

glyph *notes*



The findings of this first phase of Pacunam's LiDAR Initiative appear to confirm, in a marvelous way, information found in The Book of Mormon.

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New Astounding Discoveries Verify Information in The Book of Mormon

By Sherrie Kline Smith and Lyle Smith

In the early days of February 2018, the media exploded with startling news about discoveries hidden beneath the thick rainforest canopy in northern Guatemala.

According to archaeologist Stephen Houston, the results were “breath-taking” and “one of the greatest advances in over 150 years of Maya archaeology” (BBC News). Other Maya scholars say the new data is a game-changer; it’s beyond stupendous; this is really big news; the discipline [Maya archaeology] is turned on its head; it’s revolutionizing Maya archaeology.

In a nutshell, the “breath-taking” results include the discovery of over 60,000 new structures as well as other aspects about the ancient Maya, including a much higher population than previously estimated, vast agricultural acres with industrialized water management systems, raised roads and causeways interconnecting virtually all the Maya cities, and massive defensive fortifications and interconnected watchtowers indicating large-scale warfare throughout the area. Much of the ideas mentioned here were already known among archaeologists, but a new aerial

survey revealed **the scale to be three or four times larger than before.**

Aerial Surveying and Mapping with LiDAR

How were these discoveries made? By LiDAR, Light Detection and Ranging, a combination of light and radar. Aircraft, equipped with a LiDAR scanner that uses lasers linked to a GPS system, flies over the rainforest to carry out the mapping. The results provide a 3D image with a detailed survey of what lies beneath the jungle canopy.

Cont. on Page 2



Don Beebe

Sitting on top of a massive man-made platform, Tikal's Temple IV rises another 212 ft., making it the tallest structure of any ancient civilization in the Americas.

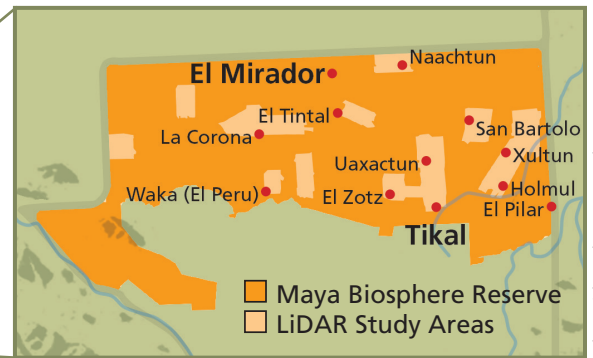
Astounding Discoveries (Cont. from Page 1)

The first part of the Pacunam LiDAR Initiative consisted of about 810 sq. miles of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in northern Guatemala, part of a larger area known archaeologically as the Maya Lowlands. The Pacunam Foundation is a Guatemalan nonprofit that fosters scientific research, sustainable development, and cultural heritage preservation. The National Center for Airborne Laser Mapping, based at the University of Houston, did the survey.

Archaeologist Francisco Estrada-Belli, a co-director of the Initiative, told CBS News that LiDAR is revolutionizing archaeology the way the Hubble Space Telescope revolutionized astronomy with its discovery of thousands of unknown galaxies. “Part of the jungle we thought was empty is full of cities and small towns and amazing things that we didn’t suspect were there” (CBS News).

For years Maya archaeologists have hacked their way through the dense rainforest jungle to locate ruins. Thomas Garrison, co-director of the project, said his team took eight years to map less than a square mile at El Zotz. “The plane using LiDAR took data for 67 square miles in a matter of hours” (NPR).

This first phase mapped only a tenth of the projected 5,000 square miles (National Geographic).



Lyle Smith and Aaron Presler

The ten targeted areas of phase one included the sites of Tikal, Uaxactun, Naachtun, Holmul, Xultun, San Bartolo, El Peru-Waka, El Tintal, El Zotz, and La Corona. This survey occurred in 2016, but it took months of computer modeling to put together the data and get results.

The Initiative is one of the largest-scale archaeological LiDAR surveys to date, but not the first in the Maya region. Husband and wife team Arlen and Diane Chase pioneered the LiDAR technique in Belize in 2009 and 2010. About the same time, archaeologist Anabel Ford used LiDAR at El Pilar, a site that straddles the Belize and Guatemala border and is adjacent to one of the areas just surveyed (*Popular Archaeology*). Richard Hansen, director of the Mirador Basin Project, and his colleagues also mapped around 500 square miles in the Mirador Basin with the cities of El Mirador and Calakmul (in Mexico). They plan to continue surveying there in March 2018. (*ARS Technica*)

Since a mountain of evidences exists that indicates the ancient Maya were the Nephite/

This structure at Tikal, surrounded by dense rainforest, is the Great Pyramid located in what is called the Lost World Complex. The Great Pyramid is one of very few structures throughout the Maya area that its last renovation, dating to 100 B.C. to A.D. 250, was never altered. Many, many buildings in the Maya area, including those at Tikal, have been either built over and over with new versions or built new after A.D. 420. The LiDAR illustration to the right on page 3 shows how the dense rainforest jungle was stripped away to reveal things not seen by the naked eye.

Don Beebe

Lamanite/Mulekite people, these exciting discoveries add to that large body of evidences.

Population

Around A.D. 320, Mormon relates that when he was 11 years old, his father “carried” him from the Land Northward to the Land of Zarahemla, which was in the Land Southward; which we believe, on the basis of considerable evidence, was in the area now called the Maya Lowlands. At that time, “the whole face of the land [was] **covered with buildings**, and the **people** were as **numerous** almost, as . . . the **sand of the sea**” (Mormon 1:7). Almost four hundred years earlier, ca. 120-100 B.C., it was recorded that

the people began to be very numerous . . . 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 11:156-157 [LDS 27:6]).

The results of the recent survey leave no doubt about the truth of these statements.

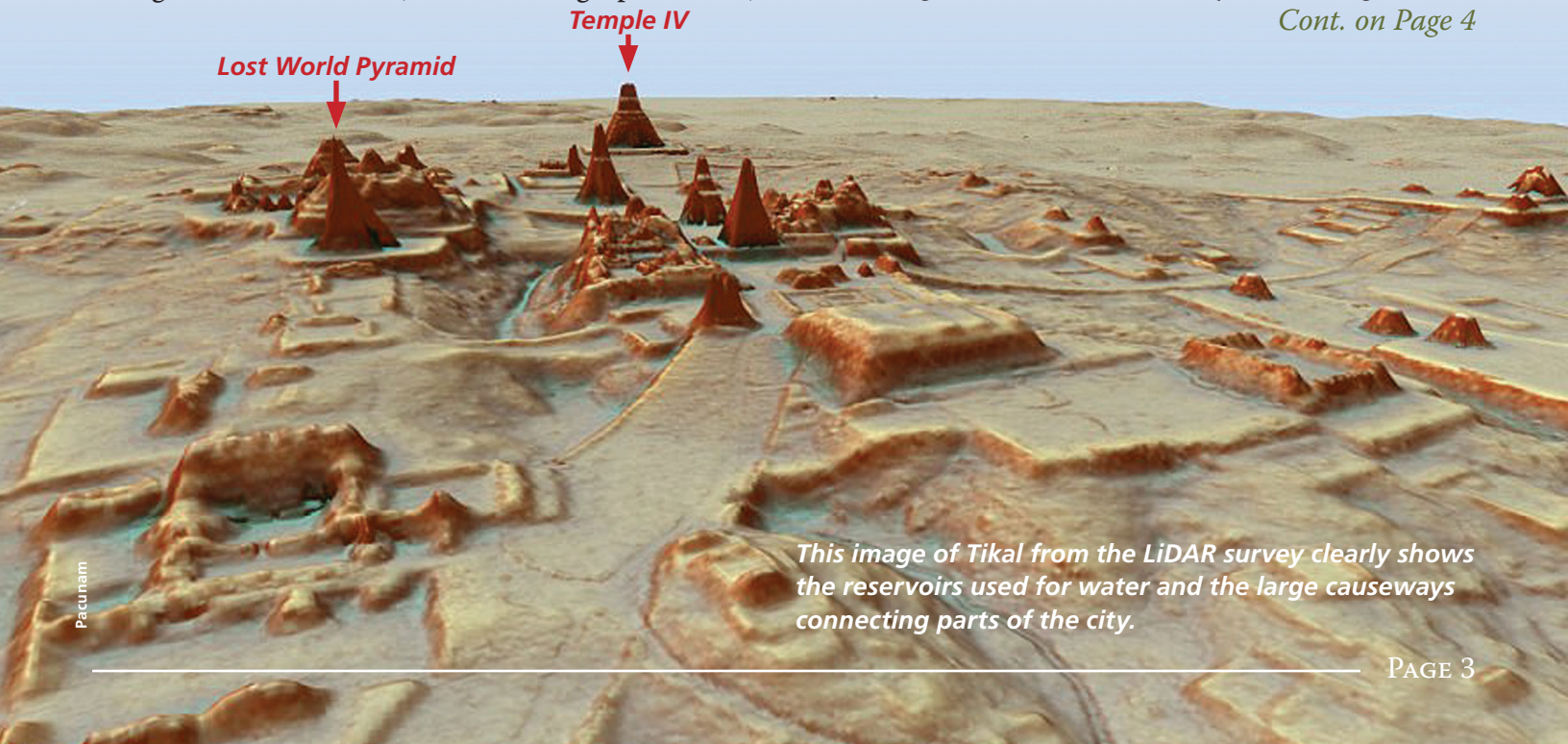
The LiDAR study revealed more than 60,000 previously unknown man-made structures, including pyramids, palaces, houses, stone quarries, fortresses with towers, and raised causeways that were part of a vast network of cities. “The LiDAR images make it clear that this entire region was a settlement system whose **scale and population density had been grossly underestimated**” (National Geographic News). Estrada-Belli observed, “With the new data it’s no longer unreasonable to think that there were 10 to 15 million people there, including many living in low-lying, swampy areas that many of us had thought uninhabitable” (National Geographic News).



Mapping Tikal took four years, 1957-1960. The resulting map, part shown here, has been the definitive map since then. Structures, reservoirs, and causeways are clearly noted. Temple IV (pictured on p.1 in this issue) is on the far left.

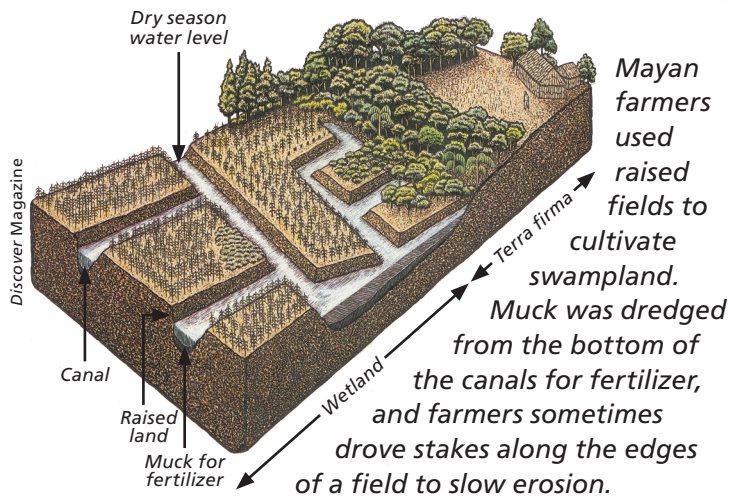
Fifteen years earlier, in 2003, archaeologist Patrick Culbert wrote “by ca. A.D. 500, Maya population had reached a density of 600 people per square mile across a 36,000-square mile area [approximately **20 million people**] in the forested lowlands of northern Guatemala and adjacent parts of Mexico and Belize. *This is a staggering figure, comparable to the most heavily populated parts of rural China*” (Culbert 2003:6; emphasis added). Culbert’s numbers were an estimate based on ground surveys and didn’t appear to be widely accepted by archaeologists. The LiDAR survey, however, gives

Cont. on Page 4



This image of Tikal from the LiDAR survey clearly shows the reservoirs used for water and the large causeways connecting parts of the city.

Pacunam



Astounding Discoveries (Cont. from Page 3)

evidence that his estimate was accurate.

The ancient city of Tikal, a major tourist attraction in the Guatemala Peten, is one of the most studied Maya sites. Controlled excavations began in the 1950s and since then, many structures have been uncovered and restored, including six, very tall pyramids. Almost from the beginning Tikal has been known as one of the larger Maya settlements. So archaeologists were not expecting anything new. Much to their astonishment what was always believed to be simply a hill in the center of the excavated area was in reality a 100-ft. pyramid! Furthermore, Tikal is three or four times larger than previously thought (NPR). What was believed to be the “city” of Tikal was “just a fraction of an immense hidden metropolis” (*Daily Mail*). Prior population estimates of Tikal had been around 60,000; now, possibly a quarter of a million.

Agriculture and Water Management

During a short period around 29-25 B.C., the Nephites and Lamanites enjoyed a time of peace.

They did **raise grain in abundance**, both in the north [Maya Lowlands] and in the south [Maya Highlands]. And they did **flourish exceedingly**, both in the north and in the south. And they **did multiply** and wax exceeding strong in the land. And they did **raise many flocks and herds, yea, many fatlings** (Helaman 2:131-132 [LDS 6:12]).

About 100 years earlier, King Mosiah noted that he had his people till the earth and he, himself, the king(!) tilled the earth so he would not become a burden to his people (Mosiah 4:9-10 [LDS 6:7]). Zeniff’s record relates,

And we began to till the ground, yea, even with

all manner of seeds, with seeds of **corn**, and of **wheat**, and of **barley**, and with **neas**, and with **sheum**, and with seeds of **all manner of fruits**; and we did **begin to multiply** and prosper in the land (Mosiah 6:12; see also verse 31 [LDS 9:9, 10:4]).

They raised **flocks** and had **corn fields** (Mosiah 6:17 [LDS 9:14]). Nephi in 23 B.C. had a **garden** (Helaman 3:10 [LDS 7:10]) and most likely so did many others.

Large populations need food and water. Earlier, archaeologists believed that the ancient Maya subsisted on a slash and burn farming method, a method that doesn’t support high population. A number of years ago, archaeologists began to know that the Maya had agricultural fields. “But [Garrison] says this data shows **huge, huge expanses** of these **irrigated field systems** in these low lying swamps” (NPR). The LiDAR survey showed that the swampy valleys around the ancient city of Holmul had **thousands of acres** of grid-like canal systems outlining raised blocks of land (*ARS Technica*). National Geographic News put it this way:

Complex irrigation and terracing systems supported intensive agriculture capable of feeding masses of workers who dramatically reshaped the landscape.... In a part of the world where there is usually too much or too little precipitation, the flow of water was meticulously planned and controlled via canals, dikes, and reservoirs.

Roads and Causeways and Trade

We find in The Book of Mormon mention of roads and merchants ca. A.D. 25-29. Nephi wrote that

there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired, and there were **many highways** cast up, and **many roads** made, which **led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place**.... There were **many merchants** in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers (3 Nephi 3:8; 12 [LDS 6:7, 11]).

And remember—Nephi’s garden, mentioned above, “was by the **highway** which led to the **chief market**” and it had a **tower** in the garden near “the garden gate which led by the highway” (Helaman 3:10-11 [LDS 7:10]). Jacey Fortin, in a *New York Times* article, describes the Maya roads system as if she were writing about the roads and markets in The Book of Mormon! “Among the structures uncovered were roads, built wide and raised high above the

Sherrie Kline Smith



What looks like simply a pile of stones in the Usumacinta River near the landing for the ancient ruin Yaxchilan is in reality the remains of one of the piers for a suspension bridge. The one at Yaxchilan was an engineering marvel. A rendering of the bridge can be seen on O’Kon’s website under the Maya Technology link and then Maya Bridges. theoldexplorer.com

wetlands to connect fields to farmers and markets to metropolises.”

In the last issue of *glyph notes*, Lyle Smith reported about investigative research on Maya roads by James O’Kon*, an “engineer with a life-long passion for the Maya civilization.” O’Kon’s conclusion was that the roads crisscrossed the whole Maya area (Smith 2017:3-4). Curiously, while working on that article and searching other Maya archaeology sources, nowhere did we find acknowledgement of such a bold claim that the roads connected the whole Maya area.

Archaeologists have long known about roads, called *sacbe* (white road), in the Maya area, but only for a few selected sites. The new LiDAR study confirms O’Kon’s research that the roads **crisscrossed the whole Maya area**. Archaeologists were surprised by the complex network of causeways **linking all the Maya cities in the area** (BBC News). The raised highways, allowing easy passage even during rainy seasons, were wide enough to suggest they were heavily trafficked and used for trade.

Defensive Fortifications and Warfare

Warfare was almost constant in The Book of Mormon, from the beginning of their settling in the land of promise until the sad end of the Nephites in A.D. 420. The wars continued, however, for years

**We appreciate brothers Eric and Terry Scott for making us aware of O’Kon’s book. See Further Reading with the References.*

after the close of The Book of Mormon as prophesied by Nephi (1 Nephi 3:130-132 [LDS 12:20-21]) and verified by the archaeological record in the Maya area.

Around 73 B.C., Captain Moroni raised his title of liberty upon every **tower** and had **forts of security** built with high banks “thrown up” surrounded by a **deep ditch (moats)** for every city (Alma 21:71, 164, 170 [LDS 46:36; 49:13, 18]). **Heaps of earth** were piled high around all the cities with tall pickets on top and **towers** (Alma 22:1-4 [LDS 50:1-4]). See also Alma 24:6-7 [LDS 52:6].

After the peaceful and prosperous period following Christ’s visit, war began again, which became the downfall of the Nephites. Mormon writes to Moroni about the **tower** of Sherrizah (Moroni 9:8 [LDS 9:7]), and Moroni sadly states that “the Lamanites are **at war one with another**; and the whole face of this land is one continual round of murder and bloodshed; and no one **knoweth the end of the war**” (Mormon 4:10 [LDS 8:8]).

What about the Maya? Archaeologists knew of warfare among the Maya because defensive walls had been discovered at several sites (as well as from inscriptions and ceramics with scenes of warfare). “But this new information reveals ‘Maya **fortresses and systems of interconnected watchtowers,**’ raising the possibility of more sophisticated and large-scale warfare” (NPR). Garrison noted that “warfare wasn’t only happening toward the end of the civilization [ca. A.D. 800-900]; it was **large-scale and systematic, and it endured over many years**” (National Geographic).

There were not only defensive walls, but **ram-parts** and **moats** (or deep ditches). Archaeologists “were struck by the ‘incredible defensive features,’ which included walls, fortresses and moats” (BBC News). At El Zotz, archaeologists have worked years mapping the landscape, but the LiDAR revealed miles of a **fortification wall and moat** that had never been noticed before. Garrison remarked, “Maybe, eventually, we would have gotten to this hilltop where this fortress is, but I was within about 150 feet of it in 2010 and didn’t see anything” (BBC News). He also observed that the Maya were channeling water for hundreds of meters or modifying hilltops so they become these impregnable areas (NPR).

Summary

The following quotes indicate the magnitude of the results of the 810 sq. miles surveyed by LiDAR which comprises only a small portion of the total Maya area.

Cont. on Page 6

Astounding Discoveries (Cont. from Page 5)

“The lidar [*sic*] completely changes the way we see the Maya. For the first time I have seen unsuspected fortresses, entire cities, settlements that are now doubled or tripled in size” (Houston, Channel 4).

“The idea of seeing a continuous landscape, but understanding everything is connected [by roads] across many square miles is amazing. We can expect many further surprises” (Houston, BBC News).

“The fortified structures and large causeways reveal modifications to the natural landscape made by the Maya on a previously unimaginable scale” (Estrada-Belli, *Daily Mail*).

“The findings have been astounding archaeologists, and are putting the Maya on the very top table of ancient civilisations [*sic*], not only in the Americas, but the world, alongside China and Egypt. New research suggests that the Maya not only created spectacular cities, but managed and manipulated their landscape on an almost industrial scale to supply food and water for urban populations far bigger than anyone had ever imagined” (*Daily Mail*).

“We’ll need 100 years to go through all [the data] and really understand what we’re seeing” (Estrada-Belli, BBC News).

Conclusion

There is no doubt that LiDAR has revolutionized archaeological exploration by seeing deep below the forest canopy that archaeologists confront on the ground. LiDAR mapping takes a fraction of the time that ground surveying or exploration take. To determine timeframes, or dates of the constructions, actual on-the-ground excavations are still needed. This requires more time.

The findings of this first phase of Pacunam’s LiDAR Initiative appear to confirm, in a marvelous way, information found in The Book of Mormon. Nowhere else in the Americas is there so much precise evidence that matches requirements of The Book of Mormon. As Shirley Heater explained:

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 (Heater 2012:7).

These discoveries also help us to flesh out the bare bones of the temporal aspects of the account, the culture, economy, and much more—and the people of The Book of Mormon become real people, living in a real society, interacting and doing all the things a sophisticated society would do with **population as the “sand of the sea,” intensive agriculture, and an extensive system of roads** “leading from city to city, land to land, and place to place.”

What more lies hidden in the jungle?

Annotated List of News Sources

ARS Technica (blog)

Smith, Kiona N. Fortresses, Farmlands of the Maya Emerge from Massive LiDAR Survey. February 1, 2018. tinyurl.com/y7z4zscw

Recommend this article for a less sensational tone.

BBC News

Sprawling Maya Network Discovered under Guatemala Jungle. February 2, 2018. tinyurl.com/ybrw8ap6

Book of Mormon Resources (blog)

Magleby, Kirk. LiDAR. February 2, 2018. tinyurl.com/ycqkvlub

Provides correlations to The Book of Mormon of the new LiDAR survey. It has links to some of the articles in this list, making them quicker to access.

CBS News

Archaeologists Uncover Massive Network of Mayan Ruins with Laser Technology. February 5, 2018. tinyurl.com/y923yybs

Channel 4

Lost Cities of the Maya: Revealed. February 11, 2018, and was available online until March 12. tinyurl.com/ydbf7nd5

Daily Mail [London]

Weston, Phoebe. Maya ‘Megalopolis’ Featuring Thousands of Ancient Pyramids, Palaces and Causeways Is Found Hidden under Thick Jungle Foliage in Guatemala. February 2, 2018. tinyurl.com/y8me7ma4

The webpage has outstanding photographs as well as a short video. The explanation of LiDAR is clear and understandable.

Motherboard

Ferreira, Becky. The Ruins of a Massive Ancient City Have Been Discovered in Guatemala. February 2, 2018. tinyurl.com/yawd4n5x

National Geographic

Lost Treasures of the Maya Snake Kingdom, documentary. February 10, 2018. tinyurl.com/yak2fl2h

National Geographic News

Clynes, Tom. Exclusive: Laser Scans Reveal Maya ‘Megalopolis’ below Guatemalan Jungle. February 1, 2018. tinyurl.com/ycp82mnr

National Public Radio (NPR)

Kennedy, Merrit. ‘Game Changer’: Maya Cities Unearthed in Guatemala Forest Using Lasers. “All Things Considered.” February 2, 2018. tinyurl.com/y7jfpekj

New York Times

Fortin, Jacey. Lasers Reveal a Maya Civilization So Dense It Blew Experts' Minds. February 3, 2018.

tinyurl.com/yagffo9u

Popular Archaeology

Ford, Anabel. Seeing Through the Canopy. August 21, 2013. tinyurl.com/yaltab42

This article has a good explanation of the LiDAR process.

tDAR (The Digital Archaeological Record)

LiDAR in the Maya Heartland: Results of the 2016 LiDAR Survey in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve (Part of the Society of American Archaeology (SAA) 82nd Annual Meeting, Vancouver, BC, 2017). tinyurl.com/ycce9dgb

Provides an abstract of the LiDAR project and abstracts of eight papers presented by archaeologists at the SAA meeting about the LiDAR study done in 2016. To read the full abstracts, one must sign up for this free resource.

Washington Post

Wootson, Cleve R., Jr. Maya Civilization Was Much Vaster than Known: Thousands Of Newly Discovered Structures. February 3, 2018. tinyurl.com/y96p6hl3

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2003 The New Maya. In *Secrets of the Maya: From the Editors of Archaeology Magazine*, ed. by Peter A. Young, pp. 5-9. Hatherleigh Press, New York.

Heater, Shirley R.

2012 A Response to the Heartland Book of Mormon Geography Theory. *glyph notes* vol. 19 (2):1-8.

O'Kon, James A.

2012 *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology*. The Career Press, Pompton Plains, New Jersey.

Smith, Lyle L.

2017 Where Did the People of The Book of Mormon Live? Archaeological and Linguistic Evidences Provide a Key. *glyph notes* vol. 24 (4):1-7.

Further Reading

Many articles in past issues of *glyph notes* address the topics and some of the ancient cities mentioned in this article. All references below are from *glyph notes*.

LiDAR was first incorporated into research of Mesoamerican ruins in May 2010 at the sites of El Tajin in Mexico and Caracol in Belize.

"glyph clips." (May/June 2010:11-12 and Jul/Aug 2010:7).

Population

Smith, Lyle L. Sand of the Sea and Rising Suns (Mar/Apr 2009:1-3).

Water Management

Smith, Lyle L. Water, Without It Nothing Lives (May/June 2010:1-5).

"glyph clips." Palenque: Maya Engineered Water Pressure (Jul/Aug 2010:8).

Roads

Scott, Eric. The Wheel and Maya Innovation (Nov/Dec 2013:6, 8).

Scott, Terry. Maya Technology: The Maya Road System (Mar/Apr 2014:7-9).

Some of the Sites Mentioned**El Zotz**

New Tomb Discovered at El Zotz (Jul/Aug 2010:6).

Scott, Glenn. El Zotz (ca. A.D. 250)—Temple of the Night Sun (Jan/Feb 2013:1-2).

Smith, Sherrie Kline. More on El Zotz (Jan/Feb 2013:2-3).

La Corona

Smith, Sherrie Kline. Highlights from the Maya at the Playa Conference (Jan/Feb 2013:4).

Holmul and El Peru-Waka

Smith, Sherrie Kline. More Evidence for the Truth of The Book of Mormon (Mar/Apr 2014:1-4). 

About this Article

Ordinarily, we do not use general media sources for information supporting The Book of Mormon. Many times the media approaches things in a sensational manner and often misquote and misrepresent the situation. We prefer to use trusted sources. This article deviates from our practice because we wanted our readers to know about these amazing discoveries now instead of waiting for a busy archaeologist to write a journal article or book.

Another practice we are deviating from is the manner in which we list our references or sources. Since the majority of the references are news sources from February 2018, we thought that listing by news source, instead of by author, would make finding the correct source easier.

Archaeologists Quoted

- Patrick Culbert (1930-2013), Anthropologist, University of Arizona
- Francisco Estrada-Belli, Archaeologist, Tulane University
- Thomas Garrison, Archaeologist, Ithaca College
- Stephen Houston, Professor of Archaeology and Anthropology at Brown University

glyph quotes

By Eric English

Recently I learned from a friend that the word *condescension* is found only in The Book of Mormon. The Bible uses the word *condescend* once in Romans 12:16. It references our Christian duties to condescend to men of low estate, which misses the power of this concept entirely. The Book of Mormon, however, gives us incredible depth on this subject. In First Nephi chapter 3, an angel instructs Nephi regarding the interpretation of the dream that he had, and then the angel asks him the question, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?"

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines *condescension* as "voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims; relinquishment of strict right; submission to inferiors in granting requests or performing acts which strict justice does not require."

In order for us to have a clear understanding of the voluntary descent of our Creator, we need to first set the stage by recalling those events that got us to this state where divine intervention is needed. We must recall the twin pillars of creation and the fall. These two events give the Christian faith a bifocal explanation of the real world which we see and experience all around us. Os Guinness, in his book *Long Journey Home* writes,


Created directly out of nothing by God, the world was and remains good. But it's also fallen. The entry of moral disobedience has left the world marred and broken. Thus the biblical vision is characteristically bifocal. The world must always be understood simultaneously from the perspective of creation and the perspective of the fall. Sometimes we see what it might have been. Sometimes we see only what it has become by being marred (Guinness 2001:101).

Knowest thou the condescension of God?

~ 1 Nephi 3:56 [LDS 1:11-16]

From this perspective—seeing both the beauty of God's creation as well as the tragedy of the effects of sin, destruction, and death—we understand that the fall would have been a permanent separation from our Creator. This situation thus brought about the need to satisfy the just consequences of our sin through a miraculous event—the voluntary condescension of our God to descend down to our level and to perform an act of such unfathomable love that justice did not require.

The angel also teaches Nephi about the virgin birth of Jesus, his earthly ministry, and the establishment of the church through the training of the apostles. The same three major categories of events in Jesus' ministry revealed by the angel to Nephi are the same found in the New Testament: namely preaching, healing of the sick, and casting out devils. This alone is powerful instruction for us in our own lives as we consider that we are to follow his example. We are called to preach or share and persuade others with the truth. We are also called to cast out devils by helping to liberate souls around us from whatever is enslaving them. We are called to heal the sick by working to mend the broken relationships between men and their God and in human relationships between each other, not to mention working to mend the broken state of this world from the side effects of the fall. Finally, the angel builds to the pinnacle of all of history—the death and resurrection of Jesus. This allows for the substitutionary atonement of our sin and gives us a choice to return to God to be with him for all of eternity.

God still continues to condescend into our lives today. Do you "know the condescension of God?" 

Reference

Guinness, Os

2001 *Long Journey Home*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.



Salutations for 2018

By Patricia J. Beebe, Vice President
Pre-Columbian Studies Institute

The board of Pre-Columbian Studies Institute wishes our readership and supporters a prosperous and joyous new year. We give thanks for the opportunity to share with you, through its newsletter *glyph notes*, exciting, up-to-date findings obtained through research; findings that help bring a deeper understanding of truths found in The Book of Mormon.

In 1828 Webster defined truth as, "Conformity to

fact or reality; exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be." Doctrine and Covenants 90:4b has a similar definition: "and truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." Truth is founded on fact, which can be proven by evidence and is verifiable over time. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830; therefore, the world based their judgment of the book on Webster's definition. Many early proponents of The Book of Mormon grounded their faith in its truthfulness by placing their trust and confidence

in the testimonies of others. Criticism has been abundant and on-going. Even so, the book flourished.

Early research done in Central America by explorers John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood (*Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, 1841) provided credence for a book seemingly out of place in history. But, it was not until the 1980s that evidences obtained through the scientific communities of archaeology, epigraphy, and linguistics began to be published and made readily available to the public. These bodies of research have provided correlative links that more and more portions of narratives in the book do conform to reality and, therefore, can be verified. We, indeed, live in exciting times.

PSI continually strives to be on the forefront of new discoveries that could be useful to those who want to grow their faith through study, testimony, and witness of The Book of Mormon, a latter-day



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scripture given for this day and time. We rely on the promise, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure.... For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). Our supporters have never let us down. Thank you seems trite when looking back over the length of time that you, our supporters, have provided the means for sharing a growing wealth of knowledge that sheds deeper meaning to truths being revealed in these latter days.

Won't you please use the self-addressed envelope included with this issue to add a friend or family member to the mailing list, to invite PSI into your group for classes, to submit comments or suggestions, or to update your subscription? It is our hope that more responses from our readership, such as—I am always excited to get my *glyph notes*; I read it from cover to cover immediately; I wish it would come more often—will be forthcoming. 



Isaiah's Signature?

I By Sherrie Kline Smith
The latest Biblical Archaeological Review has an article entitled "Is This the Prophet Isaiah's Signature?"

In ongoing excavations at the Ophel ("fortified hill") at the southern end of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a seal impression (bullae) was discovered that may have belonged to the prophet Isaiah. This would be the first archaeological evidence for Isaiah.

There is no doubt that the name on the bullae is Isaiah, but the inscription below the name, which transliterates to *navy* (navi), is puzzling.

The standard formula for a "signature" seal or bullae is the person's name usually followed by "son of" and the father's name. Occasionally, when the seal is small, "son of" is absent. The Isaiah seal does not have "son

of" before *navy*, even though there is ample room for it. Several seals of other individuals do use "son of *navy*," indicating navi is a personal name. Or possibly it could be a place name, but no other seal—and hundreds are known—with a personal name followed by a place name has ever been found.

Adding the Hebrew letter *aleph* to navi creates "the prophet." So the bullae would read "belonging to Isaiah the prophet." A close examination of the seal showed the left side of the seal was damaged by a fingerprint which probably happened before the clay bullae dried. Therefore it is very possible that the *aleph* once was on the bullae, and that *navy* did read "the prophet." (Watch the video listed under websites with the references.)

The Isaiah bullae is not the only bullae found during the excavations in this particular area of the Ophel. One of these was the personal seal of King Hezekiah, which was found less than 10 feet away from Isaiah's seal. The Hezekiah bullae is the first one found in an archaeological excavation. Prior to this discovery, other seals of Hezekiah had come to light on the antiquities market. (See Figure 1.)



The Hebrew letter aleph

Cont. on Page 10

Isaiah's Signature? (Cont. from Page 9)

The author of the article, Eilat Mazar, director of the excavations of the Ophel for many years, examines in depth the pros and cons of the bulla being one of Isaiah's, the prophet. She concludes this way:

This seal impression of Isaiah, therefore, is unique, and questions still remain about what it actually says. However, the close relationship between Isaiah and King Hezekiah, as described in the Bible, and the fact the bulla was found next to one bearing the name of Hezekiah seem to leave open the possibility that, despite the difficulties presented by the bulla's damaged area, this may have been a seal impression of

Isaiah the prophet, adviser to King Hezekiah.

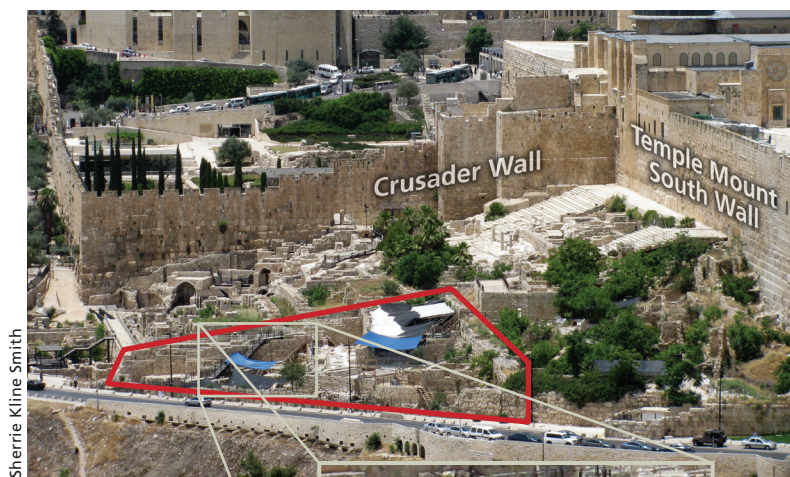
The discovery of the royal structures and finds from the time of King Hezekiah at the Ophel is a rare opportunity to reveal vividly this specific time in the history of Jerusalem. The finds lead us to an almost personal "encounter" with some of the key players who took part in the life of the Ophel's Royal Quarter, including King Hezekiah and, perhaps, also the prophet Isaiah (Mazar 2018:92).

Isaiah has been a key prophet for believers in the Restoration, primarily for his prophecies regarding Jesus Christ and the end times. We know that in The Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ himself tells the people, "Great are the words of Isaiah." He gave them a commandment to "search these things diligently..." (3 Nephi 10:27 [LDS 23:1]).

Nephi, Lehi's son, quoted Isaiah extensively. (Abinadi and Moroni also quoted from Isaiah.) Nephi wrote about teaching his brothers, and said, "But that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer, I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah" (1 Nephi 6:4 [LDS 19:23]).

The quotations from Isaiah in The Book of Mormon have provoked much criticism. In 1947 Sidney Sperry explains it this way; "The Book of Mormon quotes twenty-one entire chapters of Isaiah and parts of others. In the light of modern biblical criticism, these quotations raise problems that have a serious bearing on the integrity of the Nephite record as a whole" (Sperry 1995:129). (Sperry's original book, *Our Book of Mormon*, was first published in 1947. Chapter 14 of the book was an in-depth examination of the "Isaiah Problem.")

Quoting from the Old Testament was not unusual for New Testament writers or even later authors in the Old Testament quoting from prior biblical books. The quoted passages from Isaiah in



Sherrie Kline Smith

The Ophel is the whole area in front of the south wall of the Temple Mount and adjacent to the Crusader wall on the west. Circled in red is the area of the recent excavations; the smaller photo shows the specific area under the blue awning where the possible bulla of Isaiah and King Hezekiah's bulla were both found.



Figure 1. This particular bulla of King Hezekiah was not found in an archaeological excavation but on the antiquities market. The words are the same as the new one discovered in the Ophel, "Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah," but the designs are different. According to Eilat Mazar, director of the excavations of the Ophel, "The symbols on the seal impression from the Ophel suggest that they were made late in his life [Hezekiah's], when both the royal administrative authority and the king's personal symbols changed from the winged scarab [pictured here]—the symbol of power and rule that had been familiar throughout the ancient Near East, to that of the winged sun—a motif that proclaimed God's protection, which gave the regime its legitimacy and power, also widespread throughout the ancient Near East and used by the Assyrian kings" (Ngo 2018: tinyurl.com/yctej66y).



Glenn Scott

The Book of Mormon are no different.

The *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* provides a valuable nugget of information illuminating the biblical practice of quoting former scripture passages. This information—from a footnote for Romans 3:10-18, where the Apostle Paul quotes scripture from the Old Testament—applies also to The Book of Mormon.

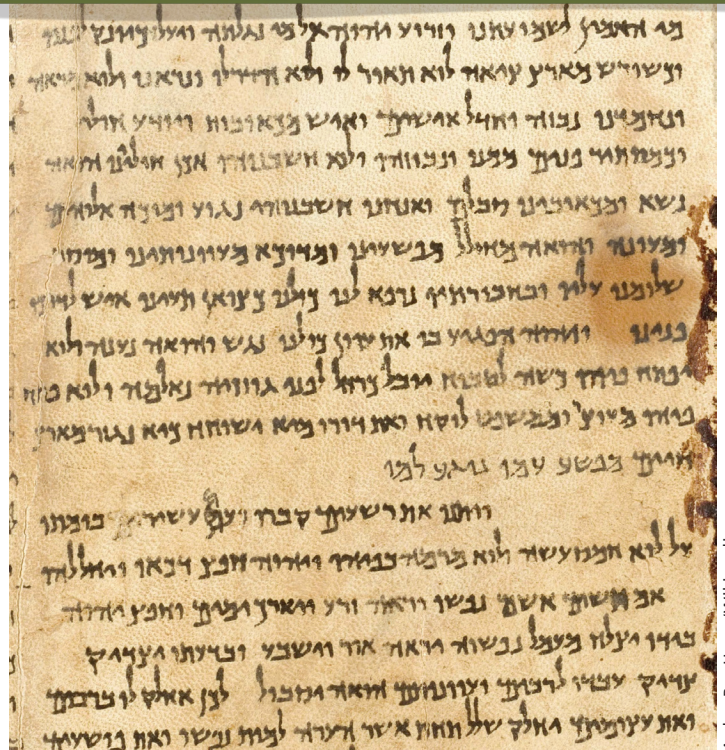
Several factors explain why Old Testament quotations are not always cited verbatim in the New Testament: New Testament quotations sometimes gave the general sense of the original and were not intended to be word-for-word citations.... Sometimes the New Testament writer, in order to drive home his point, would purposely enlarge, abbreviate or adapt an Old Testament passage or combine two or more passages” (2005:1839).

In our society, plagiarism or changing the words of another author is taboo. For ancient societies, not quoting scripture in biblical times exactly as it had been written was not a concern. So, we need not feel uncertain about why particular quotes in The Book of Mormon do not match exactly how it appears in the Bible. Furthermore, the prophets and authors of The Book of Mormon had access to the *original* Brass Plates, which those in the Old World did not have; they only had scribal copies of the text written on the Brass Plates, which may have had scribal errors.

Another aspect of controversy about the quoted passages from Isaiah in The Book of Mormon revolves around the belief by some modern scholars that the book of Isaiah was written by several different people over the course of 300-400 years, from around 740 to 400 B.C. (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible* 2005:1055); thus the difficulty with passages in The Book of Mormon quoted from those chapters supposedly written after the people of Lehi left Jerusalem.

It’s not my purpose to get into that debate, except to say that with the finding of the Great Isaiah Scroll among the Dead Sea Scrolls, much of the controversy about the authorship of Isaiah has been laid to rest.

Among the greatest treasures of the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran was the Great Isaiah Scroll.... Scholars recognized this scroll as the earliest-known complete copy of Isaiah (c. 125-150 B.C.), replacing a copy dating back to the tenth century A.D.! Well preserved for nearly 2,000 years . . . it is the oldest complete copy [all 66 chapters] discovered to date of any book of the Bible. In addition, the discovery of this text suggests that as far back as the second century



Ardon Bar-Hama/Wikimedia

Figure 2. A complete copy of Isaiah, written on leather skin and pieces held together by linen thread, along with six other scrolls were the first Dead Sea Scrolls discovered. Shown here is chapter 53 with its familiar verses about Christ, his ministry and suffering. Abinadi quotes all of chapter 53 from Isaiah when brought before the wicked King Noah and his priests (Mosiah 8:15-27 [LDS 14:1-12]). The entire Isaiah scroll can be seen on the Israel Museum’s website (dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah). Click anywhere on the scroll and a box pops up with the translation.

B.C. the text of Isaiah was viewed as **having only one author** (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible* 2005:1115; emphasis added).

A shepherd boy discovered the first seven Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 1 at Qumran. One of the seven was the Great Isaiah Scroll. The Isaiah scroll and two others of these original seven scrolls were sold to Hebrew University’s Professor Sukenik in November 1947. The sale occurred on the eve the United Nations passed a resolution creating a Jewish state (to take place in May 1948 when the British Mandate was scheduled to end). Hershel Shanks of the Biblical Archaeology Society observed that:

At the same time, literally within a 24-hour period, the state of Israel was created and Hebrew University acquired a scroll of the prophet Isaiah that was 1,000 years older than anything that had been known up to that time. It was almost messianic (Shanks 1991:6).

Cont. on Page 12

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Isaiah's Signature? (Cont. from Page 11)

The Great Isaiah Scroll is a second century B.C. copy of Isaiah's work. Isaiah's ministry was basically from 740-700 B.C., a hundred years before Lehi. The prophets and authors of The Book of Mormon had access to the *original* Isaiah that was on the Brass Plates.

If the bulla that was excavated south of the Temple Mount, among the ruins of buildings from the time of King Hezekiah and Isaiah, truly was Isaiah's, we have for the first time something from an archaeological excavation of the great prophet himself!

The discovery of the bulla, a seal that likely belonged to Isaiah, and the Great Isaiah Scroll, discovered in 1947 at the same time the Jewish state was created, seems to be reminding us to heed Christ's commandment to search Isaiah diligently!

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YouTube has a video with good photos and explanations of both Hezekiah's and Isaiah's bullae.

youtube.com/watch?v=_ZJNHeZEzxc

For information about the **bulla of King Hezekiah**, see "King Hezekiah in the Bible: Royal Seal of Hezekiah Comes to Light," written by Robin Ngo and posted February 21, 2018, on the Web. tinyurl.com/ycte66y

For one of the more **spectacular finds in the Ophel**, see "The Ophel Treasure," written by Noel Wiener and posted September 1, 2015, on the Biblical Archaeology website, with photos and a short video about a cache of gold objects dating to the time of Solomon. tinyurl.com/y76n2o2n 