of these interrelationships.

Think of the economic structure of life among the Nephites following the great catastrophe. Obviously the vast number of casualties would have reduced the population dramatically (see 3 Nephi 8 and 9). At least in the short-term, normal agriculture would have become impossible over much of the area because "the face of the whole earth" had become deformed (3 Nephi 8:17). Commerce would have been completely disrupted. The loss of so many people would have reduced the old social and political institutions, perhaps beyond recognition, or at least would have rendered them non-functional. Populations who had once sent tribute or tax payments up the political structure would now either have nothing to send, or no power structure to salute and no threat of compulsion to enforce collections. Class distinctions would have been destroyed

because of the destruction of the material goods, such as "palaces," which had marked the old social differences. Everyone would have been plunged to near a survival level. "Money" would have lost its meaning since little or nothing existed to be bought or sold.

Yet life went on for the survivors. Food, shelter and clothing were obtained somehow. The injured were cared for. Births and further deaths would not have been absent. Under such extreme circumstances, it is not surprising to learn that the life pattern they worked out was new in many of its dimensions. Its overall configuration was revolutionarily different from what had existed, say just a year before.

In the terms used in this paper, a new polity, economy and religious/ideological arrangement developed. "The people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites" (4 Nephi 1:2). Stemming from that unity, which was based on the powerful teachings of Jesus given at Bountiful, "there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another" (verse 2). Further, "there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness" (verse 16). In their poverty and given their now-powerful religious beliefs, they understood that it was desirable, and likely it was necessary for survival, that they have "all things common among them" (verse 3); that is, "possession" was defined in new terms. Among the consequences was that no overarching political system seemed to be needed; with contentions and anti-social offenses absent, inter-group peace universal, and property quarrels a thing of the past, there was little or nothing for political figures to do, hence no political institutions as such. Such a question as who would cultivate which land was likely settled at local community level either by local church congregations and their leaders or by the remnant kinship organizations. After all, there was now abundant land available since the population had declined so greatly. And of course rank or class differences had disappeared in the wake of equality. The basics of

most trade, catering to the demand of the elite for luxury goods and social emblems, was also now absent.

Minimal social institutions, such as kinship units, surely continued to function. Local church congregations were ubiquitous (see 4 Nephi 1:1) (but there is no hint of an overarching ecclesiastical organization). Social difficulties, such as competition, seem not to have arisen as a problem; natural resources were abundant enough for the reduced population that rivalry did not become an issue. In any case the compelling system of beliefs would have overwhelmed divisive tendencies.

In time, however, the parameters of the society changed. Over many decades population would have grown dramatically under the peaceful, prosperous conditions. By the time young Mormon was a youth, in the beginning of the fourth century A.D., "the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea" (Mormon 1:7). Available lands and goods would have come to be relatively scarce as the population recovered and as the fervor for the gospel of Christ perhaps waned with the death of the eyewitnesses of his appearance. At least before the second century A.D. was over, "a small part of the people...had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites" (4 Nephi 1:20). We may suppose that the reappearance of the old tribal identification coincided with claims to land on the basis of descent—that is, on the revival of the old concept of "lands of our inheritance." Eventually each tribe reasserted its old claims to its historic territory. The Lamanites were still located in their traditional area up in mountainous Nephi and the Nephites again, or still, inhabited Zarahemla and lands to the northward (see Mormon 1:8-10).

Shortly before A.D. 200 "there began to be...those who were lifted up in pride.... And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ" (4 Nephi 1:24-26).

In short, when the political economy was transformed, in large

measure due to population growth, the idyllically simple ways of the last few generations were jettisoned and the old cultural patterns and institutions of wealth-and-power-driven society were revived. The Christian belief system had to be drastically modified because its egalitarian teachings clashed too much with the reinstituted customs for dealing with what was perceived anew as a scarcity of property. By the third century, making tribal and class claims to wealth and privilege seemed more important than seeking the general good, and churches that justified and supported the changed notions of "possessions" and social power came to replace the old, naive (in the eyes of the new sophisticates) Christian church.

Summary

We have seen through careful analysis of the text of the *Book of Mormon* that the political and economic aspects of Nephite life throughout most of their history featured ideas and institutions reminiscent of those of ancient Israel and other Near Eastern nations. Tribal and sub-tribal control of land undergirded the system of land tenure and agrarian production; the concept of individual ownership was insignificant. Superimposed upon the pattern of kin-based control was the monarchy. The role of a king and his court was crucial. In a certain sense he "owned" the land and people. Since he served as chief decision-maker on behalf of the people or nation, he had a legitimate claim to have the people support his establishment and projects, including a network of local and regional rulers whom he designated. Yet royal demands were often pushed so hard as to cause economic distress to the general populace. This caused dissent, and at the extreme, rebellion, after which another monarch might or might not prove more satisfactory.

The power of the monarchy was deeply embedded in a system of social privileges shared among an elite class. Their superior standing interests depended on a system of belief or ideology that explained to all why power and privilege were ordered as they were.

That meant that a cult or church with an appropriate priesthood was needed. It was closely allied with the royal court and dependent on the system of taxation.

The relatively impassive farmers and craftsmen who constituted the masses had to put up with the behavior of royalty and the associated elite. But certain ambitious individuals, families or lineages periodically felt that they had been deprived of their deserved perquisites of rulership, consequently they strove to replace the king and his cohorts with someone from their own clique. The pervasive "dissension" and "contention" in Nephite history probably centered on this contest for privilege. Meanwhile religious beliefs were shaped and reshaped to make sense of and support the claims, either conservative or revolutionary, of the faction in control or their opponents.

Given this nature of Nephite (and, broadly, Lamanite) "political economy," it seems important that we learn all we can about it as a context. It is likely that our understanding of why the Nephites or Lamanites believed or disbelieved what they did throughout their history will be enhanced to the extent that we can see the religious component as related to the polity, the economy, and the general social structure within which it was manifested.

Notes To Chapter 8

[1] "Nephi's Political Testament," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, editors, Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991, pages 220-9. See also Reynolds' "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27 (1987), pages 15-37; and "Nephi's Outline," *BYU Studies* 20 (1980), pages 131-49, reprinted in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds, Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982, pages 53-74.

[2] Although those initial rulers were called kings, the full set of state institutions that go with kingship was not in place until at least Solomon's day and perhaps later. In social science terminology the pattern of society and rule of the earlier pair of "kings" probably qualified only as a "chiefdom." See the discussion and references in Keith W. Whitelam, "King and Kingship," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* IV:40-48.

[3] *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "King and Kingship," IV:40-48.

[4] Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, revised edition, 1992, page 266.

[5] Sorenson, "When Lehi's Party Arrived, Did They Find Others in the Land?" which is included as Chapter 4 in this volume, originally published in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992), pages 1-4, 26-8.

[6] He was credited with legally eliminating slavery in Nephite society; see Alma 27:9. Benjamin said that he had not "suffered that...ye should make slaves one of another" (Mosiah 2:13), yet the Zeniffites, approximately 60 years after they left Zarahemla, expected to become slaves of the Nephites in order to escape bondage to the Lamanites (see Mosiah 7:15), so the institution still may have been practiced until Mosiah_2 terminated it definitively. Perhaps Benjamin forbade the making of new slaves but permitted the institution to continue where it already existed, while his son put a total stop to it.

[7] Regarding oaths in ancient society, see Terrence L. Szink, "An Oath of Allegiance in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, edited by Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990, pages 35-45.

[8] Note his marriage to one of Ishmael's daughters on the same basis as Nephi's sons, and see 1 Nephi 4:33-35 on his tribal standing. Also compare Lehi's blessing upon him, "thy seed shall be blessed with [Nephi's] seed," 2 Nephi 1:30-32.

[9] Interestingly the same search for kin-based connections was manifest in the early days of The Church of Jesus of Christ of Latter-day Saints through the principle of adoption by sealing. Individuals and families who were vulnerable when forced to stand alone in the risky frontier setting logically sought to be adopted to prominent Church leaders, thus forming virtual tribes. See Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900," *BYU Studies* 14 (1974), pages 291-314.

[10] John W. Welch, "Law and War in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, pages 1-4, 26-8; and A. Brent Merrill, "Nephite Captains and Armies," also in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, pages 266-95.

[11] Welch's "Law and War" and Merrill's "Nephite Captains and Armies," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon.*

[12] Sorenson's "The Geography of Book of Mormon Events" regarding the dimensions.

[13] See Sorenson's "Geography" for detailed analysis of the locations of these lands in relation to each other and to natural features.

[14] This "language" is discussed in my article, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997, pages 391-522.

[15] Sorenson's "Geography," pages 225, 228.

[16] See further on these points my paper, "Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites, 200-1 B.C.," to appear in 1998 in a festschrift for Richard L. Anderson.