

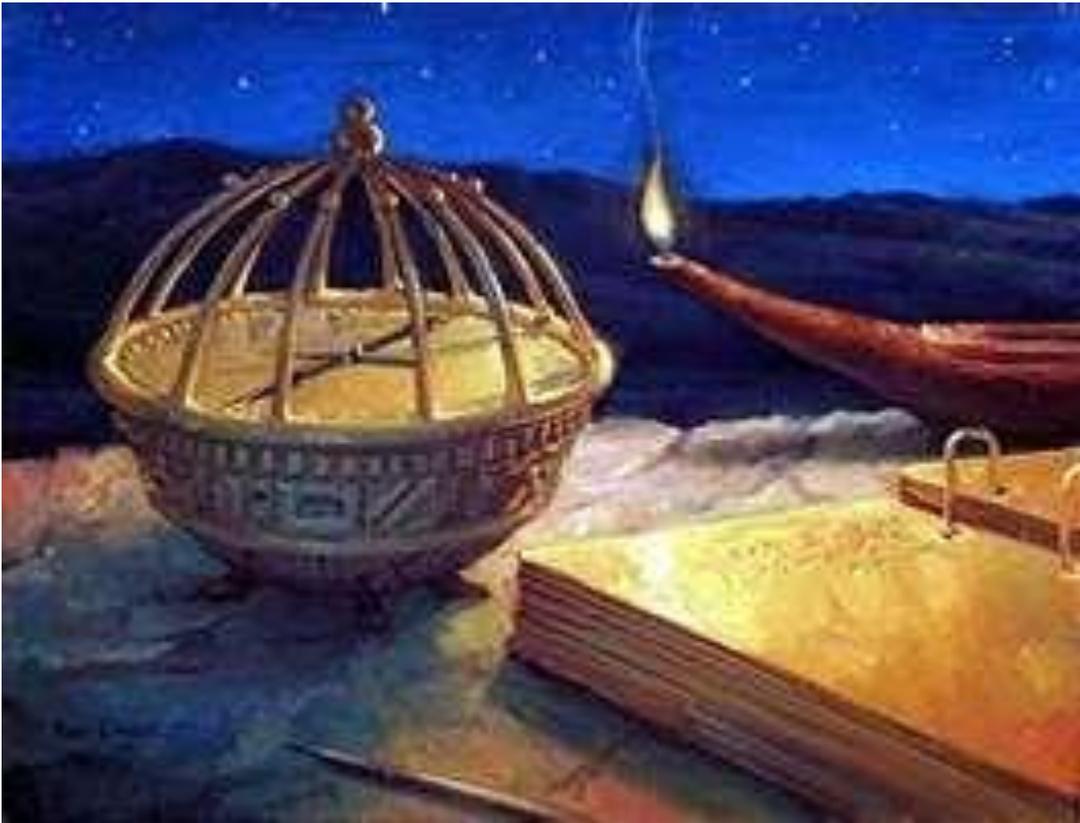
# The Liahona

## Miracles by Small Means

### Chapter 2

#### More Questions Regarding the Liahona

Can the Book of Mormon Narrative and Other Scriptures Support the Idea That the Liahona Contained a Magnetic Spindle?

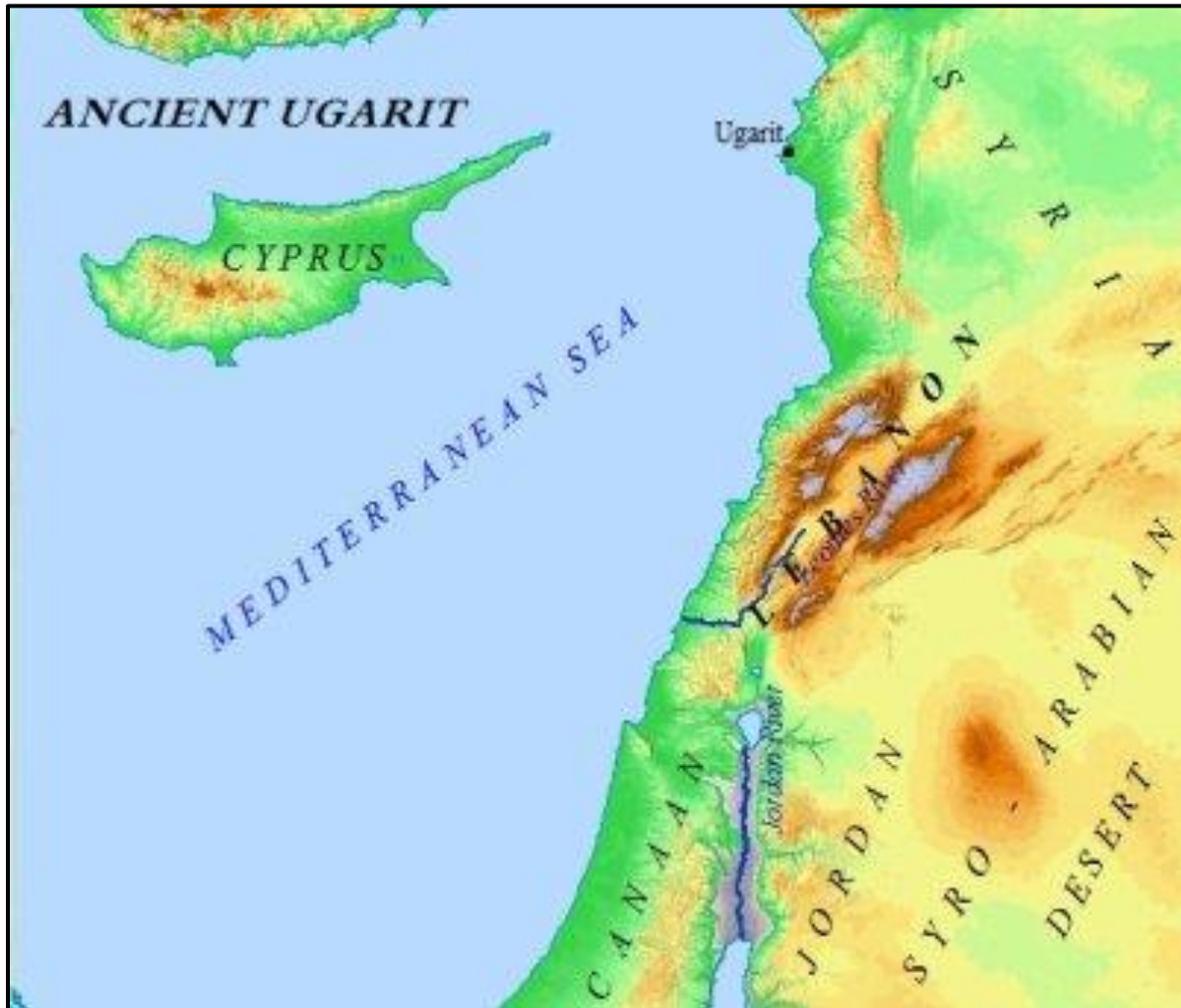


<http://www.ldsinfertility.org/on-my-mind-why-a-tree/>

## Question #5

Why was the Liahona referred to as a “ball” of “fine brass”?

Question #5 Why was the Liahona initially referred to as a "ball" of "brass" instead of a "compass"?



### The Word “Liahona” is Found in the Ugaritic Language

The word "compass" is found in the Bible. One of the meanings is an object that is circular in nature. So the term "ball" technically qualifies as a "compass" although not everything circular is a ball. Interestingly, a few years ago the word "Liahona" was found in an ancient Ugaritic text in which it meant "round." Ugarit flourished on the Mediterranean coast of what is now Syria about 1400 B.C. So we seem to have some linguistic support here for the Liahona being referred to as a ball. But the Liahona was also referred to as a "director" with spindles that pointed the direction to go. This implies more than a ball.



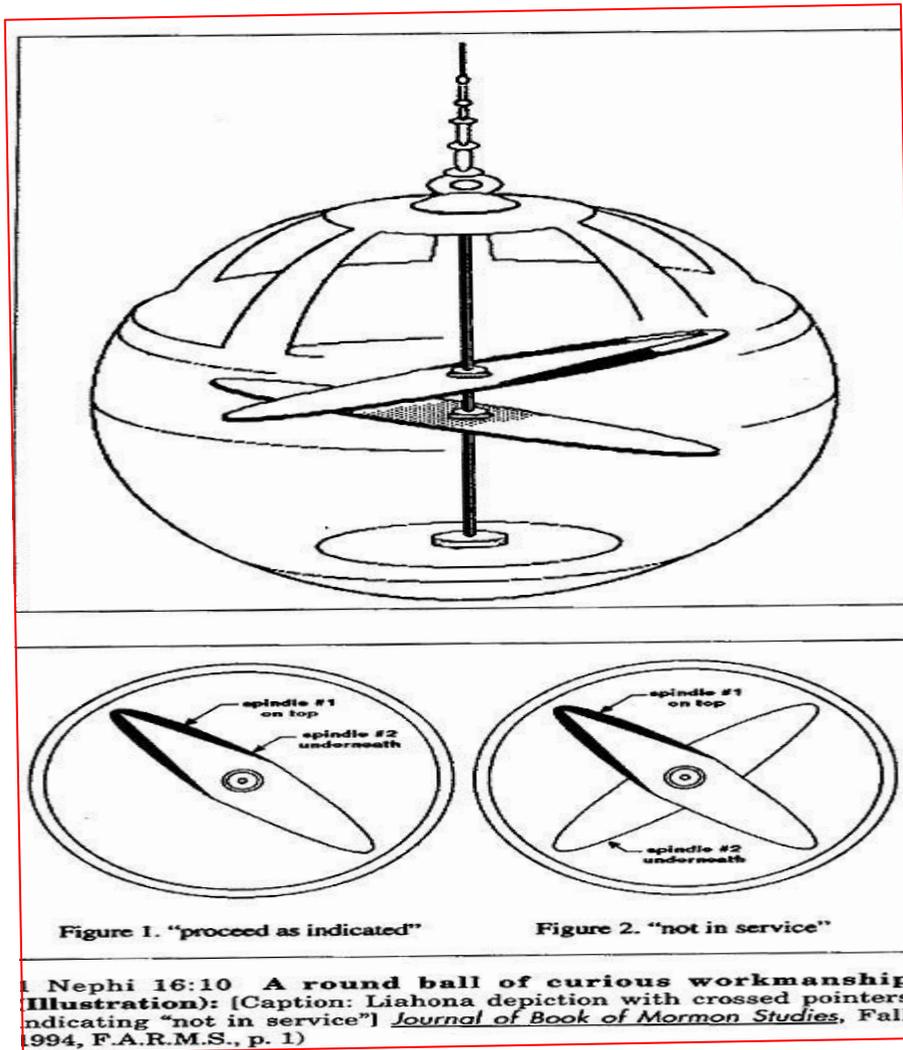
## Phoenicia & Ugarit

Interestingly, Ugarit was conquered by the Phoenicians, who ruled the Mediterranean seas and beyond for over a millennium. Did the Phoenicians adopt the word "Liahona" from the people of Ugarit? And did the Phoenicians happen to use a brass ball with magnetized spindles to help them navigate the seas as no others for over 1000 years? One might keep in mind the fact that the Phoenicians were famous for their bronze (and Phoenician bronze might possibly be the "brass" referred to in the Book of Mormon). And the Liahona was made of brass. And brass or bronze is a perfect non-magnetic and non-corrosive metal for housing a magnetic compass.

## Question #6

Why two spindles if  
the Liahona was miraculous?

Question #6: Why were there two spindles if the Liahona was miraculous? The scriptures state that "within the ball were two spindles and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness." So again why two spindles? There have been a number of theories put forth.



## Liahona with Confirmatory Second Spindle

This is an illustration of an idea proposed in 1994 by Robert Bunker that one spindle miraculously pointed the direction to go, and a second spindle miraculously confirmed that direction ( or did not confirm it)

John Tvedtnes has proposed another idea that 1 spindle miraculously pointed the direction to go, and 1 spindle had writing on it.

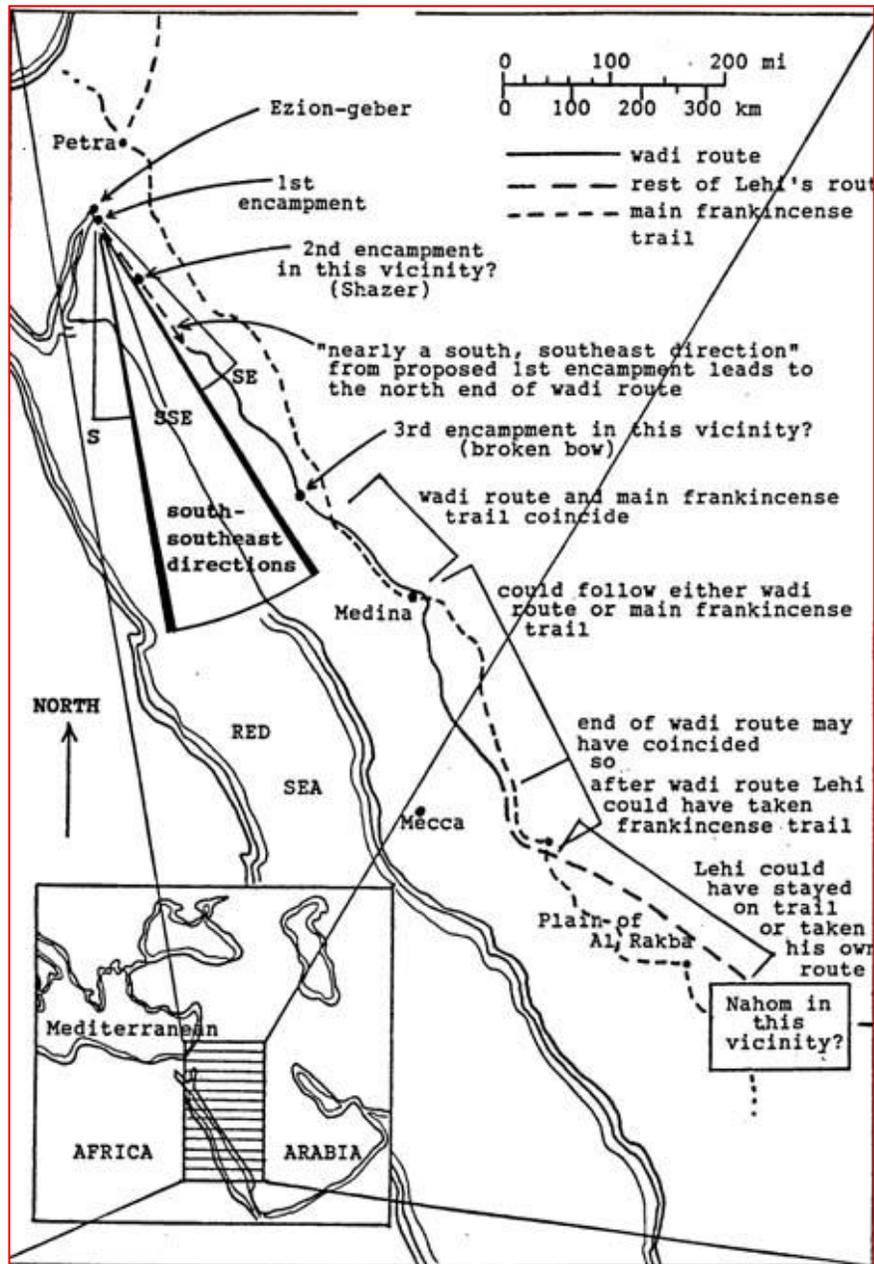
Another option, according to dictionary definitions of a spindle, is that 1 spindle miraculously pointed the way to go while rotating on another spindle that served as an axis.

Now these options have their merit, but isn't it also plausible to say that one spindle magnetically pointed north while the other spindle was set to a fixed directional reference point (or in essence was set to point the way whither they should go into the wilderness)?

## Question #7

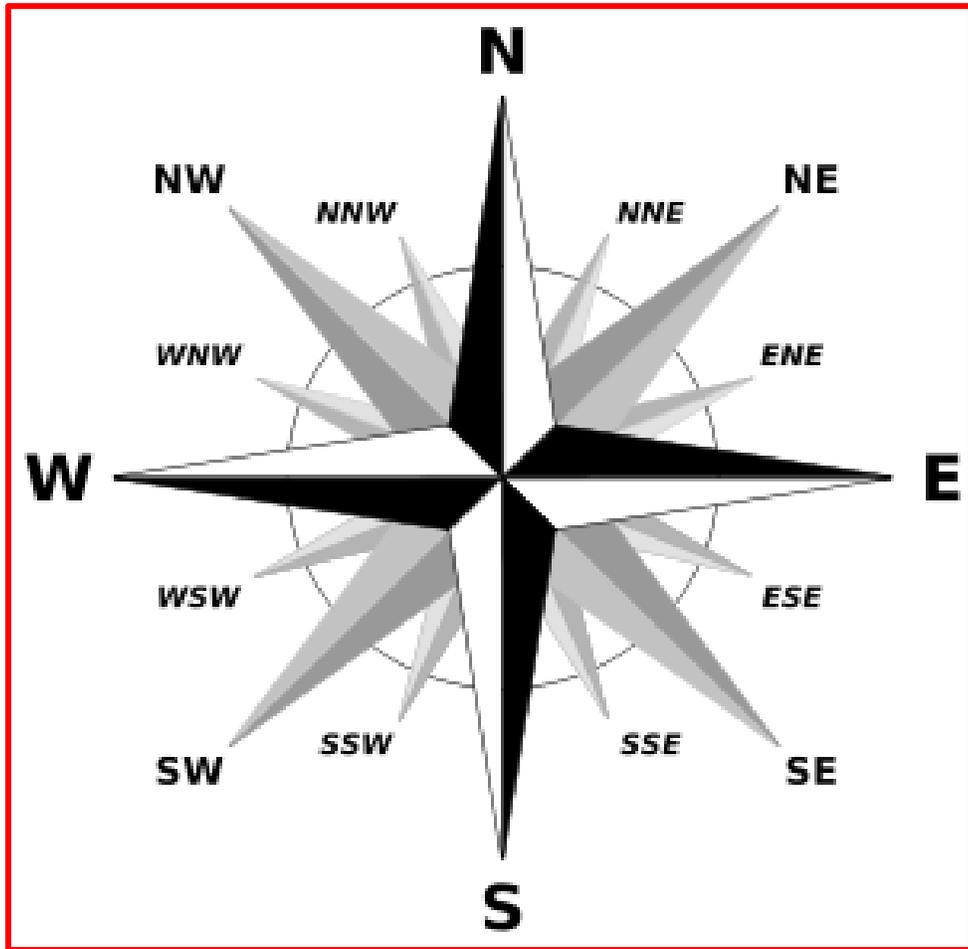
Why would Nephi need to record a  
16-point directional term “south-southeast”  
if the Liahona was miraculous?  
(1 Ne 16:13,14)

Question #7 Why would Nephi need to record a 16-point directional term "south-southeast" if the Liahona was miraculous? Wouldn't he just say they followed the way the needle pointed, or that they traveled generally eastward or westward or southward, or northward?



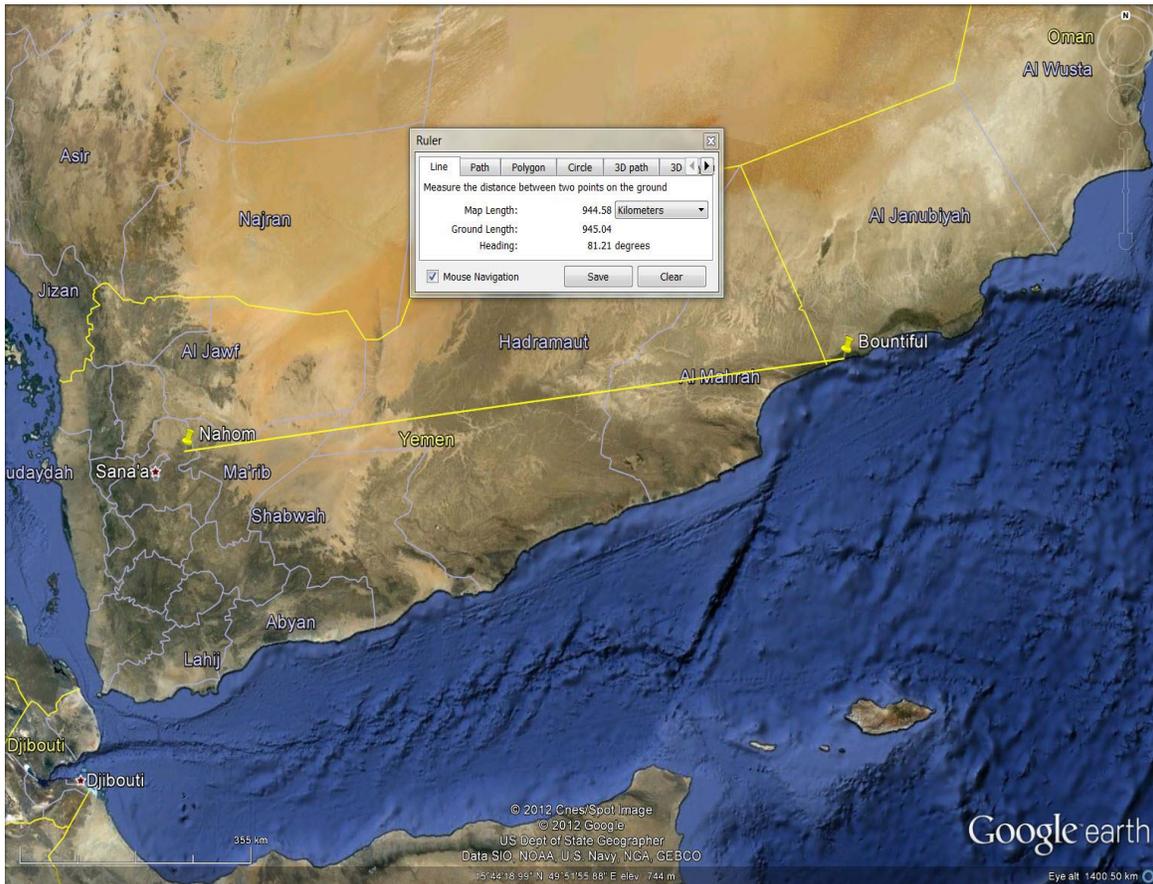
We traveled nearly a south-southeast direction

Yet isn't it coincidental that immediately after Lehi received the "ball" or "compass," Nephi records that they traveled nearly a QUOTE "south-southeast" direction? This statement specifically represents a 16-point direction and possibly infers 32 points of direction.



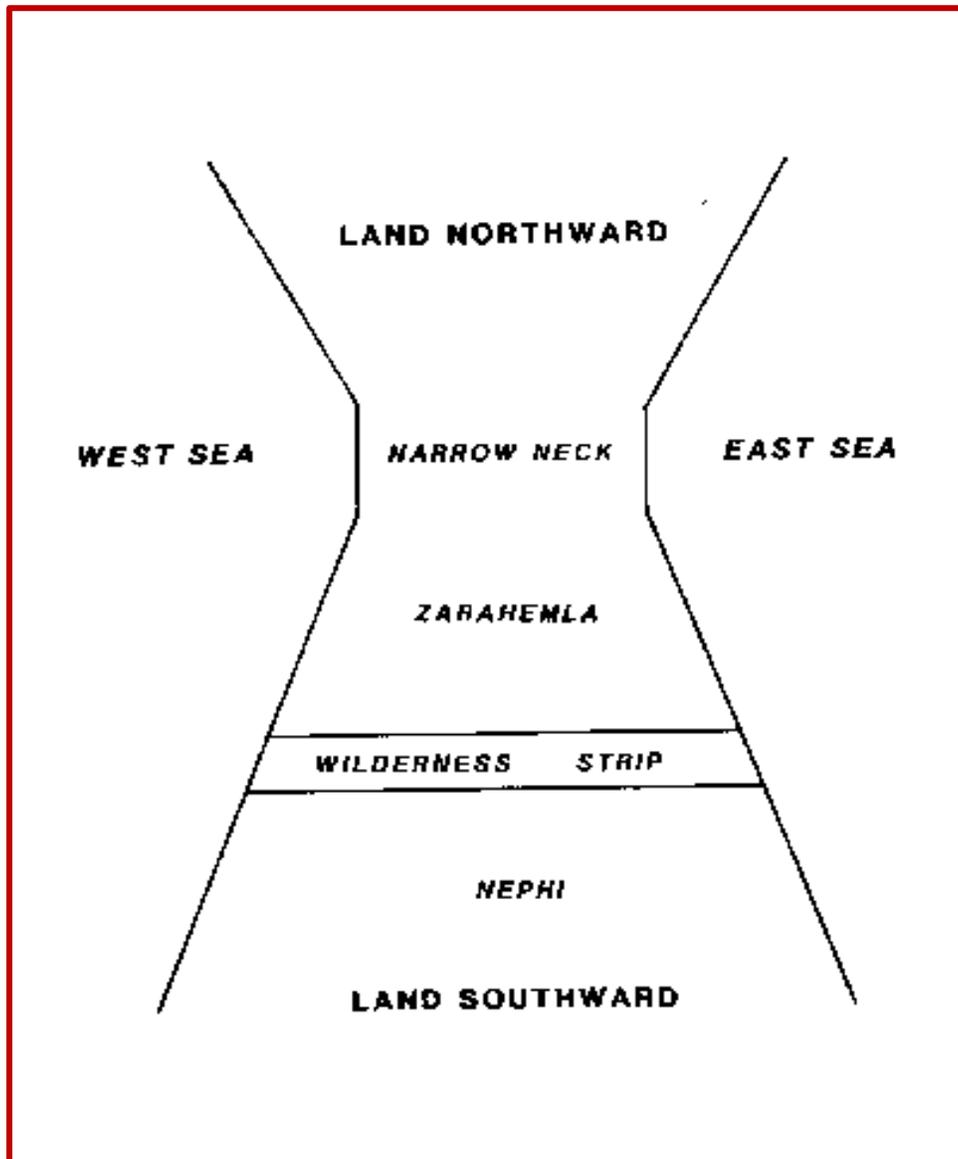
## South-Southeast

Such a 16-point directional term gives support for a magnetic Liahona with a windrose.



## Nearly eastward from Nahom

Interestingly, in some later verses that follow the 16-point term "south-southeast," Nephi uses the term "eastward" to describe their journey from Nahom to Bountiful. How can this be explained in the context of a magnetic compass? One explanation might be that while the lengthy trip from Nahom to Bountiful could have been directionally varied, it is covered in only 5 verses. Another explanation is that according to Potter and Wellington and others, Nephi's party really did travel nearly magnetically eastward to get to from Nahom to Bountiful.



Basic 4-Directional Diagram of  
New World Book of Mormon Geography

As for the geography of the Book of Mormon lands in America, there are only references to 4-part directions such as a land northward and a land southward, or a sea east and a sea west. One might wonder why directional terms weren't more specific, unless the reference structure for directions had changed.

## Question #8

Could a magnetic Liahona  
point out where to get game?

Question #8: Could a magnetic Liahona point out where to get game?



## Hejaz & Asir Mountains

Nephi writes that after breaking his bow and suffering from hunger, he built a new bow and went up into the tops of the mountains after game, according to the directions on the Liahona (1 Ne 16:30). While a miraculous Liahona might be able to point out where game was located, what about a magnetic Liahona? Perhaps that is not what the verses are saying here. From where Nephi was located on the Frankincense Trail, it is about 65 miles west to the Asir mountains that parallel the Red Sea as shown.



Top of the Asir Mountains 6000-11000 ft.

65 miles from Frankincense Trail

These mountains rise from 6,000 to 11,000 feet. Is it plausible that Nephi knew that game was in the top of the mountains, but that the purpose of the directions on the Liahona was to get Nephi safely back to camp after getting game and going through countless winding wadis and high mountain ravines?

## Question #9

Would a magnetic Liahona stop  
working when Nephi became bound?

(1 Ne 18:12)

Question #9: Would a magnetic "compass" stop working when Nephi became bound?



## Electromagnetic storm

Nephi writes that the Liahona stopped working at sea when Nephi's brothers bound him (1 Ne 18:10-12). Certainly a miraculous compass based on faith could have stopped working in such a situation. But perhaps the scenario was a bit more complex. Is it not plausible to believe that a magnetic Liahona could have become wildly erratic in such an electromagnetic storm, and become almost impossible for Laman & Lemuel to read? And could the effects of such a storm have been brought on and almost have cost them their lives because they had been QUOTE "making themselves merry," and not paying attention to their ship-board duties to sail in the right direction, to see that they had the proper sails rigged up, and to secure the cargo?

## The Book of Mormon text does not rule out a magnetic Liahona.

While I have covered much more detail and more questions related to the scriptures in my book, I will stop here to say that in my estimation, the Book of Mormon text does not necessarily rule out a magnetic Liahona. So let's move forward with some historical and cultural perspectives that might help shape our view of the Liahona and the possibility that it could have been in part magnetic.