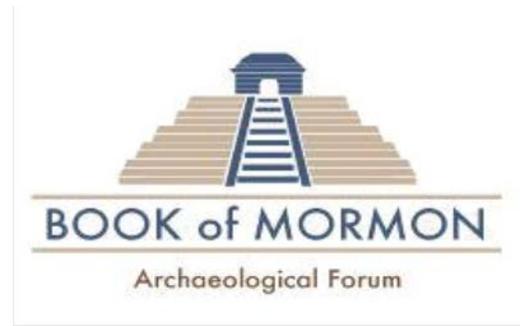




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Book of Mormon Objective Geographic Standard No. 5: Relationships of Cities of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, the Hill North of Shilom, the Narrow Strip of Wilderness, and the Waters of Mormon

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Abstract: This article is the fifth of a series of articles that will provide readers and students of Book of Mormon with specific identifiable geographic standards without reference to any real world geography. The specific standard identified in this article will be referred to hereafter as Geographic Standard No. 5 and will focus on the relationships among the cities of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, the hill north of Shilom, the narrow strip of wilderness, and the Waters of Mormon. Following a discussion of this objective standard, currently proposed models will be compared with this standard and the areas where this standard has not been followed will be shown and discussed.



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**Book of Mormon Objective Geographic Standard No. 5:
Relationships of Cities of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, the Hill North of Shilom,
the Narrow Strip of Wilderness, and the Waters of Mormon**

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This article is the fifth of a series of articles that will provide readers and students of Book of Mormon with specific identifiable geographic standards without reference to any real world geography. The specific standard identified in this article will be referred to hereafter as Geographic Standard No. 5 and will focus on the relationships among the cities of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, the hill north of Shilom, the narrow strip of wilderness, and the Waters of Mormon. Following a discussion of this objective standard, currently proposed models will be compared with this standard and the areas where this standard has not been followed will be shown and discussed.

Joseph Smith stated that the Book of Mormon (1) “was the most correct of any book on earth”¹ and (2) “that it says what it means and means what it says.”² Surely it was not translated by revelation so that only “scholars” could understand it. It doesn’t take intricate chiasmic structures—although they are fascinating and helpful—to understand it. It was translated into the English language by Joseph Smith so that unsophisticated readers could understand it. The Book of Mormon, including its geography, should be able to be understood by even the ordinary, reasonable reader.

Any reader of the Book of Mormon, knowing that Nephi correctly knew that the east side of the Red Sea ran in a “*south-southeast*” direction (1Nephi 16:13), should believe that the writers of the Book of Mormon knew and correctly used cardinal directions. Even more importantly, the average reader would reasonably believe that the Lord would not allow Joseph Smith to deceive people by using the direction of east and secretly mean north. There is no deception in the Book of Mormon.

In the face of so many divisive and vastly different models, maps, books, etc. that seem to be increasing exponentially regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon, what seems to be needed and helpful— for those intent on locating the lands of the Book of Mormon— are some objective geographic standards that are specifically described in the Book of Mormon. All proposed models would then have to conform to these standards or be deemed invalid when applied to that particular standard. Several of these specific geographic standards are described in the Book of Mormon.

The relationships described in Geographic Standard No. 5 must apply —give or take a couple of miles and directional variations of a few degrees— regardless of where a proponent geographically places the city of Nephi, the city of Shilom, the city of Shemlon, the hill north of Shilom, the narrow strip of wilderness, or the waters of Mormon. In the discussion that follows, all Book of Mormon scriptures will be italicized, and emphasis will be shown via bolding.

One day's travel will be deemed to be about ten air miles. (See Joseph and Blake Allen's and Kirk Magleby's excellent explanations).³

Relevant Objective Geographic Facts from the Book of Mormon

The following are relevant geographic facts and scripturally provable conclusions associated with the relationships among the above stated areas.

1. City of Nephi was located

- a. south of the narrow strip of wilderness (Alma 22:27–34).
- b. south of Shilom (Mosiah 11:12, 9:15; Mosiah 22:8,11).
- c. within eyesight of Shilom one to two miles (Mosiah 1:12).
- d. within eyesight of Shemlon, two to three miles (Mosiah 11:12-13). Shemlon had to have been a little farther from Nephi than Shilom because when the Lamanites were threatening, coming from Shemlon, Zeniff had time to secrete his people so they could ambush the Lamanite army (Mosiah 10: 8-10).
- e. within eyesight of the hill north of Shilom, three to five miles (Mosiah 11:12-13).
- f. therefore, within in eyesight of the narrow strip of wilderness about three to ten miles.
- g. within half day's distance from the waters of Mormon, four to six miles (Mosiah 18:32-34).
- f. Nephi cannot be located north of Shilom because a battle field was located between Shilom and the hill north of Shilom (Mosiah 10:8-10).

2. Shilom was located

- a. northerly of Nephi (Mosiah 11:12).
- b. Since there was a battle area north of Shilom that was up in elevation from both Shilom and Shemlon then it seems reasonable that the hill north of Shilom was a bit farther from Shemlon than from Shilom because Zeniff had time in his odd age to locate and hide his people and ambush the Lamanite army north and up in elevation from Shilom but between Shilom and the hill north of Shilom (Mosiah 10:8–10).
- c. Therefore, Nephi could not have been located north of Shilom.

3. The hill north of Shilom was located

- a. north of the city/land of Shilom (Mosiah 7: 16).
- b. within or very close to the narrow strip of wilderness (Mosiah 7:4–6, 16, 10:8, 11:13)
- c. within eyesight of Shilom (Mosiah 11:13) one to three miles
- d. within eyesight of city of Nephi (Mosiah 11:12) three to five miles.

4. Between Shilom and Nephi

- a. there was a watering area where fields and pastures were located (Mosiah 9:14-15).
- b. This agricultural area must have been located closer to Nephi than to Shilom because when the Lamanites attacked the Nephites in their fields—located south of Shilom— and took their corn they fled to the walled city of Nephi— instead of to the walled city of Shilom—for protection (Mosiah 9:14–15).

4. **Shemlon was located:**

- a. within eyesight of the temple at Nephi (Mosiah 19: 6; 11:12).
- b. Therefore, Shemlon was located about three miles from Nephi
- c. probably eastward from Nephi.

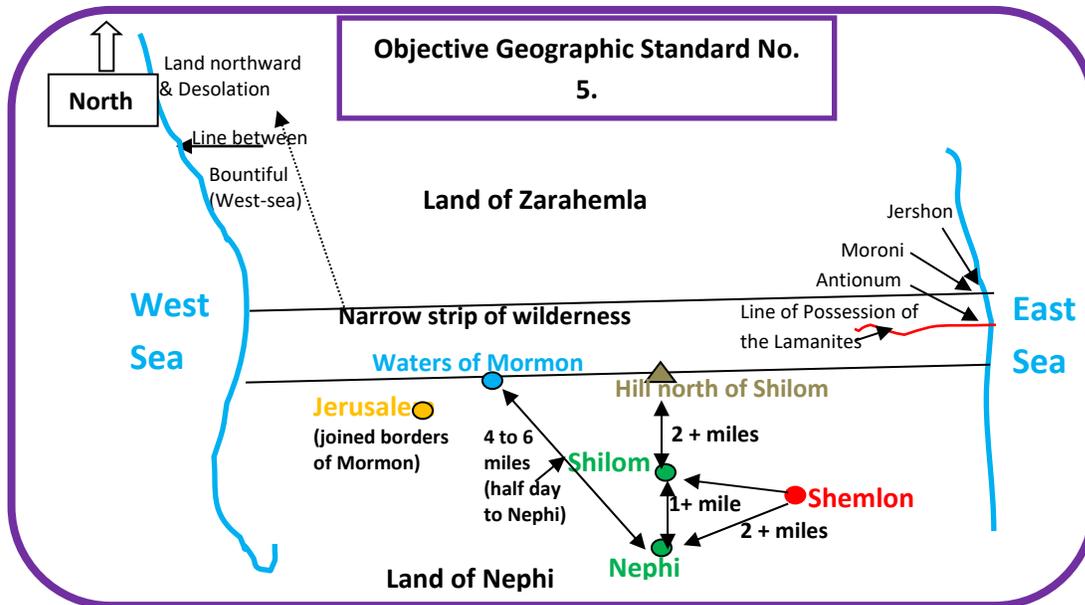
5. **The waters of Mormon were located:**

- a. within not more than a half day's journey— four to six miles from Nephi— because people from the city of Nephi could visit the waters of Mormon and return home the same day (Mosiah 18:5-7,16, 25, 30–35).
- b. adjacent to, if not within, the narrow strip of wilderness (Mosiah18:34, 23:1-4, 24-25).
- c. within the "*borders of the land*" (Mosiah 18:4, 31) being that land *that* King Noah controlled with the consent of the king of the Lamanites, identified here as the borders of the city/lands of Nephi/Shilom. Mormon says that King Laman gave Zeniff "*the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom; and the land round about*" (Mosiah7:21).
- d. It had to be a short distance because Alma taught the people of Nephi, and perhaps Shilom, privately in their homes in the night time and then hid himself during the "*daytime*" in the thicket of small trees located near the waters of Mormon from the daily "*searches of the King [Noah]*" (Mosiah 18:5). How could daily searches by King Noah have been made from any distance over a half day's distance from the city of Nephi?
- e. very close to where the King resided because in one day the following occurred (1) the King sent servants to watch people assembling to the waters of Mormon to "*hear the word of the Lord*" (2) the servants apprized the king of where the people were assembling at the waters of Mormon (3) The King sent his army to destroy them (4) Alma and his 450 people fled into the wilderness (Mosiah 18:31–35)

6. **City of Jerusalem was located**

- a. near the borders of Mormon (Alma 21:1) and therefore about a half day's distance from Nephi.
- b. The sons of Mosiah journeyed in the narrow strip of wilderness until they came to the "*borders of the land of the Lamanites*" within the narrow strip of wilderness (Mosiah 28:9; Alma 21:1).
- c. From there they separated each going to a different city, Aaron going to Jerusalem.
- d. Therefore, Jerusalem must be located near the narrow strip of wilderness and also near the waters of Mormon which was located within a half day's journey from, and northward from, Nephi. This is confirmed because when Alma and his 450 followers fled the waters of Mormon they fled directly into the narrow strip of wilderness (Mosiah 18:34), which was located north of the "valley" of Nephi.

The Geographic Standard No. 5, therefore, graphically looks approximately like the following



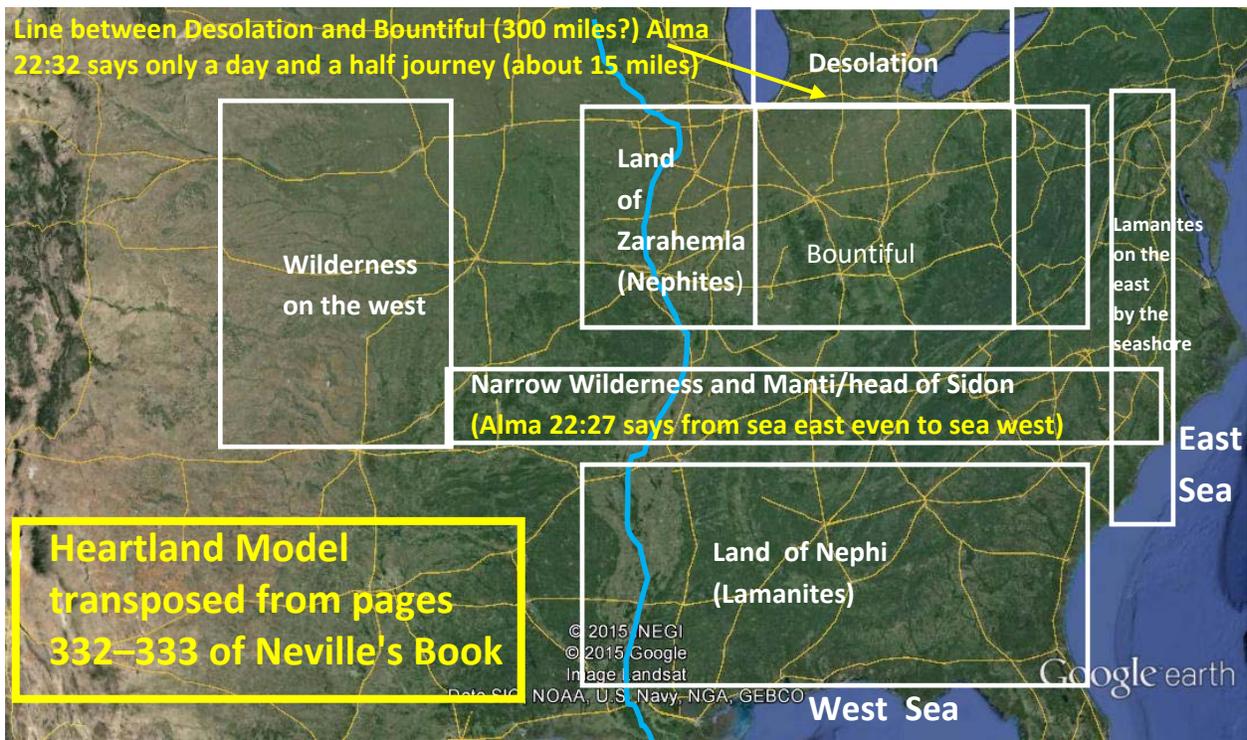
Comparisons to Several Currently Proposed Models

Applying this standard to various proposed models or maps results in the following analysis and conclusions:

The Heartland Theory ⁴

This Model does not attempt to locate the specific cities of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, Jerusalem or the hill north of Shilom, or the waters of Mormon. These locations are in a specific defined relationship identified in the Book of Mormon and therefore, should be a part of any theory or proposed model. Failing to do this makes this model inaccurate as to Geographic Standard No. 5.

Jonathan Neville makes an attempt to make a map of the North American Model but it is so general and vague and does not even identify the locations described in Geographic Standard No. 5 as is reflected in his proposed map of the geography of the lands of the Book of Mormon in North America at page 332—transposed in white by the author to a google map. Author's comments are in yellow.

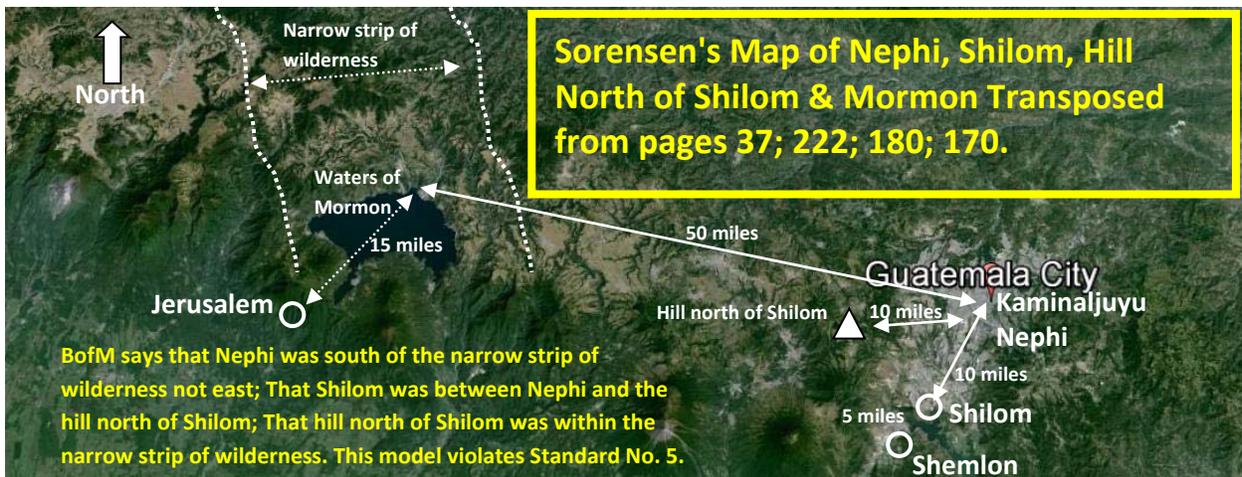


Until the proponents of the Heartland Model can reasonably show where the objective geographic indicators— that are specifically described in the Book of Mormon— are located in their model, it has no chance of being the correct area where the events of the Book of Mormon occurred.

The Sorenson Model ⁵

The Sorenson Model places the city of Nephi at Kaminaljuyu (Guatemala City); Waters of Mormon fifty air miles northwest of Nephi at lake Atitlan; Shilom ten miles south of Nephi; Shemlon about five miles south of Shilom; Hill north of Shilom about ten miles northwest of Shilom and about eight miles west of Nephi; and Jerusalem about fifty miles due west of Nephi. This model incredibly requires that the east sea be located north of the west sea instead of east and that the east sea must be the Gulf of Mexico which is located northwest of his proposed Zarahemla rather than east as required by the Book of Mormon.

The following information is transposed from Sorenson’s book, *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon*, to two Google maps of the area. The first map shows the general area, including the vague area of the narrow strip of wilderness running north to south instead of east to west. The second map reflects Sorenson’s proposed locations of the areas discussed in the Geographic Standard No. 5.



How could Noah's army make daily searches of the waters of Mormon fifty miles from Nephi? How could Alma hide in Mormon during the daytime and preach privately to the people in Nephi and perhaps Shilom in the evenings from a distance of fifty miles? How could Sorensen's proposed hill north of Shilom be located ten miles west of Nephi? And how could Nephi be located two to three miles south of the narrow strip of wilderness when Sorensen's strip of wilderness ran north to south instead of the required east sea to the west sea?

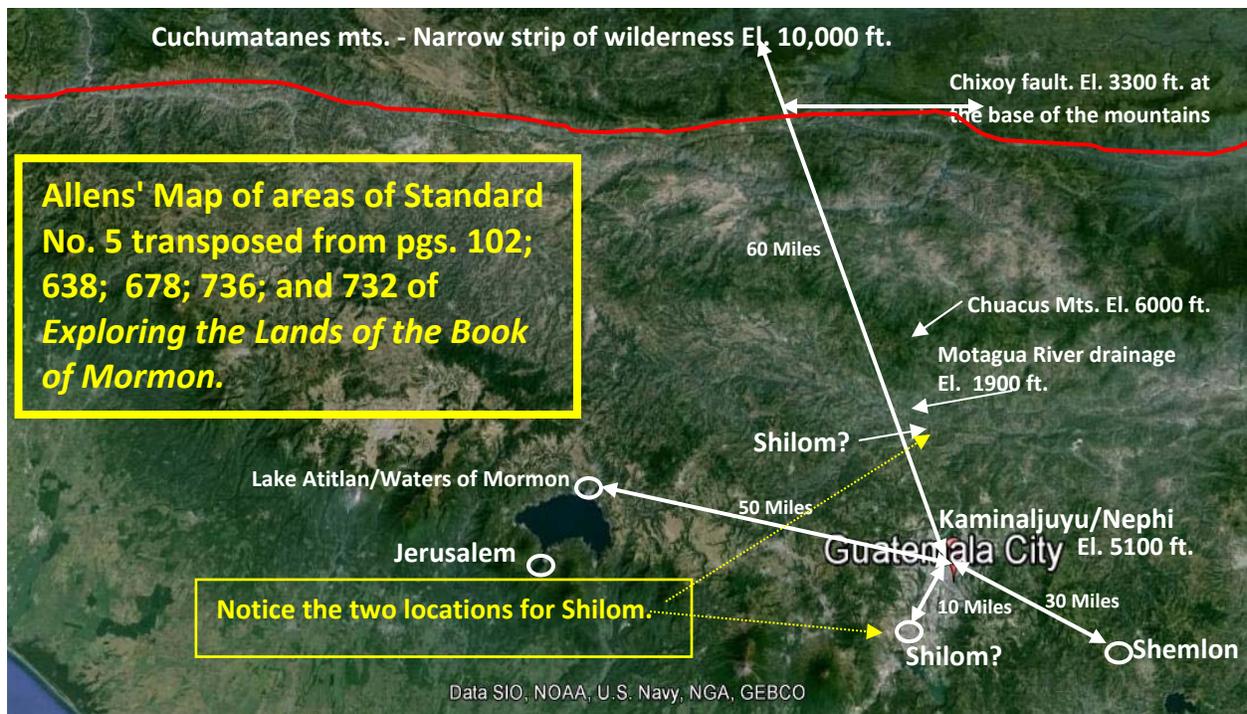
This model does not even come close to Geographical Standard No. 5 and violates what the Book of Mormon requires.

The Model of Joseph and Blake Allen⁶

Joseph and Blake Allen place Nephi at Kaminaljuyu (Guatemala City); waters of Mormon fifty air miles away at Lake Atitlan; Jerusalem near Lake Atitlan; and Shilom ten miles south of Guatemala City near Lake Amatitlan. They then place Shemlon about thirty miles southeast of Guatemala City and thirty miles east of Shilom. They place the narrow strip of wilderness as the Cuchumatanes Mountains some sixty air miles north of Kaminaljuyu. The hill north of Shilom is not located on any map, but it is described on page 760 of *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon* as follows: “Noah could see the land of Shilom and the land of Shemlon . . . from a tower he had built in the land of Lehi-Nephi. Noah caused a great tower to be built north of Shilom at a place that had been a resort for the children of Nephi before they fled out of the land of Nephi.”

Notice that the Allens agree that King Noah could see the city/lands of Shilom and Shemlon from Nephi. However, Mosiah 11:13 does not say that the hill north of Shilom was a place of resort for the Nephites “before they fled.” Rather, this was used as a gathering place for the Nephites “*at the time they fled out of the land of Nephi.*” This is an important distinction.⁷

The problem in trying to locate where the Allens place the hill north of Shilom is that they have it located in two different locations. On map 28-8 at page 732, Shilom is placed twenty miles northwest of Nephi/Guatemala City in the Motagua River basin. This placement means that the hill north of Shilom would have to be the Chuacus Mountains—located twenty-five miles from Kaminaljuyu/Guatemala City, as maintained by Magleby. Then, on the Allens’ map 28-12 on page 736, Shilom is placed about ten miles south of Nephi/Guatemala City. The following information is transposed from the Allens’ maps and from information on pages 736, 102, 638, 678, and 732 onto a Google map.



How could Ammon and scouts have come out of the Chuacus Mountains and looked down and seen Guatemala City/Nephi, located twenty-five miles away? How could Alma's converts have been taught at Lake Atitlan and then have returned to their homes and work in Kaminaljuyu—fifty miles away? How could King Noah's guards have searched at Lake Atitlan daily for Alma who was hiding at Mormon during the daytime and teaching the people in Nephi and perhaps Shilom at night?

How could King Noah have seen the army of the Lamanites at Shemlon thirty miles away from the temple at Kaminaljuyu? Or seen the city of Shilom—either twenty miles away if located at the Motagua, or 10 miles away if located ten miles south of Nephi—depending on which Shilom one uses? How could the guards of King Limhi have gone to the edge of the Chuacus/hill north of Shilom, located 25 miles away, and retrieved Ammon's scouts and returned the same day? Why would the King of the Lamanites have granted Zeniff the cities of Shilom and Nephi and lands “round about” (Mosiah 7:21) if they were located thirty miles away from King Laman’s residence at Shemlon? This would have been about a three days’ march.

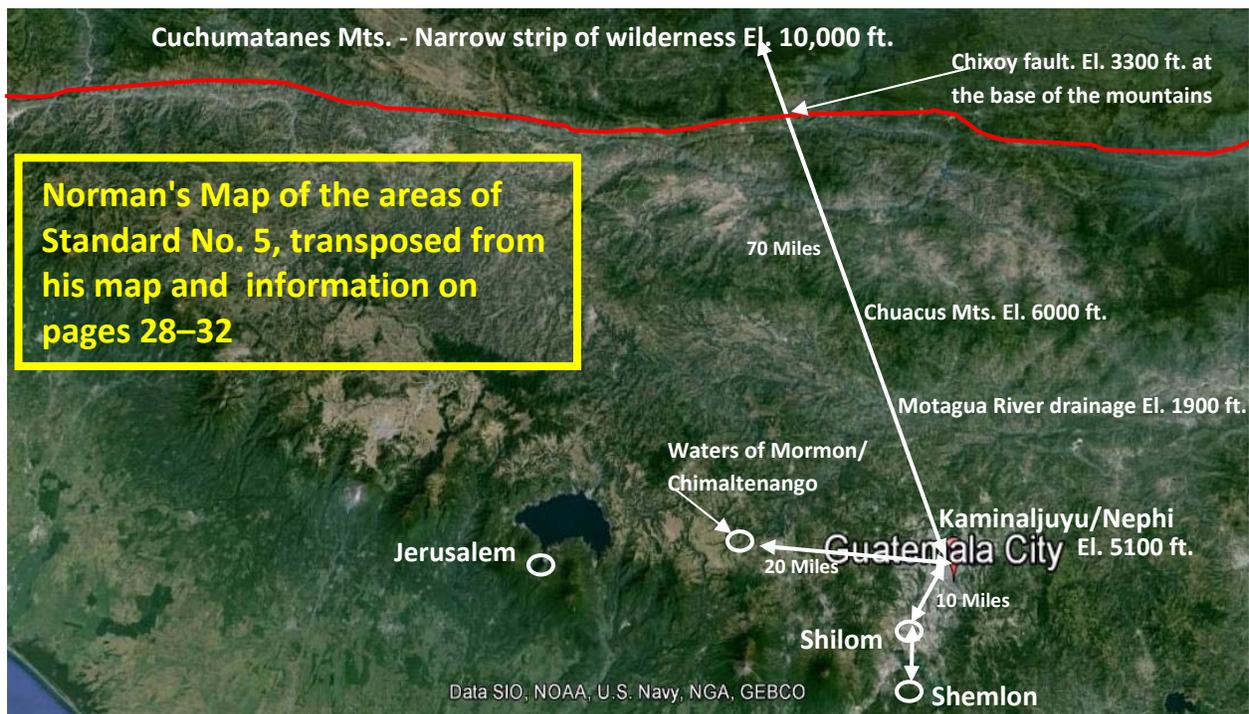
The model proposed by Joseph Allen and Blake Allen violates the requirements of Geographic Standard No. 5.

Garth Norman’s Map ⁸

Garth Norman proposes the Chama/Cuchumatanes mountain range as the narrow strip of wilderness; Kaminaljuyu (Guatemala City) as city of Nephi; south of Lake Amatitlan as Shemlon—fifteen miles distant. He agrees that Lake Atitlan is too far—one hundred miles round trip from Kaminaljuyu—to be the waters of Mormon and proposes instead the area of

Chimaltenango and Lake Almolongo—forty miles round trip (four days) from Kaminaljuyu over very rugged terrain.

Norman proposes the city of Amatitlan—located just south of the west end of Lake Amatitlan—to be Shilom—located about ten miles from Kaminaljuyu. The elevation of this area is 3900 Ft. He does not locate or reference the hill north of Shilom but if he did the only hill it could have been would have been the hill just northwest of Amatitlan which has an elevation of 4900 Ft. The elevation of Kaminaljuyu is over 5100 ft. How can one look down from an elevation of 4900 feet into a valley 15 miles away which has an elevation of 5100 ft.? There is no hill north of Kaminaljuyu/Guatemala City.



This model is invalid as to Geographic Standard No. 5 for all the same reasons as the Allens' Model.

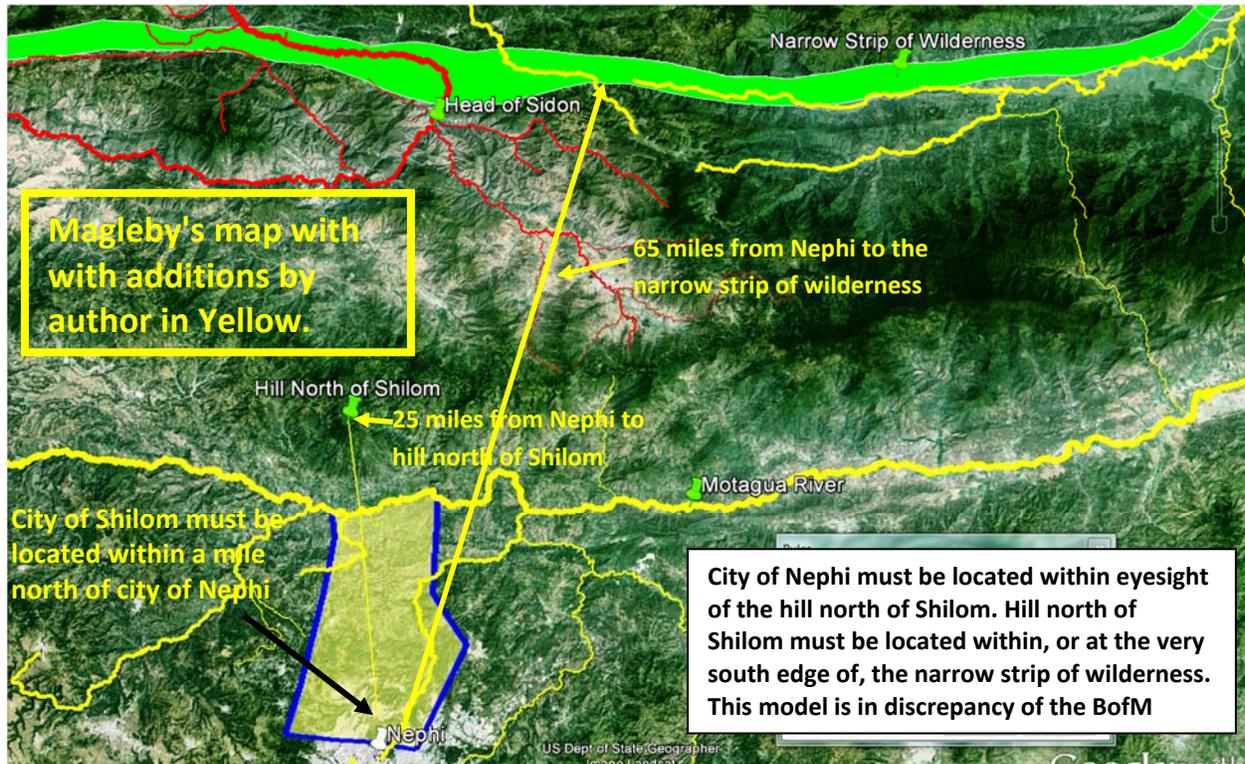
Kirk Magleby's Model⁹

Kirk Magleby has stated "**The Text.** I have made the bold assertion that this model fits the Book of Mormon text with no discrepancies."

As has been shown in previous Objective Standards articles, there are many discrepancies in his model. The following will show additional discrepancies.

Magleby places Nephi at Kaminaljuyu—elevation 5100 ft. He does not locate the city Shilom—which must be located within a mile or so of Nephi—but then takes the liberty, without scriptural support, to show a large shaded area he calls land of Shilom located north of Nephi twenty miles

down to the Motagua River — elevation 1900 ft. He apparently does this so that he can then identify the hill north of Shilom—elevation 6000 ft.—as the Chuacus Mountains from where Magleby could possibly justify Ammon looking down into the area of Shilom, somehow believing that that would not be a discrepancy.



As can be seen on the following map, Magleby chooses to show large areas and calls them "land of" instead of the location for cities. This makes it very hard to pinpoint. It is suggested that in the case of the area of the land of Nephi— where the cities of Nephi, Shilom, the hill north of Shemlon, and the area of the waters of Mormon were located— that Mormon is talking about a very small area that King Laman, residing at Shemlon, had his people vacate to permit Zeniff and his small group of people to inhabit. Further this entire area would have been under the control of the Lamanites. Therefore, when it says in Mosiah 7:21 that King Laman—living in Shemlon about two miles away—gave Zeniff "*the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom; and the land round about,*" that this was a very small area limited to the usable area of a couple of miles surrounding both walled cities of Shilom and Nephi, and not a large chunk of very rough real estate 20 miles long.

The following is Magleby's map that includes the land of Shilom and of Waters of Mormon.



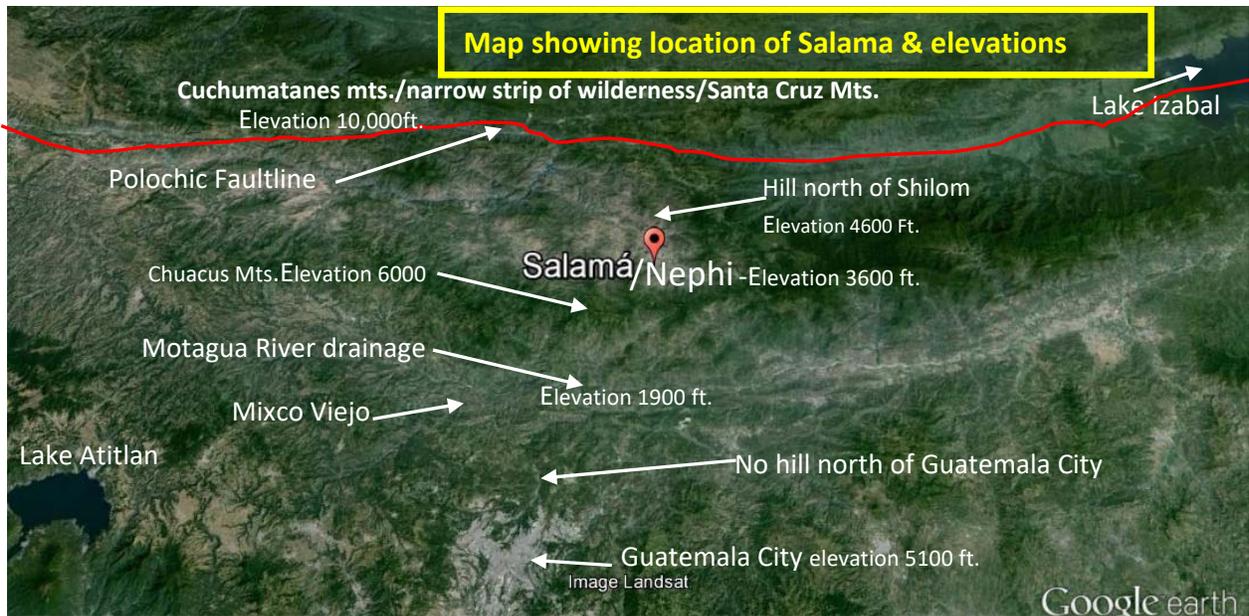
When Alma went to the waters of Mormon to hide from the daily searches of King Noah, he could not have traveled very far (1) because of the short distance of less than a half day to allow the people to live in their homes in Nephi, and perhaps Shilom, and to be able to visit the waters of Mormon and return within a day, (2) because that area must have been located within the "land round about" indicated in Mosiah 7:21, (3) and because the very small area with a "grove of small trees" was named by king Noah or kings Limhi or Zeniff, therefore it must have been located within the area allowed by the Lamanites to be used by the Nephites. It certainly was not named by the Lamanite King (Mosiah 18:4).

In Magleby's map, he apparently clusters Shilom, waters of Mormon, and hill north of Shilom within a small area as required by the Book of Mormon and Geographic Standard No. 5. However, a closer look reveals that hill north of Shilom is located across the Motagua River to the top of the Chuacus Mountains twenty-five miles from Kaminaljuyu/Nephi. The waters of Mormon are located near the Motagua River and about twenty miles from Shilom—which he properly locates near the area of Kaminaljuyu/Guatemala City

Except for Shilom, as it relates to Magleby's Nephi at Kaminaljuyu, all other proposed locations are much too far to be within the realm of reasonableness or within the requirements of Geographic Standard No. 5.

Richard Hauck's Map ¹⁰

Hauck has changed the proposed areas for the locations described in Standard No. 5 from the area of Mixco Viejo near Guatemala City to locations within the area of the Salama Valley. This general area is shown below on a Google map. The photo following the map shows the area of Salama Valley with the various proposed areas described on it. This description is per conversations with Dr. Richard Hauck and confirmed by my personal visits to the area.



The photo that follows shows the valley of Salama looking northward from near the proposed city of Nephi/Tzalcom.



The valley of Salama is located just a few miles south of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Shilom /San Juan is located about a mile north of Nephi/Tzalcam. Both of the cities of Tzalcam and San Juan had late Preclassic defensive walls around them exactly as described in the Book of Mormon. About 2 miles east of Tzalcam/Nephi is the ruin of the El Porton. It is the proposed city of Shemlon, the Lamanite capital during Limhi's reign, and it did not have defensive walls around it. Looking north from Shilom is the large hill rising above the valley about 1000 ft. and on top of this hill is evidence of a late Preclassic tower and three late Preclassic reservoirs for holding

water. From this large hill north of Shilom one can walk directly into the Santa Cruz Mountains/narrow strip of wilderness precisely as described in the Book of Mormon.

Endnotes

1. “Introduction,” *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981).

2. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), under “Scriptures.”

3. Measuring system,” a day’s travel is equal to about eight miles. (Joseph Lovell Allen and Blake Joseph Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. rev. [American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2011], According to Joseph and Blake Allen, “In the Nephite 412)

According to Kirk Magleby, “We can say with confidence that 10 air (straight line) kilometers [6.2 miles] per day are on the low end of what we would reasonably expect from Book of Mormon journeys. Fifteen air kilometers [9.3 miles] per day are probably typical of Book of Mormon travels led by well-informed guides, and 20 air kilometers [12.4 miles] per day (or more) are not unreasonable.” (Kirk Magleby, “Land Southward Travel Times,” Book of Mormon Resources Blog, <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2011/10/land-southward-travel-times.html>, [accessed October 19, 2015])

4. See Jonathan Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again,* (Rochester, NY and Cottonwood Heights, UT: Legends library publishing, 2015).

5. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985).

6. Joseph Lovell Allen and Blake Joseph Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. rev. (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2011).

7. King Mosiah I gathered his followers on the hill north of Shilom when he fled Nephi.

After the Nephites had lived in the land of Nephi for about 370 years, King Mosiah I (about 200 BC) obeyed the Lord and fled from Nephi to Zarahemla. Omni and Mosiah state the following:

“He [Mosiah] *did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land [of Nephi] into the wilderness* (Omni 1:13). [Then Mosiah states (up to)] *the hill north of the land of Shilom, which had been a place of resort for the children of Nephi at the time they fled out of the land*” (Mosiah11:13). [Then Omni continues] *“through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land [or city] of Zarahemla”* (Omni 1:13).

This hill north of Shilom was a gathering “place of resort” for Mosiah I to assemble “*all those who would hearken unto the voice of the Lord.*” How many were there? Perhaps five to twenty thousand; it is unclear. The important point is that the hill north of Shilom was located at the very southern edge of the narrow strip of wilderness, according to these scriptures. It must have been an area large enough, and with sufficient water, where several thousand people fleeing from Nephi, Shilom, and the surrounding area could have gathered and lived, for at least a few days, before traveling from there through the wilderness and then down to Zarahemla. **It was not a small hill, and it was a defensible “place of resort” for the fleeing Nephites.**

8. V. Garth Norman, *Book of Mormon—Mesoamerican Geography: History Study Map*, 3rd ed. (American Fork, UT: ARCON with Ancient American Foundation, 2008). pp 28–32.

9. Magleby, “Book of Mormon Model,” <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/July 28, 2012/bookofmormonmodel.html>.

10. Richard F. Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 143.