

## GLYPH

Notes

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## Water, Without It Nothing Lives

By Lyle Smith

*Water is essential for life. It is so basic, though, that we forget its importance until a drought occurs, like it did this summer in the Midwest of the United States. If the drought lasts too long, famine follows.*

Freshwater is crucial for the development of communities and cities in food production and health. In order to sustain large populations, water needs to be managed. How did earlier civilizations accomplish that? What about the people in The Book of Mormon? Although that record doesn't include information about how they managed water, it does affirm large populations. Mormon, one of its writers, relates at A.D. 320, "the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea" (Mormon 1:7).

Managed agricultural resources make possible large populations, and food production depends on managed water supply. Recent studies of water management in Mesoamerica have shown that these people had sophisticated systems that sustained large populations, thus fulfilling a necessary requirement for the geographical setting of The Book of Mormon.

**Background**

For many years archaeologists believed that the Maya ruins were not those of *real cities* but ceremonial areas occupied only by priests and shamans. Today, though, it is well acknowledged that this was not accurate. The cities had large populations, perhaps 80-100,000 inhabitants in some cities with overall population in the millions. The question is, how could this incredible population come about? And what did the use of water have to do with it?

Another previous prevailing opinion during the last century held by most archaeologists was the theory that the Maya primarily used what is called "slash and burn" agriculture, which is a system of farming that could not support high population. But, ideas and beliefs change, and a part of the change has come about due to recent archaeological field studies and investigations into how the Maya managed and used water resources that permitted intensive agriculture as opposed to the slash and burn method.

**Environment and Water Resources**

When we think of ancient Mesoamerica . . . images of temples, monuments, maize, [and] tropical forests . . . come to mind; the image of water does not. Yet water was every bit as essential as maize for sustenance. . . . No settlement could be without it, and every geographic zone adapted procurement and storage systems to suit local conditions. (Lucero and Fash 2006:3, emphasis added).



Jared Smith

Visitors to the site of Palenque can follow the path among the ruins that descends the side of the small mountain and comes out on the road below the site near the present-day museum. The trail follows the Otolum River that has several cascades and this beautiful waterfall.

*Recent studies of water management in Mesoamerica have shown that these people had sophisticated systems that sustained large populations, thus fulfilling a necessary requirement for the geographical setting of The Book of Mormon.*

Cont. on Page 2





Some of the many reservoirs at Tikal are shaded in blue on this site map. The largest ancient dam built by the Maya in Central America runs between the Palace and Temple reservoirs.

## Water (Cont. from Page 1)

The Maya in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador live in a very wet area of the world. Some areas get ten feet of rain a year, primarily within a six-month period; the other six months being mostly dry. The southern part of the Maya area gets much more rain than the northern Yucatan Peninsula. Annual rainfall isn't equal across the area, as the areas of the Peten in northern Guatemala and the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico are not blessed with good river systems. The water seeps through the ground and porous rock, with most rivers being underground. How could large cities develop without nearby rivers or useable wells? The Maya were ingenious and worked around such difficulties in various ways.

Within this biophysical context, one of the earliest and most long-lived tropical civilizations flourished. Maya water and land uses were significantly affected by highly seasonal precipitation and karst physiography, which accommodated little perennial surface water. In response, *the ancient Maya developed a complex system of water management dependent on water collection and storage devices.* The hydraulic system was cleverly tailored to the biophysical conditions and adaptively engineered to the evolving needs of a growing population for more than 1,000 y[ears] (Scarborough et al. 2012:12408, emphasis added).

### The Evidence

Let's look at some specific former Maya cities and the observations of current archaeologists.

#### Tikal — Peten, Northern Guatemala

Cities such as Tikal, Calakmul, and many others without nearby rivers and no known underground water sources developed a system of reservoirs that received water from planned and constructed catchment systems.

For example, Tikal had at least ten reservoirs in the city with enough water to support 45-62,000 people for a six-month dry period.

Maya built sophisticatedly engineered reservoir systems, epitomized by elevated convex macro-watershed systems whereby reservoirs, dams and channels were designed to capture and store water (e.g., Tikal, Caracol)... Controlled release from these elevated reservoirs to the downslope flanks and adjacent bajo margins supplied household and agricultural water... (Lucero n.d.:9).

This year a multi-university team led by the University of Cincinnati (UC) has been working at Tikal.

[Their] research sheds new light on how the Maya conserved and used their natural resources to support a populous, highly complex society... Detailed in the latest findings by the UC-led efforts are

- The largest ancient dam built by the ancient Maya of Central America
- Discussion on how reservoir waters were likely released
- Details on the construction of a cofferdam needed by the Maya to dredge one of the largest reservoirs at Tikal
- The presence of ancient springs linked to the initial colonization of Tikal
- Use of sand filtration to cleanse water entering reservoirs



On their way to Temple 5 at Tikal, Don and Pat Beebe cross what is now known as the largest ancient dam built by the Maya.

Lyle Smith



- A “switching station” that accommodated seasonal filling and release of water
- Finding of the deepest, rock-cut canal segment in the Maya lowlands (University of Cincinnati 2012)

### Palenque — *Chiapas, Mexico*

Common understanding among Maya archaeologists has been that the Maya did not know or use water pressure systems. Recent findings at Palenque show otherwise.

Water pressure systems were previously thought to have entered the New World with the arrival of the Spanish. Yet, archaeological data, seasonal climate conditions, geomorphic setting and simple hydraulic theory clearly show that the Maya of Palenque in Chiapas, Mexico, had empirical knowledge of closed channel water pressure predating the arrival of Europeans (French and Duffy 2010:1027).

“The ancient Maya called this city ‘Lakamha’ or ‘Big Water’ because of its nine perennial waterways, 56 springs, and hundreds of meters of cascades,” said researcher Kirk French.... One peculiar finding at Palenque was a buried, spring-fed conduit some 216 feet long.... The rectangular conduit was located on a steep slope and abruptly narrowed at its end.... The researchers calculated the resulting water pressure could drive a fountain shooting water roughly 20 feet high... (Choi 2009).

The sophistication of the water management features is evidenced by the fact that the majority of them are still intact and functioning after more than 1200 rainy seasons (French 2002:74).

### Cerros — *Belize*

#### Edzna — *Campeche, Mexico*

Large-scale hydraulic works near some centers remain to be fully explored and understood. A canal system around the Late Preclassic [400 B.C.-A.D. 300] center of Cerros delimited its sacred epicenter, provided water control for a small raised-field system, and may have facilitated the defensibility of the site’s palaces and temples.... Such multiple functions have also been posited for a much more massive water system at the northern Maya center of Edzna in Campeche.... There, enormous canals radiate out from its Late Preclassic- and Classic-period center, providing water storage, a transport system, water for fields, a defensive system, or even possibly artificial lagoons for fishing or fish farming... (Demarest 2004:141).

If the canals and reservoirs of Edzna were cleaned occasionally (as they appear to have been) the resultant muck could have been an important addition to surrounding agricultural systems.

Therefore soil transport may have been common on terrace constructions of ancient Maya populations (Hansen et al. 2002:283).

### Kaminaljuyu — *Guatemala City*

Kaminaljuyu, now mostly built over by Guatemala City, developed next to what is called Lake Miraflores. The management of the lake water included irrigation canals and resulted “in considerable growth in the population around 600-400 B.C.” (Valdés 2006:70).

The Miraflores Canal was abandoned at the beginning of the Verbena phase (400-200 BC), becoming an enormous trench that was then used as a trash pit. A new network of canals was planned or built at this time, and of these the San Jorge Canal was the largest (Valdés 2006:72, 74).

Recent salvage projects in the western suburbs of Guatemala City have discovered a complex irrigation system . . . with large clay-lined canals that fed gardens for intensive cultivation.... These hydraulic works could have made this highland center a breadbasket of food production and export throughout, and perhaps even beyond, the Valley of Guatemala (Demarest 2004:75-76).



Lyle Smith

The entrance to the Museo Miraflores in Guatemala City exhibits a replica of the irrigation canals found in Kaminaljuyu, one possibly dating as early as 600 B.C. The museum features artifacts and information about Kaminaljuyu.

### El Mirador — *Peten, Northern Guatemala*

The largest Maya city ever found by archaeologists is El Mirador. It is surrounded by the neighboring cities of Nakbe, Wakna, Naachtun, and Tintal, all in what is called the El Mirador Basin. *Their history and water management differs from the others discussed in this article.*

All the cities in the Basin began about 600 to 500 B.C. and later collapsed in the first and second centuries A.D.

*Cont. on Page 4*

Courtesy of Don Forsyth



This reservoir at El Mirador still holds water after 2,000 years and provided water for the archaeological team excavating there.

### Water (Cont. from Page 3)

This is also the case for a few other Maya cities such as Kaminaljuyu in the Maya highlands and Cerros in Belize. These cities reached their highest development in the last century B.C. and the first century A.D., during the years covered in The Book of Mormon. Therefore these early cities during Nephite times are of special interest to us. (Many other Maya cities, such as Tikal, Calakmul, Yaxha, Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, Copan, and Palenque, experienced their apogee in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D.) How could that largest Maya city be so early? What did water have to do with it?

Three years ago, excavations at El Mirador revealed finely carved and modeled lime plaster panels flanking a series of pools of a unique water control system that included the capture of rainwater from surrounding massive architecture. “The panels and water collection tanks date to the Late Preclassic period, from 300 B.C. to about the time of Christ” (Idaho State University 2009; see also “glyph clips” on p. 7, March/April 2009 issue of *glyph notes*). The people of the El Mirador Basin also successfully managed the area’s *civales*, or wet marshlands, resulting in intensive agriculture able to sustain large populations.

The newest research shows “that the primary attraction for large-scale demographic densities in the Mirador Basin was the result of humid, perennially wet marshlands that provided numerous resources of strategic importance for the major urban centers of the northern Peten” (Hansen et al. 2002:278).

The predominance of such massive importations of dark mud indicates that the ancient Maya practiced an intensive form of agriculture capable of supporting large sedentary populations.... As long as the marsh environment was available, fields could be rejuvenated with a simple addition of more nutrient-laden mud, thus perpetuating indefinitely the agricultural production of the

major centers in the Preclassic periods... (Hansen et al. 2002:287).

The evidence for intensive agriculture, sustained and expanding growth, and large-scale development during the Preclassic period is evident from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives in the Mirador Basin.... What were the factors that led to the demise and ultimate collapse of the social, political, and economic systems that had maintained the society?... Investigations have identified data suggesting that massive sedimentation of wetland marshes occurred at the close of the Late Preclassic period (ca. A.D. 150)... (Hansen et al. 2002:287).

At the time of the great destruction in A.D. 34 many people and cities were destroyed. The El Mirador Basin was one of those areas. I’d like to suggest that the cause of the “massive sedimentation of wetland marshes [that] occurred at the close of the Late Preclassic” came as a result of fewer people or not enough workers to maintain the wetland marshes. In the next 25 to 50 years, because the fields were not maintained, the clay from the local surrounding hills washed down and covered the *civales* turning them from being productive farmland into *bajos*, swamplands which are wet during the rainy season, flood about two months out of the year, and when dry, the dirt is hard, baked, and almost impossible to use for growing crops. About 70 percent of the land in the El Mirador Basin is now made up of these almost totally unproductive *bajos* instead of the *civales*. El Mirador may have died through lack of agricultural support and decimated population.

Archaeologists also suggest that this period, the first and second centuries A.D., could have been a period of dryer weather. This would have further exacerbated the destruction of these cities in the El Mirador Basin.

### Summary

My purpose in writing this article is to share archaeological evidence of complex water management in the Maya area during and after the end of The Book of Mormon. The evidence supports the growth and decline of population noted in The Book of Mormon and the capability of its inhabitants. Yet, I feel the need to point out that although all the above observations and quotes from current archaeology state unequivocally that the Maya developed sophisticated water management systems, the scholars inevitably refer to the people as “stone age” (Lucero et al. 2011:482; Scarborough et al. 2012:12413). They do this because, *according to them*, the Maya did not use metal tools until the eighth or ninth centuries A.D. The Book of Mormon, though, clearly states the people had metal tools and weapons of war much earlier.

It’s not my purpose to debate the metal issue here but to point out that labeling people as “stone age” conveys the image of a cave man with a stone club in his hand. While the Maya did use stone tools of jade, which is almost as hard as iron, and obsidian, the people described in this



article are a far cry from “stone age.” The many quotes like “complex system of water management – hydraulic system was cleverly tailored to the biophysical conditions – built sophisticated reservoir systems – use of sand filtration to cleanse water – the Maya of Palenque had empirical knowledge of closed channel water pressure – large scale hydraulic works – complex irrigation system...for intensive cultivation – evidence for intensive agriculture” suggest otherwise. People in The Book of Mormon were never “stone age” as is commonly identified. They were well-educated and industrious with large cities and a high overall population because of ingenious management of water and agriculture.

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# GLYPH *Quotes*

By Eric English


For, **for this intent** have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory, many hundred years before his coming, and not only we, ourselves, had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us.

And **for this intent**, we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for their cause, it is sanctified unto us, for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness, to be obedient unto the commands of God, in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his only begotten Son.

Jacob twice uses a very curious figure of speech that only appears a few other times in The Book of Mormon. That phrase is “for this intent.” In its context, Jacob is writing to his descendants and also to the descendants of his brethren the Lamanites. He is describing to that audience why he put such effort into engraving on metal plates: so that he could persuade them that his generation knew of Christ and believed in Him, and that that was what grounded their hope and their reasons for keeping the Law of Moses. He is answering the age-old question

found behind every action taken—the question of why, the explanation of motive, or in Jacob’s specific words, the intent behind what he was doing.

Each of us, as Latter Day Saints, are engaged in the work of kingdom-building as well. We want our families and children to understand the hope that is in us. It is incredibly important that we examine and understand our intent behind our actions like Jacob did. We may be doing many good things but be doing them for all the wrong reasons. Christ made it clear that we could do all the good deeds that we want but in the end find that we don’t really know him (Matthew 7:32-33). This implies that our motives for our actions are as important, if not more important, than the actual deeds that we do.

If we are doing good deeds because we like the attention from others that it brings or because we feel guilty if we say no or because we seek approval from others or because it makes us feel better about ourselves, or because or because or because, then we have missed the mark. Christ tells us in 1 John 3 that “hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” His message is clear. Our actions should be driven by our love for Him and our love for our fellow man and for no other reason. 

*For this intent* —Jacob 3:4, 6

# Glyph Dwellers

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

## The Adventures of Beezrom

by Mindy Mulheron

Illustrations by Aaron Presler

In fact, they love telling people about Jesus so much that they've decided to continue to travel around the country for as long as they can.

At first, King Mosiah was a little worried about his son's travels, but he also knew that God was using his sons to do a great work. Because he was getting older and needed one of his sons to take over as king, Mosiah and Alma talked with each other and asked the Lord what they should do. So they decided to set judges in place to rule after Mosiah was gone. These judges were carefully chosen, because they needed to be really great, righteous people to rule fairly.

During the process of selecting judges, some of the people in the land began to doubt Alma and the Lord. (Isn't it sad that we sometimes doubt God?!) These people began to think that they could do what they wanted—not what God wanted or what was best for everyone. A man named Amlici was one of those people. He decided to gather others like him together and try to change the laws and ways of the land. Amlici's actions stirred up hatred in the hearts of the people, and they became so angry that they began to war against the people of Mosiah!

This was a really dark and upsetting time. Thousands of people died and many things were destroyed. It was a time of great sadness. After what seemed like a really long time, the war finally ended. You know what, though? God is good—even when things seem really awful. There we were—trying to figure out how to move forward after all that destruction when God reached down and poured out His spirit upon the people. There was a revival, and hearts were turned back towards Him. Many were baptized, the church began to grow again, and the people lived in peace once more.

Alma traveled the land, sharing his experiences and calling people to repentance. The Lord was with him and blessed him mightily. Even if there were those who didn't like what Alma had to say, or maybe even



Hi guys! The last time I told you all about Alma the Younger and his friends, the sons of King Mosiah, as we traveled together. These guys are really awesome, and they've been all over—working hard on behalf of Jesus and ministering to the people.

wanted to hurt him. God protected Alma and provided a way to reach those people and bring them back to God. One time, an evil man even put Alma and his friend Amulek in jail—and guess what? After they put them in jail, God gave Alma the power to break down the walls and walk out! Isn't that cool?! It was amazing. I loved traveling with Alma during this time. I saw so many awesome things and received so many testimonies of God's goodness.

Sometimes life gets really hard, and bad things happen, but that doesn't mean that God isn't around and doesn't know what's going on with you. When things aren't going well, remember the stories I just told you. Even if you feel like you're locked in a jail, God's there with you. He's waiting for you to trust Him. He wants to set you free. ☺

Well, it looks like we're getting ready to head out again! I can't wait to see what God will do next! Take care and I'll talk with you again soon. ☺

And remember, God loves you—a lot. He's there with you wherever you are. If you're in a great place, praise Him. If you're in a not-so-great place, still praise Him, trust Him, and be patient. He will set you free. I promise. ☺

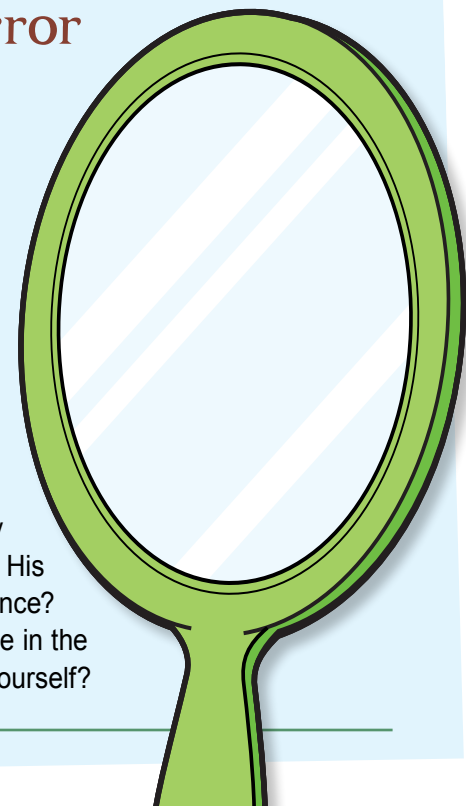
*Scriptural reference: Mosiah 12-13, Alma 1-11*

## Mirror, Mirror

by Beezrom

### Activity Directions:

Alma told the people that they needed to receive His image in their countenances (Alma 3:28). That means that they needed to live in such a way that other people would see Jesus when they looked at them. What do you hope that others see when they look at you? Do you have His image in YOUR countenance? What would you like to see in the mirror when you look at yourself?





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## The Book of Mormon: Whispering Hope

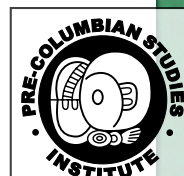
By Patricia J. Beebe, Editorial Committee

Recently the lyrics of the song *Whispering Hope* (Septimus Winner, 1868) kept running through my mind. I enjoyed singing the song in my youth. Remembering the words brought me comfort and joy after 2012, a tumultuous year for our family. The opening lines begin, "Soft as the voice of an angel, Breathing a lesson unheard, Hope with a gentle persuasion Whispers her comforting word...." The song could serve well as a theme song for The Book of Mormon. The book's beautiful message and powerful promises are whispering hope to the world. The refrain goes,

*Whispering hope, oh, how welcome thy voice,  
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.*

You, the supporter and contributor, have helped Pre-Columbian Studies Institute (PSI) through its newsletter *glyph notes* "whisper hope" to thousands through its testimonies and evidences from archaeology and linguistics attesting to the authenticity of The Book of Mormon and its relevance for our day. Without you we could not have done so. We are asking for your continued help.

If you have not already done so, won't you please take a moment to update your subscription to the newsletter now? A self-addressed envelope is provided in this issue for your convenience. Again, we thank each and every one of you who have been faithful supporters of The Book of Mormon research over the years. May we find 2013 the year that the promises in The Book of Mormon to a future generation come to fruition, and we can be part of a new beginning. 



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