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## Part 6: "Out of Obscurity"

Author(s): Warren P. Aston

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**Abstract:** When the final history of this dispensation is written, how the Book of Mormon began to emerge from obscurity will surely be one of its most fascinating stories. Since it was first published, the real-world setting of the Book of Mormon has been a source of fascination and speculation for all who believed they were reading an actual history. While most read the book for its doctrines and principles, the book's claim to be an actual historical record has ensured that its textual and real-world details will, rightfully, be closely scrutinized.

PART 6

*“Out of Obscurity”*

**“...the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered... in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see *out of obscurity* and out of darkness.”**

**(2 Nephi 27:6, 29)**

## Introduction

**W**hen the final history of this dispensation is written, *how* the Book of Mormon began to emerge from obscurity will surely be one of its most fascinating stories. Since it was first published, the real-world setting of the Book of Mormon has been a source of fascination and speculation for all who believed they were reading an actual history. While most read the book for its doctrines and principles, the book’s claim to be an actual historical record has ensured that its textual and real-world details will, rightfully, be closely scrutinized.

Also driving the interest in finding physical locations for the Book of Mormon’s setting has been the need to respond to the attacks of critics. These began as early as 1831 with the publication of a critique by Alexander Campbell, one that continues to be mirrored by anti-Mormon writers to the present.<sup>1</sup> Early LDS apostle **Orson Pratt** (1811-1881) published a partial response entitled *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* in six parts from 1850-51,<sup>2</sup> refuting criticisms and presenting logical and biblical arguments defending the Nephite scripture. His attempt to locate the New World setting in both North and South America was incorporated into the footnotes of the 1879 printing of the Book of Mormon and would influence LDS thinking on the subject of its setting for the next century.

For most early readers, the fact that most of the account took place in the Americas and the emerging appreciation of central and South American cultures by archaeologists and popular writers alike, blended with natural assumptions about the hemispheric scope of the book. Even today, for example, numerous readers of the book assume that the hill in upper New York State where the plates were recovered by Joseph Smith is the same Hill Cumorah where the Nephite nation met its destruction ca. AD 421. The Book of Mormon’s own text appears to

rule this out, as almost all LDS scholars now accept. Although Joseph Smith left statements that support a hemispheric stage for the unfolding Nephite and Lamanite saga, he was clearly also open to a more limited geography centered in Mesoamerica.<sup>3</sup>

The LDS Church has never taken an official position on Book of Mormon geography since its organization in 1830. However, with the publication of Orson Pratt’s defense, early leaders and lay readers alike generally saw the Book of Mormon account as spanning North and South America with the Isthmus of Panama as the “narrow neck of land” (Alma 22:27, 32). With the mindset of this apparently obvious correlation the primary focus for early commentators during the first century after publication remained firmly on the New World geography rather than the Old.

Hemispheric assumptions lay behind the Brigham Young Academy expedition of 1900 to Central and South America in search of Book of Mormon ruins. Led by academy Principal **Benjamin Cluff Jr** (1858-1948), in 1903 the first president of BYU, some in the group eventually reached Colombia before disbanding. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the venture remains an interesting commentary of the times. In this period Mormonism’s first qualified archaeologist emerged, **Paul Henning** (1872-1923), a German-born convert to the Church in Mexico. Henning participated briefly in the Cluff expedition following his 1899 baptism, later working for the National Museum in Mexico City and publishing several monographs. While none of his Book of Mormon-related work was ever published, Henning became a primary stimulus to Cluff, eventually leading to Cluff securing First Presidency approval for what would have been the first Book of Mormon research body, the **American Exploring Society**. However, Hennings unexpected death, aged 51, in 1923 ended ambitious plans to conduct scholarly exploration for evidences supporting the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.<sup>4</sup>

Not until early in the twentieth century could scholars, notably **George Reynolds** (1842-1909), **Janne M. Sjodahl** (1853-1939), **Brigham H. Roberts** (1857-1933) and then **Sidney B. Sperry** (1895-1977), begin assembling external evidences that connected Nephi’s account to the *Old World* as well as to the New.<sup>5</sup> An important step in that direction was the establishment of a Department of Archaeology at BYU in 1946, a development Sidney Sperry was involved with.

The new emphasis on the Book of Mormon deepened and broadened significantly with the pioneering studies of historian **Hugh W. Nibley** (1910-2005) in the late 1940s and through the following five decades. His unwavering enthusiasm can be glimpsed in a letter written home while still serving in World War:

*...I have discovered the Book of Mormon, and live in a state of perpetual excitement—that marvelous production throws everything done in our age completely into the shadows.*

This enthusiasm and his formidable scholarly abilities allowed Nibley to do what no Book of Mormon scholar had done before: see the broad cultural outlines of the Book of Mormon’s Old World milieu, about which considerably more was (and still is) known than its New World setting. Viewed as an “intellectual reconnaissance” by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, his studies revealed subtleties that scholars in many disciplines still pursue today. Nibley later felt that his early discoveries of the Arabian parallels to Nephi’s record were the most significant of his work.<sup>6</sup>

With scant exceptions, it was not until the mid-1970s that the New World setting comprising the bulk of the Book of Mormon account began receiving the scholarly attention needed to develop a coherent geography. By first fully taking account of the book’s internal geographical requirements, anthropologist **John L. Sorenson** (b.

1924) pioneered and refined the correlation most widely accepted by LDS scholars today. Limited to southern Mexico and Guatemala with the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as the “narrow neck of land,” Sorenson’s geography is articulated in his massive 2013 Opus, *Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient Mesoamerican Book*.<sup>7</sup> The evidence documented in this book seems likely to remain the basis for all serious research in connection with the New World account for the foreseeable future.



George Reynolds



Paul Henning



Ross T. Christensen



Hugh W. Nibley



John L. Sorenson



John W. Welch

Some pivotal Book of Mormon scholars past and present. Hugh W Nibley image screen-capture courtesy of YouTube.

## Book of Mormon Research Organizations

Shortly before Hugh Nibley began making inroads into the opening chapters of First Nephi, the first group to promote research

into LDS scriptures was organized in California. In October 1938, archaeologist M. Wells Jakeman, (1910-1998) and fellow students at Berkeley including Thomas S. Ferguson, created the **Itzan Society**. This functioned until the onset of World War Two, when Jakeman became the first chair of archaeology at Brigham Young University in 1945. The department’s first field project took place three years later in Mexico, leading to Jakeman’s establishment of the **University Archaeological Society (UAS)** on April 18, 1949. As an adjunct to BYU’s Department of Archaeology, the UAS was free to focus more on matters relevant to the historicity of scripture.

Meanwhile in California, Thomas S. Ferguson (1915-1983) formed the **New World Archaeological Foundation (NWAf)**, <http://nwaf.byu.edu> in October, 1952. The group enlisted several prominent non-LDS scholars from such institutions as Harvard University and the Carnegie Institution in its mission to establish the general origins of the peoples of Mesoamerica. It began excavations in Mexico almost immediately. After years of seeking private donations to finance projects in Mexico, Ferguson received some church financing in 1954. The NWAf was incorporated into BYU in 1961. Involved in scores of field projects, often in cooperation with other universities, the NWAf continues its work today without direct connections to Book of Mormon geography. After six decades it is regarded as a premier player in Central American Pre-classic (i.e., prior to about AD 200) archaeology, a fact that may become increasingly significant to Book of Mormon archaeology in time to come.<sup>8</sup>

Concurrently, the UAS, re-named the **Society for Early Historic Archaeology (SEHA)** in 1965, provided a broader forum in various fields related to the archaeology of the scriptures, laying a foundation of annual symposiums, newsletters and occasional papers. Much of its momentum was lost following its separation from BYU in September, 1979. However, following three name changes in 1983-1984, SEHA

continued functioning until 1990 when it evolved into the **Ancient America Foundation (AAF)**, [www.ancientamerica.org](http://www.ancientamerica.org), which continues today.

The year 1979 saw an event of great significance to the entire field of Book of Mormon studies and eventually to LDS scriptural studies generally with the formation, again in California, of the **Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS)**. Founded by John (Jack) W. Welch (b. 1946), a lawyer whose interest in scriptural studies was sparked by his discovery, while serving a mission in Germany, of chiasmic (inverted parallelism) writing patterns in the Book of Mormon, FARMS evolved into the largest and most comprehensive research body of its kind. When Welch accepted a position at Brigham Young University’s law school in Utah the following year, the fledgling FARMS found a permanent base in BYU off-campus facilities. Its independence provided the first opportunity for many LDS scholars and students of the scriptures to share findings and insights.

With support from John L. Sorenson, effectively its first resident scholar, FARMS began to facilitate the correlation of research efforts. It instituted peer reviews, published a wide range of work dealing with the Book of Mormon and funded numerous initiatives. In the process, high standards of scholarship were instituted. Of course, as it still does, over the years *BYU Studies* had published a range of articles on the Book of Mormon. Some of these, such as a 1969 paper by Jack Welch on chiasmus, an ancient writing style found in the Book of Mormon, broke new ground not only for the new findings documented, but for articulating the necessity of reading the scriptural text on its own terms, free of all assumptions. Under the aegis of FARMS these earlier papers now gained wider exposure and became part of an expanding matrix of studies.



Encapsulating several levels of symbolism, the distinctive logo of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) highlights the primary cultures relevant to Book of Mormon studies; it was composed of Hebrew, Greek, Mayan and Egyptian characters placed upon four interlocking blocks. The Hebrew “Aleph” in the upper left and the Greek “Omega” in the lower right represent Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, who is Jesus Christ (Revelations 1:17). Image used courtesy of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Provo, Utah.

While Hugh Nibley was never formally affiliated with it, from 1984 to 2010 FARMS was instrumental in updating and publishing

his foundational scholarship. The Nibley corpus ensured that the maturing FARMS initially focused on Old more than New World aspects of the Book of Mormon. That focus later expanded to include *all* ancient scriptures, including the sacred texts of other traditions. Wider engagement with the world of non-LDS religious scholarship saw significant involvement of FARMS and its scholars with the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in particular, and the translation and publication of some Islamic texts.

In 1986, the installation of Ezra Taft Benson as president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints marked a resurgence in Book of Mormon studies that has continued to the present.<sup>9</sup> Benson’s frequent emphasis of the Book of Mormon’s relevance to the whole church initiated a new era for the book. Decades later, it seems safe to say that the achievements of FARMS did more to assist in bringing the Book of Mormon out of obscurity than any other event or process so far, in fulfillment of President Benson’s challenge. A solid platform of scholarship resulted, ensuring that the Book of Mormon’s historical claims could no longer be attacked with impunity. While it always lacked an international advisory board and never fully embraced relevant non-BYU scholarship, FARMS was sorely needed, as evidenced by its rapid growth and the stature it attained in the LDS scholarly community.

In September 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley directed that FARMS be assimilated into Brigham Young University. Almost from the beginning, however, the implementation of this directive began a period of contraction. Fully-funded plans to build a much-needed FARMS facility were abandoned. A 2001 restructuring then saw the establishment of the **Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (ISPART)**, with FARMS subsumed as one of its divisions. In honor of Apostle Neal A. Maxwell’s (1926-2004) signal contributions to religious scholarship, ISPART was re-named in 2006 as the **Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship**

(**NAMIRS**), <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu> with several divisions including the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI) and the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) and in 2013 the Christianity and the Bible Research Initiative (CBRI). Additional private funding resulted in the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies being established in April 2007, initially in conjunction with FARMS, although the FARMS name completely faded from use during 2012. Echoing these changes, the Institute’s official logo eventually became a variation of the FARMS logo utilizing different examples of the same characters.

The Maxwell Institute’s trend away from the research approaches that originally distinguished FARMS has resulted in a body more focused on symposia and publishing. Publications include the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (known as the *Journal of The Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture (JBMORS)* from 2009 to 2013), now a small format annual publication for subscribers only; the *Insights* newsletter from 1981 to 2013, the *FARMS Review*, now the *Mormon Studies Review*, and occasional papers and books published under various imprints. The journal *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* commenced publication late 2009.

A further re-structuring of the Maxwell Institute in June 2012 saw an even more overt shift away from studies that could be construed as “apologetic,” or used for apologetic purposes. With almost all the original founders of FARMS marginalized by this change to the original charter, a new organization commenced in August 2012, the **Interpreter Foundation**, [www.mormoninterpreter.com](http://www.mormoninterpreter.com), based in Orem, Utah.<sup>10</sup> It publishes *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* frequently, with open online access and a print edition. Along with material published in *BYU Studies*, the *Interpreter* has begun to fill the void left by the collapse of FARMS.



The first Utah home for FARMS was within the Amanda Knight building adjacent to the Provo campus of BYU.

Although generally lacking meaningful funding, several independent groups increasingly fill the research void. Two major LDS research groups exist, each actively promoting differing concepts of the Book of Mormon’s New World setting. The longer established of the two, the **Book of Mormon Archaeological Forum (BMAF)** [www.bmaf.org](http://www.bmaf.org) in Salt Lake City, increasingly acts as an “umbrella” organization for a number of smaller bodies and otherwise unaffiliated individuals. It strongly defends a Mesoamerican setting and holds an annual symposium in Utah. Since 2007, the **Foundation for Indigenous Research and Mormonism (FIRM)**, [www.bookofmormonevidence.org](http://www.bookofmormonevidence.org) argues vigorously instead for a USA-centric geography, popularly known as the “Heartland” or “Great Lakes” model. It holds a variety of conferences and tours.

**Book of Mormon Central (BMC)**, <http://bookofmormoncentral.org>, commenced May 2015 under the auspices of the AAF. With affiliates including BYU Studies, BYU Religious Studies Center and Interpreter Foundation, it acts as a large open-access repository and provider of Book of Mormon textual analysis, commentary, publications, and media.

Although the Missouri-based Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized LDS Church), has relegated the Book of Mormon to the status of an optional secondary “scriptural witness,” organizations founded by its members continue. A merger of the long-standing **Zarahemla Research Foundation** in 2012 with the **Quetzal Archaeology Center for Mesoamerican Research** created **The Book of Mormon Foundation** [www.bomf.org](http://www.bomf.org), promoting the Book of Mormon as authentic history.

The largest LDS online presence of any kind is the Utah-based **Meridian Magazine**, [www.ldsmag.com](http://www.ldsmag.com), emailed daily to subscribers worldwide; it and the **Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FairMormon)**, [www.fairmormon.org](http://www.fairmormon.org) regularly release significant new material in a popular format.

Smaller LDS bodies such as the **Foundation for Ancient American Studies (FFAAS)**, [www.ffaas.org](http://www.ffaas.org) and several private websites, such as John Tvedtnes’ <http://bookofmormonresearch.org>; Jeff Lindsay’s <http://mormanity.blogspot.com> and Neal Rappleye’s [www.studioetquoquefide.com](http://www.studioetquoquefide.com) also offer useful commentary.

## The Role of Archaeology

With its roots in the collectors and adventurers of the Victorian era, the development of *archaeology*, the study of the past through its

remains, is one of the greatest triumphs of modern science. Although not immune to the dictates of conventional paradigms, archaeology has nonetheless contributed immeasurably to our understanding of human history. As scientific techniques have improved, archaeology has continued revealing our past in ways unimaginable just decades ago.

Any writing that claims to be literal history, such as the Bible and the Book of Mormon, can expect to be scrutinized according to current historical and anthropological understanding. Despite considerable progress in recent years, our knowledge of New World pre-history has significant gaps; the Old World is much better known. For that reason Book of Mormon archaeology in the New World, the Americas where most of the account takes place, remains controversial and divided. The Old World, Near Eastern, setting has become much less so. However, believers in the book take heart in the fact that as the past of both hemispheres emerges and solidifies, it mostly conforms to the picture painted in the Nephite record, both in a general sense and in a surprising number of specifics.

Archaeology’s history has always included efforts seeking various legendary or controversial sites and artifacts. Usually conducted in the style of popular culture icons such as “Indiana Jones,” discoveries have often been, and sometimes still are, announced with spectacular headlines before lapsing back into obscurity. The history of LDS archaeology has not been immune from such efforts. There have been, of course, some rare exceptions to the general rule: discoveries such as that of the Assyrian civilization by Layard and Botta in the 1840s stand out, but usually little of value emerges from what could be termed “speculative archaeology.” Most archaeological work yields the past slowly and always still tentatively. Contrary to popular assumptions, archaeology cannot “prove” anything, but remains subject to interpretation and later finds.



When our focus narrows to the archaeology of the *scriptures*, additional constraints to what archaeology can reveal become evident. The present-day situation of biblical archaeology is instructive; after more than a century of intensive work in a limited area by hundreds of professionals, some biblical locations are now undisputed. However, others -even some major sites -are not. Many remain mired in controversy. The fact that tangible evidence for many thousands of Israelites living in the days of Moses remains elusive should give us pause when seeking traces of a transient group numbering, at most, in the dozens.

For Book of Mormon archaeology, the first step forward is to attempt a general correlation between the scriptural record and present-day *geography*. The Old World setting of the Book of Mormon is recorded in only 18 chapters in which geographical detail is present, but secondary to the spiritual lessons of the story. The point of departure literally (for the Lehites) and metaphorically (for research) is, of course, Old Jerusalem and the Red Sea. Only their locations are known today beyond any doubt. But, as presented in Part 2, others can quickly be identified with a high degree of probability. The “wilderness” into which Lehi and his family departed can be linked quite firmly to the great Arabah rift valley leading them to the Red Sea, for example, while the “borders” mentioned by Nephi clearly refer to the mountain ranges they encountered.

Until recent decades only this much was certain about the setting of Lehi and Sariah’s journey. None of the other locations mentioned -the major part of the land journey -had real-world candidates. We have come a considerable distance since then. While only partial investigations have been made so far, a plausible location has been identified for the next location mentioned in Nephi’s text, the Valley of Lemuel and River of Laman. No serious attempt has yet been made to locate Shazer. Through converging textual, archaeological, historical and geographical details, however, there is no longer any uncertainty about the location

of “Nahom,” a pivotal place in the land journey. In turn, Nahom points us “nearly eastward” (17:1) to where the Old World Bountiful must lie, the fertile coastline providing timber for a ship that would depart to the New. It is at Nephi’s “Bountiful” where perhaps the greatest archaeological potential awaits us.

One reason for this is that Nephi’s account implies that the stay at Bountiful was not brief, but extended. Only after “the space of many days” (17:7) was building a ship first mentioned by the Lord; then, after making tools, its construction surely required a minimum of 2-3 years. In the meantime, months of monsoon winds (which can topple trees) and driving rains each year would ensure that early on the group constructed dwellings, perhaps of the abundant limestone rock, offering better shelter than their tents. A sacred place for community worship and sacrifice is also highly likely. Locating such structures is quite possible, a prospect enhanced by the fact that the most plausible site has only been inhabited intermittently.

Aside from a smelting site, the ship construction site and their dwellings, a community of 40 or more people unavoidably leaves other traces over several years of use. Enclosures to protect their camels and other domestic animals from local predators are probable, perhaps water channels and field walls, and certainly broken pottery and discarded tools. Locating physical traces marking the presence of a small Israelite group 2,600 years ago remains, therefore, still within the realm of possibilities.

### **LDS Fieldwork in Arabia Begins, 1976 Onwards**

The first attempt by any Latter-day Saint to visit the Arabian locales where Book of Mormon events took place did not come until a full 146 years after the book was first published. In January of 1976,

## LEHI AND SARIAH IN ARABIA

Lynn and Hope Hilton of Salt Lake City, with their daughter Cynthia and photographer Gerry Silver, traveled to Oman and succeeded in visiting Salalah in the south of the country for 24 hours. They then traveled in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel. The need for the LDS church magazines to focus on the four year rotating adult scriptural curriculum had resulted in the Hiltons, who were already well-traveled in the Arab world, being invited on behalf of the *ENSIGN* magazine to visit the possible areas where the Lehi story had unfolded. Their trip was reported in the September and October 1976 issues of the *ENSIGN* magazine,<sup>11</sup> published in book form as *In Search of Lehi's Trail*,<sup>12</sup> and later updated in their 1996 work, *Discovering Lehi*.<sup>13</sup> The Hiltons' work, based on the limited evidence they could gather, shed some valuable light in the Arabian Peninsula. They suggested a location for Nahom in Saudi Arabia and proposed that the Salalah area in Oman generally met Nephi's description of "Bountiful."



In 1976, Lynn and Hope Hilton led the first LDS attempt to visit areas Lehi and Sariah traveled. Image courtesy of Lynn M. Hilton.

The next development came in November 1984, when the author and his wife Michaela traveled to the Yemen Arab Republic to follow up the suggestion of Ross T. Christensen, a BYU professor of archaeology, who later helped lead SEHA for many years. His brief letter, published in the August 1978 *ENSIGN* magazine, referred to a 1772 map of Yemen made by the Danish surveyor, Carsten Niebuhr, that showed the tribal district of NEHHM. Christensen suggested three steps in researching the name: an examination of the name's phonetics, a search for other early references to it and finally, fieldwork in Yemen.<sup>14</sup>

In Yemen another, more recent, map was located by the author showing "Nehem" in the same general area as the 1772 map, about 25 miles/40 km northeast of the capital, Sana'a. This find established that Nehem was still the name of a tribal area, spawning a major research effort and further visits to Yemen over several years by the author. Eventually the name was documented through maps and early writings back to about AD 100, with strong indications of a much earlier origin.



Warren and Michaela Aston in Sana'a, Yemen in November 1984.



Examples of inscribed and cast metal plates used in ancient Yemen.

These data and some preliminary comments concerning the location of “Bountiful” were presented by the author as the keynote address at the 35<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Archaeology of the Scriptures held at BYU in Provo, Utah on October 17, 1986. They were published as *Preliminary Reports* by FARMS in 1984 and updated in 1986, 1988 and 1989 as new information was located. During this time, the author also documented several cast metal plates in Yemen bearing temple inscriptions and dating to about AD 400. This illustrated the use of metal in that part of the world for important purposes. Concurrently, the author began exploring the adjacent Sultanate of Oman. With security conditions more settled since the Hilton’s visit he was able to explore without major restrictions from October 1987 onwards. From the first visit to Oman it became apparent that the criteria for Nephi’s Bountiful were not found in any single place in or near Salalah, as was believed in the LDS community at the time.

With the necessity for data on the entire coastline of eastern Arabia evident, ground exploration of the Oman coastline further west of Salalah commenced the following year. During this exploration Khor Kharfot, the coastal mouth of Wadi Sayq, was observed and photographed in 1988, but not actually visited until October 2, 1989.

On that date the author and his fourteen-year-old daughter Claire became the first Latter-day Saints to visit the site.



On October 2, 1989 the author and his daughter Claire became the first Latter-day Saints to visit Khor Kharfot, a visit reprised 22 years later in October 2011 (2011 image courtesy of Alana Aston Orth).

This first, brief, visit immediately established that Kharfot had some unique characteristics in a very compact area that remained undisturbed by any current habitation. In addition to the abundant vegetation, large timber trees grew close to the ocean. The same visit also revealed the presence of an inland area with huge quantities of exposed hematite-rich “Chert” (Jasper), an early stage in the development of flint, perhaps what Nephi referred to when he said “I did smite two stones together that I might make fire” (17:11). As hematite is iron oxide ( $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ) it was the first indication of iron being present in the area. Exploration of the interior wadi system leading to the coast and closer examination of Kharfot itself were made by the author over succeeding years, uncovering a complex of ruins indicating past human occupation at Kharfot.



The author during frequent exploratory visits to Kharfot from 1990-1992.

As noted earlier in Part 5, exploration of the entire eastern coastline of Yemen also proceeded concurrently. Facilitated by the timely reunification of the two Yemen republics in 1990 after a brief civil war, the coastal survey was completed from Aden to Sayhut, including an assessment of two wadis on the coast, Wadis Hajr and Masilah as potential Bountiful sites. In 1991, FARMS released two completely updated papers by the author, “The Place Which Was Called Nahom” and “And We Called the Place Bountiful,” thus placing data on Khor

Kharfot into the public domain for the first time. At the conclusion of this exploration the general fertility of southern Oman was established as unique and Kharfot remained the most plausible Bountiful candidate.

### **The First LDS Expeditions to Oman, 1993-1999**

The following year, the author led two expedition teams sponsored by BYU and FARMS to Kharfot. The first team in April 1993 included the President of FARMS, Noel B. Reynolds, to evaluate the site firsthand. It also brought to bear the expertise of an archaeologist, Paolo Costa of Italy, and geologist William Christiansen of Salt Lake City, for the first time at the site. Dr. Costa had previously visited the site briefly by helicopter, on May 10, 1989, while working for the government of Oman and with this background was thus the best-qualified person to begin assessing its history. Finding that Kharfot had been a sea inlet until recent centuries aided significantly in understanding the place; the first evaluation of the ruins defined at least four apparent periods of human occupation at the site. As earlier noted, Dr. Costa later presented a paper on Kharfot, noting its abundant flora and offering a preliminary dating for the human traces at the site, at the Seminar for Arabian Studies, held in London in July 1993. His paper was later published in the *Proceedings* of the Seminar.

The second expedition team traveled to Oman in September 1993. After reassessing Khor Rori, the very beginning of Wadi Sayq inland was accessed for the first time and other fertile areas west of Kharfot to the Yemen border were explored. The extensive area of chert deposits inland of Kharfot was examined and documented more completely and the first examination was made of the interior stages of Wadi Sayq. Access to most of these areas has since been restricted. Several days were then spent by the team at Kharfot, refining work begun five months earlier by the first team. A closer examination of the western plateau

was begun and measurements of the structures there were made for the first time. The hydrology of the lagoon and the inlet was also defined further, assisted by infra-red photography.



The April 1993 team departing by boat from Rakhyut.



The April 1993 Team: (L-R) Jonathan Reynolds, Noel Reynolds, William Christiansen (Geologist), Michaela Aston, Paolo Costa (Archaeologist), Warren Aston.



Noel Reynolds and Paolo Costa.



Paolo Costa, team archaeologist.



The September 1993 Team: (L-R) Warren Aston, Chad Aston, Rosalea McIntire, Malcolm Rea, Michaela Aston, Gary Widdison.



Historian and epigrapher Ali Mahash al-Shahri of Salalah, Oman has made unique contributions to our understanding of the region's past and given invaluable support to research efforts reported in this book.

The material from both expeditions was included in the author's 1994 book, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, published by Deseret Book, which summarized what was known about the latter stages of Lehi's journey

at that time.<sup>15</sup> In July 1995, the author presented a paper, "Some Notes on the Tribal Origins of NHM," at Cambridge University in England at the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies, the leading scholarly forum dealing with the Arabian Peninsula. This paper traced the NHM name back to its documented beginnings and included Nephi's reference to the place. It is printed here as an Appendix. Also in 1995, Nigel Groom of London, a leading authority on the history and geography of early Arabia as well as the incense trade, published a major paper that referred to the discovery of Kharfot and the still-unfolding picture of early human activity in Arabia as follows:

*The recent discovery of ancient sites in the vicinity of Harfut (Kharfot) by Aston and Costa, now being investigated by a Brigham Young University team, and of sites in the vicinity of Ra's Sajir, now being investigated by archaeologists from South West Missouri State University under Zarins, raises new problems of identifying sites in Dhofar with places mentioned in the early sources.<sup>16</sup>*

In his article, Groom concluded that the trading port of Moscha, in early writings such as the *Periplus* and those by Ptolemy, may not be Khor Rori as most commentators have assumed, but that it probably lay further west. Earlier in the same piece, he stated:

*If the measurements of the Periplus are correct, then Moscha should lie some 40 miles west of Salala[h].*

The potential historical significance of this can be seen when it is realized that Kharfot lies about 50 miles west of Salalah. Kharfot is therefore a candidate for the port of "Moscha" of early writings.<sup>17</sup> Material and photographs from the research appeared frequently in commentaries on the Book of Mormon, in Church Education System teaching materials used throughout the church and in the authoritative *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (published by MacMillan in 1991). Talks at

BYU and articles by Noel B. Reynolds, Executive Director of FARMS 2003-2005, continued to endorse Kharfot as the most plausible candidate known for Bountiful, as in these examples:

*No other site on this coastline meets all these criteria. Book of Mormon critics have long insisted that no site ever would. Only someone who had been to this unique place in ancient times could have described it in such precise detail as did Nephi in 1 Nephi 17.*

*Contrary to the theories of earlier investigators, [the Astons] have shown that Salalah and other sites do not fulfill the full criteria for Bountiful. Instead, they have discovered an obscure site, little known to people even in Oman, that seems to easily and convincingly meet all the criteria for Bountiful.<sup>18</sup>*

A 1995 visit to Oman by FARMS-sponsored geologist Eugene E. Clark had resulted in a FARMS Preliminary Report that gave an updated assessment of the geology of the Dhofar region, without any focus on the candidate areas for Nephi’s Bountiful. Clark’s paper noted the existence of minor iron deposits east of Salalah and that they were likely to be present in association with manganese and carbon. Such a combination would result in high-grade steel suitable for tools.<sup>19</sup>

In February 1998, a FARMS team including an archaeologist, a geologist, historian, and an archaeo-botanist visited Oman to evaluate the research that could be pursued there. Their visit was reported in the *Church News* of November 14, 1998 and in a *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* article published the same year.<sup>20</sup> A brief botanical survey by a BYU team in 1999, joined by faculty from the Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat, resulted in the identification of two plant species never before reported in Oman.<sup>21</sup>



A BYU botanical team working in Dhofar in 1999.



A BYU geological team in Oman during 1999. (L-R) W. Revell Phillips, Jeffrey D. Keith, Jason Aase, Ron Harris, Talal al-Hosni.



(L-R) W. Revell Phillips, Ron Harris, Jason Aase, Jeffrey D. Keith.

### LDS Fieldwork in Oman, 2000 - 2012

Late February 2000, emeritus BYU professor of geology W. Revell Phillips led a team of six on a three week geological evaluation of Dhofar. The visit identified small, but totally adequate, iron deposits near Rakhyut and Mirbat, thus giving credibility to Nephi's claim to have smelted "ore" in that general area. In Nephi's day either bronze or iron were the plausible options for making tools. Bronze is unlikely however; while copper has been mined in northern Oman for thousands of years it is almost unknown in the south. Tin, the other component of bronze, is unknown in the region and could only have been used if imported.

It thus seems almost certain that Nephi's "ore" was actually a form of steel processed from iron, with perhaps manganese or carbon added.

Phillips's team found exposed hematite in Wadi Nharat, on the coast a few miles east of Rakhyut. The natural impurities from the matrix of limestone would have helped lower the temperature needed to smelt the ore, making it feasible to forge hardened iron from such sources. Various techniques that harden iron into forms of steel were known thousands of years ago; one could well have been familiar to Nephi and used by him to fashion simple but effective tools. Likewise, at Jebal Ali close to Mirbat, at the eastern end of the Salalah bay, significant surface veins of siderite, an iron-carbonate combination that weathers to goethite-limonite ore (generic formula:  $\text{FeO}(\text{OH})\cdot\text{NH}_2\text{O}$ ), were located. While not present in commercial quantities, they are more than adequate for the tool making Nephi described.<sup>22</sup>



The Malachite Kingfisher (*Corythornis cristatus*) was reported in Arabia for the first time in September, 2000 at Khor Kharfot. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.



In a September 2000 visit to Kharfot with the author, LDS ornithologist Dr. Steven Carr identified a bird species never before reported in Arabia, the brilliantly colored Malachite Kingfisher, *Corythornis cristatus*. It has since been reported further east in 2004 and 2009-11. No formal survey of bird species at Kharfot has yet been completed.<sup>23</sup>

As discussed earlier, the 1999 discovery of the three altars at Marib in Yemen was of great significance, providing indisputable evidence linking the NHM tribal name to the period of which Nephi wrote (16:34). A full discussion by the author of the altar find and its implications was published in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* in 2001.<sup>24</sup>

In 2007, a landmark issue of the *Journal* (Volume 15/2) entitled “Lehi and Sariah’s Wilderness Trek: Illuminating the Real-World Setting,” updated the findings of the primary researchers involved in researching the Lehite story. Articles by Lynn M. Hilton, Warren P. Aston, Richard Wellington, George Potter and S. Kent Brown were followed by three respondents. Despite differences over some details by the authors, the overall consensus was appropriately summed up by the title of reviewer Daniel McKinlay’s article, “The Brightening Light on the Journey of Lehi and Sariah.”<sup>25</sup> The issue highlighted the abundance of evidence now available from the Old World supporting the Book of Mormon’s credibility, that the most optimistic believer in the book could not have foreseen even a decade earlier.

Following geologist Revell Phillip’s suggestion that Mughsayl could be considered a candidate for Nephi’s Bountiful, S. Kent Brown of BYU and William Glanzman from the University of Calgary led three seasons work excavating two trenches atop a scenic headland overlooking Mughsayl from 2007-2009. The project yielded a small pottery shard identified stylistically as being an import of pre-Islamic South Arabian origin. The means by which it had arrived at the site and more precise

dating could not be determined. This result was summarized in various reports to the Omani authorities and eventually in a 2012 LDS book.<sup>26</sup> Nothing potentially relevant to the Lehite account emerged from this venture and the opportunity to work at Kharfot expired.

Beginning late 2012, a University of Pisa team cleared and mapped the ruins at Mughsayl proper where a coastal community had once lived, completing excavations in February 2013. They concluded that the human traces reveal “only an Islamic occupation... no Pre-Islamic period has been detected and our investigation led us to exclude that there were any more ancient levels...”<sup>27</sup>

Other mooted BYU projects, including development of a herbarium in Provo and in Muscat, Oman to facilitate further research of the flora of Dhofar, and plans to build a general reference collection of microscopic-sized *phytoliths*, one of three general categories of plant microfossils (the others are pollen and starch grains), to aid in identifying plant species in future research,<sup>28</sup> have not materialized.

In 2009, continuing degradation to Kharfot’s environment due to water diversion by a water-pumping station in Wadi Sayq, and the threat posed by a renewed road proposal, led to two privately-funded team visits led by the author. The initial visit, in February, saw systematic contingency documentation of all artificial structures using high-definition imagery. The second visit, in October, saw a nine person team including an archaeologist, a botanist and a film crew. Intensive exploration revealed several significant faunal, floral and geographical features not previously documented. These included traces of smelt-able iron ore, fossils and a cave system containing a human burial found at Kharfot. In April 2010, a further team focused on exploration of the cave system and located a further iron ore source.

## LEHI AND SARIAH IN ARABIA

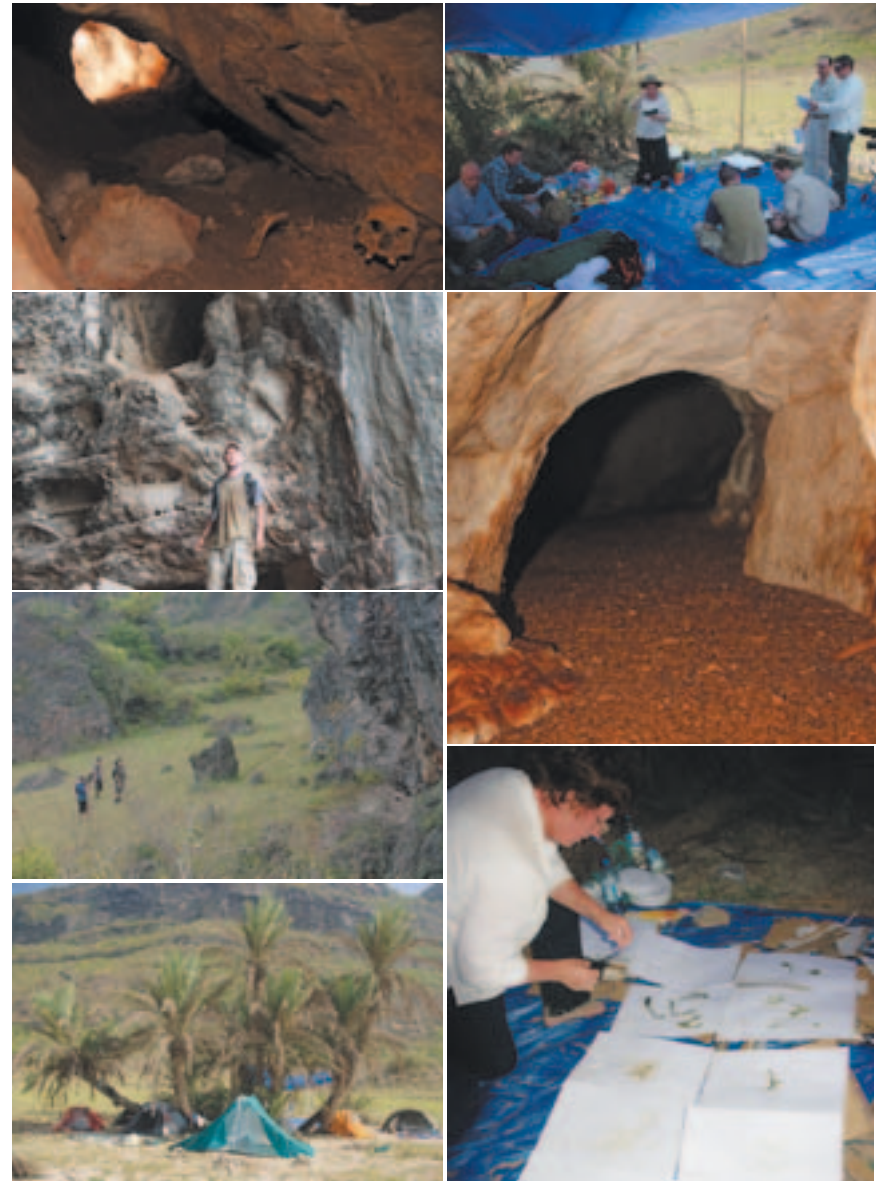
In February 2011 it was reported that the proposed road project had been canceled for the time being, but serious concerns remained over the impact of the diversion of water from the site by the water-pumping station in Wadi Sayq. In October 2011 the largest team yet, thirteen persons, continued exploration of the eastern coastline and a series of caves overlooking the bay.



The February 2009 Team: (L-R) Warren Aston, Sherry Chew.



The October 2009 Team: (L-R) Warren Aston, Chad Aston, Paul Hume, Adam Jones, Judith Grimes (Botanist), Brent Heaton, Neville Terlich (Archaeologist), Scott Gubler, Marty Heaton.



Views of the “Chadam” cave system discovered October 2009; interior cave views courtesy Colin Ligertwood and Paul Hume; Botanist Judith Grimes conducting a flora survey in October 2009; views of team working and the campsite; LDS Sacrament service held on Friday October 2, 2009.



The April 2010 Team: (L-R) Warren Aston, Chad Aston, Colin Ligertwood.



The October 2011 Team: (L-R) Back Row: Warren Aston, Kathrine Durrant McAllister, Alana Aston Orth & Cameron Orth, James Reynolds & Chrystine Heward Reynolds. Front Row: Panu Puikkonen & Leah Aston Puikkonen, Varian Aston, Chad Aston & Felicity Bryen Aston, Claire Aston Richards & Brandon Richards.



The jawbone of a cow drying in the sun at Kharfot reminds us that Lehi’s name in Hebrew means “jawbone.”

## The Khor Kharfot Foundation

In 2013, a new effort began to fully document Khor Kharfot and Wadi Sayq and to stimulate awareness of their fragile ecology. With one general assessment of Dhofar biodiversity made in 2000 still largely reflecting the situation in 2013 and another study noting that remnant forest sites in Arabia had not been surveyed for over 15 years,<sup>29</sup> a private non-profit body, the **Khor Kharfot Foundation**, [www.khor-kharfot-foundation.com](http://www.khor-kharfot-foundation.com) was formed by a group of private LDS individuals including the author. Based in Houston, Texas, the foundation solicits funding to ensure that the best-qualified specialists are involved in each aspect of the work and that findings are released promptly in both scholarly and popular formats.<sup>30</sup>

The first team assembled and funded by the Foundation completed its initial fieldwork at Kharfot in late April 2014 with three archaeologists and a geologist making preliminary assessments as a basis for future

## LEHI AND SARIAH IN ARABIA

work. Based on the project, a paper titled “Khawr Kharfut (Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman) re-visited” was presented on July 27, 2014 by archaeologists Carl Phillips and Michele Degli Esposti at the annual *Seminar for Arabian Studies* in London.



The April-May 2014 Team. (L-R) Iftikhar Abbasi (Geologist), Neil Prendergast, Michele Degli Esposti (Archaeologist), Scot Proctor, Mariah Proctor, Carl Phillips (Archaeologist), Maurine Proctor, Mark Hamilton, Chad Aston, Richard Hauck (Archaeologist), Caleb Barnes, Warren Aston. Image: Scot Facer Proctor.



Some of the team arriving by boat.



The team camp site at Khor Kharfut.



Lead archaeologists, Carl Phillips and Michele Degli Esposti.



Team Geologist, Iftikhar Abbasi.



Archaeologists working on the western plateau.

In late October 2014, the Foundation's second team worked at the site. A total of 16 persons, 9 of them from Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat, were involved in making baseline studies of the flora and fauna. The two archaeologists involved assessed the requirements for future projects at the site.<sup>31</sup> At the time of going to press, several papers resulting from the two 2014 teams were in preparation, reporting on the geology, archaeology and other aspects. They will be published in due course.



A motion-activated wildlife camera being installed by Chad Aston.



The October 2014 Team: Back row (L-R): Warren Aston, Abdullah al Shuraiki (Botanist), Richard Hauck (Archaeologist), Kimball Banks (Archaeologist), Thekra al Mantheri (Botanist assistant), Amina al Farsi (Botanist), Jayanthi Victor (Limnologist), Reginald Victor (Limnologist), Ahmed Jashool (Veterinary Science), David Clayton (Biologist), Ahmed Hardan. Front Row (L-R): Mohammed Haneef, Matthew Thurmond, Ahmed al Wahaibi (Botanist), Abubakr Bouzier, Ibrahim al Zakwani (Biologist assistant).



Botanists Amina al-Farsi and Abdullah al Shuraiki process flora samples.



Biologist David Clayton collecting faunal samples on the beach..



Reginald Victor and Ibrahim al Zakwani retrieving water samples.



Matt Thurmond with archaeologists Ric Hauck and Kimball Banks.

## Relevant non-LDS Research in Arabia

Of course, many other non-LDS scholars also work in these locations. In all disciplines, their findings continue to be invaluable in pushing the boundaries of our understanding and helping to build a more complete picture of life and conditions in Lehi’s day. In addition to the German and French teams working in Yemen already discussed, Paolo Costa of Italy was the archaeologist who participated in the April 1993 expedition to Kharfot in Oman. His assessment of the site’s manmade structures provided the first indications of when the place had been inhabited. Nigel Groom of London, the leading authority on the Arabian incense trade, made invaluable contributions by way of review and suggestions over several decades. UK botanists Anthony Miller and Miranda Morris, with experience in cataloging Dhofari plants and identifying their uses by local people, helped evaluate the botanical data from the 1993 expeditions to Kharfot.

In addition to the continuing (as of 2015) work being done by the University of Pisa at Khor Rori noted in Part 5, one of the more significant efforts to uncover the history of southern Oman was the *Dhofar Epigraphic Project*, coordinated by the Oriental Institute at Oxford University. Building upon the efforts of Salalah historian Ali Mahash al-Shahri to record local carved and painted texts, from 1991-1992 the project documented over 800 texts at some 90 sites, including Kharfot.<sup>32</sup> However, while some progress toward understanding the Kharfot script (and others like it) has been made, as of 2015 it remains un-translated.

A representative sample illustrates the breadth of what has been done in other research efforts across Arabia. Noting the “total absence of archaeological discoveries of Arabian ships pre-dating the Portuguese incursion,” several Australian and Omani museums jointly investigated the heritage of early Omani seafaring using new underwater techniques to reveal data about ship construction, a subject of obvious interest to Latter-day Saints.<sup>33</sup> Scholars investigating links between the Mahra and Dhofar regions and the isolated island of Socotra off the Yemen coast have learned things about traditional practices that may shed light into Lehi and his family’s environment at Bountiful.<sup>34</sup> A joint Russian, French, and German venture conducted a survey to examine the environment and human activity on the Yemen coast in pre-Islamic times.<sup>35</sup> Until security conditions curtailed it, a Canadian team led the excavation of the Awwam complex in Yemen, adjacent to the Bar’an temple at Marib that yielded the Nahom altars; Italian and British scholars are digging into the origins of the Lehyanite kingdom in northern Saudi Arabia using newly-found inscriptions.<sup>36</sup> A German and Omani effort cooperated in documenting Omani rock art as a way to better understand the very early history of the area.<sup>37</sup>

Since 2012, another research front has been opened by the British Exploring Society based at the Royal Geographical Society in London. In

conjunction with Oman’s Office for Conservation of the Environment, the BES began a long-term project documenting the biodiversity of two ecosystems; the edge of the Empty Quarter in Dhofar and eastern Wadi Sayq, including Khor Kharfot. From January 31 to March 1, 2012, the first team of over 20 worked at these locations. Similar-sized teams worked in Wadi Sayq in 2013 and 2014, publishing their reports in a timely manner.<sup>38</sup> The project will continue yielding data that will be invaluable to all future research efforts.

The fact that large areas of the Dhofar province of Oman and the adjoining Mahra province in Yemen had never been explored until the brief exploratory forays led by Juris Zarins of Southwest Missouri State University from 1990 onwards is a reminder of how much remains to be learnt about this ancient region. Zarin’s milestone 2001 work, *The Land of Incense* remains the premier work available on the history and archaeology of southern Oman and eastern Yemen. Underscoring this lack of data, the only reference in Zarin’s book to sites along the Qamar coast (i.e., west of Mughsayl to Hauf in Yemen) was this author’s 1991 paper on “Bountiful,” reporting Iron-age structures at Kharfot.<sup>39</sup> By comprehensively assessing the resources offered to a coastal community elsewhere in Oman, some recent studies point to what remains to be done at the place where the Lehite ship was built.<sup>40</sup>

## Book of Mormon Movies and Documentaries

As the insights resulting from this research, including the first totally plausible Book of Mormon sites, began to penetrate the LDS community, new attempts to bring the Lehite story to the screen commenced. The first to appear was the privately produced movie drama “*Book of Mormon: The Movie*” in September 2003, covering Lehi’s story from Jerusalem until his death in the Promised Land. Despite the

credentials of some involved in the project, the film’s production values resulted in very limited commercial success.

A documentary of the Lehite story, filmed on location in the Near East, debuted in August 2005. Produced under the direction of BYU and FARMS, the 90-minute film “*Journey of Faith*,” and the 2006 book of the same name, attempted to depict the Lehite journey for a general audience through extensive commentary from a variety of BYU scholars and two Arab authorities.<sup>41</sup>

The status of a motion picture version with the working title “*A Voice from the Dust: Journey to the Promised Land*,” first mooted in 2002, remains unclear at present. Neither of these films achieved a truly comprehensive treatment of the subject, and neither was entirely free from errors and unwarranted speculation. This was particularly true with regard to the Lehite journey from Nahom to Bountiful. Ignoring the flat plateau providing access directly “eastward” from Nahom to the coast, the better-known and more photogenic sites SE of Nahom such as Timna, Shabwah and the Hadhramaut valley were instead prominently featured in *Journey of Faith*. Both Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot were presented as possible Bountiful sites, the latter clearly favored in the location filming (done in Oman in October 2004) and in the commentary by Noel B. Reynolds and Peter Johnson. Artwork depicting Nephi’s Bountiful in the film and book was also modeled on Kharfot.

Late in 2014 a privately-made TV documentary titled *Lehi in Arabia: The Search For Nephi’s Bountiful* was completed. The 75 minute film presents the Lehite account against the background of the LDS exploration of the Near East that has enabled the story to emerge from obscurity.<sup>42</sup>



## Lehi’s Trail Tourism

With the identification of plausible sites for the primary locations on the Lehiite journey, Nahom and Bountiful, the first LDS tourism has begun in the area. A scattering of LDS visitors have made their way to Kharfot since 1992, including small groups of members living in the Gulf and at least one General Authority. In October 1999, and again in September 2000, the first LDS tour groups retraced Lehi’s journey from Jerusalem to Bountiful, visiting Israel, Jordan, Yemen and Oman without incident. Due to the escalation of unrest in Yemen, LDS tour groups since 2000 have visited only the sites in Israel, Jordan and Oman, including both “Bountiful” possibilities. It is hoped that tours of the full trail will resume in the future.<sup>43</sup>



LDS tour groups, such as these in Oman in 2000 and in 2013, are able to safely visit many of the general areas of Lehi and Sariah’s journey.

## Conclusion

While research and field work at the Nahom and Bountiful sites will be on-going for years to come, a strong argument can now be made that both locations are no longer merely conjectural. In the case of Nahom, the dating is substantiated by the most powerful evidence of all: inscriptional; at Khor Kharfot, the weight of support rests upon the way that the place uniquely meets a very detailed scriptural paradigm.

For the longest part of Lehi’s journey from Jerusalem to Nahom more work remains to be done before the remainder of Nephi’s account can be firmly correlated with the modern map. In particular, little competent research has been conducted from Eilat/Aqaba to Nahom, primarily due to access difficulties. Some LDS commentary on these topics, however, has tended to diminish the significance of Book of Mormon studies rather than enhance it. If not competently researched, even well-intentioned writing ultimately often degrades scripture; rather than letting the Book of Mormon speak for itself, geography, history, logic and commonsense are often abandoned in such efforts to force the facts to fit preconceptions and pet theories. Such writings are typically characterized by selective use of scripture, lack of familiarity with scholarly sources and by extravagant claims.<sup>44</sup>

Invariably, such writers also misunderstand the nature of faith and the limitations of evidence, forgetting that ultimately the Book of Mormon, like other sacred gifts, can never be “proved” in any meaningful, objective, sense. No matter how compelling they may be, external evidences can *only* establish plausibility. Plausibility then encourages people to consider spiritual claims and also validates the testimony of those who, having received a spiritual confirmation through the method prescribed by Moroni, already accept the Book as true. As Hugh Nibley succinctly stated years ago:

*The evidence that will prove or disprove the Book of Mormon does not exist.*<sup>45</sup>

More recently, Apostle Neal A. Maxwell stated:

*It is my opinion that all scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, will remain in the realm of faith. Science will not be able to prove or disprove holy writ. However, enough plausible evidence will come forth to prevent scoffers from having a field day, but not enough to remove the requirement of faith.*<sup>46</sup>

**The steady, on-going research being done by serious Book of Mormon scholars continues to bear fruit and bodes well for the future. The Book of Mormon is no longer assailed by critics with impunity. However, as with the Bible, while many aspects of the Book of Mormon now find support in various scholarly fields, others do not. Although many Latter-day Saints remain unaware of its depth and breadth, a steady convergence of supportive evidence continues to emerge. It may not be going too far to state that the Book of Mormon's Old World setting is now as plausibly established as that of the Old and New Testaments.**



This overview shows the key locations for the Lehite land journey.

## NOTES

1. *Alexander Campbell* (1788-1866), minister of an extreme Baptist splinter group, *The Disciples of Christ*, published his critique “Delusions” on February 7, 1831 in the *Millennial Harbinger* and as a pamphlet in Boston the following year.
2. *Oliver Cowdery’s* earlier published response to *Campbell’s* writing was limited to only some of the points that had been raised. Other issues awaited *Orson Pratt’s* work. Both writings are among the collection “19<sup>th</sup> Century Publications about the Book of Mormon (1829-1844),” now searchable at [www.lib.byu.edu/dlib/bompublications/](http://www.lib.byu.edu/dlib/bompublications/).
3. *Joseph Smith’s* comments published in *Times & Seasons* 3 (October 1, 1842), 927 about the ruins in southern Mexico and Guatemala possibly being connected to the *Book of Mormon* account referred to a popular book by *John L. Stephens*, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* 2 vols. (New York City: Harper & Brothers, 1841-43), recently re-released by several publishers in the UK and the US.

*Joseph Smith’s* own statements show that he was quite open to a limited geographical setting rather than a hemispheric one. While we cannot be sure that this statement was personally penned by him, it certainly had at least his editorial approval.

4. A summary of *Paul Henning’s* contributions to *Book of Mormon* archaeology is *Robert W. Fullmer*, “*Paul Henning: The First Mormon Archaeologist*” *JBMS* 9/1 (2000), 64-65.
5. The names **Reynolds and Sjodahl** are usually linked because of their attribution as co-authors of the 7 volume *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, however see *Bruce A. Van Orden’s* review, “*Every City, Hill, River, Valley, and Person: Review of [George Reynold’s] Book of Mormon Dictionary*” in *Review of Books* 8/1 (1996), 51-60. The unauthorized merging, by a *Reynolds* descendant, of materials from the two scholars in no way detracts from the contributions of each scholar to our understanding of the *Book of Mormon*.

**Brigham H. Robert’s** *New Witnesses for God* was published early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Some of his work has been misused in recent years by anti-Mormon and cultural-Mormon writers in an attempt to cast doubt on *Robert’s* belief in the *Book of Mormon* being authentically ancient. Consult the *FARMS* and *FAIRLDS* websites for a range of responses, for example *Davis Bitton*, “*B. H. Roberts and Book of Mormon Scholarship*” in *JBMS* 8/2 (1999), 60-69 and *Daniel Peterson*, “*Yet More Abuse of B. H. Roberts*” *FARMS Review of Books* 9/1 (1997), 69-87.

**Sidney B. Sperry’s** work is ably summarized in the special issue of *JBMS* 4/1 (1995), containing most of his writing on *Book of Mormon* subjects and a full bibliography,

287-296. *The Sidney B. Sperry Symposium at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah* annually acts as a fitting reminder of his wide-ranging contributions.

6. The wide-ranging corpus of **Hugh W. Nibley** (1910-2005) is published as the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (CWHN)* series, totaling 19 volumes (1986-2010). On *Nibley’s* *Arabian parallels to Nephi’s* account as his “most important” contribution to *Book of Mormon* research; see *John W. Welch* “*Hugh Nibley and the Book of Mormon*,” *ENSIGN* (April 1985), 50. The quotes by *Nibley* and *Elder Maxwell* come from a *Nibley* son-in-law, *Boyd Peterson*, in ““*Something to Move Mountains*”: *The Book of Mormon in Hugh Nibley’s Correspondence*” *JBMS* 6/2 (1997), 1-25.
7. **John L. Sorenson**, *Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book* (2013) is an exhaustive compilation of evidence supporting the *Book of Mormon* as authentic *New World* history and a focused examination of the internal *New World* geography. It follows and enlarges his *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (*Salt Lake City: Deseret Book & FARMS*, 1985) and *Mormon’s Map* (*Provo: FARMS*, 2000).

*Sorenson* authored an under-appreciated two part summary of the *Book of Mormon’s* *New World* issues in his “*Digging into the Book of Mormon: Our Changing Understanding of Ancient America and Its Scripture*” published in the *ENSIGN* magazine (September, October, 1984). Explicitly referring to the limited *Mesoamerican* geography and its requirement for the original *Hill Cumorah* to be located in *Central America*, publication of this article suggests that his conclusions had at least quasi-official acceptance.

Thorough discussions of the developments in *Book of Mormon* archaeology by *LDS* and anti-*LDS* writers alike can be found in *Terryl L. Givens*, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* and by *Louis C. Midgley*, “*Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Critics and Their Theories*” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, 101-139. Another wide-ranging treatment that includes references to *B. H. Roberts*, *Nahom* and *Bountiful* is the review by *Matthew Roper*, “*Unanswered Mormon Scholars: Review of Answering Mormon Scholars: A Response to Criticism Raised by Mormon Defenders*, [by] *Jerald and Sandra Tanner*” in *FARMS Review of Books* 9/1 (1997), 87-145.

8. See the account by *Daniel Peterson* “*On the New World Archaeological Foundation*” in *The FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004), 221-233. *Mesoamerican* fieldwork has been published by *BYU* faculty through the *Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies*, based in *Los Angeles*, [www.famsi.org](http://www.famsi.org).

9. *The major addresses concerning the Book of Mormon by Ezra Taft Benson (from April 1975 to October 1987) are found in his compilation A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-Day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988). For analysis of how the Book of Mormon has been increasingly used by Latter-day Saints as it was intended, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century” BYU Studies 38/2 (1999), 6-47.*
10. *A useful summary of these developments is Daniel C. Peterson’s August 2012 essay “The Role of Apologetics in Mormon Studies” available at [www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-role-of-apologetics-in-mormon-studies](http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-role-of-apologetics-in-mormon-studies)*
11. *Lynn and Hope Hilton, “In Search of Lehi’s Trail” in the ENSIGN (September and October, 1976).*
12. *Lynn and Hope Hilton, In Search of Lehi’s Trail (book).*
13. *Lynn and Hope Hilton, Discovering Lehi: New Evidence of Lehi and Nephi in Arabia. This book was reviewed by the author in the FARMS Review of Books 9/1 (1997), 15-24, available at <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1441&index=5>*
14. *Ross T. Christensen, “The Place Called Nahom” ENSIGN (August, 1978), 73 under “Comment,” accessible at [www.lds.org/ensign/1978/08/comment?lang=eng](http://www.lds.org/ensign/1978/08/comment?lang=eng) Christensen later recalled the event, which happened as he and his wife Ruth participated in an excavation at Tel Bathsheba in Israel. In August 1977 they were given Thorkild Hansen’s book Arabia Felix by a departing fellow volunteer, the Rev. David Hunsberger, a minister from Pennsylvania wishing to lighten his luggage. Reading the book in Jerusalem, Christensen said it “came to me immediately” that the book’s map showing the district of NeHHM (page 232-3) referred to the Book of Mormon NaHoM. Christensen had mentioned the matter briefly in the 1977 Symposium of the Scriptures in Provo before writing his letter to the ENSIGN.*
15. *Part 3 of Aston and Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, contains accounts of the 1993 Oman expeditions. The 8 page assessment made by geologist Dr William Christiansen, “Geology of Wadi Sayq” remains unpublished. Copy in possession of author.*
16. *Nigel Groom, “The Periplus, Pliny and Arabia” in Arabian archaeology and epigraphy 6 (1995), 184-185.*
17. *Not all scholars agree. The possibility that Khor Kharfot may have been the trading center “Omanum Emporium” rather than “Moscha” has been suggested by von Wissman in his 1963 map Das Vorislamische Arabien and more recently by H. Stewart Edgell (email correspondence with the author, March 2006). Edgell sees Ptolemy’s association of the trading center with a river outlet (“Ormanos Potamos Exbolai”) and Sprenger’s judgment that it lay on “dem bache Charyfot” (“the brook of Charyfot”), in A. Sprenger, Die Alte Geographie Arabiens (Bern, 1875) as suggesting a coastal river outlet such as Kharfot rather than an inland location. See Edgell’s paper “The myth of the “lost city of the Arabian Sands” in PSAS 34 (2004), 113.*
18. *Noel B. Reynolds, “Shedding New Light on Ancient Origins” address delivered May 27, 1997 at a BYU Assembly, available at <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/home/transcripts> and later published in Brigham Young Magazine 52/1 (Provo: BYU, Spring 1998), 36-45 is also available on video as “The Authorship of the Book of Mormon” from FARMS. See his earlier article in Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins. The second quotation comes from Reynold’s article, “Lehi’s Journey Updated” in the sequel, Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins, 379-390. Similar material was used in Reynold’s presentation to BYU faculty and staff in March 2004, as reported by FARMS in Insights 24/2 (1994).*  
*Richard L. Bushman’s 2007 work Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, 93 lists discovery of a plausible Bountiful site (Kharfot) as lending credence to the Book of Mormon’s Old World account.*
19. *Eugene E. Clark, “A Preliminary Study of the Geology and Mineral Resources of Dhofar, the Sultanate of Oman” Preliminary Report CLR-95 (Provo: FARMS, 1995). The introduction by Noel B. Reynolds offers background, identifying, once again, Kharfot as “a location that appears to meet all the criteria one can infer from the text of the Book of Mormon.”*
20. *See “Searching for Land Bountiful” Church News, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, Nov 14, 1998), 8, 9, 12 and “Planning Research on Oman: The End of Lehi’s Trail” JBMS 7/1 (1998), 12-21 and J. Lee Simons, “Tracing History in Arabian Bountiful” Bridges: 1999-2000 Annual Report Issue (Provo: David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Brigham Young University), 18-22. For a photo-essay showing the organization of the October 2009 expedition to Khor Kharfot, see Warren P. Aston, “Exploring Nephi’s Bountiful: Behind the Scenes of an Expedition” published March 7 2011 in Meridian Magazine, available at [www.ldsmag.com/component/zine/article/7599?ac=1](http://www.ldsmag.com/component/zine/article/7599?ac=1)*
21. *The 1999 discovery of at least two plant species previously unattested in Dhofar will be reported at a future date by BYU botanist Loreen Allphin-Woolstenhulme.*
22. *W. Revell Phillips, “Metals of the Book of Mormon” JBMS 9/2 (2000), 36-43, discusses the Oman findings. See also a report “Iron Ore Occurrences in Oman” Insights 20/5 (2000). The only report of the geological visits by the BYU teams to date*

- is Jason G. Aase, "Geology of a Carbonate Rich Diatreme-like Structure, Marbat area, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman: A Reconnaissance Study" a Master's thesis. In discussing the possible Book of Mormon connection, Appendix D of the paper has several factual errors and misrepresents what the Book of Mormon says about "ore." The paper was accepted November 18, 2004 at BYU Provo and is available at: [www.geology.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2004-Aase-Jason-G.pdf](http://www.geology.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2004-Aase-Jason-G.pdf)
23. Reported at [www.birdsoman.com/lob16-update.html](http://www.birdsoman.com/lob16-update.html) (item # 831 A). The regularly updated book by Jens Eriksen and Reginald Victor, *Oman Bird List, Edition 7* (Muscat: Center for Environmental Studies and Research, Sultan Qaboos University, October 2013) is the benchmark for avian species in Oman. The Malachite Kingfisher is pictured on p. 154 and Dr Carr's observations of it at Kharfot in 2000 noted within.
  24. Warren P. Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom" *JBMS* 10/2 (2001), 56-61. A human interest account of the altar discovery was published January 5, 2011 by *Meridian Magazine* as "The First Archaeological Support for the Book of Mormon" at [www.ldsmag.com/component/zine/article/7240](http://www.ldsmag.com/component/zine/article/7240)
  25. *JBMS* 15/2 (2006), 78-83.
  26. The BYU excavation was reported by William D. Glanzman, "South Arabian Pottery in Khor Mughsayl, Oman: An Early Settlement Connection" in Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, Carl Griffin, eds. *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in honor of S. Kent Brown* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2012), 157-174. Notes 4, 9, 27 and 29 of the essay cite the 4 official reports which, however, remain unpublished as at early 2015.
  27. The Italian Mission To Oman (IMTO)'s University of Pisa findings are reported at "Khor Mughsayl: Preliminary Report, February-March, 2013 (KM13A)" at [http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/fileadmin/Arabia\\_Antica\\_New/Projects/Khor\\_Roril/KM13\\_Report.pdf](http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/fileadmin/Arabia_Antica_New/Projects/Khor_Roril/KM13_Report.pdf)
  28. On phytoliths, see T. Ball, G. Baird, A. al-Fassi, S. Ghazanfar, L. Woolstenhulme, "A survey of phytoliths produced by the vegetation of Dhofar, Oman" in M. Madella, D. Zurro, eds. *Plants, People and Places – Recent Studies in Phytolith Analysis* (Oxford, UK: David Brown Book Co, 2007), 29-40; Terry B. Ball et al. "Phytoliths Produced by the Vegetation of the Sub-Tropical Coastal Region of Dhofar, Oman" a CD distributed 2002 by The Society for Phytolith Research, now available as "The Dhofar Phytolith Reference Collection" at [www.phytolithsociety.org](http://www.phytolithsociety.org). No attempt has yet been made to sample phytoliths from Kharfot in particular. Some useful commentary is found in Terry B. Ball & Wilford M. Hess, "Agriculture in Lehi's World: Some Textual, Historical, Archaeological, and Botanical Insights" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 149-192.
  29. A March 31, 2012 email from Dr Reginald Victor, Department of Biology, Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat advised that his 2000 study "Biodiversity Conservation in Oman: Current Status and Future Options" at [www.nizwa.net/enu/biodiversity/biodiversity.html](http://www.nizwa.net/enu/biodiversity/biodiversity.html) still reflects the current situation.  
See also M. Hall et al. "Arabia's Last Forests Under Threat, 11" in *Edinburgh Journal of Botany* 66/2 (Edinburgh: Royal Botanic Garden, 2009), 263-281 and Matthew Hall & Anthony G. Miller, "Strategic requirements for plant conservation in the Arabian Peninsula" in *Supplementum 3: "Biodiversity Conservation in the Arabian Peninsula," of Zoology in the Middle East* (Heidelberg: Kasperek Verlag, 2011), 169-182.  
See Warren P. Aston, "Arabia's Hidden Valley: A unique habitat in Dhofar captures Arabia's past" in *Wildlife Middle East News* vol. 6 no. 4 (Dubai: WMENews, March 2013), 2-4 and front cover. PDF available online: [www.wmenews.com/newsletters/1366812925wmenews\\_V6\\_I4\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wmenews.com/newsletters/1366812925wmenews_V6_I4_eng.pdf) (English) and [www.wmenews.com/newsletters/1366812925WMENewsV6I4\\_ar.pdf](http://www.wmenews.com/newsletters/1366812925WMENewsV6I4_ar.pdf) (Arabic). This article also appeared May 28, 2013 with added commentary as "Why Arabia's Hidden Valley is the Best Candidate for Bountiful" in *Meridian Magazine* at <http://ldsmag.com/article-1-12748/>
  30. The Foundation was publicly introduced, along with a funding drive, by a series of articles published in *Meridian Magazine* beginning late September 2014; see "Exploring Nephi's Bountiful: All Article Links" in *Meridian Magazine* at <http://ldsmag.com/article-1-14965/>
  31. Reported November 2, 2014 as "Some Thoughts from Nephi's Land of Bountiful in *Meridian Magazine* at <http://ldsmag.com/reflections-from-nephis-land-of-bountiful>.
  32. See Ali Ahmed Mahash Al-Shahri & Geraldine M. H. King, *The Dhofar Epigraphic Project: A Description of the Inscriptions Recorded in 1991 and 1992* available at: [http://krc2.orient.ox.ac.uk/aalc/images/documents/mcam/dhofar\\_epigraphic\\_project.pdf](http://krc2.orient.ox.ac.uk/aalc/images/documents/mcam/dhofar_epigraphic_project.pdf)
  33. Tom Vosmer, "Old Ships' Bones and Anchor Stones: Maritime Ethnology and Archaeology in Oman" in *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies* (Spring 2000), 19-23.
  34. Miranda Morris, "Soqatra and its place in South Arabia" in *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies* (Spring 2000), 9-13.

35. *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies* (Spring 1999), 30 reports the joint coastal project.
36. William D. Glanzman, “Digging Deeper: the results of the first season of activities of the AFSM (American Foundation for the Study of man) on the Mahram Bilqis, Marib” *PSAS* 28 (1999) and an update concerning ongoing work into Lehyanite inscriptions, *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies* (Spring 2000), 28.
37. The Oman rock art project is also noted in the *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies* (Spring 2000), 28. Valuable documentation of physical and linguistic cultural traces of early Dhofar is documented by Omani epigrapher Ali Ahmed Mahash al-Shabri, *The Language of ‘Aad*. See also his useful illustrated paper “Recent Epigraphic Discoveries in Dhofar” in *PSAS* 21 (1991), 173-191.
38. The reports of the British Exploring Society fieldwork for 2012 are presented in “A Rapid Biodiversity Assessment of Wadi Sayq, Dhofar Province, Oman” (*British Exploring Society and Office for Conservation of the Environment: publication pending, copy in author’s possession*) and for 2013 at: <http://oman2014.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/oman-science-report-2013.pdf>.
- Other papers also result. Examples include studies of Dragon Flies made in 2012 and 2013, primarily at Khor Kharfot; see Lawrence Ball, “An Investigation of Odonate Communities within Wadi Sayq, Dhofar Province, Oman [Insecta: Odonata],” in *Check List: The Journal of Biodiversity Data* 10/4 (Sao Paulo: CRIA, 2014), 857-863 and a summary of all bird data to date in Lawrence Ball, Waheed al Fazari & James Borrell, “Birds of Wadi Sayq, Dhofar, Oman: British Exploring Society expeditions January-March 2012 and 2013,” in *Sandgrouse* vol. 37 (1) (Bedfordshire: Ornithological Society of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Spring 2015), 2-12 and accessible at [www.jamesborrell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Ball-et-al\\_Sandgrouse-37-2-12-2015.pdf](http://www.jamesborrell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Ball-et-al_Sandgrouse-37-2-12-2015.pdf).
39. Juris Zarins, *The Land of Incense*, referencing W. P & M. J Aston, *And We Called the Place Bountiful: The End of Lehi’s Arabian Journey* (1991), 128. Archaeological work in Oman under the direction of Zarins ended mid-2012.
- Coordinated by Juris Zarins and Lynne Newton, the *Atlas of Archaeological Survey in Governorate of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman* (Muscat: Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, 2013) summarizes archaeological undertakings in Dhofar. However, it contains numerous editing errors and almost completely neglects Khor Kharfot, the second-largest archaeological site in Dhofar. Kharfot’s name is misspelled and listed as an “Iron Age” site (p. 58), a sweeping categorization based only on brief observation that fails to account for the wide range of sites.
40. The report of a comprehensive survey of the ancient port of Qalhat in north-eastern Oman as reported by marine archaeologist Tom Vosmer in “Qalhat, an ancient port of Oman: results of the first mission” in *PSAS* 34 (2004), 389-404 should be considered a model of what can be achieved toward understanding the past at such a site. Also see Tom Vosmer et al, “Oman Maritime Heritage Project Field Report 1998,” *Western Australian Maritime Museum Report No. 144*, available at [http://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/sites/default/files/no.144/oman\\_herit\\_proj.pdf](http://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/sites/default/files/no.144/oman_herit_proj.pdf)
41. Brown, S. Kent & Johnson, Peter. eds. *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land* (Provo: NAMIRS, 2006), accompanied by a DVD titled “A Filmmaking Odyssey: The Making of Journey of Faith.” The film website is <http://journeyoffaithfilms.com/>.
42. *Lehi in Arabia* was produced by Aston Productions of Brisbane, Australia. [www.lehiinarabia.com](http://www.lehiinarabia.com)
43. See [www.discovernephisbountiful.com](http://www.discovernephisbountiful.com).
44. Examples in this genre include:
- Eugene L. Peay, *The Lands of Zarahemla: A Book of Mormon Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Northwest, 1993), 38-46 offers perhaps the most novel geographical suggestion yet made in connection with the Book of Mormon. The book suggests that after traversing central Arabia, Lehi traveled overland across India and then across Southeast Asia, building vessels several times in order to cross the Arabian Gulf and such rivers as the Ganges, eventually finding “Bountiful” in either Hong Kong or Macau harbor. This book was reviewed by Les Campbell in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994), 139-145.
- Robert A. Pate’s *Mapping the Book of Mormon* (Logan, UT: privately published, 2002) makes a proposal, based on supposed linguistic connections between various places, for Lehi sailing from the Yemen coast. Its map of the final stage of Lehi’s journey (p 52) and the commentary on Nahom and Bountiful (p 50-54) betrays a lack of awareness of and disregard for long-published research, ignoring almost all other reference material. Pate’s book was briefly reviewed by Allen J. Christenson, “Linguistic Puzzles Still Unresolved” in *The FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004), 107-111, but without any reference to its Old World ideas.
- George Potter and Richard Wellington’s 2003 volume, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, is the most recent and most useful of these four works. It contains some useful information on the early stages of the Lehite journey, but its overall value is greatly reduced by the incorrect and sometimes nonsensical claims made. The discussion concerning Nahom (never visited by the authors) is unforgivably inadequate and the section on Bountiful, trivializing elements of Nephi’s text, has lost all semblance of objectivity.

The reader is steered toward a pre-determined conclusion in favor of the author's favored site, Khor Rori via multiple factually incorrect assertions about Kharfot (which the authors had also never, to that point, visited). This book was reviewed and its key assumptions challenged by archaeologist Jeffrey R. Chadwick in "The Wrong Place for Lehi's Trail and the Valley of Lemuel" in *The FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005), 197-215. However, a full critique of the book's treatment of the later stages of Lehi's journey remains to be published.

Factual errors and claims by these authors were perpetuated, and added to, in their article "Lehi's Trail: From the Valley of Lemuel to Nephi's Harbor" in *JBMS* 15/2 (2006), 26-43. These errors and those in another article proposing Khor Mughsayl as a possible Bountiful were noted in Warren P. Aston, "Identifying Our Best Candidate for Nephi's Bountiful," *JBMRS* 17/1-2 (2008), 58-64.

More than 70 geographical models have been proposed over the years for the setting of the Book of Mormon, most focusing on the New World that occupies the majority of the Book of Mormon account. While most are based on a North American setting, periodically such places as South America, the Malay Peninsula in Asia and Eritrea in Africa have been proposed.

In 2013, BYU archaeologist Mark Alan Wright made a case for a geography initially centered in Mesoamerica, but one that later expanded northwards (as suggested in Alma 63:4 for example) in his "Heartland as Hinterland: A Look at Book of Mormon Geography," in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015), 111-129; available at [www.mormoninterpreter.com/heartland-as-hinterland-the-mesoamerican-core-and-north-american-periphery-of-book-of-mormon-geography/#more-6367](http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/heartland-as-hinterland-the-mesoamerican-core-and-north-american-periphery-of-book-of-mormon-geography/#more-6367)

45. Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, CWHN 7: xiv. On the roles of evidence and faith see John W. Welch, "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith" in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, 17-53. On historicity issues, see Robert L. Millet, "The Book of Mormon, Historicity, & Faith" *JBMS* 2/2 (1995), 1-13. For a discussion on the state of archeological support for the Book of Mormon and the limitations of such evidence, see BYU archaeologist and head of the New World Archaeological Foundation, John E. Clark, in "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief" a 2004 forum address delivered at BYU Provo, available in *JBMS* 14/2 (2005), 38-49. See John E. Clark, Wade Arden, Matthew Roper, "Debating the Foundations of Mormonism: The Book of Mormon and Archaeology" at [www.fairlds.org/FAIR\\_Conferences/2005\\_Debating\\_the\\_Foundations\\_of\\_Mormonism.html](http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2005_Debating_the_Foundations_of_Mormonism.html) A more general summary of Book of Mormon scholarship is John-Charles Duffy, "Mapping Book of Mormon Historicity Debates" in *Sunstone* 151 (Oct 2008),

36-62; 152 (Dec 2008), 46-61. For discussions on the pitfalls of pseudo-scholarship see BYU archaeologist John L. Sorenson's "Instant Expertise on Book of Mormon Archaeology" in *BYU Studies* 16/3 (Spring 1976) 429-431 and BYU art-historian Martin Raish, "All That Glitters: Uncovering Fool's Gold in Book of Mormon Archaeology" in *Sunstone* 6/1 (Jan-Feb 1981), 10-15. Although reviewing two books on the New World setting of the Book of Mormon, Brant Gardner's "Too Good To Be True: Questionable Archaeology And The Book of Mormon" discusses principles that are also relevant to the Old World at <http://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/gardner-too-good-to-be-true.pdf>

46. Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 4. See also Dallin H. Oaks, also of the Twelve, in "The Historicity of the Book of Mormon" in Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed. *Historicity and the Latter-day Scriptures* (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 239.