

## GLYPH

Notes

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## A Response to the Heartland Book of Mormon

## Geography Theory (fourth article in a series)

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*This series of articles in glyph notes grew out of questions about the latest theory promoted by a core of LDS—at first referred to as the Limited North American Model, or LNAM, and later changed to the Heartland Model. It was initially developed by Rod Meldrum.*

In previous *glyph notes* articles we have presented the positives for why Mesoamerica—not the United States—is the geographical setting for The Book of Mormon. In fact, these past 20 years, the mission of the Pre-Columbian Studies Institute has been to provide positive, faith-building evidences from archaeology, epigraphy, and linguistics to witness that the book is true. This fourth article in the series will directly address this Heartland theory.

All geography theories which place Book of Mormon events in the U.S./Great Lakes/Canada regions have as an anchor a small hill at Manchester, New York, which is south of Palmyra. Historically, this is the hill where Joseph Smith was directed and found the stone box containing The Book of Mormon plates deposited by Moroni, the last record keeper. Today, this hill is owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and called “Hill Cumorah,” where an annual outdoor pageant is performed in July (Argetsinger 1992:347).

This annual pageant has reinforced the common assumption that Moroni buried the plates of Mormon in the same hill where his father had buried the other plates, thus equating this New York hill with the Book of Mormon Cumorah. Because the New York site does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of Book of Mormon geography, some Latter-day Saints have looked for other possible explanations and locations, including Mesoamerica (Palmer 1992:346-347).

In general, the LDS tradition embraces this hill in New York as the original Hill Cumorah in The Book of Mormon. In addition to the pageant, this idea is conveyed by stories passed down through generations and by those serving their mission in that area. Their stories are of “tremendous earthworks,” “defensive trenches,” large deposits of metal weapons and evidences of a major battle—all of which are either exaggerated or fabricated and **are not supported by archaeological evidences.**

For many, this tradition is accepted as truth; for others who have searched for evidences as well as studied Book of Mormon requirements, this is no longer the case. See “Looking for Artifacts at New York’s Hill Cumorah,” written by one LDS man who grew up in the “Palmyra-as-Cumorah” culture, but when he investigated, looking for archaeological support, he found there was none (BMAF Staff; also Smith 2001).

The theory has been proposed that there were two Cumorah’s—one in Mesoamerica and a second in New York. John Clark, former director of the New World Archaeological Foundation, relates:

Until I heard the two-Cumorah theory after returning from my mission, I had no idea that the location of Cumorah was even a question or that the location of Book of Mormon lands was a topic of research. My initial reaction was to take offense and to argue the point . . . it soon dawned on me that I had unthinkingly accepted

*By dismissing Book of Mormon geography references as “incomplete and misleading,” it is Meldrum’s presentation that is incomplete and misleading.*

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a traditional view of the matter and had never seriously looked at the statements from the Book of Mormon (Clark 1994:93-94).

**So, What's It All About?**

The foundational beliefs that led to the Heartland theory can be summarized as follows: 1) Cumorah anchored in New York; 2) possible U.S. Native American DNA evidence linked to the Middle East, leading to selected civilizations of Hopewell and Adena as Book of Mormon people; and 3) scriptural support relating to prophecies and promises in The Book of Mormon. These beliefs led to the development of a “hierarchy” of witnesses or standard works. Meldrum ranks them in order of importance (Porter and Meldrum 2009:19).

1. Book of Mormon prophecies and promises . . . in relation to the Promised Land and the people associated with it.
2. Inspired and revealed statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith on geography.
3. Physical “real world” evidence, such as correlating civilizations in the correct time frame, archaeological findings as described within the text, the cultural lifestyles, genetic relationships, and linguistic ties.
4. Geographical indicators or passages contained within the Book of Mormon.

Meldrum treats the first two categories as nearly equal in “credibility” and “strength.” Along with prophecies and promises from The Book of Mormon, *any* and *all words* of Joseph Smith are equally considered as inspired and revelatory as The Book of Mormon. This also includes accounts of what *others* say Joseph *said*. The third category combines the DNA and archaeology “evidences.” The last, and least-valued, category views Book of Mormon geographical references as incomplete and inconclusive because it does not fit their paradigm.

**1. Prophecies and Promised Land**

The top category of “Heartland” witnesses is described as spiritual and prophetic. The key scripture used in support of this theory is the prophecy about the Gentiles who go forth out of captivity to the Land of Promise and obtain their land of inheritance (Nephi’s vision, 1 Nephi 3:148-177 [13:13-30 LDS]). Additional promises and prophecies in The Book of Mormon are quoted extensively and used to prove that “the United States is the *only* nation in the Western Hemisphere that qualifies” as the Land of Promise (emphasis added; Porter and Meldrum 2009:19, 94).

***But is it?***

As I began to focus my own study on the various passages, the reference in Nephi’s vision turned out to be the key in toppling their house of cards and in fact is the very scripture that led me to an entirely different conclusion. The crucial point is that the Gentiles’ land



Figure 1. Greater Land of Promise—showing lands of inheritance for four groups

of inheritance is *upon* the Land of Promise and does not necessarily mean their land of inheritance covers the *entirety* of the Land of Promise. It is “a mighty nation *among* the Gentiles upon the face of this land,” i.e., there are more Gentiles than just in the mighty nation, and is “above *all other nations* upon the face of the land” or in other words, this nation is not the *only* nation on this Land of Promise.

The Book of Mormon account records that three separate groups were brought to the Land of Promise, each to a *different* location—the Jaredites (to the Land Northward), Lehi’s group (to the southern part of the Land Southward), and the people of Mulek (to the northern part of the Land Southward). See Figure 1 above. Through examining the four groups brought to the Promised Land—three separate areas in Mesoamerica and the Gentiles as the fourth group in the U.S.—I saw distinct lands given for an inheritance to each nation, all within a *greater* Land of Promise.

**2. Inspired and revealed statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith on geography**

In the second category of their hierarchy of witnesses are the “inspired and revealed” statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith on geography, including accounts of what *others* say Joseph *said*. Table 1 at right presents excerpts from a few letters by Joseph Smith referring to a range of places, from the U.S. to “Central America.” In addition, during his tenure as editor of *Times & Seasons* (March 15, 1842 through November 15, 1842), there appeared a number of his editorial articles highlighting discoveries in Guatemala, etc., and associating them with The Book of Mormon (see Table 2 on page 4).

However, from the Heartland viewpoint, Joseph couldn’t possibly have written these articles because they say that, during part of this time as editor, Joseph was apparently in hiding. Meldrum concludes that he is not even in town so someone else has to be responsible for these statements. Research, however, has shown that Joseph was in town, staying with friends until October 8th (Lund 2009).

The statements in Tables 1 and 2 made by Joseph

Smith illustrate his openness to consider a larger area than just the United States. As evidences came forth and knowledge grew, so did his understanding of the lands of The Book of Mormon. These statements are “primary sources,” whereas numerous accounts by *others* of what Joseph said are “secondary.” Primary or firsthand witnesses differ from secondary witnesses which are perceived as secondhand or hearsay and are considered inadmissible in a court of law. It is because Meldrum views *everything* Joseph said as inspired and revelatory that he must dismiss the *Times and Seasons* comments attributed to him. It is my opinion that excluding these *Times and Seasons* comments by Joseph is an attempt to discredit a Mesoamerican connection. This becomes apparent when you realize that the “secondary” information is crucial to the Heartland theory about the geography correlations as covered below.

### 3. Physical “real world” evidence

The third category in part combines DNA and archaeological “evidences.” The identification of the

archaeology region for The Book of Mormon lands is directly tied to DNA studies among the U.S. Native Americans. But it is not sound scholarship to make this leap, to draw absolute conclusions based on incomplete, preliminary data. For more about this research see the timely article by Don Beebe in which he points out that “caution must be exercised in claiming too much for this method.... Many of the discrepancies and much of the unreliability of the data employed in the study lies in the sample sizes of the populations used” (Beebe 2004:3, quoting Peter Jones of the University of Georgia). As new data was released (the European and Middle East connection), “earlier conclusions had to be revisited” (emphasis in original). “However, the experts in the field have raised serious doubts and advised caution” (Beebe 2004:7).

This caution should still be exercised, based on continuing disagreement and conflict in this field of study. Even the genetic experts disagree. “Significant loss of mtDNA information . . . can occur in short time

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Table 1. Correspondence by Joseph Smith with Geographic Comments

Smith’s personal correspondence conveys a range of ideas, all of which can be understood as applying to a greater Land of Promise, including the tribes of Indians in the U.S. to Stephens’ book *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* as the area in which The Book of Mormon events took place.

Letter to Editor, *American Revivalist Newspaper*, New York, 1833:

*The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians, having been found through the ministrations of an holy Angel translated into our own Language by the gift and power of God, after having been hid up in the earth for the last fourteen hundred years containing the word of God, which was delivered unto them, By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them....*

(emphasis in Porter and Meldrum 2009:107; Jessee 1984:273-274)

Letter to Emma, June 4, 1834:

*The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendour and the goodness so indescribably, all serves to pass away time unnoticed.*

(emphasis in Porter and Meldrum 2009:113; Jessee 1984:324; original letter in possession of Community of Christ)

Letter to John Bernhisel from Joseph Smith, November 16, 1841, thanking him for sending Stephens’ book *Incidents of Travel* by way of Wilford Woodruff:

*I received your kind present by the hand of Er Woodruff & feel myself under many obligations for this mark of your esteem & friendship which to me is the more interesting as it unfolds & develops [sic] many things that are of great importance to this generation & corresponds with & supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon. I have read the volumes with the greatest interest & pleasure & must say that of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most correct luminous & comprehensive.—*

In handwriting of John Taylor (emphasis added, Jessee 1984:501-502)

Table 2. Geographic Comments in *Times and Seasons* During Joseph Smith's Editorship

Comments express Joseph's views of both this "country" reflecting the U.S. as a place of inhabitants today, as well as this "continent" reflecting "Central America" as the place where the events of The Book of Mormon occurred—which can be understood as applying to a greater Land of Promise. The Heartland view rejects all references to "Central America" as being made by Joseph. Misspellings are in the originals; italics added for emphasis.

TO SUBSCRIBERS. This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. —March 15, 1842 (Smith 1842:3[9]:710)

CHURCH HISTORY. I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of *this country*, and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a *brief sketch* of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people was made known to me: I was also told where there was deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgment of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on *this continent*. —March 15, 1842, Wentworth Letter (Smith 1842:3[9]:707)

AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES. If men, in their researches into the history of *this country*...were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed . . . a great and a mighty people had inhabited *this continent*...that there was as great and mighty cities on this continent as on the continent of Asia. . . . Stephens and Catherwood's researches in *Central America* abundantly testify of this thing. The stupendous ruins, the elegant sculpture, and the magnificence of the ruins of *Guatemala*, and other cities, corroborate this statement, and show that a great and mighty people . . . inhabited *this continent*. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormon unfolds their history.—ED. —June 15, 1842, (Smith 1842:3[18]:860)

The following quote was preceded by excerpts relating to Copan, Honduras, and Palenque, Mexico and ended with this editorial comment:

The foregoing extract has been made to assist the Latter-Day Saints, in establishing the Book of Mormon as revelation from God. It affords great joy to have the world assist us to so much proof, that even the most credulous cannot doubt. . . . Mr. Stephens' great developments of antiquities are made bare to the eyes of all the people by reading the history of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. They lived about the *narrow neck of land*, which now embraces *Central America*, with all the cities that can be found. . . . Who could have dreamed that twelve years would have developed such incontrovertible testimony to the Book of Mormon? surely the Lord worketh and none can hinder. —September 15, 1842, Extract from Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America* (Smith 1842:3[22]:911-915)

ZARAHEMLA. Since our 'Extract' was published from Mr. Stephens' 'Incidents of Travel,' &c., we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or *Guatemala*, is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien . . . The city of *Zarahemla*, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, *stood upon this land* . . . It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and varacity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of *Zarahemla* have been found where the Nephites left them... It will not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens' ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon: light cleaves to light, and facts are supported by facts. —October 1, 1842, article (Smith 1842:3[23]:927) [following this article, another 'Extract' is quoted (927-928)].

VALEDICTORY. I beg leave to inform the subscribers of the *Times and Seasons* that it is impossible for me to fulfil the arduous duties of the editorial department any longer. The multiplicity of other business that daily devolves upon me, renders it impossible for me to do justice to a paper so widely circulated as the *Times and Seasons*. I have appointed Elder John Taylor . . . As this number commences a new volume, it also commences his editorial career. —November 15, 1842 (Smith 1842:4[1]:8)

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frames” (per Smith 2010, quoting Helgason et al 2003). In addition, the expectation of finding links between modern and ancient populations has had little success; in other words, current DNA results cannot reliably be connected to ancient populations (Wade 2002).

From the view of the *greater* Land of Promise, The Book of Mormon contributes to our understanding of the makeup of the remnant today, in both Mesoamerica and north. The Book of Mormon tells us that after the nations are “swept off,” the people would not all be utterly destroyed—there would remain a “mixture” of Nephi’s seed, as well as the seed of his brother Joseph, *among* their brethren, the Lamanites. Numerous migrations northward took place—by land and by water (Alma 30:5-14 [63:4-10]; Helaman 2:3-10, 13 [3:3-10, 14]).

When observing the *greater land* we must consider that ancestors of many of the U.S. tribes are linked to Mesoamerica. Anthropology and archaeology, as well as tradition among the Native Americans, inform us of connections with Mesoamerica, through both migrations and trade.

Also it is entirely possible that many Native Americans today include Jaredite descendants. During the long term of the Jaredite civilization, in their “land of inheritance” above the Narrow Neck, they would naturally spread out and obviously occupy those lands northward through migrations. An even bigger picture might also include other people who arrived in various transoceanic contacts. Thus, we can say that today among Native Americans is a mixture of Lehi’s seed, including his son Joseph, also Nephites (migrations, as well as dissenters who survived among the Lamanites), Mulekites (of Judah), and Jaredites (Asian connection)—a very complex mixture indeed.

Included also in this third level of hierarchical witnesses are archaeological evidences which will be addressed below.

#### 4. Geographical indicators or passages contained within The Book of Mormon

This is the least valued category in the hierarchy of sources by Meldrum and his followers who view Book of Mormon geographical references as “having some degree of shortcomings if not insurmountable flaws” (Porter and Meldrum 2009:11). This becomes clear through presentations (Meldrum 2008) and books (Meldrum 2009; Porter and Meldrum 2009), as any and all association of The Book of Mormon with Mesoamerica are dismissed. Those who propose a Mesoamerican setting are seen as using a “geographic-passage-only method,” ignoring the prophetic or spiritual, “reading into the text private musings about archaeology, geography or culture,” and “undue trust in the secular ‘philosophies of men’” (Porter and Meldrum 2009:9-10). Thus, the strongest opponent to a shift to the U.S. area was the “grand assumption” that Mesoamerica was the setting, “yet it is a completely unsubstantiated assumption . . . an assumption based on . . . much speculation” (Meldrum 2009:21). They do,

however, acknowledge Mesoamerica as part of the “other sheep” because of evidences of association with the visitation of the resurrected Savior (Porter and Meldrum 2009:105).

This overall evaluation of the Mesoamerican viewpoint clearly shows a *lack of even rudimentary understanding of archaeology, especially as it relates to The Book of Mormon*. By dismissing Book of Mormon geography references as “incomplete and misleading,” it is Meldrum’s presentation that is incomplete and misleading. Meldrum’s statement that “the secular and physical information . . . was in large measure edited out by inspired men of God” (Porter and Meldrum 2009:136-137) demonstrates a lack of understanding of this treasured record and numerous statements by the record keepers that its contents were divinely controlled.

The first error is the view that “the sacred space on the plates was reserved for the more important prophecies and promises” (Porter and Meldrum 2009:12). He applies this view to the entire Book of Mormon while basing it on two statements which specifically refer to the small plates of Nephi. The first reference is the commandment to Nephi that “the ministry and prophecies . . . should be written upon these plates” (1 Nephi 5:223-224 [19:3]). The second reference lifts the phrase “prophesyings and revelations” from Words of Mormon and applies it to the entirety of The Book of Mormon record to come to the remnant (4 Nephi 1:59 [1:49]).

Mormon’s comment actually refers to when he found the small plates: “I shall take these plates which contain these *prophesyings and revelations* and put them with the remainder of my record” (Words of Mormon 1:9 [1:6]). Nephi tells us that his set of other plates, the large plates, is for the civil history: “Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates which gives an account . . . of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people” (1 Nephi 5:225 [19:4]), and also “an account of the reigns of kings” (1 Nephi 2:97-98 [9:4]). When the small plates were full and turned over to King Benjamin, both the sacred and civil accounts were kept on the large plates. Because this portion of The Book of Mormon—the small plates—is “as written” (and not abridged), we are blessed with the richness of the sacred history during this early period. Beginning with the book of Mosiah, we have Mormon’s abridgement from the large plates, which contains **both** the spiritual *and* civil accounts.

The second error is to dismiss any geographic references as incomplete and flawed. This is clearly in direct contrast to the three major Book of Mormon writers, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, who record that they were directed by God what to put in and what to leave out as they wrote (Treat 1992b). As a principle or general truth that the contents were divinely controlled, this leads to an increased appreciation of *all material* in The Book of Mormon. Included in the abridged portion of The Book of Mormon are spiritual teachings, as well as numerous details interwoven in various accounts of warfare,

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missionary trips and migrations with an abundance of clues that will ultimately lead us to a complete geography. In addition, Mormon, as military leader, as well as abridger and author, inserts what is known as the main geographic description in Alma 13:68-80 [22:27-34]. This insertion, made nearly 350 years after the upheaval at the time of the crucifixion, confirms that the relationships of the lands and geographic features are still relevant, and that they are important enough to include (Treat 1992a:141).

**Mesoamerica/Heartland Comparisons**

In order to identify the setting where The Book of Mormon events unfolded, it is essential to consider what the record says. The Book of Mormon is the primary source! In addition to places and their relationships, as well as words that indicate elevations (such as up, over, and down), consideration also includes the overall timelines of events, migrations/movements of people, etc. This is contrary to the Heartland position. When they dismiss this information and ignore it out of hand, they take out of the equation the prominent body of evidence that contributes to a 3,000-year mirror image of The Book of Mormon/Mesoamerica timeline. This leaves them only meager evidences for the “favored” Heartland area—where much research is old, out of date, but also not as intensely studied as Mesoamerica because it is *lacking* advanced civilizations.

The fact remains—**no** civilization in the U.S./Canada region can compare as even a dim bulb to a million watt flood light on Mesoamerican evidences that fit Book of Mormon requirements! Only Mesoamerica has a multitude of parallel evidences, filled in over the years as new details have come forth. While archaeology has continued to change its viewpoint, The Book of Mormon has not—perhaps one of the strongest witnesses to the reality of its historicity and geographical landscape, while the Heartland view presents *creative* interpretations of geography and *molds* as pliable clay Book of Mormon references.

Let’s look at two key Book of Mormon geographical



Figure 2. Mesoamerica with key features

features and consider comparisons with Mesoamerica and the U.S. Heartland correlations: Hill Cumorah and the River Sidon and its head. Side-by-side comparisons of these features are shown in Table 3 at right along with a couple others. The Book of Mormon references and Mesoamerican correlations should be familiar to our readers from numerous books and materials widely available (see Figure 2 below), so we will focus on the Heartland points.

The main Heartland anchor is the designation of the New York hill at Palmyra as The Book of Mormon Hill Cumorah, which does not fit Book of Mormon requirements in relation to other places. Cerro Rabon in Mexico is believed by some to be the Hill Cumorah where Mormon hid up *all* the records *except* those plates that became The Book of Mormon (Mormon 3:8 [6:6]). The record, which became The Book of Mormon, was created mainly by Mormon and completed by his son Moroni and was abridged from the records hid up in Hill Cumorah. Some years later, Moroni deposited this abridged record in a hill in the State of New York where Joseph Smith would be able to find them by divine direction. Joseph stated, “Convenient to the village of Manchester . . . stands a hill of considerable size” (Smith 1841:77). It was Oliver Cowdery and others who first began calling it Hill Cumorah (Wooley 2010). This designation seems to have been incorporated into everyday language much as a “historical myth.”

The Heartland theory believes the Mississippi River (which flows south) is the Sidon, with “anchors” of Zarahemla (in Iowa, across from Nauvoo) and Manti (Huntsville, Missouri), and the “head” of Sidon the junc-

|   |
|---|
| <b>BOOK OF MORMON</b>   |
| <b>NARROW NECK</b> .....  |
| Led into Land Northward (Alma 30:6 [63:5]); between the Land Northward and the Land Southward   |
| <b>CUMORAH</b> .....  |
| Same hill as Ramah (Ether 6:83 [15:11], Mormon 3:8 [6:6]); in Land Northward (Mormon 1:61 [2:29])   |
| <b>NARROW STRIP OF WILDERNESS</b> .....   |
| Divides Land of Nephi from the Land of Zarahemla (Alma 13:68-69; 15:14 [22:27; 27:14]); ran from Sea East to Sea West and round about on borders of seashore and borders of wilderness on north by Land of Zarahemla, through borders of Manti by head of River Sidon (Alma 13:68-69 [22:27]) |
| <b>HEAD OF RIVER SIDON</b> .....  |
| By borders of Manti, by Narrow Strip of Wilderness, (Alma 13:69 [22:27]), by line fortified between Lands of Zarahemla and Nephi, running by head of River Sidon (Alma 22:11 [50:11]), Land of Manti near South Wilderness at higher elevation (Alma 11:9 [16:6])                             |
| <b>RIVER SIDON</b> .....  |
| Flows from higher elevation down into Land of Zarahemla which is north of Land of Nephi (Alma 1:70; 13:69 [2:15; 22:27]); City of Zarahemla west of River Sidon (Alma 1:83-84 [2:26-27]); runs to the sea (Alma 1:101; 20:97 [3:3; 44:22])  |

Table 3. Side-by-Side Geography Comparisons

| MESOAMERICA  | HEARTLAND  |
|--|--|
| Isthmus of Tehuantepec   | Land between Lakes South) and Ontario (Sea East)   |
| Possibly Cerro Rabon in Mexico, north of Oaxaca  | East of Narrow Neck, south of the Land Desolation  |
| Mountain range from Sea East (Caribbean) to Sea West (Pacific) divides southern highlands of Guatemala from northern lowland | No definitive information  |
| "Up" in wilderness, north of mountain range, headwaters of Usumacinta River, highlands of Guatemala                          | Confluence of Mississippi and Missouri rivers (and nearby Illinois River) (Meldrum 2010); previously indicated at confluence of Mississippi and Ohio rivers (Meldrum 2008) |
| Usumacinta flows north from highlands of Guatemala, empties into Gulf of Mexico  | Flows south, past "Zarahemla" across from Nauvoo and "Manti" at Huntsville, Missouri, past Land of Nephi, empties into Gulf of Mexico                                      |

tion of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers (Meldrum 2008) or the Mississippi, Missouri and nearby Illinois rivers (Meldrum 2010). To reach this conclusion, Meldrum states in his DVD presentation that a city was established across from Nauvoo named Zarahemla (Lee City, Iowa), but he

doesn't know if it's the same Zarahemla as in The Book of Mormon (Meldrum 2008:Section 5). However, he goes on to say that he doesn't believe this is a "New Zarahemla," but the actual location of the original Book of Mormon city and includes it in his list of map "anchors." His reason is tied to a revelation given in March 1841 in D&C 125:1-4 (**LDS only**) where God named the city. But this new settlement was "called Zarahemla" by the Saints as early as 1838, and in 1841, according to Roper, "the Lord . . . was merely referencing a location already [known] among the Saints by that name" (Roper 2010) and not the Zarahemla of The Book of Mormon.

South of this Zarahemla, the Mississippi and its convergence with *either* the Ohio *or* Missouri and Illinois are designated, according to Meldrum, as the "head" of the River Sidon. Meldrum's interpretation of "head" rests on an alternate definition to the one generally accepted as "the principle source of a stream, as the head of the Nile." Instead he favors the definitions of "conflux" and "confluence": "a flowing together; a meeting of two or more currents" and "the place of meeting, as the confluence of the Tigris and the Frat" (Meldrum 2010).

A key geographic reference for locating the head of the River Sidon is the identification of the city of Manti. Manti in The Book of Mormon is at a higher elevation, by the head of the River Sidon and near the Narrow Strip of Wilderness (mountainous range) that runs from the Sea East to the Sea West. Meldrum identifies Manti with the Missouri city of Huntsville, based solely on secondary sources which say that it was revealed by Joseph. Actually, though, Joseph was not in the area at the time. In 1838 this Manti referred to the "place where the city of Manti *is to be built*" rather than a reference to "the ancient site of the city of Manti" (emphasis in original; Roper 2010).

Meldrum concludes that the Sidon flowing south is acceptable because it flows past Zarahemla and 'down' towards Manti (Meldrum 2010). But, this belief requires the River Sidon to flow *past* the Land of Nephi (see Figure 3 on page 8), *which is something created without any possible Book of Mormon foundation*. There is nothing in Missouri, nor ranging from there to the Sea East (Lake Ontario in Heartland view) and the Sea West (Lake Michigan in Heartland view) that fits the mountainous strip with Manti which should be between these "seas."

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the above points which are the foundations to this new Heartland theory, as well as a few key geographical correlations, it serves little purpose to continue to evaluate detail for detail every type of correlation. If the foundation is sand (and not rock), the house falls. The fact remains—no civilization in the U.S./Canada region can compare as even a dim bulb to a million watt flood light on Mesoamerican evidences that fit Book of Mormon requirements! Only Mesoamerica has a multitude of parallel evidences, filled in over the years as new details have come forth.

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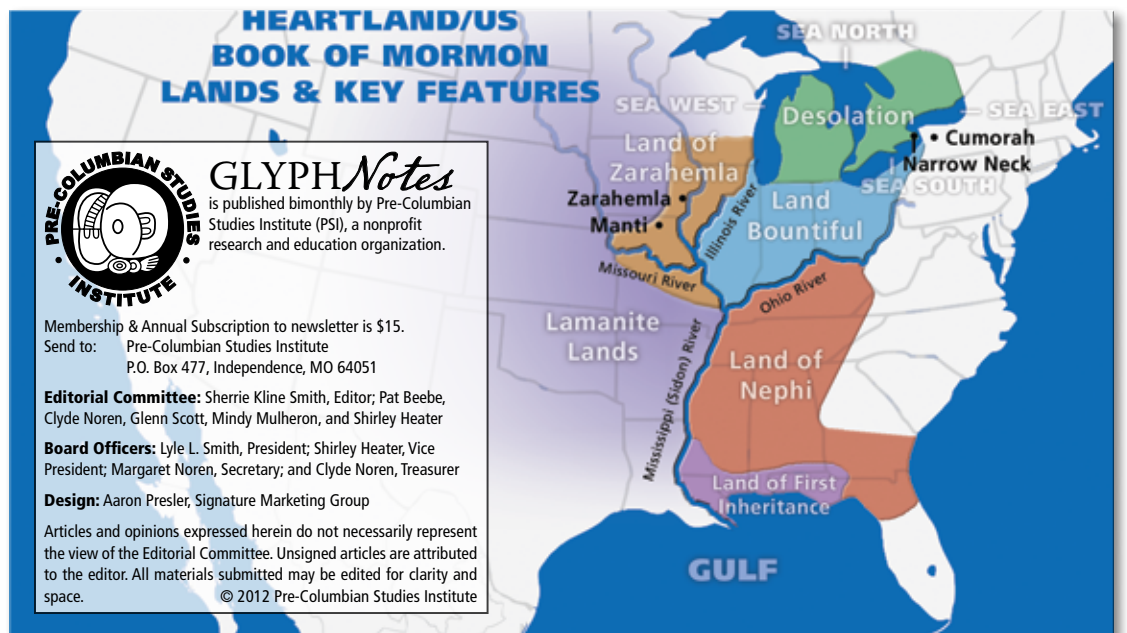


Figure 3. Heartland with key features



## Book Review: *The Road to Ruins*

By Ian Graham, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2010. 538 pp., illustrated, notes, bibliography, index, \$39.95 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-0-8263-4754-1.

Reviewed by Sherrie Kline Smith  
(with contributions by Jim D. Feagins)

Hang on to your hat and trowel! Ian Graham's memoirs of his life in *The Road to Ruins* are reminiscent of a roller coaster ride. It begins slowly, with an account of his early life growing up in England, the son of an aristocratic family, then—*swoosh!* The adventure exploring the jungles of Mexico and Central America looking for previously unknown sites takes off. Graham's experiences—hacking his way through the jungle, witnessing a murder by looters, being thrown in jail twice—read more like fiction than fact. Indiana Jones would be envious!



Although Graham never set out to be an archaeologist, serendipitous events caused him to embark in the field. Fifty years later he wrote, "I can think of no other occupation that would have been half as rewarding" (p. 4). He had no formal training and in the early years no affiliation with an educational institution for support, yet in 1981 Graham received the MacArthur Fellowship, commonly called the "genius grant," for his work with the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program. He is the founding director of what evolved into this program.

The Corpus project began in the 1960s because reliable source material was not available to help decipher the thousands of Maya hieroglyphs. With support from the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, Graham was enlisted in 1968 to begin a program aimed at recording all known Maya inscriptions. Graham was the perfect choice because he had partly supported his early years in the field by selling his photographs; he had the artistic ability to create the drawings; and, not to be underestimated, he had knowledge of the sites and the courage and sangfroid to brave all the hazards of jungle exploration. He photographed and then created line drawings of the many door lintels, stelae (large standing stones carved with human figures, iconography, and inscriptions), and

other items with glyphs.

This project grew into the formal Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard. Graham retired as director of the project in 2004, but the effort is ongoing (<http://www.peabody.harvard.edu/node/24>).

Another reason for the initiation of this program was the race to record the inscriptions before texts eroded and/or looters got to them. Graham gives many examples of the loss of inscriptions because of theft, and portrays throughout his book his abhorrence for the looting that has and is occurring in the Maya area. Indeed he devotes a couple

chapters delving deep into the topic and provides plenty of examples to make one shudder at the loss of scholarship due to lust and greed.

The book jacket text says that Graham's careful recording of Maya inscriptions "are often credited with making the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphics possible." Graham himself never makes this claim and always classifies himself as an "amateur." Granted, without availability of a large corpus of glyphs to work with, decipherment languished, but in reality it was the invention of the Xerox copy machine which made it possible to easily reproduce the drawings, making them readily available for the newly formed Maya Meetings at the University of Texas-Austin in the early 1970s. Under the charismatic leadership of art historian Linda Schele who began the Maya Meetings, the process of decipherment was spurred on. The Maya Meetings were open to anyone who had an interest in the glyphs, and under her leadership all ideas were welcomed—the ideal

*Cont. on page 10*



*Hang on to your hat and trowel! Ian Graham's memoirs of his life in The Road to Ruins are reminiscent of a roller coaster ride.*

*Stela from Aguateca, a remote site in the jungles of Guatemala where Graham discovered unknown stelae. He also was the first to survey and map portions of Aguateca.*



Lyle L. Smith

*Response (Cont. from page 1)*

setting for rapid progress.

Graham is mostly known for his work on the Corpus, but this autobiography—divided into three sections he calls Preclassic, Early Classic, and Late Classic, following the terms used by archaeologists to define the time periods of the Maya—provides rich historical information about Mesoamerican archaeology in the 1960s and '70s and his discovery of several key sites. This information, too, might have been lost—much like the hundreds of looted monuments—except for his book. Graham's work at sites like Aguateca, Bonampak, Calakmul, El Mirador, Machaquilá, Naranjo, Seibal, Toniná, Uxmal, Yaxhá, and Yaxchilán, to name a few, reads like a memorization exercise for learning the alphabet.

His description of how he details the way he plotted on aerial maps where the ruins of El Mirador would most likely be and his surveying methods, which in the end proved remarkably accurate, will be of interest to the archaeologist and especially Mayanist. After his discovery and mapping of El Mirador, excavation began and continues today. This key site, along with its neighbor, Nakbe (named by Graham), has revolutionized the thinking of Mayanists about the Classic period (A.D. 250-900). El Mirador and Nakbe caused them to realize that the achievements by the Maya used to define "classic period" actually occurred hundreds of years earlier than previously thought.

For those who believe in The Book of Mormon, the recognition that Maya society was fully developed much earlier (circa 600 B.C.), added more strong evidence in support of the truthfulness of the account found in The Book of Mormon.

At Rio Azul, a known site that had been heavily looted, Graham discovered a tomb with painted hieroglyphics on the walls. Subsequent excavations by Richard Adams revealed six looted tombs with glyphs on the walls and one undisturbed tomb with what has become known as the famous chocolate pot. This ceramic pot has a screw-top lid and the residue found in the pot tested as chocolate. There is no other piece like it known in the Maya area.

After a season in the field, Graham would return home to England and work on drawing the site maps and Maya monuments. On one occasion he writes about the reaction of his father and stepmother (his mother died when he was 11) to his chosen line of work.

I usually worked on these drawings and maps after dinner, and on two occasions at least, when my father came in to bid me good-night, he


asked, a little wistfully, "I hope they are paying you for this work."

I had to tell him no. His forbearance was noble, for he must have been worried about a son who had bought a Rolls-Royce, and before long a second one, while earning very little and obviously running down the few thousand pounds, intended as capital, that his grandmother had given him. My stepmother was more direct: she hinted that I was on the road to ruin (an expression I have remembered!), and tried hard to persuade me to look for a job as a schoolmaster. She was sure I could find one (p. 268).

In 2007 Graham received the Order of the Quetzal, the highest honor awarded by the Guatemalan government—not exactly earned by following a "road to ruin."

This book sounded like a good choice to throw in a backpack and take on vacation or while visiting the ruins, but it weighs in at about four pounds! Because the book is illustrated throughout with photographs, all 500 pages were printed on glossy paper resulting in a very hefty tome, discouraging one from toting it along, which is something I would have loved to have done.

I found the lack of a map disconcerting. One, either in the endpapers or within the book itself, would greatly help a reader follow Graham on his many excursions. Another shortcoming for me is the list of Graham's own publications in the bibliography. He only lists a few while in the text he refers to several of his reports that describe the discovery and work at some sites that do not appear in the bibliography.

Whatever these minor distractions, Graham's autobiography joins the ranks of other Mayanists who have written their own biography, like Edwin Shook (*Incidents in the Life of a Maya Archaeologist*) and Michael Coe (*Final Report: An Archaeologist Excavates His Past*), that provides valuable information about the last 50 years of explorations of the ruins of Maya civilization. Reading Graham's memoir was an enjoyable, educational, and exciting experience! 



Lyle L. Smith

*Broken or remains of a looted monument at Aguateca, Guatemala.*

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# Glyph Dwellers

Dwellers - to live and have a home in a particular place

## The Adventures of Beezrom

by Mindy Mulheron

Illustrations by Aaron Presler



Last time I checked in with you, I had just met the people of Zarahemla and learned about these other people called the Jaredites. I still haven't heard the whole story of the Jaredites, but some amazing things have been happening here!

King Benjamin has been working hard to establish peace in the land. He's taught us many things. We've been working hard studying the languages of our fathers and recording our adventures on metal plates. King Benjamin wanted us to do this so our children would know where they came from and how God had blessed us. And we use metal plates because they last a lot longer than paper.

King Benjamin gave us lots of good advice. One of my favorites was this statement: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God." Isn't that neat?! It means that when we help others, God is pleased with us. It reminds me of the scripture in Matthew (25:46) that says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." God definitely wants us to help our friends, and even those we don't know well if possible!

He also shared something else that I thought was so neat! King Benjamin said,

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things both in heaven and in earth; Believe that he has all wisdom,

and all power, both in heaven and in earth; Believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you: And now, if you believe all these things, see that ye do them (Mosiah 2:13-17 [4:9-10]).

So he was basically saying, "Believe in God. Believe that He is in charge and He knows about everything that's going on. Repent when you do things wrong, and pray that He will forgive you. And now that you know these things, live righteously." That's so easy, right? If we believe that God is who He says He is, we should understand that He loves us and wants us to be happy and well. That's why He gave us rules to follow that help us live the right way. Aren't you glad we have such an amazing Heavenly Father?!

Oh, hey - we have visitors coming into town! I better go see what that's about... Talk to you next time! 😊

*Scripture references: Words of Mormon and Mosiah 1-4 [1-6]* 📖



### MY GOOD DEEDS LIST

"A dozen ways I can be a blessing to others..."

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
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*A Response to the Heartland  
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*Glyph Dwellers:  
The Adventures of Beezrum*

*GLYPH Quotes*

GLYPH *Notes* PRE-COLUMBIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012 VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1

# GLYPH *Quotes* There is an opposition in all things.

by Lyle L. Smith

— 2 Nephi 1:81 [1:5]

One of the teachings that the prophet Lehi provides is a good example of the plainness of understanding found in The Book of Mormon. Beginning with 2 Nephi 1:81 [1:5], Lehi explains that “there is an opposition in all things.” He lists a series of paired opposites, which is a form of Hebrew poetry. Some examples are the fall of man versus salvation; good versus evil; righteousness versus wickedness; and the forbidden fruit opposed to the tree of life. He clarifies that because of the fall of man and the redemption by the Messiah that was made for us, we know good from evil. We choose liberty and eternal life or captivity and death.

Over the years I have watched this principle play out again and again in my life and in the lives of others. Recently I assisted in a Priesthood retreat. There were many testimonies that the Lord blessed the preparation and the actual retreat itself. A number of the brethren in the final worship service expressed publicly what a blessing the retreat had been to them and their commitment to being a better servant for the Lord. We all left feeling richly blessed.

On the way home from the priesthood retreat, one of the brethren had his Scriptures, his computer, and clothing stolen. It was a great hardship for him. Another brother, after church on the following Sunday, was kidnapped and cruelly beaten. Only the Lord provided his release. Both had expressed personally to me that they wanted to be better servants for the Lord. A third brother had severe illness that might well have cost him his life.

It is not often that we see so plainly this principle of life taught by Lehi. There *is* opposition in all things. These three brethren have choices, as we all do. Because they had committed to a closer walk with God, they were tested, as we all are. They could have chosen to walk away because of the opposition, as we can, but they chose eternal life in spite of the cost.

I believe it helps us to understand what is happening when “bad” things occur; to realize that the Lord has not left us, to know that we should expect opposition. Our response to the opposition shows whether we choose liberty and eternal life through the great mediator of all men, even at all cost, or do we choose captivity and death? 