

1 Nephi

Chapter 16- continued

1 Nephi 16:10 **A Round Ball [the Liahona]:**

Hunter and Ferguson write that according to both the Popol Vuh [an ancient Guatemalan Indian history] and the Book of Mormon, the original ancestors had a sacred instrument. As indicated by the Popol Vuh, it was symbolic of the power of God which power was possessed by these early colonizers. . . . Concerning the deathbed statement of the original head of the colony, the Popol Vuh says: "Then Balam-Quitze left the symbol of his being: 'This is a remembrance which I leave for you. This shall be your power. I take my leave filled with sorrow,' he added." Then he left the symbol of his being, the Pizom-Gagal, as it was called. The Totonicapan [Guatemalan] account states that the Lord supplied the Giron-Gagal [director] and led the colony across the sea because they were "the sons of Abraham and of Jacob." [Milton R. Hunter and T. Stuart Ferguson, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, pp. 66-72]

1 Nephi 16:10 **Curious Workmanship:**

The author Brenton Yorgason tells of a professor Sami Hanna, an Egyptian who was especially schooled in the Arabic language and who accepted the assignment of the First Presidency to translate the Book of Mormon into the Semitic cultural format. According to the words of Dr. Hanna, "When I began reading the Book of Mormon, and began making myself familiar with it, I expected to find a very poorly written book, as I had been told by critics . . . but to the contrary, I found myself reading the most beautiful Semitic book I had ever read!"

According to Dr. Hanna, the word "curious" in 1 Nephi 16:10 referring to the workmanship of the Liahona does not mean "strange" as many have presumed, but actually designates an instrument of "skilled" or "elegant" workmanship. [Brenton G. Yorgason, Little Known Evidences of the Book of Mormon, pp. 32,36] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 18:1]

1 Nephi 16:11 We Did Gather . . . All the Remainder of Our Provisions Which the Lord Had Given unto Us:

The family of Lehi dwelt in a tent in the valley of Lemuel for apparently quite some time (see the commentary on 1 Nephi 16:6), yet Lehi's family came upon this valley while traveling in the Arabian wilderness. Lawrence of Arabia, the British Intelligence officer who served with the Bedu during the First World War and became a national hero, wrote that "the Bedouin ways were hard even for those brought up in them," that they were "a death in life." If one asks the old Bedu today what life was like in the old days, they will generally not speak of a romantic past. Their tales are of constant thirst and hunger, of great journeys to bring water from the wells or to seek out areas that had received some rain.

[It is against this backdrop that one might contemplate what Nephi was talking about when he recorded as they prepared to leave the valley of Lemuel: "we did gather together whatsoever things we should carry into the wilderness, and *all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given unto us*" (1 Nephi 16:11) Lehi's family was living in one of the harshest lands in the world, yet Nephi talks about "provisions which the Lord had given us." Was Nephi living in Arabia? Are we facing a contradiction here?] Either Nephi knew nothing about the difficulties of dwelling in a tent in Arabia and his record's credibility must be questioned, or there must have existed a valley three days into the wilderness of Arabia where the Lord was able to provide Lehi and his family with provisions. If the latter is true, then there must be a valley 60-90 miles into Arabia that provides [many of] the necessary conditions for a good life, and it must do so against the backdrop of terrible living conditions around it. If the southern end of the wadi Tayyib al-Isim is to qualify as the valley of Lemuel, it must pass a difficult test. It must possess some basic elements for making life relatively comfortable. Here is a list of it's qualifications:

1. *Cool Campsite During the Hot Season:* The land of Midian in the northwest corner of Saudi Arabia is a wilderness second only in barrenness to the great Rub'al Khali, or Empty Quarter, of the central Arabian Peninsula. Hardly a blade of grass breaks up the monotony of the terrain. Temperatures average between 115° and 125° Fahrenheit during the summer months. During the springtime, daytime temperatures are over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The Arabian sun will kill a man within hours if he cannot find shade. The towering cliffs of the canyon of granite of wadi Tayyib al-Isim would have provided a likely solution. The shade from the canyon walls keeps the environment in the canyon cool. We estimate that the temperature in the canyon can be up to 30 degrees Fahrenheit lower than in the rest of Midian. To this one must add the avoidance of direct sunlight. For any one place on the floor of the canyon, it is only directly hit by the sun for a few minutes a day. It is possible to live in the canyon without ever moving out of the shade. There are several good campsites next to palm groves and the river in the canyon. The shape of the canyon also tends to funnel the sea breezes which leads to ready evaporative cooling--a natural air conditioning. With plentiful drinking water, a cooling

breeze and abundant shade, the family of Lehi enjoyed the coolest possible camp conditions.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions *which the Lord had given us* (Potter Theory) [Illustration – not shown]:** A Cool Campsite During the Hot Season. The Upper Valley with its oases of date palms and springs. Located in Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (proposed Valley of Lemuel). Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 88]

2. *A Dry and Safe Rainy Season Campsite:* As ideal as the canyon would have been as a campsite in the summer, it would have been unattractive and possibly even dangerous in the rainy season, from November to March. We have located the ruins of two elevated campsites in the wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Both are located just above the Waters of Moses, part of wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Both campsites are on a slight incline, allowing drainage in the camp. The largest of the two sites, the one that would seem more the size of one used by Nephi's family is located on the north side of the upper valley next to the middle groves of date palms. The middle grove is the largest of the three date palm groves of the Waters of Moses. The middle grove contains four wells. The ruins are built on a shelf a few feet above the wadi floor, well out of danger of flash floods.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions *which the Lord had given us* (Potter Theory) [Illustration-not shown]:** A Dry and Safe Rainy Season Campsite. Ruins of a long-term camp elevated above the wadi floor. Stone circles and circle with palm fronds are corrals next to the camp. Located in Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (proposed Valley of Lemuel). Photo by Tim Sedor. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 113]

3. *Building Materials:*

(A) *Materials for Corrals:* It is certain that Lehi's party had a large number of camels. Camels require pens so they do not wander off and become lost at night. In Nephi's time, a stray camel would be prey for lions and wolves. Lehi would have needed to build corrals from the natural materials found in the wadi Tayyib al-Isim. The traditional corral in Arabia consisted of a circle of large stones that supported sticks or palm fronds. One can trace the ancient caravan routes through Arabia by looking for the ruins of these corrals (circles of single stones). Lehi's camp probably needed several camel corrals to accommodate their animals. We found ruins of these corrals on both sides of the Waters of Moses, including several adjacent to the large long-term campsite ruins above the middle grove. The Bedouins still graze camels in the valley and use the traditional corrals. Due to the availability of free palm fronds in the groves, the Bedouins seem content to use the traditional materials rather than modern methods.

(B) *Safe Box Materials:* The brass plates were a key in preserving the faith and language of their new nation (see 1 Nephi 4:13). Lehi taught that the plates should "never perish"

(1 Nephi 5:19). Would Lehi have left the plates unprotected in a wilderness valley? Tent walls held little security for the priceless records or the valuable sword of Laban. If bandits raided their camp or a thief ventured in while they were away from the tents, they might have lost these treasures. One could speculate that Lehi might have used a practice still found in the area today, that of building a stone box in the earth, placing the plates in it for safe keeping, and then covering the stone box with a large uncut rock. We can also speculate that if this was so, then the Nephite practice of keeping the plates in a stone box in the earth started as far back as the Valley of Lemuel. [Note* One might wonder if this manner of security was also the case in Lehi's land of inheritance where Nephi went to retrieve gold and silver" (see 1 Nephi 3:22).]

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given us** **(Illustration):** Typical Bedouin stone storage box. This one found approximately ten miles from wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Photo by Chris Hamilton. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 117]

4. *Drinking Water:* The water situation in Wadi Tayyib al-Isim is unique to the Midian region of Arabia. Here one can choose a campsite next to any one of twelve wells or the only continuously flowing river in all of Saudi Arabia.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given us (Potter Theory) [Illustratio-not shown]:** Richard Wellington drinking from what we believe is the River of Laman. Photo by Ed Benson. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 119]

5. *Food:* Our survey of the flora of the valley was strictly amateur, and based only on what grows there presently. We are convinced that the last four miles of the wadi Tayyib al-Isim is the only place in all of the Midian region of Arabia that could possibly have met Nephi's flora requirements. The only other place we have seen fruits and vegetables grow in this region in any significant amount is in the area around al-Bada. However, that area seems to have always been a cultivated place (grown by man not God), for its fields rely today, as in ancient time on the deep wells of Jethro.

(A) *Fruits:* If the local legend is true that the Waters of Moses is the Bible's Elim, then we know that the date palms in wadi Tayyib al-Isim have existed there well before the time of Nephi (see Exodus 15:27). So far we have found five varieties of dates at the Waters of Moses and the canyon. They represent all three varieties of palm that grow wild in Arabia, the Phoenix caespitosam, the Phoenix dactylifera, and the Hyphaene thebaica, with its giant, lemon-size dates.

In the context of the provisions needed for traveling across Arabia, it is safe to assume

that among the "seed of every kind" (1 Nephi 16:11) which Nephi took into the wilderness were dates. Dates hang in clusters, from the top of the palms as if they are giant balls of seed. The date, consisting of the sweet outer flesh and the pit, is the seed of the palm. Dates are a traditional food source for travelers in Arabia. Nephi's family would have either known this fact or have been told it by the locals. An Arab colleague whose great grandfather marketed camels from central Arabia to Palestine, Cairo, Baghdad, and as far as India, claims that his great grandfather and his crews ate only dates and tea during the days they traveled. Together with the camel the Arabs consider the date to be one of God's greatest gifts to them. Without the camel gravel across the desert would have been impossible and without the date, one of the few foodstuffs that do not perish in the heat of the desert, they would have had nothing to eat. Long distance desert travel anciently without the came and date would have been impossible.

There are other fruits growing wild in the wadi. So far we have found a variety of edible berry and two vine fruits. The berry is called the *Teen* by the Bedouins. We have not been in the valley when fruit has been on the teen bushes, but the Bedouin tell us that the berry is about the size of a strawberry and is delicious.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions *which the Lord had given us* (Potter Theory) [Illustration-not shown]:** Fig. 6.6 Dates are the seeds of the seeds of the date palm. They hang in clusters given the appearance that they are seeds. Photo by George Potter. Fig. 6.7 Dates still in the tree of the middles grove. Photograph taken at the end of January. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, *Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel*, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 122]



Photo: L.J.G. van der Maesen, Biosystematics Group, Wageningen UR

Hyphaene thebaica

prota4u.org

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions *which the Lord had given us* (Potter Theory) [Illustration-not shown]:** Fig. 6.8 The *Hyphaene thebaica*, found growing in the canyon. Bedouins peel the date before eating. Photo by George Potter. Fig. 6.9 Giant dates still uncollected months after the harvest season. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, *Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel*, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 123]



Cucumis prophetarum.

[Species.wikimedia.org](https://species.wikimedia.org)

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions *which the Lord had given us* (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Fig. 6.10 The bush of the Teen Berry, found in the canyon along the river bank.

Photo by George Potter. Fig. 6.11 Fruit of the vine *Cucumis prophetarum*.. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 124]

(B) *Grains*: The canyon, at least in the areas where the river runs above surface, is full of grasses. Grains grow on grasses. Arriving in the canyon in January, 1999, well after the time grain would have been harvested, we still found large amounts of grain hanging from the grasses. Not only did this grain seem to grow in ample quantities in the canyon, it was also easy to strip from the bush and separate. Using a plastic bag to gather some of it, I then crushed it. In a total of ten minutes I separated enough wheat size grain for several bowls of cereal. Of the four grasses we have identified so far in the valley, only one would probably qualify as a human food source, unless they used the seed grains of the smaller varieties as spices.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given us (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Fig. 6.12 Grain growing in the Canyon. Photo by George Potter. Fig. 6.13 Grain collected and separated in about ten minutes. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 125]

(C) *Protein*:

Seafood: The Red Sea has one of the world's richest sea life environments. The family could have constructed nets from the fibers of palm fronds and netted fish, or picked lobsters from the crevices of the reef. An even easier source of seafood would have been to harvest the large shellfish found along the shoreline of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Birds: A number of birds make their nests in the wadi. The most common is the Rock Dove (*Columba livia*), which nests in rock crevices. Palm Doves (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) and Namanqua Doves (*Oena capensis*) also nest in the area, as well as Tritam's Grackle (*Onychognathus tristramii*), all of which would have produced eggs large enough to make a meal.

Small Game: Small game animals are also found in wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Of the 15 species of larger carnivores recorded in Arabia almost all are confined to the western mountains. These include the Leopard, Striped Hyena, Arabian Wolf, Caracal and Wild Cat.ⁱ While these would not necessarily be primary food sources, their presence suggests numerous smaller prey items such as the Rock Hyrax (*Procavia caapensis*), the "Coney" of the Bible.ⁱⁱ

6. *Drinks or Beverages*: Although Nephi brought back "seeds of every kind" (1 Nephi 8:1) from which various teas or drinks could have been made, the wadi Tayyib al-Isim's flora would also have provided Lehi's family with a range of free beverages. Date pits abound

beneath the palms. Arabs roast these to make a coffee substitute. Dates themselves can be used to make date tea and wine.ⁱⁱⁱ

7. *Salt*: In Arabia, with its blustering temperatures, salt takes on its own importance. Heat causes the loss of body fluids through perspiration. As fluids are lost, so are the body's mineral salts. To stay healthy, Lehi's family would have needed to maintain a healthy salt balance in their bodies. In the wadi Tayyib al-Ism, salt can be laboriously harvested from the Gulf of Aqaba, or in a most convenient manner by simply scraping it off the rocks along the river where it accumulates in large deposits.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given us (Potter Theory) [Illustration-not shown]**: Salt deposits on the rock in the river bed. The highest deposit is 11 inches above the current water line. Photo by Richard Wellington. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 55]

8. *Medicine*: The vine fruits *Citrillus colocynthis* and the *cucumis prophetarum* are found in the valley, and are used to cleanse the digestive system of parasites and as laxatives. The mint that is found in the valley is used by Arabs to cure stomach problems.

9. *Fuel for Cooking and Heat*: Local bedouins simply feed dried palm fronds toward the center of a fire. They are easily lighted on the end that has the split (finger like) leaves, so there is no need for kindling. As they burn down, the Bedouins push more of the unburnt frond into the coals. From nearly any point in the canyon or Waters of Moses, dried fronds can be gathered and a fire started within a few minutes.

10. *Fodder for the Camels*: Bertram Thomas, the first westerner to cross the great sand desert of Arabia, the Empty Quarter, wrote:

The traveler in the desert soon discovers that the welfare of the camel is the supreme consideration. . . . Fodder is almost more important than water, for the camel can carry a load for a week or more without water, but food is a daily want.^{iv}

The wadi Tayyib al-Ism would have provided for Lehi's camels. Camels still graze in the canyon and through the entire wadi system. The thorny acacia bush is also a favorite fodder of the camel.

1 Nephi 16:11 **We did gather . . . all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given us (Illustration-not shown)**: Camels in the Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 31]

In summary, it is impossible, of course, to know exactly the conditions in the Midian region of northern Arabia during Nephi's time. However, we have good reason to conclude that before the use of extensive pumping there were only three true oases in the region of Midian, and only one of those, the Wadi Tayyib al-Isma had a river. Sir Richard Burton cited that these oases were all within a space of thirty-five geographical miles. Burton reported (1878) the Khedivial Expedition found three oases.^v He reported seeing two of these, at Al-Bada'a and Maqna. Neither of these oases have what could be considered a river. Musil reported a spring at al-Bada'a, but no river. This leaves the waters of Moses as the unique site in Midian with a river.^{vi} The Wadi Tayyib al-Isma contains a unique ecology. It appears to be the only wilderness valley in all of the Midian region of Arabia that could have provided the campsite and the provisions for the length of time described by Nephi.

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, pp. 58, 71, 86, 110-132; see also George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, pp. 4-5, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 16:12 **We Did Take Our Tents and Depart into the Wilderness:**

According to Potter and Wellington, phrases in Nephi's record appear to describe a journey to and then along the Frankincense trail. There are multiple corroborative references like coming "down by the borders of the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:5), traveling "three days" in "borders near . . . nearer the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:5-6), then traveling "nearly a south-southeast direction" (1 Nephi 16:13) "keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:14). But one might ask, Why was it necessary for the Liahona to point "the way whither we should go" (1 Nephi 16:10) if Lehi and Nephi were traveling on such a well-established trail such as the Frankincense trail? There are a number of reasons:

1. *Water:* The course of the Frankincense trail can be explained in one word, "water." Lynn Hilton notes: "Where there is water--that is the inescapable fact of Arabian life--and the great oases of the Arabian peninsula do not move from place to place"^{vii} The great oases of western Arabia, Tabuk, Hijra, Dedan (Ula), Medina, Mecca, and Najran are all found on the Frankincense trail or a branch of it. The eastern side of the coastal mountains forms an underground sea, trapping large pools of water in aquifers. The inland underground reservoirs, called the Basalt Aquifers, run almost the entire length of the northern and central parts of the Frankincense trail, providing dependable wells and springs along its course. The Frankincense trail was used because it had a reliable water supply. Yet water was not a free resource for all but rather a jealously guarded commodity. Water holes were guarded and regulated public property of the ruling tribe.^{viii} Without permission from the local tribe one cannot drink from them. And those wells which were not part of a settlement were often covered with a large rock and a bush so that one could even stand on the well and never know it was there unless informed of such by one of the local tribesman.

Some might argue that the Liahona could have directed Lehi through the desert without a trail. Even if that were possible, the party needed to rejoin the trail at the wells. They had no other choice. The need to find water in the desert made it relatively easy for the emirs to control passage through their lands. Andrew Taylor writes:

Like the soldiers and traders who had made their way through Arabia before them, they (pilgrims) knew there were supplies of water, scanty and brackish through they might be, on the road ahead. Fortified *kellas* or water stations, protected by iron-plated doors and garrisons of soldiers, dotted the route at long and irregular intervals. Although it might have been two or three days' march from one to another, at least the water supplies were known and plans made accordingly.^{ix}

2. *Supplies*: The Frankincense trail also provided the other important elements needed to survive the trip through the desert: food and, when needed, fresh camels. At the camps or "caravansaries" along the trail, the traveler could also share news and companionship with other travelers as well as inquire about the trail ahead. Every Bedu herdsman was responsible to the local emir to be an informer. To this day, they still receive rewards for notifying authorities of strangers traveling in their lands. Andrew Taylor writes of the earlier Europeans that journeyed into the Arabian wilderness: "Like other explorers before and after them, the Blunts (Wilfrid and Ann Blunt) were amazed at how news of their presence had spread among the tribes."^x Lehi would have understood that in order to travel through Arabia he would need the continued information and supplies offered by an authorized trail.

3. *A Good Road*: Mohammed Al-Mansour and his family were wealthy caravan-traders from Qassim, due east from Medina. His great grandson, Waleed Al Mansour, keeps a long genealogy that includes personal histories. He notes that to this day, his uncles can describe the footing of each of the main camel trails in Arabia, that is, gravel, hard sand, dry river bed, etc. The routes were not straight courses, but often deviated far distances to avoid lava beds, mountains or soft sand, none of which were good terrain for camels. Such considerations were far from incidental. If one's camels became lame in the desert, the traveler's fate was in serious jeopardy. The courses of the Frankincense routes were derived from thousands of years of experience, and were faithfully followed in an effort to minimize the risk of losing camels or of getting lost.^{xi}

4. *Places to Acquire Income*: Besides money for tributes, Lehi would have needed funds for acquiring provisions, and probably for replacing camels that became lame or died on the trail. Lehi apparently did not take his gold and silver into the wilderness. However Randolph Linehan, an international attorney specializing in international commerce, and one who practiced law in Arabia, speculates that in the commercial centers that were located along the Frankincense trail, Lehi and his older sons could have exchanged their highly valued personal services for tribute and provisions. Lehi was wealthy. He had taught not just his oldest sons,

but his younger ones as well, reading, writing, and the trade languages: Egyptian, Canaanite script, Judahite Hebrew. They made written records and had scriptures in their possession.^{xii} This might, to some degree, explain why it took Lehi eight years to cross Arabia.

5. *Protection from Plunder:* Remaining on the Frankincense trail would have provided Lehi with a couple of good security measures: (1) they would have been traveling with many other people; and (2) they would have the opportunity to pay proper tribute to local authorities who guarded the trail. The Bedouins of Arabia watched the passages and wells and knew who traveled in their lands. To wander off this trail invited death from those officials who derived their income from the caravan trade. Those entering tribal lands without permission were considered by those in authority to be trespassers, tribute dodgers or what we might call illegal immigrants. The family would thus have been fair game for plunder, enslavement and perhaps even death.

Staying on the trail also meant traveling with large groups. Waleed Al-Monsour relates that his grandfather's caravan's numbered two to three hundred camels, each few camels being accompanied by an armed man.^{xiii} When a smaller group wished to make a long journey they would wait at a village (or caravanserai) until enough people could band together to make a sizable traveling party.^{xiv} The caravan was thus a small army traveling across the desert. The same strategy applied to the pioneers of the American West.

Arabist Alan Keohane explains why it was in the interest of the tribes to encourage travel:

Traders and cultivators paid them protection money, called *khawah* to keep themselves safe from raids. The desert sheikhs--a title of respect derived from the Arabic word for "to be old"--became so powerful that many were given the grander title of *emir* or prince. They were also fabulously wealthy.^{xv}

For this reason, the tribes that ruled trade routes went to great efforts to protect their trails and to organize small parties into larger groups for travel between villages. These tribute-paying travelers needed a degree of safety or they would find other routes. The travelers were their customers, and the tribute from the trail was their main source of income. Andrew Taylor writes of one nineteenth century Emir in northern Arabia:

Emir Mohammed ibn Rashid at Hail, who would briskly lop off the heads of strangers found loafing around near the roads in his domain as an example to anyone thinking of mounting an armed attack on passing travelers. It was . . . an effective policy--there had been no robberies on the Emir's highways for years . . .^{xvi}

Nigel Groom notes of the Minaeans, one of the incense kingdoms of southern Arabia that controlled the trade in Lehi's time:

Over the long period of the overland incense trade, power and influence will have shifted among the different tribes of central Arabia and it seems likely that the Minaeans organizing the trade will always have been much concerned in dealings to ensure the safe passage of their caravans through the territories of tribal chiefs with varying and fluctuating degrees of authority. A general measure of law and order must have been maintained, however, for the trade to have continued over the centuries without, so far as we know, any major interruption.^{xvii}

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 74-83; see also George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 4, p. 4, 8, Unpublished]

Geographical Theory Map: 1 Nephi 16:12-13 Lehi Travels to Shazer & "Broken Bow" (Year 005)

1 Nephi 16:13 **A South-Southeast Direction:**

In 1 Nephi 16:13, Nephi mentions the directional term "south-southeast." According to John Sorenson, directions and how they are referred to are cultural products, not givens in nature. Both the conceptual frameworks which define directions and the languages of reference for them differ dramatically from culture to culture and throughout history. . . A person may say that "east is obvious," it is "where the sun comes up." But as I write, in Utah in December, the sun is rising in the southeast . . . while in, say, Norway or northern Canada the sun is coming up only in what we call the south. . . . On the other hand, in the tropics, sunrise is at astronomical "east" on only two mornings per year. On every other day its rising point at the horizon is either to the north or south of astronomical "east," for much of the year by many degrees of arc. . . .

Clearly, Old World civilizations held many ideas about how directions were to be determined, assigned significance, and labeled. The cardinal points were only a relatively late, technical answer to the question "what directions are there?" From a survey of ideas such as these that were known in the part of the world where Book of Mormon peoples originated we see some possibilities that enlighten us about how the Nephites may have oriented themselves, but by no means do exclusive answers to what their conceptions actually were leap out at us. [John L. Sorenson, A Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 401,407. (For an extended discussion on cultural disparities in directional systems, see pp. 401-415)]

1 Nephi 16:13 A South-Southeast Direction:

Nephi explicitly informs us in 1 Nephi 16:13 that the direction his family traveled was "south-southeast." In using such descriptive directional language, Nephi (and indirectly Mormon and Moroni), have opened the door for a discussion of directions in the Book of Mormon, more particularly a discussion of some of the primary building blocks for a standard of directions: consistency among the recordkeepers, range of variance in directional terms, and directional orientation from a point of reference.

1. *Consistency Among the Recordkeepers:* The Book of Mormon is made up from original writings of many writers: Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, etc. of the small plates of Nephi; Lehi, Nephi . . . Benjamin, Zeniff, Mosiah₂, Alma₂, etc. of the large plates of Nephi; the Brother of Jared, Ether, etc. of the Jaredite history. Many of these writings were either abridged or translated by Mormon and Moroni. In our present Book of Mormon, we find examples of directional notations given by Nephi (1 Nephi 16:13 -- small plates); Zeniff (Mosiah 9:14 -- large plates); Mormon (Alma 22:27-24 -- Mormon's Abridgment); and Moroni (Ether 1:1 -- Moroni's Abridgment). Were these directions from the same standard? In other words, were the directions of every writer on the small plates the same as the directions of every writer on the large plates? And was the directional system established first by Nephi on the large plates (1 Nephi 19:1-5) and years later by Nephi on the small plates (2 Nephi 5:28-34) (both from a location on the American continent), according to the same directional standard as that of Mormon and Moroni?

Whether the directional ideas in the Book of Mormon were expressed in the beginning of Nephite history according to "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2), or whether in the end of Nephite history directional ideas were expressed according to "Hebrew" or "reformed Egyptian" which had been "altered" (Mormon 9:32-33), if the directions mentioned in our present Book of Mormon didn't become standardized when they went through the editing and compiling process of Mormon and Moroni, or more importantly, if they didn't become standardized when they came through the mind of Joseph Smith, then trying to make sense out of the geographical terms in the Book of Mormon would be helplessly frustrating. Although we find that Mormon used many different geographical and directional notations in trying to describe not only Nephite and Lamanite territories but the lands of Mulekite and Jaredite origins as well (see Alma 22:27-34 for an example), he apparently did not make any mention of having to change any system of directional standards relative to any recordkeeper on the large plates. Nor did he mention any directional system changes relative to the authors of the small plates when he wrote his editorial introduction to that record (see Words of Mormon). In the writings of Moroni we find that even though he tried to correlate some Jaredite locations with those of the Nephites (hill Shim -- hill Cumorah -- hill Ramah -- Ether 9:3, 15:11), he failed to mention any major differences in directional reference systems.

Thus, the directional and geographical references in the Book of Mormon appear to be

consistent and standardized. If we choose not to accept this reasoning, we are left with one or more of the alternative conclusions that: (1) consistent directional terms and consistent geographical references were not factors in telling the Book of Mormon story (see 1 Nephi 6:6); (2) Mormon and Moroni were lacking in their understanding and responsibility as abridgers to describe the geographical picture through the different chronological and cultural time frames of the Book of Mormon; or (3) Joseph Smith was lacking in his ability as a translator to properly convey a meaningful directional system or an understandable geographical picture from the writings on the plates. Although it seems logical to accept the idea of consistency, it might be wise to leave the matter open to discussion.

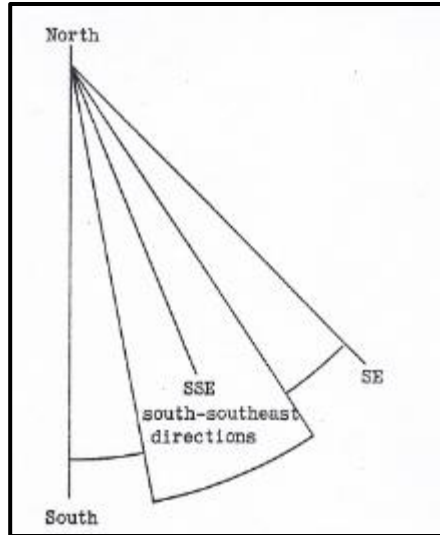
2. *Range of Variance in Directional Terms:* In the Book of Mormon, we are not dealing with all the cultural variations by which people orient themselves or have oriented themselves throughout history, we are only dealing first with how directions were sent out to the world by Mormon and Moroni, and second, with how those directions came forth in translation from the mind of Joseph Smith. By the use of such a term as "south-southeast" (1 Nephi 16:13), the directional system of the Book of Mormon becomes divided into sixteen parts: the terms "south" + "east" are two terms of an implied four-part system (north-south-east-west); the term "southeast" implies eight divisions of direction; and the term "south-southeast" implies sixteen divisions. This 16-part division of direction tends to limit the range of variance in defining such specific words as "north," "south," and "east" (at least in the small plates). However, the terms "northward" and "southward" might be somewhat more open for interpretation.

3. *Directional Orientation from a Point of Reference:* In order to orient ourselves to a directional standard, we must have a point of reference:

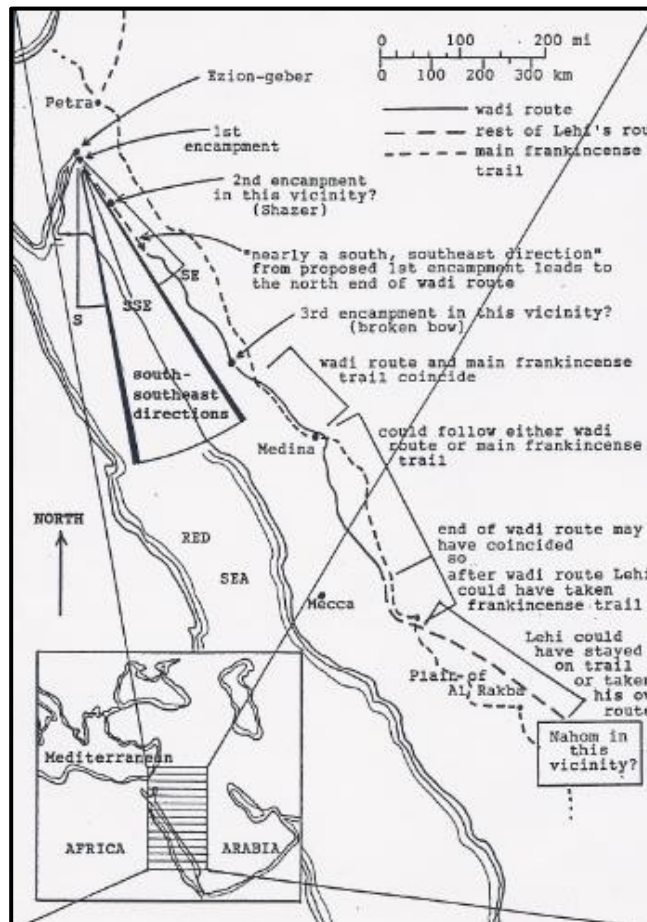
(a) If Lehi's "valley of Lemuel" was near the northern tip of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:4-14), and if Lehi traveled "south-southeast" in "nearly the same course as in the beginning" until he reached Nahom (1 Nephi 16:33-34), then the direction of "south-southeast" can be correlated with ancient travel routes paralleling the coast of the Red Sea.

(b) Lehi eventually reached Nahom before he mentioned turning "eastward" (1 Nephi 17:1). Scholars have found evidence for the site of Nahom on ancient maps (see the commentary on 1 Nephi 16:34). Thus, if the position of Nahom can be confirmed, then by having the beginning point and the ending point of Lehi's "course" of travel, a definite directional orientation and comparison can be made relative to our modern day system of cardinal directions.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [For a continuation of the discussion of directions, see the commentary on 1 Nephi 17:1; Mosiah 7:5]



1 Nephi 16:13 **South-southeast (Illustration):** A south-southeast direction would be within an arc on either side of south-southeast. [Keith Christensen, The Unknown Witness, p. 72, Unpublished]



1 Nephi 16:13 **South-southeast (Illustration):** Illustration of the direction of south-southeast superimposed on the Red Sea. [Keith Christensen, The Unknown Witness, p. 73, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 16:13 A South-Southeast Direction (Hilton Theory):

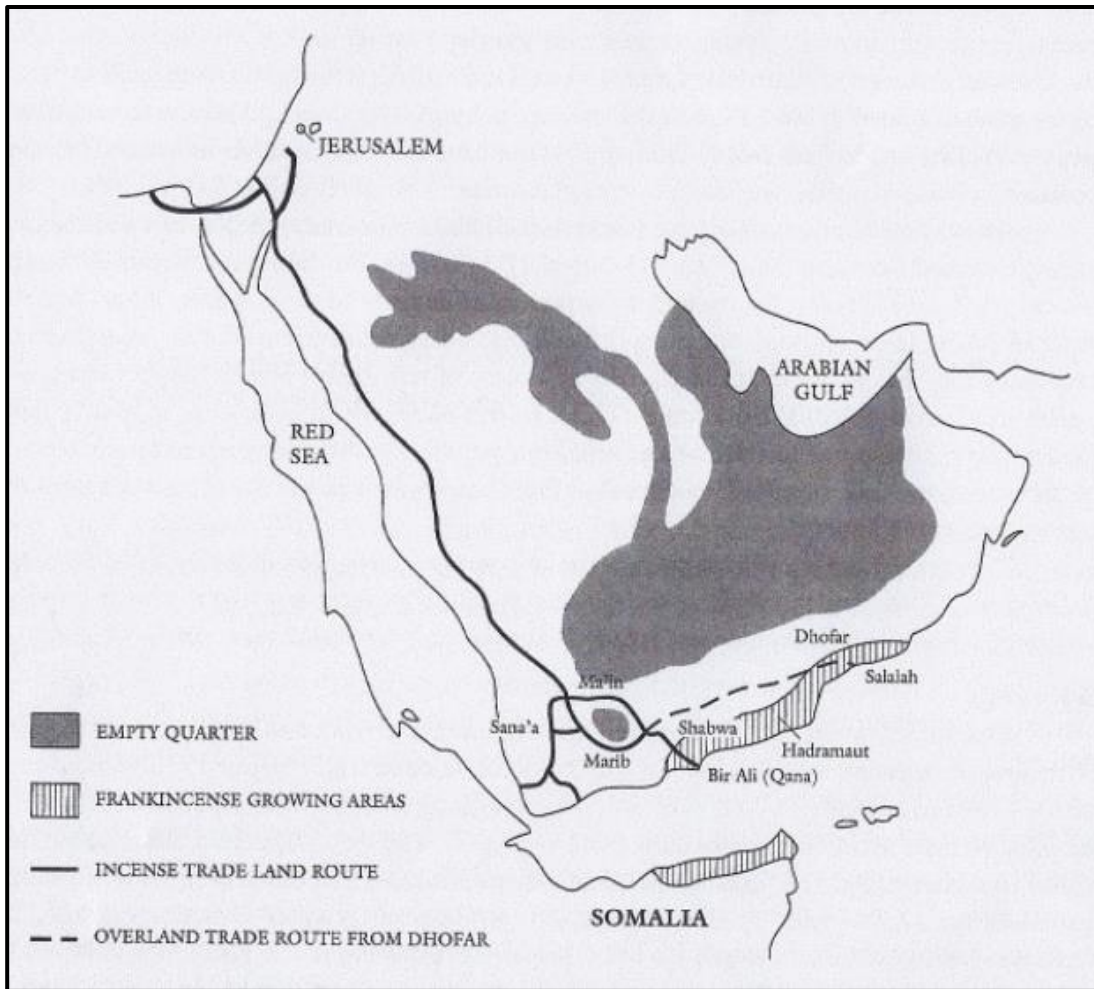
The Hiltons suggest that from this point of their journey near the northern tip of the Red Sea until they reached Bountiful, Lehi was probably traveling on what was called the "Frankincense Trail." Frankincense was highly valued and came from certain locations in the southern part of Saudi Arabia. It was shipped overland along major trails that soon became major highways of commerce. As water was the determining factor of any travel in Arabia, these trails connected hand-dug wells all along the way (p. 77).

They believe that Lehi would not have left an established path to roam on waterless mountains and deserts. The Book of Mormon does not say he was hiding on his journey, nor does it say he was fleeing from pursuit as some have thought; so it is likely that he kept to the known highways of the day. (pp. 32-33).

The Hiltons note that the word *trail* is apt to be misleading. It does not refer to a well-defined, relatively narrow path or roadway, but to a more general route that followed through this valley, that canyon, etc. The width of the route varied with the geography, ranging from a half mile to a dozen (even at one point up to fifty) miles wide. Travelers could thus camp great distances from one another and still be at the same point on the same trail (p. 32). [Lynn and Hope Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, pp. 32-33, 77]

1 Nephi 16:13 A South-Southeast Direction (Hilton Theory):

In an interesting note regarding directions, Lynn Hilton writes that the south-southeast direction in the borders of the Red Sea is very close to the actual direction. The actual reading averaged over the Red Sea coast is a bearing of 149 degrees, whereas the true direction of south-southeast is a bearing of 157.5 degrees, or a deviation of only 8.5 degrees to the east or left. But this direction of travel, 149 degrees, is much closer to "south-southeast" than to southeast, where the deviation is 14 degrees, or to any other cardinal point of the compass. [Lynn M. Hilton, "Nephi's 'Eastward' Journey," in Ancient America Foundation (AAF) Newsletter, Num. 5, August 1995, p. 1-2]



1 Nephi 16:13 **A south-southeast direction (Frankincense Trail) [Illustration]:** The Arabian peninsula, including incense trade routes and major centers. [Warren and Michaela Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, p. 6]

1 Nephi 16:13 **Shazer (Potter Theory):**

When the time came, Lehi's party left the valley of Lemuel and traveled to their next halting place where Nephi notes, "we did pitch our tents again and we did call the name of the place Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13). According to Potter and Wellington, while the number of helpful pieces of information Nephi gives about this stage of the journey are scant, they are nevertheless insightful:

A. *They departed into the wilderness* (1 Nephi 16:12).

From the valley of Lemuel (proposed wadi Tayyib-al-Isim) Nephi notes that they traveled south-southeast. Taking this heading would have led them back into the mountains and towards the huge wadi Ifal which runs north/south some 13 miles from where they were

camping and towards the town of al Bada'a. Al Bada'a was a major stop on the Frankincense trail^{xviii} some 20 miles to the southeast. Lehi or Nephi may have even visited it during their long stay in the valley of Lemuel. The terrain between the valley and al Bada'a is essentially the same as they had encountered entering the valley; mountains interspersed with winding wadis, and the occasional stunted tree. Certainly this was still "wilderness," the very word Diodorus uses to describe this area around wadi Ifal.^{xix}

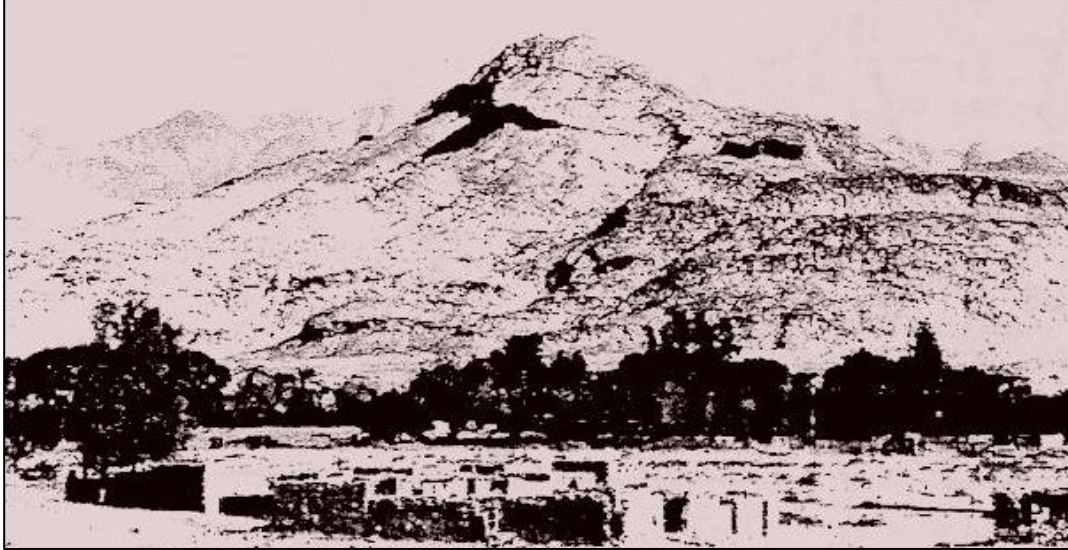
B. They traveled in "nearly a south-southeast direction" (1 Nephi 16:13).

Nephi tells us that the trail they took ran in the direction nearly south-southeast. A bearing of south-southeast is $157\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ from north. This bearing took Lehi's family down one of the branches of the frankincense trail. In fact, various Arab geographers have given us the names and order of the rest stops along this branch. (see chart below) However, some items of caution regarding direction should be noted:

- a. "Nearly south-southeast" could mean a bearing anywhere between 147° and 170° .
- b. We do not know by what method Nephi was measuring north. He may have been referring to the north celestial pole (pole star)^{xx} or to magnetic north. Magnetic north varies from true north by a little over 3° at the Gulf of Aqaba.
- c. Nephi gave only one direction to cover the entire trip from the valley of Lemuel to Nahom, a journey of approximately 1200 miles. There were obviously twists and turns in the journey which would allow the family to follow the logical course.
- d. Nephi wrote his account on metal plates over 30 years after the made he trip to Shazer (2 Nephi 5:28, 34). The details he chose not to include are unknown to us.

C. A "commandment" to "take [their] journey" "on the morrow." They traveled "for the space of four days" (1 Nephi 16:13).

From the text of 1 Nephi 16:9, 11-13 it would appear that prior to Lehi receiving a "commandment from the Lord "by night" to depart from the valley of Lemuel (Tayyib al-Ism) "on the morrow," that the family did not know that they would be departing the following day. Dismantling their camp and packing for their journey would have taken some time, however, they would have probably reached al-Bada'a the following day. Since al-Bada'a was on the main trail, the family would then have been synchronized with the subsequent rest stops which travelers were accustomed to reaching after each day's journey. Day 3 would have taken them to as-Swer, and by the end of day 4 they would have reached al-Agharr and "pitched their tents."



1 Nephi 16:13 **We traveled for the space of four days (Illustration-Potter Theory):** The town of Midian (al-Bada'a), home of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, would have been the first town the family of Lehi would have encountered after leaving the Valley of Lemuel (Tayyib al-Isim). It was a major halt on the trail that led from Egypt to southern Arabia. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 104]

D. *They stopped at a place they called "Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13).*

Could Lehi have named the location "Shazer" because of some obvious feature which might have survived to this day? Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote of the meaning of the name Shazer:

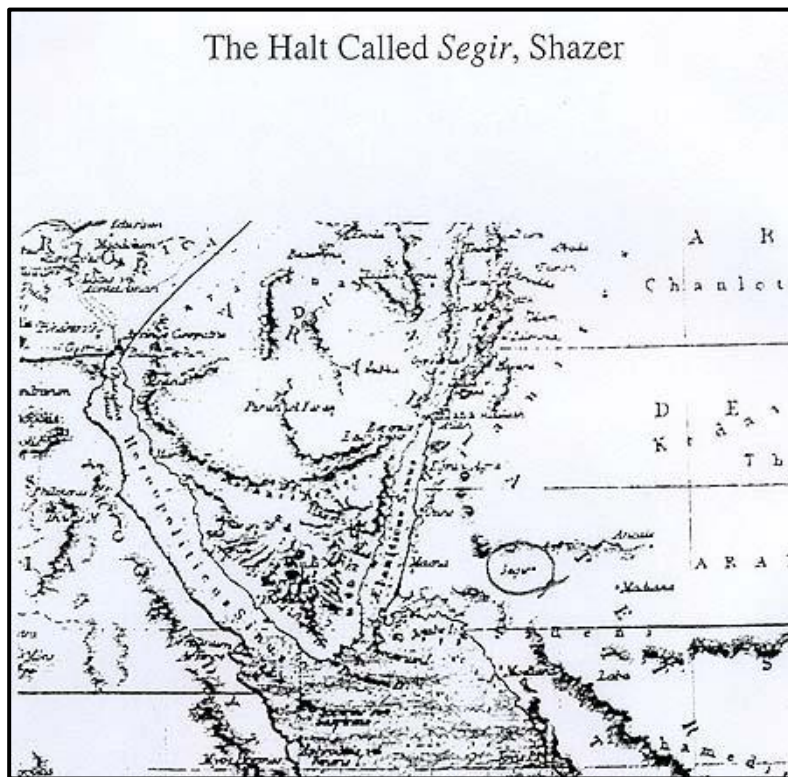
The first important stop after Lehi's party had left their base camp was at a place called *Shazer*. The name is intriguing. The combination *shajer* is quite common in Palestinian place names; it is a collective meaning "trees," and many Arabs (especially in Egypt) pronounce it *shazher*. It appears in *Thoghret-as-Sajur* (the Pass of Trees), which in the ancient Shaghur, written *Segor* in the sixth century. (Nibley, (1) pp. 78-79)

The De L'isle's map of 1701^{xxi} shows this interchangeable situation of Shajer and Segor by using both names for a given location (see map #1). Nigel Groom uses a number of variations of the place name: Shajir, Shajirah, Shajra, Ashjar, Mushjir and Mashjarah.^{xxii} These variations are explained by the fact that Arabic is a vocalized language where the vowels are interchangeable. While Groom uses "Shajir" and Nibley "Shajer," both words are identical. Groom's definition of Shajir is almost identical to Nibley's, being: "a valley or area abounding with trees and shrubs."^{xxiii} The plural for "trees" is pronounced "Ash-jar" by Saudi Arabs and "Ash-gar" by Egyptian Arabs. This leads to Groom's variant spelling of "Ashjar."

A variant spelling of "shasar" means a "cleft." Dr. Nibley also indicates that the name Shazer might be "connected somehow or other and denoting either seepage--a weak but

reliable water supply--or a clump of trees." (Nibley, (1) pp. 78-79) In Hebrew the word "Shazer" is associated with twisting or intertwining.

George Potter happened to stumble across an old map made by Ptolemy (see map #2). On this map there is a location of Segir (the old name for Shajir) past al-Bada'a and to the east of Macna (Maqna). Musil commented on Ptolemy's record: "That the names of these towns or settlements in many cases denote only the more important wells or camping places is evident from the character of the country."^{xxiv} Obviously Lehi's journey far predates this map, but to Potter and Wellington, it was encouraging to see that historically, the first halt after al-Bada'a was considered worthy of the name "tree, the same name which Lehi appears to have given to their first stopping place after joining the trail at al-Bada'a. At the very point that Ptolemy placed a location named "Segir," Potter and Wellington found an oasis with a few small farms and a handful of humble dwellings. This may be just as it was two and a half thousand years ago. It must surely be a great coincidence that not only do we find an ancient trail leading south-southeast from the valley of Lemuel (Tayyib al-Isim), but also a place called Segir (Shazer) on that trail about a four-day journey from the valley. The assumption is often made that this campsite had no name since Nephi records, "we did call the name of the place Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13), however, this statement of Nephi's does not preclude that the place already had a variant on the local name.

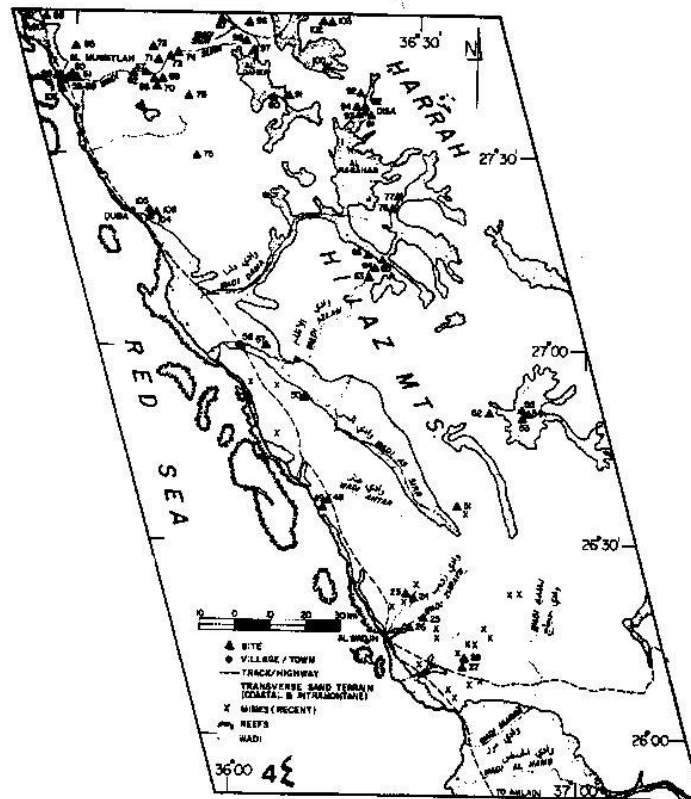


1 Nephi 16:13 **We did call the name of the place Shazer (Illustration-Potter Theory):** Map #1 showing the double listing of the names Seger and Schajar. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 102]



1 Nephi 16:13 **We did call the name of the place Shazer (Illustration-Potter Theory):** Map #2 The Halt Called Segir -- Shazer. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 103]

Figure 9-1: Location of Ancient Ruins
Cities along Nephi's Trail

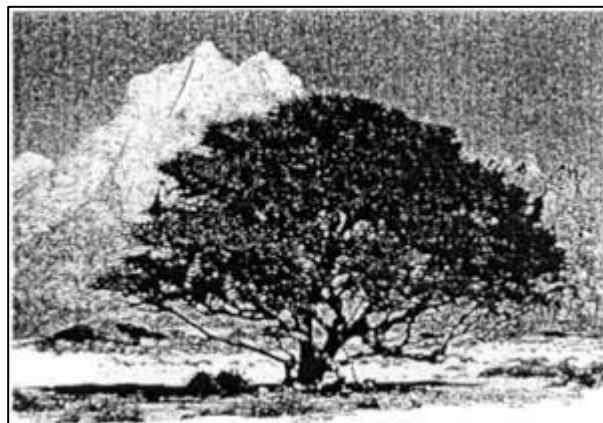


1 Nephi 16:13 **We did call the name of the place Shazer ["Trees"] (Illustration- Potter Theory):** Wadi Al-Gharr has 18 miles of cultivation running through it, including thousands of date palms. There is simply no other place in the northwest corner of Arabia that the expression, "Shazer," which means "a valley with trees," more aptly describes. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 104]

E. *Shazer was a place where they could hunt* (1 Nephi 16:14).

It seems strange that the family would go to the effort of breaking camp and then, after only four days of travel, unpack everything and set up camp again. Besides, Nephi had mentioned only three verses earlier that they took their provisions with them when they left the valley. It would seem unlikely that the family had run low of food after only four days. What seems likely is that they reached an area of excellent hunting and here was the opportunity to eat well and stock meat before they continued. (see 1 Nephi 16:14) It seems possible that the Lord took this opportunity to have the men hone their skills. Diodorus, who wrote of this area in 20 B.C., mentioned that the local people lived primarily by hunting: "The inhabitants . . . are called Banizomeneis. They engage in hunting and eat the flesh of animals of the mainland." Wadi Gharr has steep mountains on each side of it standing nearly 7000 feet high (see illustration). According to Groom the place name Aghar means a "precipice, crevice or cave, depressed place in a mountain; wild animal lair, a steep place."^{xxv}

Note* The ibex (*capra ibex nubiana*) is a shy animal with curved horns resembling a rather stout goat. It lives high among the steep craggy mountains, where few other animals can survive.^{xxvi} The ibex does not obtain all of its water requirements from its food and so must come down from the peaks to drink. It is at this time that it is susceptible to ambush by hunters. We would suggest that the men in Lehi's group may well have left the rest of the family in the protected halt and traveled into the mountains just as the text infers in order to hunt this most noble of beasts.



The mountain range immediately east of Al Gharr (Shazer) provides good hunting to this day. The local

residents have told us that the best ibex hunting in Midian is found in these mountains. this was an excellent place for the men to go and hunt. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 104]

F. After leaving Shazer they were still in the "borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:14).

As discussed earlier, the "borders" to which Nephi refers were the mountains which formed the border between the Tihama (beach) and the Negev (desert). These mountains were known as the Hijaz. The fact that after leaving Shazer the family kept "in the borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:14) implies that they must have been close to or in the Hijaz mountains. It also implies that Nephi could tell they were near the sea, or in essence, they were on the seaward side of the range and could still see the Red Sea.

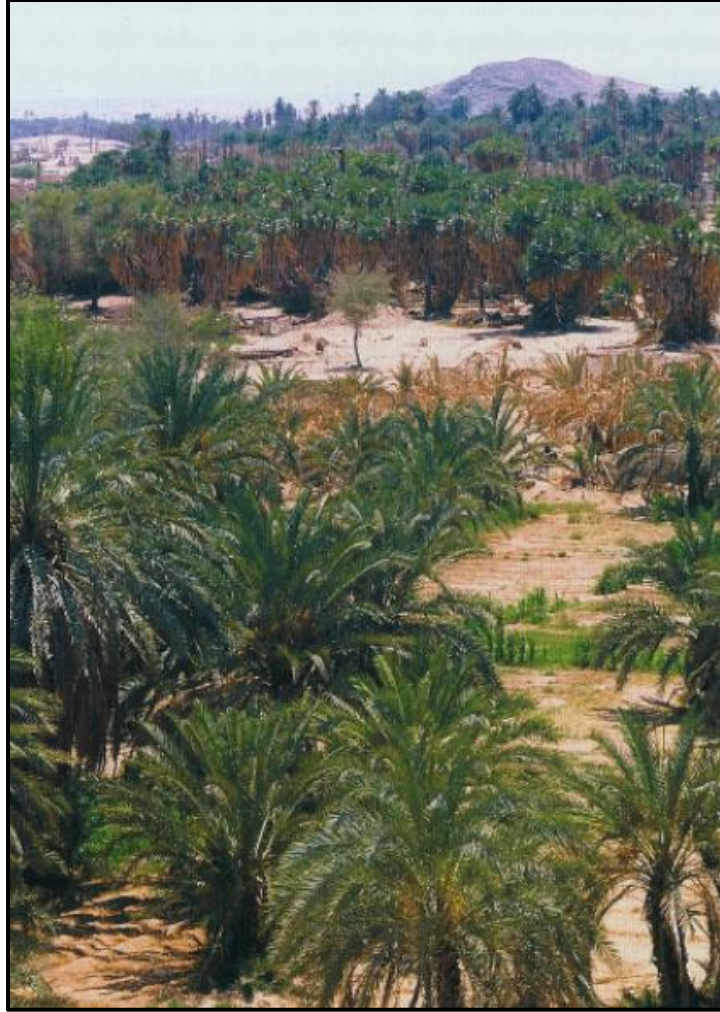
Conclusions:

The halt of al-Aghra qualifies in every important way as Shazer. It was the first authorized halt on the Frankincense trail after leaving al-Bada'a. Shazer was Lehi's first halt after restarting his trail into the wilderness. It is a four-day journey from the valley of Lemuel (Tayyib al-Isim) and is in a nearly south-southeast direction. Indeed it is in the same basic location to where an old map shows "Segir," and established variant spelling for Shazer. Unlike the rest of Midian, which is barren and almost entirely void of trees, wadi Agharr has miles of trees growing within it, and the most likely meaning of Shazer (Shajir) is a "valley abounding with trees." It may be that Lehi chose a name for the halt which was a clever word play combining a number of meanings of the word "Shazer": a valley with trees, a cleft in a rock with water, and an intertwining (here the trail intertwined with the valley track, all three being found at this location. Finally, there would have been a good reason for Lehi to stop; at Agharr as it is surrounded by tall mountains that abound with large game.

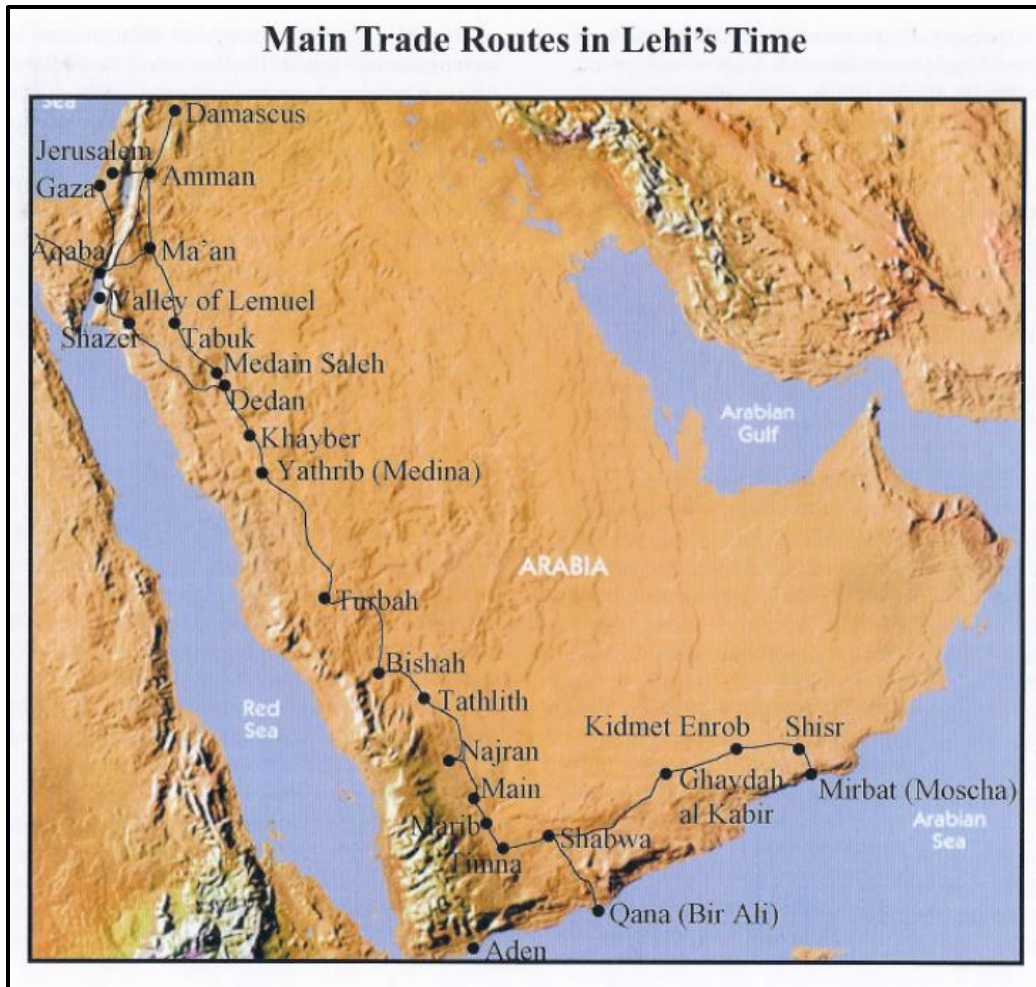
[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 91-103]



1 Nephi 16:13 **Shazer (Illustration – Potter Theory)** The mountains north of wadi Agharr as evening sets in. The terrain is typical of the area of Arabia the Romans called *Arabia Petrae* or “rocky Arabia.” George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 75]



1 Nephi 16:13 **Shazer (Illustration – Potter Theory)** Wadi Agharr looking west towards the sea. Lehi named this place “Shazer,” meaning “wadi of many trees.” George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 77]



1 Nephi 16:13 **We did call the name of the place Shazer (Illustration-Potter Theory):** "Main Trade Routes in Lehi's Time," George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, p. 57]

1 Nephi 16:13 **We Did Call the Name of the Place Shazer:**

The phrase "we did call the name of the place Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13) is apparently an Hebraism. According to John A. Tvedtnes, the Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon help persuade us that it is authentic. . . . When a child is born, we say in English that his father and mother "called him X" or "named him X." The same is true in naming places, for example, "He called his ranch Pleasant Valley." But Hebrew expresses it quite differently: "He called the name of his son X." In Hebrew, it is the *name* that is "called," not the child or the place. Perhaps the best-known example from the Bible is the one found in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall *call his name* Immanuel."

[John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon" in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, F.A.R.M.S., p. 89]

1 Nephi 16:14 We Did Go Forth . . . Keeping in the Most Fertile Parts of the Wilderness, Which Were in the Borders Near the Red Sea (Hilton & Potter Theories Compared):

According to Potter and Wellington, the Hijaz mountain range runs the entire length of Arabia in an approximate north-south direction paralleling the coast of the Red Sea and just a few miles to the east of the Red Sea. In traveling "south-southeast," Lehi's party had two choices in making their way southward towards the place which they called "Shazer" (1 Nephi 16:13) and beyond: (1) They could either cross through the heart of the Hijaz mountains and continue on the Frankincense trail which followed along the east side of the mountains; or (2) They could travel down the coastal shoreline of the Red Sea on the west side of the mountains. Obviously they could not travel directly along the mountain chain because they would have been traversing one thousand miles of jagged peaks from six to ten thousand feet in height.

The Hiltons have suggested that the family traveled to the western side of the Hijaz range, down the Red Sea shoreline.^{xxvii} (see illustration below) In 1 Nephi 16:14, Nephi informs the reader that from the place called Shazer "they did go forth again in the wilderness, following the same direction, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea. Adherents to the Hiltons' theory interpret the word "borders" in 1 Nephi 16:14 to mean the shoreline plain, which is called the *Tihama*.

Potter and Wellington disagree with the Hiltons' proposed shoreline manner of travel for a number of reasons. Some of the main reasons are listed below:

(1) The first and most notable of these is that there is no evidence that a trail existed down the shore of the Red Sea until well after Lehi's time. Crossing Arabia was a very difficult process. Such long journeys in the desert would have required logistical support, or in essence dependable and maintained wells, fodder for animals, and provisions. A review of the official maps of the pre-Islamic trade routes in Arabia exhibited at the National Museum of Bahrain and the Antiquities Museums of Saudi Arabia at Najran and Damman show a network of trading routes through Arabia--yet none are located along the shoreline of the Red Sea. Virtually all of the texts, printed in English, that deal with the pre-Islamic trade routes show the Frankincense trail inland and no trail along the coastline.^{xxviii} For a short distance in the south of Arabia a branch of the incense route traveled along the coast but then joined up again with the Frankincense trail.^{xxix} However, it was fifteen hundred years after the time of Lehi before a trail existed along the Red Sea coast, with its infrastructure of supply stations and wells, from Palestine to the Hadramawt in southern Arabia.

(2) Nephi noted that they traveled in "the most fertile parts." The entire northern two thirds of the Red Sea coastal plain is barren wasteland. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Agriculture has tested the soils along the Red sea plain and determined that they are "non-arable soil due to the high salinity."^{xxx}

(3) A journey along the coast would provide terrain that is the direct opposite to what Nephi describes. Nephi states that they traveled first in the *most* fertile parts of the wilderness, then in the *more* fertile parts. He also says that on the last part of the journey south, at Nahom, the family was suffering from starvation. Yet a look at a map showing areas of cultivation on the west of Arabia shows that the coastal route is just the opposite of that. There are no areas of cultivation on the first part of the trip, then they increase in number by the time one reaches Jeddah, and on the final southerly stretch on the Tihama plain they are plentiful.

(4) Nephi's text states that they turned east only *after* Nahom (1 Nephi 17:1). The Hiltons propose that Lehi's family used the Shar ascent to go from the shoreline up into the mountains, turning east after al-Qunfidhah to pass through Abha and Khumis Mushayt, before coming to Nahm.^{xxxix} This route runs east for 75 miles from Ash Shi'b to Ash Sh'ar, 400 miles *before* reaching Nahm. The western side of the mountains in southern Saudi Arabia is the most fertile portion of all of Saudi Arabia with terraced cultivation on the mountains and fields on the Tihama. Since the area supported a larger population anciently than it does today this was probably also the case in Lehi's time. Yet by the time they reached Nahom the family was starving (1 Nephi 16:35).

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, July, 2000, pp. 83-84]

1 Nephi 16:14 *And We Did go Forth Again . . . in the Most Fertile Parts of the wilderness (Potter Theory):*

According to Potter and Wellington, after Lehi's group finished hunting at Shazer (al-Gharr), they continued south-southeast ("the same direction") on what appears to be the Gaza branch of the Frankincense trail and kept in what the text describes as "the most fertile parts of the wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:14). One might ask, How could there be "most fertile parts" in the desert land of northwest Arabia, where rainfall averages less than four inches per year and extreme summer temperatures bake everything? Isn't this a contradiction?

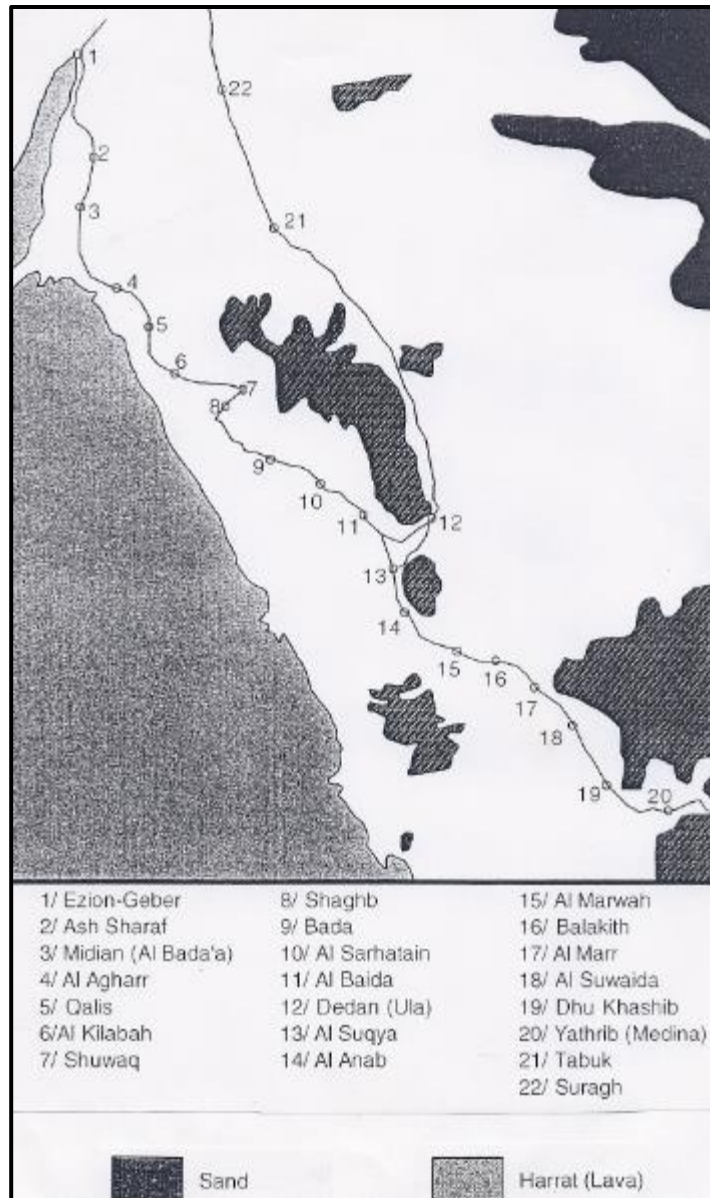
In order to solve this problem, some LDS scholars have suggested that the phrase "most fertile parts" meant that Lehi rode his camels through the lowest spots in the wadis where slightly more desert bushes are found.^{xxxix} This notion would seem to reinvent the definitions of "most" and "fertile," especially in light of what these words would have meant to the author Nephi and Joseph Smith, the translator. Nephi came from Jerusalem, part of the "fertile crescent." He came from an agrarian society and undoubtedly knew the precise meaning of fertility. Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that the words Nephi used for "most" and "fertile" meant just what they imply.

As in many other instances, what might at first seem to be a great flaw in Nephi's text is actually one of the most compelling witnesses for its historical accuracy. Based on research and

explorations by Potter and Wellington, they believe there are two rational explanations for Nephi's wording:

(1) Based on broad assumptions, the phrase "keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness" might have meant that Lehi's family visited the large oasis towns which were mostly located on the Frankincense trail. These were, in order: al-Bada'a, Al-Aghra at wadi Sharma, Shuwaq, Shagbh, Dedan, Medina, Najran, etc. (see illustration below). Each of these oases had a farming community associated with it.

(2) It is more likely, however, that "the most fertile parts" was the particular section of the Frankincense trail from Dedan to Medina. That is to say, "the most fertile parts" was an actual place, a series of villages and farms called the *Qura Arabiyyah* which were found on the Frankincense trail.



1 Nephi 16:14 **And we did go forth again . . . in the most fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration-Potter Theory):** Halts on the Frankincense Trail. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, [Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail](#), Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 122]

According to Groom, *Qura* or *Qara* means "a region or place of fixed abode; villages, a cultivated land."^{xxxiii} Thus *Qura Arabiyyah* means villages of Arabia. To Nephi and fellow Palestinians of his day, the *Qura Arabiyyah* were the settled villages of the "Arabs" who lived in a great desert; everything else in the peninsula was Bedouin country, the land of the "A'rabs." The distinction of the two words in quotation marks is very important. Al-Wohaibi explains:

It is from *Qura Arabiyyah* that the name "Arab" as opposed to "A'rab" is to be derived, since the word "Arab" denotes the settlers, as opposed to "A'rab" the Bedouin. This distinction is definitely pre-Islamic and can be assumed to have originated in this

region which is known to have possessed commercial, agricultural centres.^{xxxiv}

Al-Wohaibi infers that in ancient times, the only lands considered *Arabia* were the villages (occupied by "Arabs") between Wadi Qura, the home of the empire of Dedan, and the great oasis of Medina. Thus *Qura Arabiyyah* included twelve villages, a chain of fertile farmlands which ran for over two hundred miles to the south-southeast. Only these *Qura* villages are what ancient Palestinian and Syrian historians considered Arabia or Arabiyyah. The term Arabia or *Bilad al-Arab* ("the land of the Arab") did not apply to the entire peninsula until well after the advent of Islam.^{xxxv} Even more interesting to the Book of Mormon reader is the fact that the Prophet Mohammed referred to these villages as the *Muhajirun*, which means "the fertile parts [pieces] of land."^{xxxvi} In essence, the title *Muhajirun* (fertile parts) or *Qura Arabiyyah* (villages or cultivated lands) seems only to have applied to the villages that were located on the Gaza or Egyptian branch of the Frankincense trail, the exact route that Lehi would have taken from Tayyib al-Isim (the valley of Lemuel) to Medina. In other words, when Nephi referred to the "most fertile parts," he appears to have been using the actual place-name for the area that Lehi's family was traveling in.

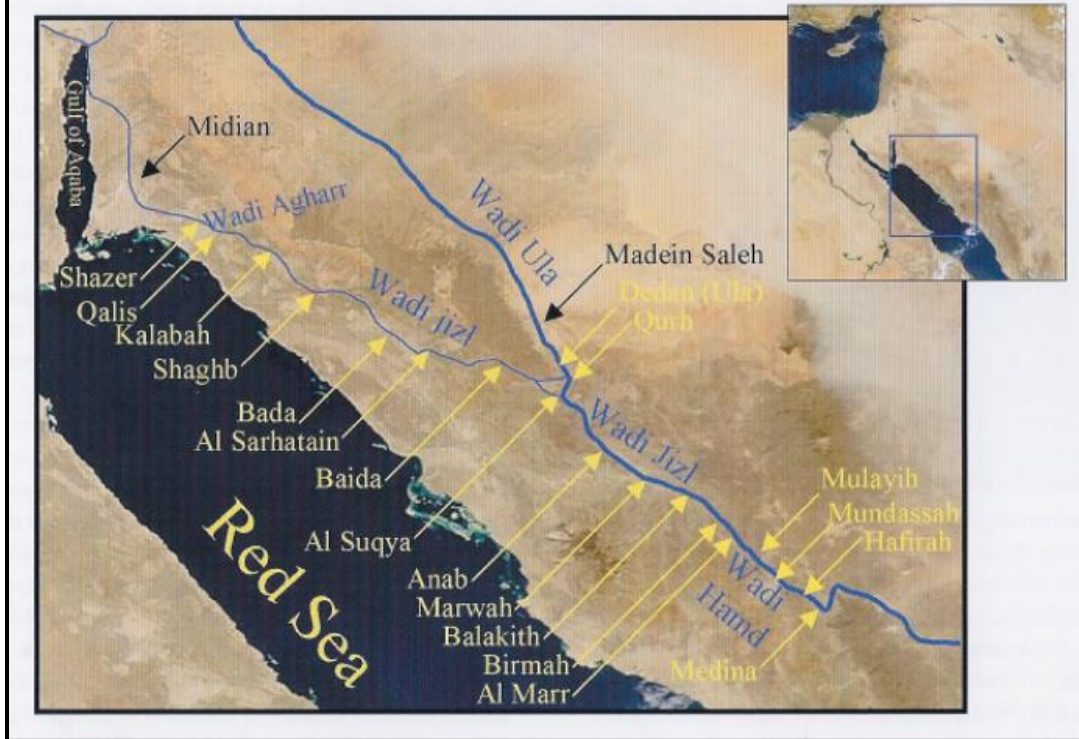
With this in mind it is interesting to note two things about the 1830 original translation of the Book of Mormon:

- (1) capitalization was generally not a part of the text; and
- (2) the phrase actually read, "keeping in the most fertile parts, which WAS in the borders."

This implies once again that "the most fertile parts" was a place-name for a unique area, in essence, the *Muhajirin*, the *Qura Arabiyyah*.

One final note. No reliable record existed of a westerner visiting these most fertile parts of the Frankincense trail until after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Department of Antiquities and Museums of Saudi Arabia cites: "Charles Doughty was the first who visited al-Ula (Dedan) in 1876 and opened the doors for study and research for the others."^{xxxvii} [George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail*, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 105-120]

The Muhajirun, the Most Fertile Parts

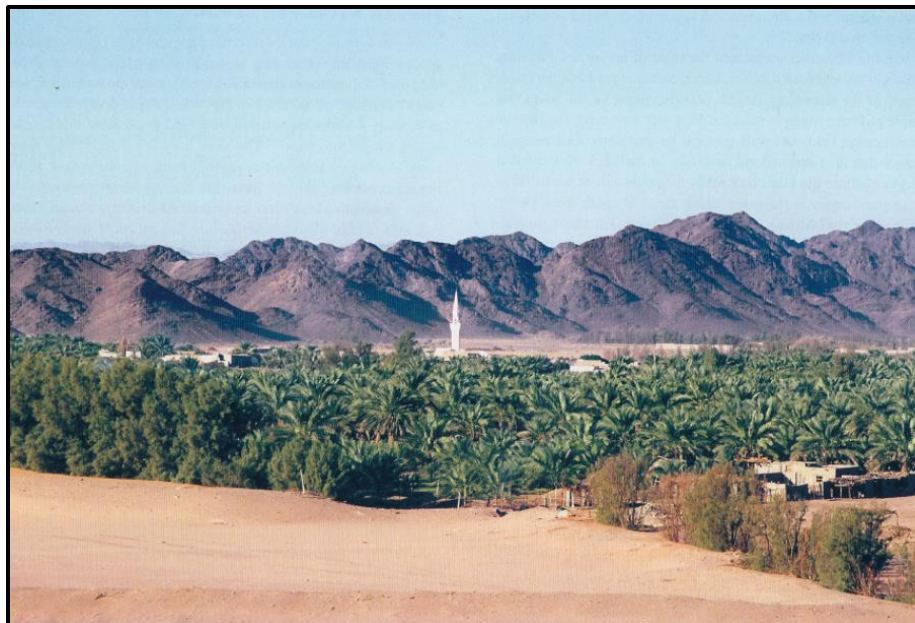


[1 Nephi 16:14 **And we did go forth again . . . in the most fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration-Potter Theory) "The Most Fertile Parts"**

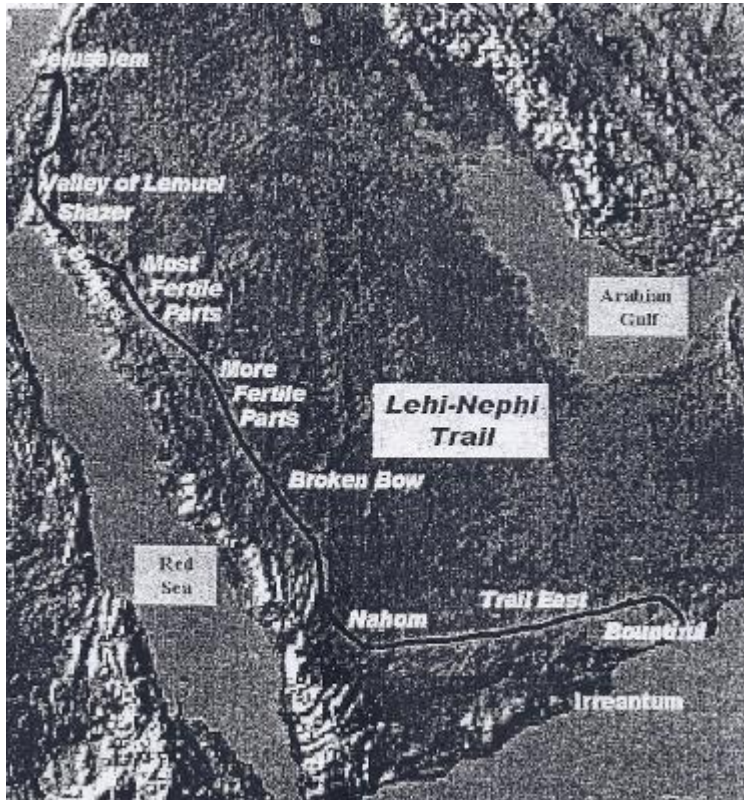
The Qura Arabiyyah, or "Arab Villages" (in yellow), are fertile areas sitting astride the Frankincense Trail. They were also referred to as the Muhajirun, which means "the fertile parts [of land]," corresponding to the "most fertile parts" that Nephi informs us they passed through (1 Nephi 16:14). Nowhere else along the trail was there such a high concentration of farms and caravanserais. After Medina the trail passed through fewer farms, corresponding to the "More fertile parts" (1 Nephi 16:16). [George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, p. 84]



Examiner.com



Farms just north of Medina ("Medinah" on the map above) fed by water that seeps from the lava mountains seen in the background. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 91]



1 Nephi 16:14 **And we did go forth again . . . in the most fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration-Potter Theory):** Map showing the Trail Taken by the Family through Arabia. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 260]

1 Nephi 16:14 **And we did go forth again . . . in the most fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration-not shown-Potter Theory):** Fields and palm groves line the route for many miles leading up to Medina. Amid the desert a line of farms stretches like a string across the barren terrain. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 124]

1 Nephi 16:14 **KEEPING in the Most Fertile Parts (Potter Theory):**

Potter and Wellington note that the title of "the most fertile parts" seems to have been derived from the productivity of the farmlands. In writing about the period of Mohammed, Hitti notes of these oases that "most of these fertile tracts were cultivated at the time of the Prophet by Jews."^{xxxviii} It has already been noted that these villages would have been home to the escaping Jews in Lehi's time. (see the commentary on 1 Nephi 2:2) If such was the case, could Lehi's family have stayed for some time there among people who were inclined to believe as they did? Nephi's text seems to give a number of clues in this regard:

(1) The phrase "keeping in the most fertile parts" might be interpreted to mean "staying or remaining for some time in the most fertile parts."

(2) During almost the entire journey in the wilderness, Nephi reports that they hunted or ate raw meat. The only part of the trail where he fails to refer to eating flesh seems to be in the most fertile parts. This makes sense. Why would they hunt while in rich farming villages?

(3) The absence of murmuring through the most fertile parts could also testify that they felt safe during this part of the journey. The fact that Jews were fleeing Jerusalem and coming to the Arab villages in large numbers suggests that the migrants from Jerusalem in Lehi's time were welcomed in this part of Arabia by the controlling tribes. These were skilled craftsmen and farmers, both valuable assets in a wilderness community.

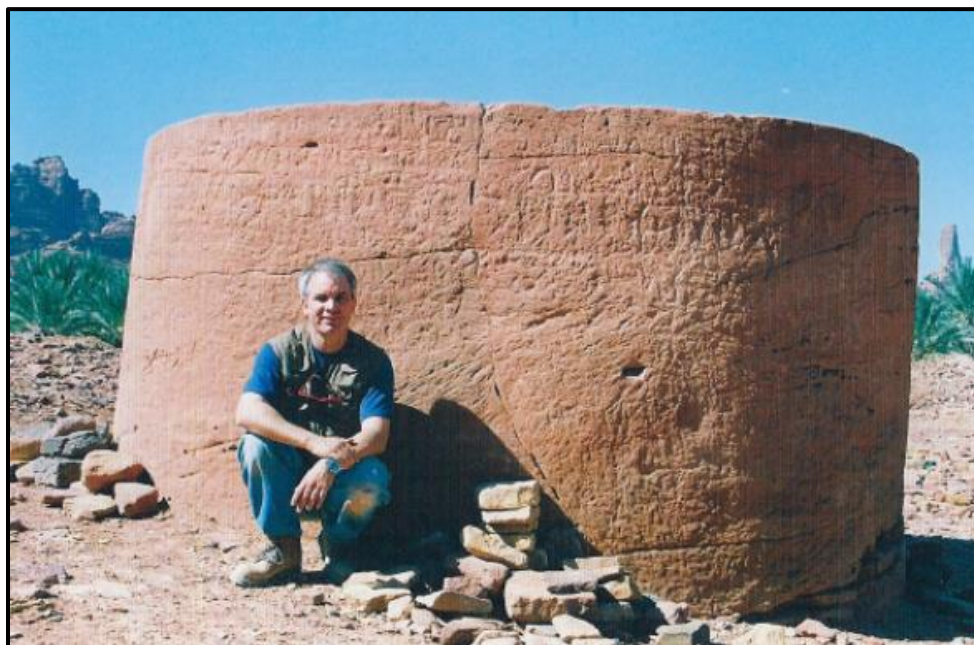
(4) One additional factor might have to do with Lehi and Nephi's calling to be the Lord's servants. D&C 33:7-8 implies that somewhere Nephi might have been a missionary. Lynn and Hope Hilton suggested that it was perhaps to the predecessors of the Lihyanites (the people of Lihy) at al-Bada'a, Midian^{xxxix} who came to power in northwest Arabia over four hundred years after the passage through Arabia of Lehi's family.^{xi} However, it also seems likely to Potter and Wellington that Nephi might have taught for a lengthy time in the most fertile parts. The Lihyanite capital city was in the Wadi Ula, and their temple at Dedan. The Hiltons go into great length to associate the cistern at the Dedan temple to the Brazen Sea of Solomon's temple^{xii} Apparently someone was a gospel missionary in this area. An intriguing story is related by al-Wohaibi of the old Arabia geographer "Ibn Zabalah and recorded by both al-Samhudi and al-'Abbasi, . . . they allege that there is an inscription on two stones at Medina, one of which says that a messenger of Solomon or Jesus was sent to Qura Arabiyyah or Yathrib (Medina) or to 'this village.'^{xiii} It is worth noting from a missionary aspect that Arabiyyah villages were so close to each other that "travelers would leave a village in the afternoon and spend the night in another and so on for several days."^{xiii} Thus, Nephi could conveniently move from village to village preaching the gospel.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 118-123] [See the Hiltons' commentary on 1 Nephi 2:14]

Note* The Hiltons note that history and tradition tell of the Jewish and Israelite families that settled in the northwestern part of the Arabian peninsula, called the Hijaz, from the time of Moses to the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. Sir Richard F. Burton, the famous nineteenth century English explorer, reports a fascinating tradition of an Israelite army sent by Moses (on the island route paralleling this part of the western coast) to purge Mecca and Medina of all their "infidel" inhabitants. The army saved a young man of the royal family and some women and children. "When the army returned [to the children of Israel], they found that Moses had died during the expedition, and they were received with reproaches by the people for having violated his express command. The soldiers, unwilling to live . . . under this reproach, returned to al-Hijaz and settled there."^{xiv}

Numerous traditions account for the origins of other Jewish families in Arabia. One is that some came during the reign of David, and many more during the reign of Hezekiah. It is well known in Islamic circles that much of the population in the Hijaz (the state in northwest Arabia) was Jewish when Mohammed rose to power in the seventh century A.D.^{xlv} [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi, p. 117] [See the commentary on Helaman 7:7]

1 Nephi 16:14 **Keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration-not shown-Potter Theory):** After traveling down wadi Jizl the family would have reached Dedan. A beautiful and fertile town in one of the most picturesque settings in Saudi Arabia. The ruins of the old town of Dedan are just a short way from the modern town of al Ula. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 124]



Richard Wellington beside the font in the remains of the Lihyanite Temple in al Ula [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 86]



The red sandstone cliffs containing the Lion Tombs on the right tower over farms at Ula. The ruins of the old Lihyanite Temple sit at the far end of this farm.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 87]

[INSERT HERE THE WRITINGS OF THE HILTONS ON THE LIHYANITES in “Discovering Lehi”]

In their writings (finally published in 1996), the Hiltons put forth some theories on the Lihyanites at Dedan.

1 Nephi 16:15 Wilderness:

Nephi noted that they traveled in the wilderness "keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:14). Nephi thus tends to at least divide the term "wilderness" into parts, and it seems that "the most fertile parts" of that wilderness were "in the borders near the Red Sea." [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

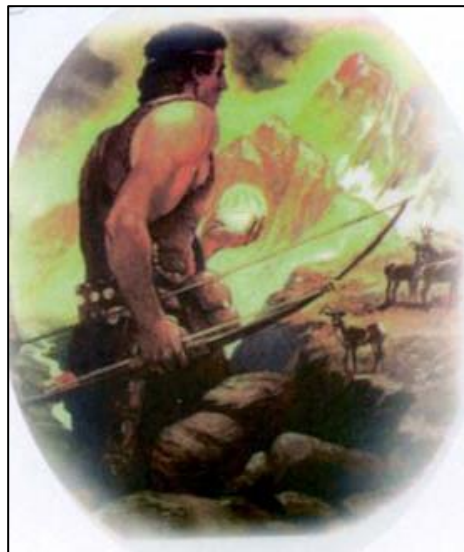


1 Nephi 16:15 **Slaying food by the way with our bows and our arrows (Illustration):** Ashurbanipal's servants stringing bows for hunting. Nineveh. c. 650 B.C. Photograph of a wall relief. [Tyndale House, [The Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#), Vol. 1, p. 114]

1 Nephi 16:15-16 **We Did Travel . . . in the More Fertile Parts of the Wilderness:**

After showing a number of photographs of the Palestinian Desert, Hugh Nibley points out that there are long stretches of fertility in the desert. Bushes grow over underground water channels or aquifers. Sometimes in the photographs you will see them running as far as a hundred miles, and you follow them. In the wilderness Nephi said, "We survived by keeping to the more fertile places of the wilderness" (see 1 Nephi 16:15-16). Well, there are more fertile places of the wilderness, and you stick to them. The Arabs survive by following these places where the underground water produces vegetation.

[Hugh W. Nibley, [Teachings of the Book of Mormon](#), Semester 1, p. 120]



1 Nephi 16:15 **Slaying food by the way, with our bows and our arrows and our stones and our slings**
(Illustration): Nephi Hunting [Gary E. Smith, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 3]

1 Nephi 16:16 **The More Fertile Parts of the Wilderness:**

According to Hugh Nibley, in Arabia it is this practice of following "the more fertile parts of the wilderness" (see 1 Nephi 16:16) that alone makes it possible for both men and animals to survive. Cheesman designates as "touring" the practice followed by men and beasts of moving from place to place in the desert as spots of fertility shift with the seasons. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 59]

1 Nephi 16:15-16 **And It Came to Pass That We did Travel for the Space of Many Days . . . in the MORE Fertile Parts of the Wilderness (Potter Theory):**

After describing how they kept in "the most fertile parts of the wilderness," Nephi states the following about the next section of their journey:

And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days, slaying food by the way, with our bows and our arrows and our stones and our slings. And we did follow the directions of the ball, which led us in the MORE fertile parts of the wilderness. (1 Nephi 16:15-16; emphasis added)

According to Potter and Wellington, it is intriguing that the Book of Mormon account of these different parts of the journey conforms to the actual fertility of the lands along the main branch of the Frankincense trail as it proceeds through the "most fertile" Qura Arabiyyah, and then through the "more fertile" parts south-southeast from Medina to Bishah.

Just south of Medina (Yathrib) there were two branches of the trail that Lehi could have taken:

(1) The more westerly one followed the Wadi al-Aqiq in a southwesterly direction to Mecca, and then in a southeasterly direction to Bishah. This branch of the trail would have provided Lehi with a milder climate and established trails, however the coastal mountain route was rocky and not as well suited for camels. The mountains in this part of Arabia are called the Asir, which means "difficult" "because of the impact of the terrain on travel."^{xlvi}

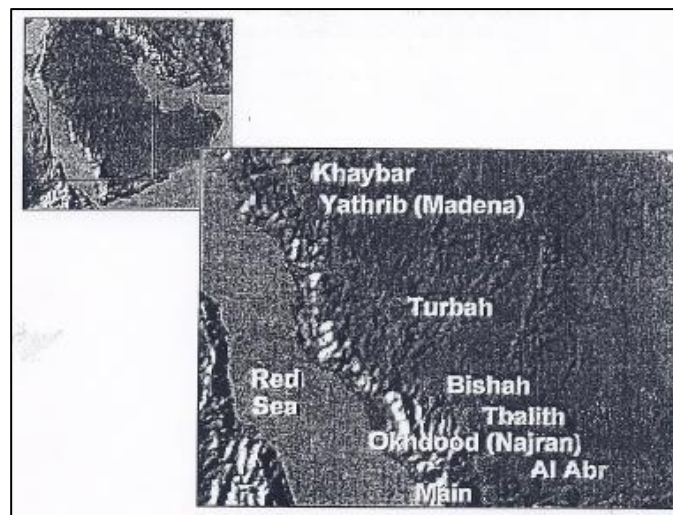
(2) The alternative route, or more easterly route, traveled on a general south-southeast bearing, skirting the lava fields and staying in the Arabian shelf desert. Frankincense trail expert Nigel Groom believes that this route was the main one for reasons of topography.^{xlvii} After leaving Medina, this easterly main trail exited the mountains and into the flatlands. This inland

route through the flat desert plain, called the Arabian shelf, had its own problems, yet these were more than outweighed by the benefit of good footing for the camels.

The Book of Mormon text seems to favor the more easterly main trail. That route's exit from the mountains would explain why Nephi no longer makes any mention of "the borders near the Red Sea." Furthermore, as one traveled on this trail south of Medina, farms became fewer and farther between. Potter and Wellington write of using Tactical Pilotage Charts (TPC) which indicate areas of cultivation in order to verify this information. Between al-Ula and Medina ("the *most* fertile parts"), there were 25 places marked. On the average, there was a cultivated area every 11 miles. However, from just south of Medina past Turbah and on to Bishah ("the *more* fertile parts"), the land was markedly less fertile (see illustration). There were only 6 areas labeled "cultivation" on the charts, an average of roughly one cultivated area every fifty miles. Thus hunting would shifted from a nicety to more of a necessity, a fact alluded to in the text.

The entire course from Medina to Bishah (the "more fertile parts") would have been approximately 350 miles. Groom estimates that an incense caravan would have taken fifteen to eighteen days to complete this part of their journey. Lehi's family would have traveled at a slower pace. Nephi notes that they traveled "for the space of many days."

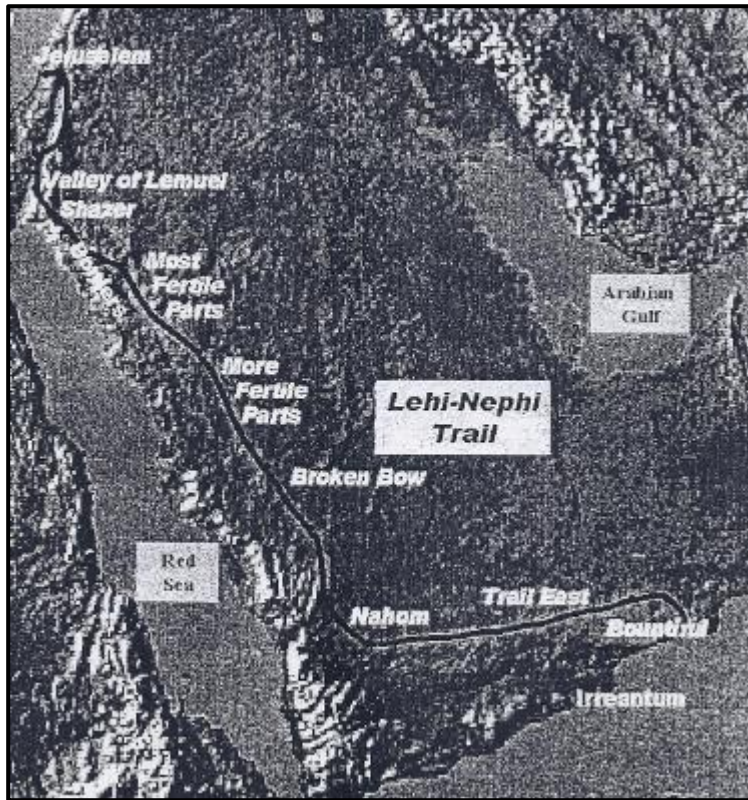
[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 127-129]



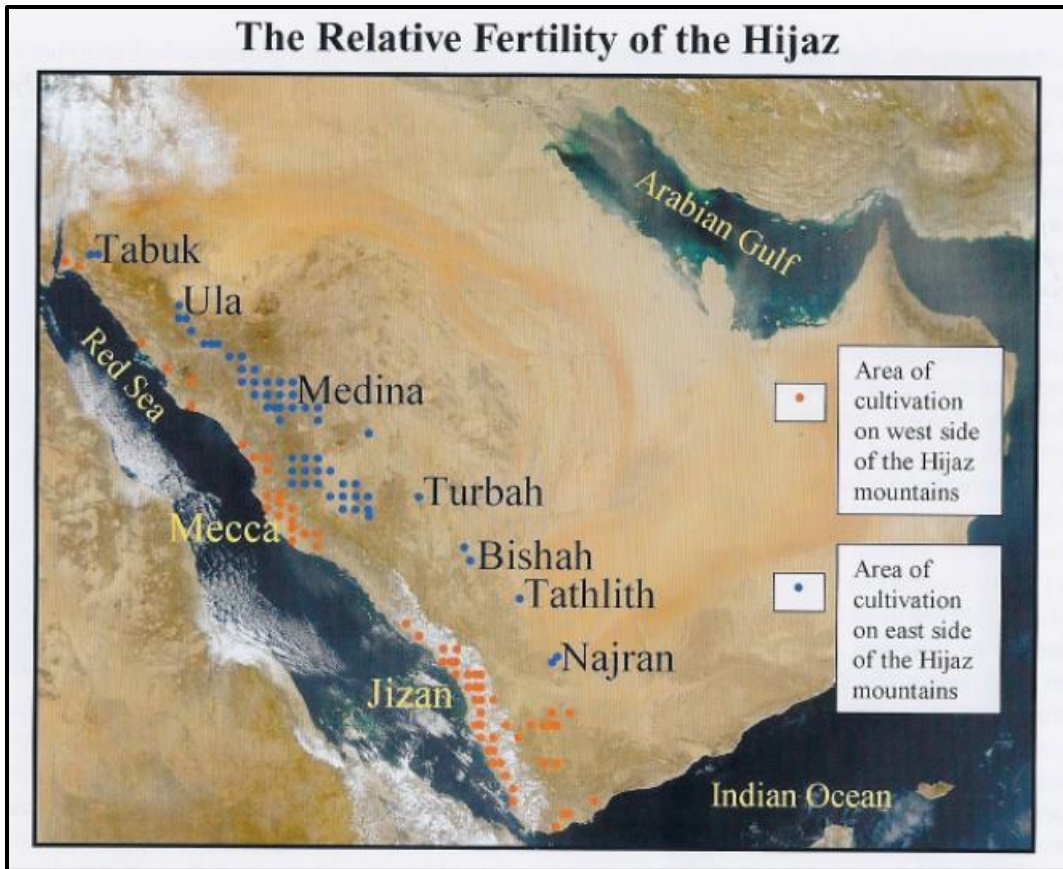
1 Nephi 16:15-16 **And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days . . . in the more fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration--Potter Theory):** The More Fertile Parts. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 140]

1 Nephi 16:15-16 **And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days . . . in the more fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration not shown--Potter Theory):** By the time the family reached

Turbah the terrain had changed. Fertile rest stops were much fewer and further apart. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 141]



1 Nephi 16:15-16 **And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days . . . in the more fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration--Potter Theory):** Map Showing the Trail Taken by the Family through Arabia. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 260]



[1 Nephi 16:15-16 **And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days . . . in the more fertile parts of the wilderness (Illustration--Potter Theory):** "The Relative Fertility of the Hijaz"

Cultivation in modern Arabia relies on fertile soil and aquifers and therefore gives a guide to approximate levels of fertility. Lehi's party could have encountered on their journey south. The Frankincense Trail, to the east of the mountains, agrees with Nephi's description of the journey encountering first "the most fertile parts" at the northern end then "the more fertile parts," and finally the parts where things were apparently less fertile because they struggled. Travel down the shore of the Red Sea provides the exact opposite picture with areas of least fertility to the north and increasing fertility as one progresses southward.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 81]

1 Nephi 16:17 And After We Had Traveled for the Space of Many Days We Did Pitch Our Tents for the Space of a Time That We Might Rest Ourselves and Obtain Food (Potter Theory):

After noting that they "had traveled for the space of many days" (1 Nephi 16:17) through "the more fertile parts of the wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:16) Nephi notes: "we did pitch our tents for the space of a time", that we might again rest ourselves and obtain food for our families. For Lehi's family, travel along this part of the journey had become strenuous. This is not surprising, especially if there were now pregnant wives and newborn children in the party.

Lehi's decision was to stop, rest and resupply.

At this stop some interesting events takes place. Nephi breaks his bow (1 Nephi 16:18) and then Makes a new one out of wood)1 Nephi 16:23). Nephi's description of the events surrounding these actions are very pertinent to the verification of Lehi's position on the Frankincense trail. According to Potter and Wellington, while we will probably never know with great certainty where the campsite of the broken bow was, they can propose a reasonable scenario.

They note that the entire course through the more fertile parts of the wilderness from Medina to Bishah would have been approximately 350 miles. Towards the end of that journey, it is highly probable that Lehi passed along the main Frankincense trail through the rough terrain between Turabah and Bishah. The trail passed through the rocky and barren lava fields. By the time they reached the leg of the journey between Bishah and Najran, they would have been exhausted and ready to rest and prepare themselves for the even more difficult trail which lay ahead. To make matters worse, the hot season may well have been upon them which brought the tormenting exposure to the sun. If such was the case, the caravan traffic would have already ceased for the summer. As a result, the commercial interests at Bishah would have closed their shops and the residents would have departed to the cooler mountains. Thus, there would have been no help for Lehi in Bishah, a virtual ghost town during the off overly-hot summer season.

By this time in his narrative, Nephi has dropped the term "fertile" altogether. Indeed the TPC maps show that from Bishah to Najran and then approximately another 100 miles south to the end of the Dahm Sand Dunes where the Frankincense trail turned east, there are no areas marked "cultivation." Hilton provides an appropriate comparison for this land: "the last 60 miles of this route [to Najran] might be situated in Death Valley California, so similar is the landscape."^{xlviii}

With the Asir mountains within sight of the trail at Bishah, but with the trail now detouring to the southeast, it would have made sense for Lehi to have left the unbearable heat of the flats, waiting out the summer in the foothills or high valleys of the Asir mountains where the summer temperatures are relatively pleasant, usually remaining in the eighties Fahrenheit. These Asir mountains are blessed with rains from summer thunder storms. The TPC maps also confirm that there are numerous wells in the high wadis on the eastern side of the mountains. From the Frankincense trail staging center at Bishah, the high wadis of the Asir mountains are no more than sixty five miles distant. At least in the mountains Lehi could obtain food by hunting. Lehi probably followed the migrant workers of Bishah in a westerly to southwesterly direction up the wadi Tabalah to the high valleys. Tired and afflicted, the party finally reached the temperate climate of the high wadis, and knew that meat would be available from the hunt. However, Nephi's bow broke and his brother's bows were found to have lost their spring. Tired and hungry, the tolerance of the family members was at a minimum and they began to

complain (1 Nephi 16:20). Instead of joining the others in murmuring, the ever self-reliant Nephi may have discovered from the locals that a bow could be made from a branch of the Atim tree that grows on the nearby slopes, or perhaps he recognized as much. They may well have already been camped in the wadis that are between 5,000 and 7,000 feet elevation. Still Nephi knew from experience that the best hunting would be in the mountain tops. But where? There are numerous high peaks between 8,000 and 9,300 feet at the ends of the wadis leading west from Bishah. Guided by the Liahona Nephi went to the top of the mountain (1 Nephi 16:26-30) and there he found and hunted wild "beasts" (1 Nephi 16:31), providing enough meat to satisfy the family to the point where the murmuring stops, as well as enough to restore their provisions (1 Nephi 16:31-32).

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 127-140]

1 Nephi 16:18 **My Bow, Which Was Made of Fine Steel:**

According to Hugh Nibley, it should be noted that when Nephi mentions his "bow, which was made of fine steel" (1 Nephi 16:18), he did not necessarily imply that the whole bow was made of steel. Anciently, a steel bow was not necessarily a solid piece of metal, any more than the Canaanites' "chariots of iron" (Joshua 17:16-18; Judges 1:19; 4:3) were solid iron, or than various implements mentioned in the Old Testament as being "of iron," e.g., carpenter's tools, pens, threshing instruments, were iron and only iron. It was in all probability a steel-ribbed bow, since it broke at about the same time that the wooden bows of his brothers "lost their springs" (1 Nephi 16:21). Only composite bows were used in Palestine, that is, bows of more than one piece, and a steel-backed bow would be called a steel bow just as an iron-trimmed chariot was called a "chariot of iron."

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 59]

1 Nephi 16:18 **I Did Break My Bow:**

According to an article by Nahum Waldman (reprinted by F.A.R.M.S), "the breaking of the bow" was a symbol in the ancient Near East for (1) the breaking of one's military power and (2) the establishment of general peace by military or political master. The bow is also discussed as a symbol for (3) a person's "strength and vigor." [Nahum Waldman, "The Breaking of the Bow," (FARMS reprint 1984, with introduction by Alan Goff and John W. Welch) of Nahum Waldman, "The Breaking of the Bow," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 69 (October 1978): 82-88.]



1 Nephi 16:18 **As I, Nephi, went forth to slay food, behold, I did break my bow (Illustration):** Nephi's Broken bow. "As I, Nephi, went forth to slay food, behold, I did break my bow." Artist: Michael Jarvis Nelson. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 47]

1 Nephi 16:18 I Did Break My Bow, Which Was Made of Fine Steel:

According to Potter and Wellington, Nephi was a youth when he left Jerusalem with a boy's bow. He was now a powerful young man with strength far beyond what the bow was designed to withstand. It follows that the bow, now potentially many years old, most likely broke because it was stressed beyond its designed limits.

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript (July 2000), p. 310]

1 Nephi 16:20 To Murmur Exceedingly:

According to Terrence Szink, quite probably, Nephi, the author of this section, consciously wrote his account of the wilderness journey in a way that would remind the reader

of the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. . . . The wilderness of Sinai and the wilderness of the Arabian peninsula were both harsh environments. Both the Israelites and the people of Lehi suffered hunger during their journeys, and they complained about it (see Exodus 16:2-3,8; 1 Nephi 16:20).

In both cases the uncommon word *murmur* is used. In both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, *murmur* is used primarily for the exoduses. Forms of the Hebrew root *lwn* (translated "to murmur" in the King James version) occur eighteen times in the Old Testament. All but one of them are connected with the Exodus. How is the English word *murmur* used in the Book of Mormon? It appears thirty-three times; of these, nineteen describe events in the Old World wilderness.

Apparently Nephi used the wording from the brass plates (essentially like our Bible) to remind his audience of the previous Exodus, and Joseph Smith's translation of this material was literal enough to preserve the similarity.

[Terrence L. Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, pp. 38-40]
[See also Terrence L. Szink, "To a Land of Promise," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, pp. 62-63]

1 Nephi 16:20 **They Were All Exceedingly Sorrowful:**

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, only by knowing the harsh conditions found along the southern section of the frankincense trail, can one appreciate the emotional trauma placed on Lehi's family. Nephi wrote that his family was "exceedingly sorrowful" (1 Nephi 16:20). It appears they were suffering from depression or something closely related. Andrew Taylor who studied in detail the journeys of the early Europeans who traveled across the Arabian wilderness wrote:

For a few, there was the crippling sense of loneliness to contend with, . . . During the day, they would often be parched and burning from the blazing sun--but at night, they might wake shivering with cold and damp. For all of them, occasionally, there was the specter of abject despair: the challenges to be met were psychological as well as physical.^{xlix}

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 4, p. 15, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 16:21 **Lost Their Springs:**

The phrase "lost their springs" (1 Nephi 16:21) seems out of place according to modern English usage, but not according to the Hebrew. According to Hugh Nibley, one should note the peculiarly Semitic use of the plural for a noun of quality.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 60]

1 Nephi 16:23 A Bow and . . . a Sling:

Hugh Nibley claims that hunting in the mountains of Arabia to this day is carried out on foot and without hawks or dogs; in classical times the hunter in this area was equipped with a bow and a sling--exactly like Nephi.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 60]

1 Nephi 16:23 I Nephi Did Make Out of Wood a Bow:

The mention by Nephi that he "did make out of wood a bow" (1 Nephi 16:23) might be a significant geographical and cultural statement. Hugh Nibley asserts that according to the ancient Arab writers, the only bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia was the *nab* wood that grew only "amid the inaccessible and overhanging crags" of Mount Jasum and Mount Azd, which are situated in the very region where, if we follow the Book of Mormon, the broken bow incident occurred.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 61]

1 Nephi 16:23 I, Nephi, Did Make Out of Wood a Bow (Potter Theory):

This statement by Nephi that he "did make out of wood a bow" (1 Nephi 16:23) has some significant geographical and cultural aspects, especially when put in context with the other statements which Nephi makes concerning this part of their journey. One might ask, Were there any woods in this part of Arabia, especially near the Frankincense trail, that were suitable for making a bow? Could Nephi have made a bow from the chosen wood? And would the length of this process have affected the family in the same way that the text records?

According to Potter and Wellington, in order to make a bow Nephi would have needed a quality hardwood that would remain flexible when it was dead. Since most trees in Saudi Arabia are brittle and only a few hardwood species exist, an investigation into woods available to Nephi is both apparent and required. After detailing the qualities of a number of woods (Nab' wood (*Ziziphus*), pomegranate, acacia, tamarisk, and olive, they noted that while it is impossible to know with certainty what wood Nephi used to make his bow, we may assume a few things in accordance with the text:

(1) We may assume that he used a wild tree, since the loss of the bows seemed to lead to hardship and lack of food. This seems to imply that they were not near an area of cultivation. This would probably rule out pomegranate wood since the tree is rarely seen in the wild and seems to be associated solely with cultivation in Saudi Arabia.

(2) Since Nephi would have probably used the most readily available wood for a bow, *Ziziphus*, or what might have been termed "Nab wood" would seem the least likely choice, for it grows "amid the inaccessible and overhanging crags" of mount Jasim and mount Azd. Mount Jasim is on the west of the mountain range, so Nephi wouldn't have been close. *Ziziphus* is also far less common than acacia, tamarisk or olive.

(3) If the bow were made below 1,000 meters then tamarisk is a possibility; up to 2,000 meters then more likely acacia; above 2,000 meters then olive becomes more probable. Since Nephi did not leave when he made the bow (1 Nephi 16:23) like he did when he went to hunt (1 Nephi 16:23), the bow appears to have been made from wood near the family's camp. When Nephi went to hunt he followed the direction he was given on the Liahona. He tells us, "I, Nephi, did go forth up into the top of *the* mountain" (1 Nephi 16:30). The Hijaz is a mountain range with hundreds of peaks but Nephi seems to mention a specific one and so it may be that he was already on the slopes of the mountain. If he were far away from the mountains it seems more likely he would have written, "I did go forth to the top of *a* mountain," or "to the top of the *mountains*." If the family were already at the base of a mountain, then his terminology is correct. And if this were the case and the family were already in the mountains, then olive wood becomes the most likely choice for Nephi's bow.

(4) Knowing what we do about Nephi, it seems most likely that he would have made the best bow possible. And we do not read of Nephi making another bow, so it must have been powerful enough to bring down enough big game to supply the family for the remainder of their journey. Therefore, we would look towards the olive tree ("Atim wood") as the most likely candidate. A fact confirmed by research.

Bruce Santucci contacted the Department of Antiquities in Riyadh concerning bow woods. The Department indicated that there had never been a study conducted of ancient bow woods in southwest Arabia. The oldest wooden bows they have in their collection dated back only 150 years. They noted that these bows were made from "Athl" wood (Tamarisk). The Department suggested that we contact tribal authorities in the southwest and ask what wood they traditionally used. Niel Holland did just that.

Niel Holland is a retired F-15 pilot living near the Frankincense trail in southwest Arabia with a university degree in history and a keen interest in archaeology, desert exploring and the Book of Mormon. He was asked to explore the mountains west and southwest of Bishah relative to bow wood. He provided some excellent insights:

This was the first Saudi I have talked to who knew what we were talking about. He said the tree we were look at was the Dharu tree and was not good for bows-it broke when dry (we confirmed this). He said there was another tree further down the mountain that was good for bows. We went lower and stopped when we spotted another variety

of tree. He pointed to one and said that was very good. He called it the Atim.

Subsequently Neil dried the Atim wood and found that it still retained its flexibility and was very strong and springy. The problem Neil faced was that he was not able to find a straight piece of Atim long enough to make a "self-bow" (one made from one continuous piece of wood) but when visiting an Arab cultural festival being held in al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, he noticed an old bow on display that was made out of three pieces of wood. This type of design is known historically as a built bow. The bow had a center piece and two end pieces joined to it. Armed with the "new" idea for a design Neil returned to his home in Khamis Mushayt and, once the wood was dried, fabricated a bow similar to the one he had seen displayed at the Arab cultural festival. Initially his bow could shoot an arrow just over 100 feet. Neil then offered a second report on his findings:

I had an interesting experience yesterday (3 December 1998). I went by the local Dhafir Bin Hamsan Traditional Village to see if they knew anything about bows being used here anciently. It turns out that Dhafir represents the Asir region at the annual cultural festival in Riyadh which is held just after Ramadan. . . . I explained to Dhafir that I had made the bow from Atim. . . . He agreed that Atim was used anciently for bows and that they had been replaced by the gun. He knew no examples of remaining bow artifacts. He knew of Athel wood and that it also had been used for bows but that Atim was the best. He described Atim as being the best wood in the world.ⁱ

Making a weapon from olive was a lengthy and exacting process. The piece of wood was first chosen and roughly shaped. Anthony G. Miller & Miranda Morris describe how these weapons were constructed ancient in southern Arabia:

He put it [the bow wood] in a liquid mixture of cow dung, urine and earth to soak for at least a week, after which time the bark was easily removed from the heartwood. Then the stick was carved into the final shape, hardened over a slow fire, then planed and rubbed down. Finally it was oiled and burnished at intervals with butter until it was smooth and glossy. Such sticks had a real marketable value, and were always in high demand.ⁱⁱ

Niel Holland adds the following:

Matt Fortner told me that the Native Americans steamed the wood to straighten their bows. I tried that with the Atim since it was very hard to find straight pieces and my bow had quite a curve to it. By saturating the wood with hot steam I found it to be easy to shape. . . . As a result I have straightened the bow considerably and improved it's performance about 20%. Dhafir also showed me how they used intestinal walls of animals for "string."ⁱⁱⁱ

After much field reconnaissance and study, Holland proposed that the southern edge of the range of the Atim trees was Jabal Azzah, one hundred miles south-southwest of the Frankincense stage center at Bishah. Holland took Potter and Wellington into the mountains and showed them the Atim trees in a high wadi near Al-Qadim. The next morning they set out to estimate the northern limits of the Atim trees. They discovered that within 15 miles south of Al-Baha, the Atim trees disappeared. This would mean that the extent of the Atim tree seemed to range only 72 miles north-south in a narrow band of slopes between 6,000 to 7,000 feet in elevation. However all but the very northernmost trees of the Atim range were far too far from the Frankincense trail. The most copious Atim groves they found were due west of Bishah. They approximated the distance from the Frankincense trail at Bishah to the Atim groves to be about sixty-five miles, a journey of four days.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 132-140]



1 Nephi 16:23 **I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow (Illustration):** Neil Holland demonstrates the bow he made from Atim wood (Olive) that grows above 6,000 feet up in the mountains. Atim was favored by the locals for making the best bows. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 141]

1 Nephi 16:23 **Out of a Straight Stick, an Arrow:**

Three times in his record, Nephi mentioned that he had broken his bow, but not once did he say that any of his arrows were damaged. Yet in 1 Nephi 16:23, Nephi says that he "did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow." Why would he need to make a new arrow if his old ones were still intact?

David S. Fox, in a letter to F.A.R.M.S., suggests an answer: . . . If a bow's draw weight and the arrow's stiffness are not perfectly matched, the arrow will stray off the intended course or

fall short of the mark. . . . Nephi's steel bow likely used heavier, stiffer arrows than his simply fashioned wooden bow could handle. . . . The arrows from the steel bow when shot from the wooden bow would be like shooting telephone poles. . . . Anyone unfamiliar with the field of archery would have almost certainly omitted such a statement. Another bull's-eye for the Book of Mormon.

In addition, William Hamblin concludes that the length of Nephi's old arrows may have been another, perhaps even bigger, problem than their weight or stiffness. ["Nephi's Bows and Arrows," in John Welch ed. Reexploring the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 41-43]



1 Nephi 16:23 **A sling and with stones (Illustration):** Assyrian slingers . . . from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh c. 690 B.C. [Tyndale House, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, p. 115]



1 Nephi 16:23 **A sling and with stones (Illustration):** Sling stones found at the main gate of Lachish. Probably used either during Sennacherib's siege of the city in 701 BC, or during the Babylonian attack c. 588/7 B.C. [Tyndale House, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, p. 115]

1 Nephi 16:29 **A New Writing, Which Was Plain to Be Read:**

Joseph McConkie and Robert Millet note that the language in which the messages of the Liahona were written was new to Lehi and his family and yet easily understood by them. No additional commentary is given on the matter. We are left to wonder whether it was pure Adamic language (see Moses 6:5-6) and whether or not it influenced the nature of their written language thereafter. [Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. I, p. 126]

1 Nephi 16:30 **I Nephi Did Go Forth up into the Top of the Mountain:**

According to Hugh Nibley, Nephi's discovery that the best hunting was only at "the top of the mountain" (1 Nephi 16:30) agrees with later experience, for the oryx is a shy animal that travels far and fast over steppe and desert in search of food but retires over to the almost inaccessible sand-mountains for safety." In western Arabia the mountains are not sand but rock, and Burckhardt reports that "in these mountains between Medina and the sea, all the way northward (this is bound to include Lehi's area), mountain goats are met, and the leopards are not uncommon." [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 60]

†

1 Nephi 16:31 **I Did Slay Wild Beasts:**

A local guide told the Hiltons . . . "that in the hills are wild asses, gazelles, oryx, ibex, reem, pigeons, grouse, partridge, wild cows, hares, and such domesticated animals as goats, horses, donkeys, camels, and dogs." These might have been the "wild beasts" that Nephi says he slew (1 Nephi 16:31). [Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, p. 83]



Arabian Ibex

redorbit.com



Tripadvisor.com



Arabian mountain gazelle

true-wildlife.blogspot.com

1 Nephi 16:31 **I did slay wild beasts (Illustration-not shown):** Nephi and his brothers depended on wild game for a large part of their food supply. Gazelles, ibex, wild asses, and other game as recorded to have abounded throughout the wilderness area that their party passed through. [Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, [In Search of Lehi's Trail](#), p. 82]

1 Nephi 16:31 **I did slay wild beasts, insomuch that I did obtain food for our families (Illustration-not shown):** Nephi with Meat [Clark Kelley Price, [Verse Markers](#), Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1

1 Nephi 16:32 **I Did Return to Our Tents, Bearing the Beasts Which I Had Slain:**

Nephi says that he returned to camp "bearing the beasts which I had slain" (1 Nephi 16:32). According to Potter and Wellington, Nephi brought back "beasts" (plural). The animals must have been small enough for him to carry down the steep slopes. This might rule out the ibex (*Capra ibex*) which weighs 100-165 lbs (45-75 kg.) and the Wild Goat (*capra aegagrus*) which weighs 57-200 lbs (26-90 kg.). However there are two other likely candidates for the beasts he hunted at this altitude. One is the Rock Hyrax - *Procavia caaapensis* (the "Coney" of the Bible).^{liii} This small animal, 20 inches long, weighing 5 1/2-10 lbs (2.5-4.6 kg.) lives in colonies high in the mountains. The second, though less likely, possibility is the Sacred Baboon (*Papio hamadryas*). Troops of these animals have been seen up to 2100 meters (6,825 feet) high and as far north as Taif.^{liv} These animals are considerably larger than the Hyrax. The females weigh 17 1/2-33 lbs. (8-15 kg.)^f and the males 33-66 lbs. The Sacred Baboon is not found as high as the Hyrax and so it would seem to be less likely that these were Nephi's prey item. The terrain

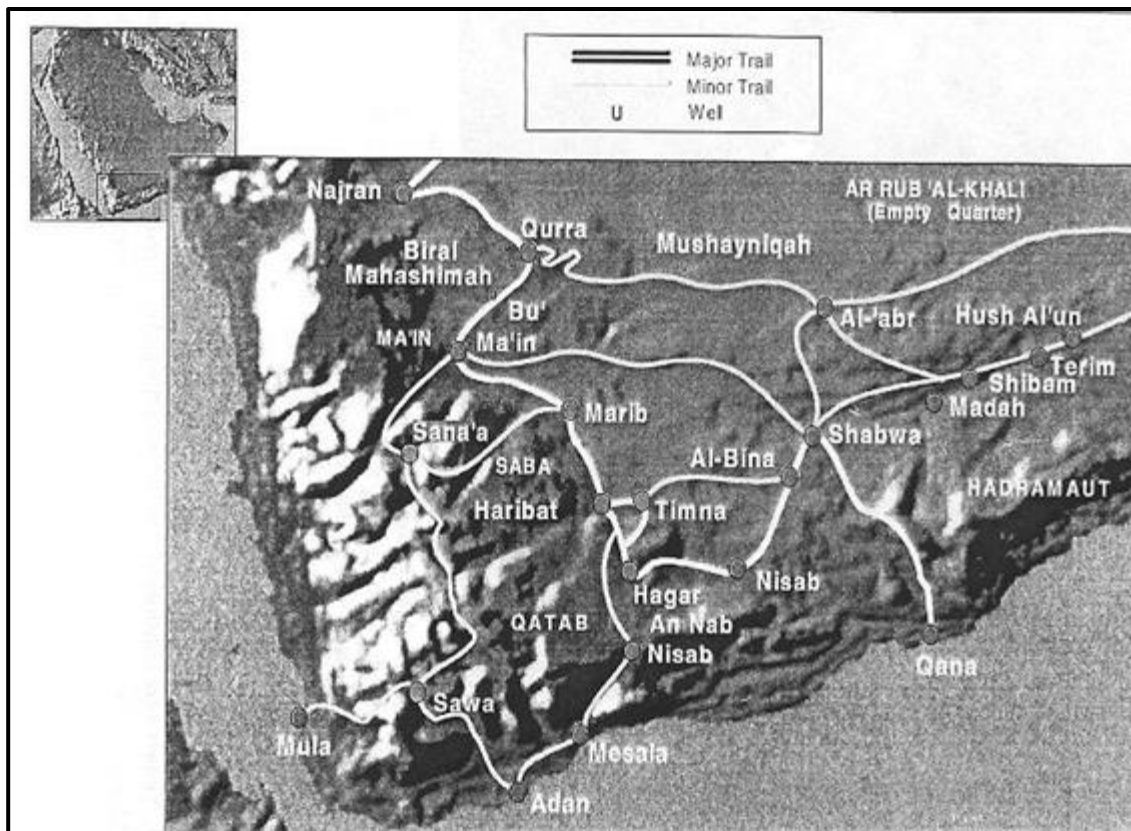
here is too rugged for camels, so Nephi must have traveled to the hunting areas on foot. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 140-141]

Geographical Theory Map: 1 Nephi 16:33-39 Travel to Nahom (Year 005-006)

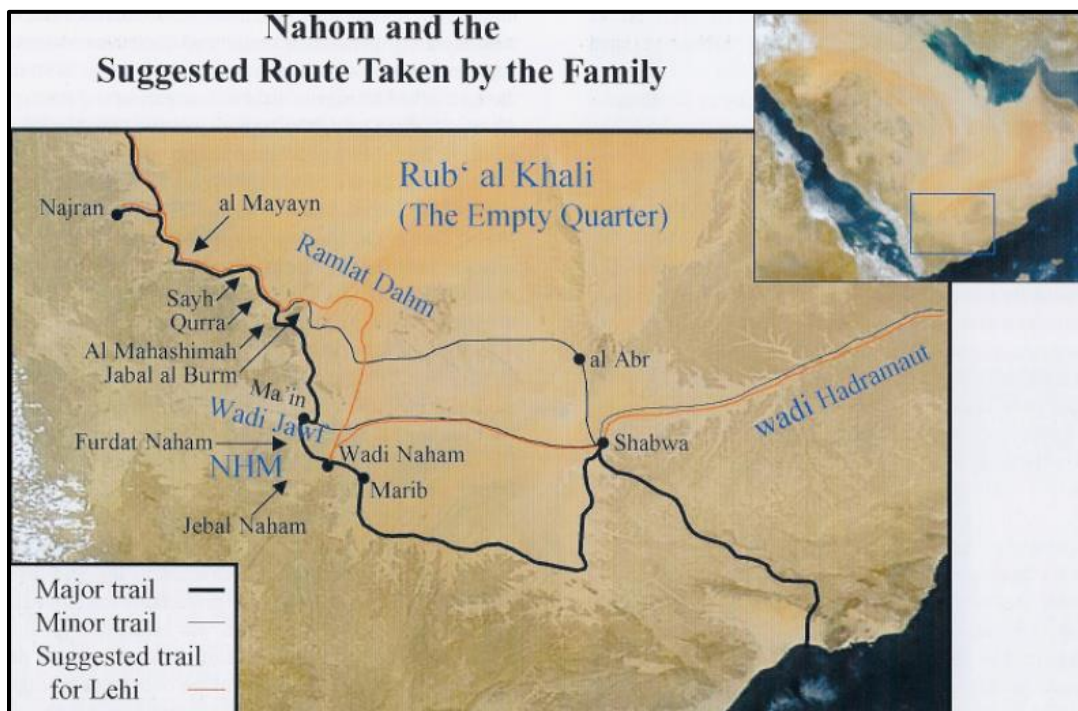
1 Nephi 16:33 And It Came to Pass That We Did Again Take Our Journey, Traveling nearly the same Course As in the Beginning (Potter Theory):

Nephi records that from where Nephi broke his bow, they "did again take [their] journey, traveling nearly the same course as in the beginning" (1 Nephi 16:33). He then records that "after [they] had traveled for the space of many days [they] did pitch [their] tents again, that [they] might tarry for the space of a time. And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom" (1 Nephi 16:33-34) The questions here are, How far did they travel before they reached Nahom and in what direction?

Since Lehi's party traveled "south-southeast" in order to reach Nahom (1 Nephi 16:33), and since from the location of Nahom they would travel "nearly eastward from that time forth" (1 Nephi 17:1), then the position of Nahom would seem to correlate with the location of an easterly branch of an approximately north-south trail. According to Potter and Wellington, the first easterly trail that Lehi's family would have encountered on the Frankincense trail after leaving Najran (Okhdood) would seem to be the most likely to lead to the Nahom scenario as described by Nephi. (see illustration) One hundred miles southeast of Najran, this easterly trail initially splits off in a southeasterly direction.^{lv}



1 Nephi 16:33 **And it came to pass that we did again take our journey, traveling nearly the same course as in the beginning (Illustration--Potter Theory):** Major Trails in Ancient Yemen. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail*, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 160]



1 Nephi 16:33 **And it came to pass that we did again take our journey, traveling nearly the same course as in the beginning (Illustration--Potter Theory):** "Nahom and the Suggested Route Taken by the Family," George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 114]

1 Nephi 16:33 **And it came to pass that we did again take our journey, traveling nearly the same course as in the beginning (Illustration--Potter Theory):** The trail leading south from Najran to Nahom. The edge of the Rub'al Khali extends right down to the trail here. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 162]

In order for the Book of Mormon to understand Potter and Wellington's choice of this first branching trail south of Najran as leading to Nahom rather than the main trail south, I will include some of their reasoning. For additional reasoning, the reader is referred to their commentary on Nahom (1 Nephi 16:34). It also goes without saying that one must consult the map as noted above to follow what is said.

According to Potter and Wellington, in southern Arabia (Yemen, Oman) a number of the frankincense trails came together and formed into one main trail that headed north^{lvi} That means for Lehi's party heading south out of Najran along that main trail, they would have faced a decision on which of many routes to take.^{lvii} After leaving Okhdood (Najran), a well traveled main trail headed south past Ma'in (also known as QRNW, Qarnaw), the capital of the Minaean kingdom, and on to Marib, the Sabaeen capital and then to Timna, the capital of Qataban. Once there the trail continued in a generally southern direction to Hagar and Nab and then turned east and then north to Shabwa, the capital of Hadramawt. After turning southeast at Shabwah, the trail ended at one of the major ports on the south coast of Arabia. This port was called Qana. Since Qana is the final coastal destination, this would imply that it would have to be a candidate for the land Bountiful. This hardly seems the case. The relatively short distance to Qana from Najran could have been traveled in about a week which would not seem compatible with Nephi's account of the journey as found in 1 Nephi 17:1-4, where he describes the women giving birth and the family living on raw meat. The area leading to Qana could hardly be described as a wilderness, yet Nephi states that they traveled in the wilderness for eight years. Finally, the harbor at Qana is not a verdant area.

It is worthy to note, however, that the advantage of this well traveled trail was the combination of easy terrain through the cultivated valleys of Saba and Qataban and the protection offered by the kingdoms through which it proceeded. The down-side to this trail was that all of these kingdoms extracted a levy from the caravans as they passed. This meant that if Lehi chose this trail, they would be subject to expensive tribute money.

Pliny recounts that in order to cut down the length of time of this enormously expensive journey along the frankincense trail and to avoid the levies that would be applied if one passed

through all the "state capitals," a number of "shortcuts" or secondary trails came into existence.^{lviii} Thus other trails existed and all of them turned basically east from the main trail. But as they went east they traversed desert country--either the more southerly Ramlat Sabatayn, or the more northerly Ramlat Dahm. This desert travel offered more difficult going and a dearth of wells and caravansaries. Such was the desert trail Nephi chose to take according to Potter and Wellington.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 147-151] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 16:34; 16:38]

~~1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died, and was buried in a place which was called Nahom (Hilton Theory) [Illustration]:** Figure 10-4. Proposed reconstruction of the Lehi-Nephi trail along one of the ancient frankincense roads from the Red Sea to Bountiful. [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi, p. 133]~~

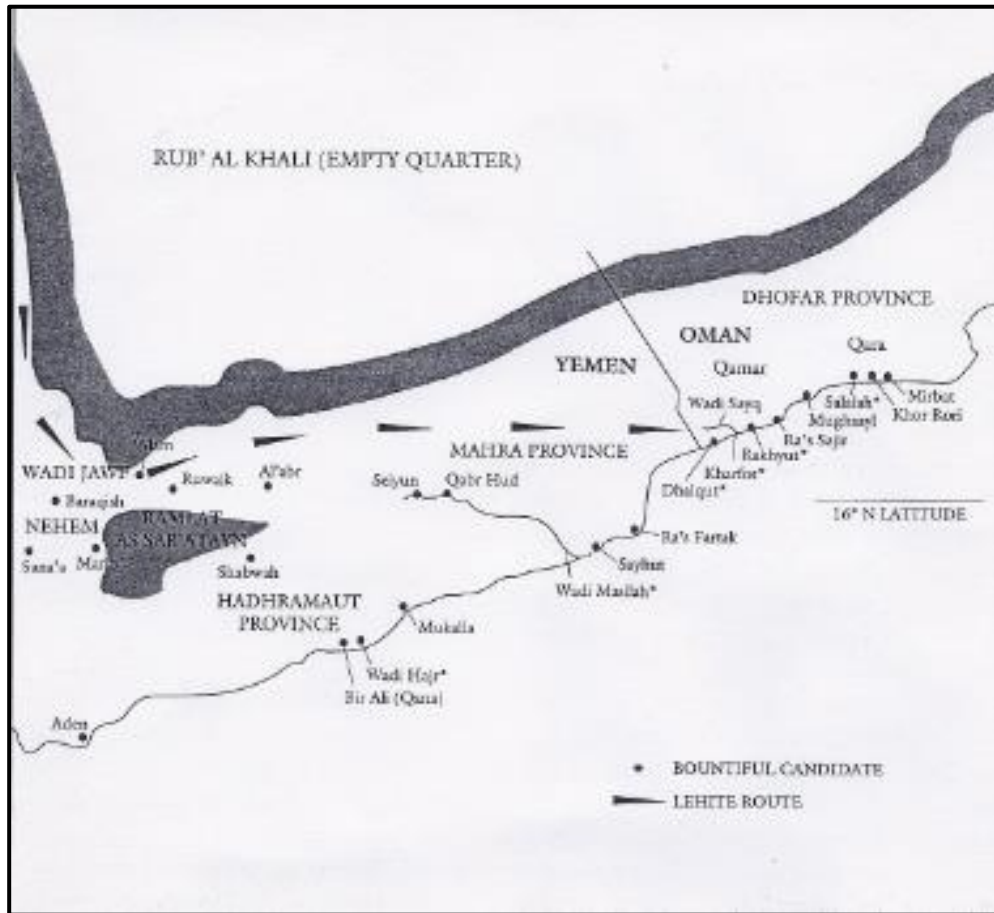
1 Nephi 16:34 Ishmael Died, and Was Buried in a Place Which Was Called Nahom (Aston Theory):

It should be noted that Ishmael was buried in the place "which was called Nahom" (1 Nephi 16:34). Thus we find that Nahom was probably in existence many years before Lehi ever arrived. According to the Astons, one of the most interesting discoveries in recent years is an ancient city of Nehem. This city is located on the Frankincense Trail in the general location necessary for Lehi's reference. The distance from Jiddah ("broken bow"), which is near the modern holy city of Mecca, to Nahom is about 160 miles. As such, this distance qualifies as the "many days" journey dictated by the Book of Mormon. (Note* The term "many days" is used at different times and places in the Book of Mormon, and seems to be quite variable in its meaning of distance and time.) (p. 22)

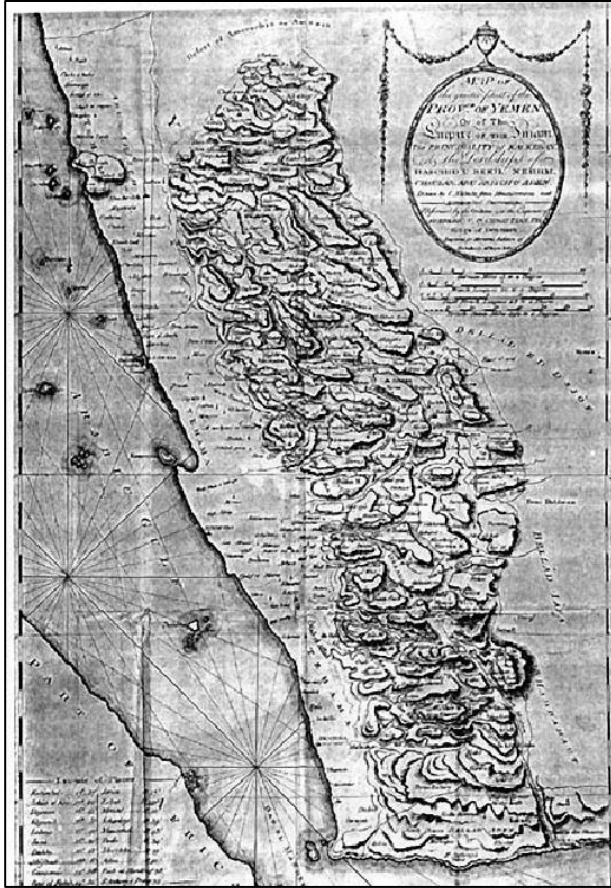
The Book of Mormon does not state that Ishmael *died* at Nahom, only that he was *buried* there. Likely the Lehiite encampment was in the Jawf valley and Ishmael was carried up into the hills for burial. . . . Since the Book of Mormon Nahom was a burial ground, we were excited to discover on a later visit to Sana'a that an ancient burial ground had recently been located in the hills of Nehem itself. Warren [Aston] met with the leader of the French archaeological team that made the find and has worked in the area many years and was informed that the circular rock tombs may date to 3000 B.C. or earlier (pp. 13, 19).

The name *NHM* (in any of its variant spellings, Nehem/Nihm/Nahm, and so on) is not found *anywhere* else in Arabia as a place-name. It is unique. It is known to appear only once in southern Arabian writings (as a personal name) and a handful of times in northern Arabian Safaitic texts. . . .

This verse also is the clearest evidence in the text that Lehi's family had contact with other peoples during the journey; they could only have known about Nahom from someone outside the group. (pp. 10-12) [Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi,]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died and was buried in the place which was called Nahom (Aston Theory)**
[Illustration]: Figure 3. Map of southeastern Arabia showing the final stages of Lehi's journey and all locations referred to in the text. [Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, p. 11]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died and was buried in the place which was called Nahom (Illustration):**
Niebuhr's 1763 map of Yemen showing the tribal district of NEHHM northeast of Sana'a. [Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, p. 15]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died and was buried in the place which was called Nahom (Illustration):** 3,000-year old city of Baraqish on the incense trails of Sheba with two ancient tombs in the foreground. The modern name of this region is Nehem, named after the Yemini tribe who have dwelt in the area for at least a thousand years. It is hard not to observe the similarities between this place and the Nahom mentioned in Nephi's account . . . Thousands of ancient graves have been discovered in this area, making this probably the largest burial site in Arabia. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, Light from the Dust, p. 38]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died and was buried in the place which was called Nahom (Illustration):** The mountains of Nehem overlook the wide plain of Wadi Jawf in Yemen. While encamped in this area, Ishmael died and was buried. [Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, p. 69]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael died and was buried in the place which was called Nahom (Illustration):** Some of the thousands of rock burial tombs lining the low hills of Ruwaik and 'Alam Abyadh in the desert northeast of Marib. Rarely viewed by outsiders, they are similar in style and age to the Nehem tombs. [Warren and Michaela Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, p. 70]

1 Nephi 16:34 Ishmael Died, and Was Buried in a Place Which Was Called Nahom:

Hugh Nibley claims that when Ishmael died on the journey, he "was buried in the place which was called Nahom." Note that this is not "a place which we called Nahom," but the place which was so called, a desert burial ground. Jausen reports (*Rev. Biblilque X*, 607) that though Bedouins sometimes bury the dead where they die, many carry the remains great distances to bury them. The Arabic root NHM has the basic meaning of "to sigh or moan," and occurs nearly always in the third form, "to sigh or moan with another." The Hebrew *Nahum*, "comfort," is related, but that is not the form given in the Book of Mormon. At this place, we are told, "the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly," and are reminded that among the desert Arabs mourning rites are a monopoly of the women. [Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 90-91]

1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael Died, and Was Buried in a Place Which Was Called Nahom:**

According to an article by Alan Goff, a connection with the Hebrew verb *naham* is suggested in a footnote to this verse in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. The Hebrew word means "to mourn or to be consoled." But a much stronger connection with biblical tradition unfolds in the account that follows the verse. The scholar Damrosch says this about the word: "It [the root for *naham*] appears twenty-five times in the narrative books of the Bible, and in every case it is associated with death." [Alan Goff, "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom" in John W. Welch ed., Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., p. 92]

1 Nephi 16:34 **Ishmael Died, and Was Buried in the Place Which Was Called Nahom:**

According to Mark Johnson, in the past decade, there have been many reports on what has been called the "Exodus Pattern" in the Book of Mormon. [See the commentary and chart on 1 Nephi 17:26] To the numerous comparisons that have been made I would like to add another. It deals with death in the desert. In 1952, Hugh Nibley first pointed out the significance of the name *Nahom* in relationship to the death of Ishmael, that is the name implied "mourning."^{lix} He also mentioned the importance of Ishmael's daughters mourning his loss. What also becomes apparent is that, by the way Ishmael is buried in the desert, they (the Lehtes) are following in the footsteps of their fathers (the children of Israel under Moses): "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought." (Joshua 24:32) Just as Joseph was buried in a special parcel of land, it seems only natural that the Lehtes would wait until they found a proper place to bury Ishmael.

We cannot conclude whether the Lehtes were aware of the parallels to the Exodus as they were reenacting them, although it appears that Nephi did at least thirty years later.^{lx} We can be sure that, like the children of Israel, they honored their patriarchs and also were following ancient ritual in burying their dead. [Mark J. Johnson, "The Exodus of Lehi Revisited," in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., 1999, pp. 54-55; see also Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 3/2 (1994); pp. 123-26] [See the commentary and chart on 1 Nephi 17:26]

1 Nephi 16:34 **Nahom (Potter Theory):**

Potter and Wellington propose the location for Nahom to be somewhere in the 50 miles north of jabal al-Lawdh (N16°10', E45° 05') and south of wadi Khabb.(see illustration) (See also

their commentary on 1 Nephi 16:38 for their reasoning). This location is not in accordance with the prevailing theory at the moment. In explaining the prevailing theory they note that in 1978 Dr. Ross T. Christensen published a brief article pointing out that in Yemen a community named "Nahom" existed 18 miles northeast of the modern capital Sana'a.^{lxi} In 1991 Warren and Michaela Aston also accepted this idea. They identified a map by Groom which showed a burial site on the southern edge of wadi Jawf, marked with the name Nehem.^{lxii} Furthermore, the recent finding by a German archaeological team, of an inscribed altar at Marib, bearing the name of Bi'athar . . . the Nihmite^{lxiii} and dated to around the time of Lehi, seems to confirm that the Nihm tribe existed at the time Lehi would have passed through southern Arabia. North of Sana'a is the Nihm tribal lands, near a mountain named Jabal Nihm. Thus, other scholars have generally accepted this reasoning on the location of Nahom. So why do Potter and Wellington suggest that Nahom and the events preceding it did not take place either at Jabal Nihm or at the wadi Jawf burial ground Nehem? Clearly it could not have taken place at both places, but the present extent of the Nihm tribal lands does not extend to the trail north of wadi Jawf, so why are they placing their location outside this area?

According to Potter and Wellington, one needs to look further into the extent of the Nihm tribe. Multiple historical sources (which they cite) imply that the borders of the area of influence of the land of Nihm were not static through time. That the influence of these ancient tribes extended over a far greater area than they do today can be attested to by the fact that the tribes gave their names to features that are many miles from their present tribal homelands. They also note an old map of the Yemen showing the area "Nehem," which they superimposed onto a modern map and found that the area occupied by the place-name Nehem included part of the Rub'al Khali east of Ramlat Dahm. This location was where the most direct trail to Moscha (Dhofar), the most likely candidate for the place Bountiful, leads off to the east. They then ask a pertinent question: Why would the tribal place-names Nihm (Nahom), Dahm and Jahm be found so far north of the lands controlled by the tribes of that name? There are two probable reasons for this. First, these could have been the desert areas that the nomads originally came from carrying the name of their homeland with them. A second possibility exists, and once again Kamal Salibi can help with a possible answer:

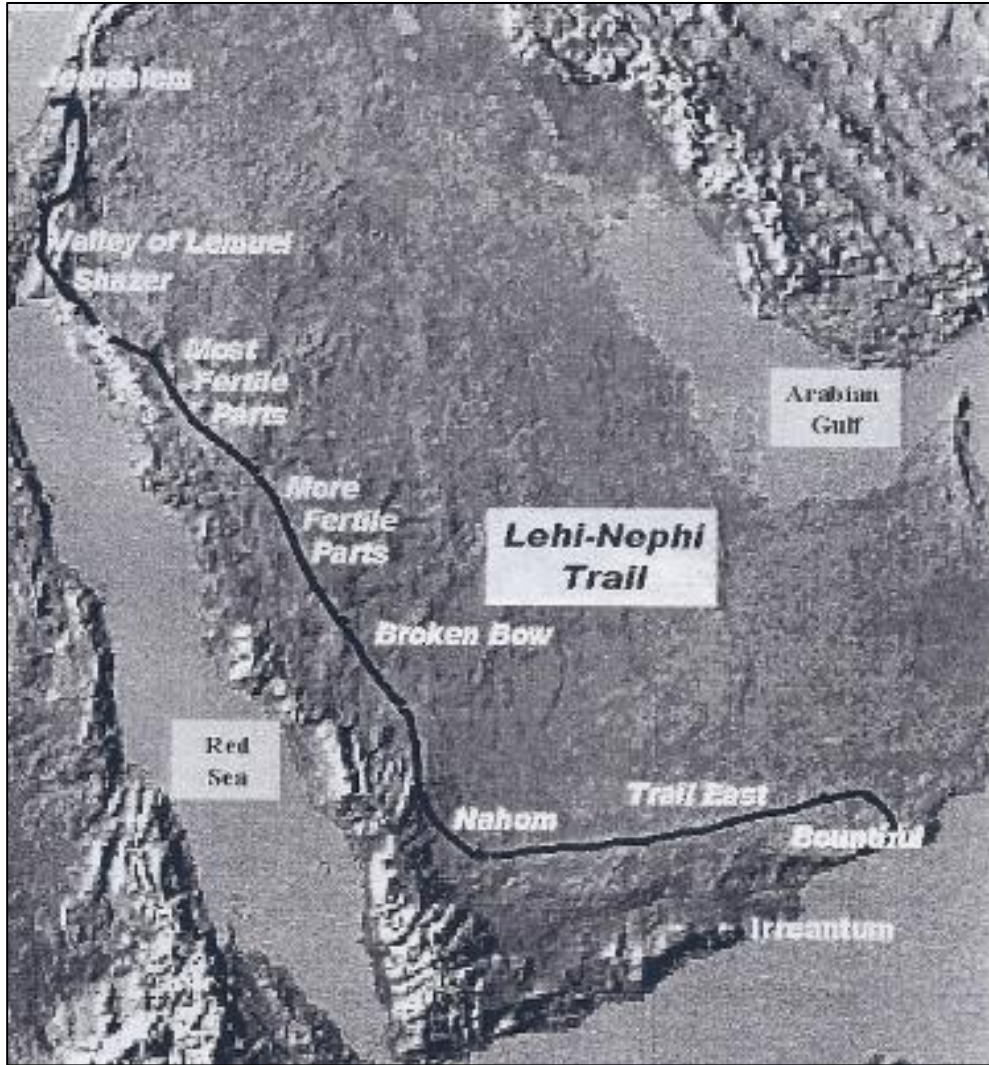
While their neighbors in the highlands to the south seem to have identified themselves in geographic terms according to the country to which they belonged (Saba', Qataban, Awsan or Hadhramut), the Minaeans thought of themselves in terms of community rather than land. Wherever they went to settle as traders, the people of Ma'in carried their tribal identity (and their tribal gods) with them.^{lxiv}

So we see the possibility that the Minaeans carried the names of their tribal homelands with them as they pushed their control of the frankincense trail out into the desert to the north and east. As such is it not possible that if the Dahm tribe controlled the trail area east of wadi Jawf, and the Jahm the area to the east of that, then could not the Nahm tribe also have carried their name out to the area of the trail they controlled, the place called Nahom, to which Nephi

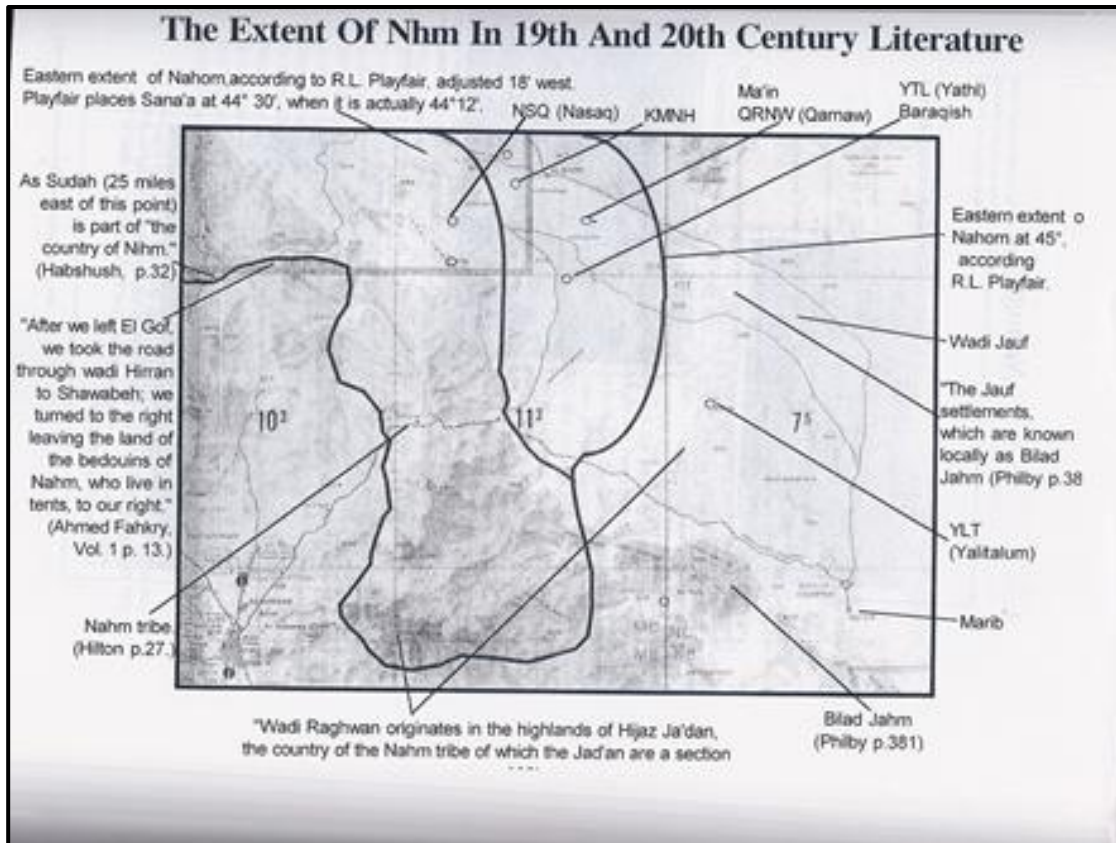
refers? The idea is far from outrageous.

Research by the Italians into the prehistory of Yemen has provided evidence that there was agriculture in the highlands in the bronze age beginning about 3,000 B.C. and ending abruptly about 1,500 B.C. It has been concluded from this that "perhaps the civilization shifted eastwards and, as a result of population growth, gave rise to the early towns, principally Marib, the capital of Saba"^{lxv} According to Walter W. Muller, Yemen is unique inasmuch as "nowhere else in the Orient does there exist such a strong, unbroken continuity from the many names of places and tribes that have remained unchanged for almost 3,000 years"^{lxvi} Since we know the NHM name goes back farther than that, is it not possible that the tribe and name also moved from the highlands out to the east, to the edge of the desert in seeking control of the frankincense trail? And with the collapse of the frankincense trade nearly two millennia later, could not the tribes have moved back to their homelands, abandoning their desert outposts and the ancient association of the name Nahom with the frankincense trail lands? In view of the historical evidence, and the correlation of Nephi's narrative with the frankincense trail, it is the contention of Potter and Wellington that indeed NHM may well have covered a larger area in Lehi's time than it does today and that the Nihm tribe probably held a position of greater prominence.

They conclude by saying that with only 7 verses of scripture to guide the reader (1 Nephi 16:33-39) students of the Book of Mormon will probably never know exactly what took place at Nahom or where that was precisely. And like others before them they feel that the similarities between the location of the tribal lands of NHM and Nephi's "place which was called Nahom" are too numerous to be coincidental. Both are associated with the frankincense trail. Both are on the eastern side of the mountains. Both are in the area where there are trails heading to the east. The trail from Najran to Ma'in covers nearly 150 miles of desert terrain with few wells and no cultivation between the two cities. By assuming an expanded territory for the tribe of Nihm, and that an error was made in reading the Liahona, or a misdirection was made in travel, Lehi's family would have been led into affliction in the desert where their supplies would have been rapidly depleted. This is exactly the kind of location in which the drama at Nahom appears to have taken place.^{lxvii} [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 152-158] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 16:33; 1 Nephi 16:38]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Nahom (Illustration--Potter Theory):** Map Showing the Trail Taken by the Family through Arabia. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 260]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Nahom (Illustration--Potter Theory):** The Extent of Nhm in 19th and 20th Century Literature. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 162]



1 Nephi 16:34 **Nahom (Illustration--Potter Theory)**: "The Trails through the Incense Kingdoms," George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, p. 117]

1 Nephi 16:35 **The Daughters of Ishmael Did Mourn Exceedingly:**

According to Hugh Nibley, when it says that "the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly" (1 Nephi 16:35), this is following correct Arabic tradition. Whenever a person died among the ancient Arabs it was the daughters, and only the daughters, that had the privilege of mourning. Later on they hired professional male mourners, but in the early times that was unthinkable. It was the mothers and the daughters, but specifically the daughters, who mourned for the dead--both at the burial and at the funeral. [Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Semester 1, p. 219]

1 Nephi 16:35 **The Daughters of Ishmael Did Mourn Exceedingly:**

Williams Smith writes the following concerning mourning in Old Testament times:
One marked feature of Oriental mourning is what may be called its studied publicity

and the careful observance of the prescribed ceremonies. (Genesis 23:2; Job 1:20; Job 2:12).

1. Among the particular forms observed the following are mentioned:

- (a) Rending the clothes (Genesis 37:29, 34; Genesis 44:13; etc.)
- (b) Dressing in sackcloth. (Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 3:31; 2 Samuel 21:10; etc.)
- (c) Ashes, dust or earth sprinkled on the person. (2 Samuel 13:19; 2 Samuel 15:32; etc.)
- (d) Black or sad-colored garments. (2 Samuel 14:12; Jeremiah 8:21; etc.)
- (e) Removal of ornaments or neglect of person. (Deuteronomy 21:12, 13; etc.)
- (f) Shaving the head, plucking out the hair of the head or beard. (Leviticus 10:6; 2 Samuel 19:24; etc.)
- (g) Laying bare some part of the body. (Isaiah 20:2; Isaiah 47:2; etc.)
- (h) Fasting or abstinence in meat and drink (2 Samuel 1:12; 3:35; 12:16, 22; etc.)
- (i) Diminution in offerings to God, and prohibition to partake of sacrificial food (Leviticus 7:20; Deuteronomy 26:14;
- (k) Covering the "upper lip," i.e. the lower part of the face, and sometimes the head, in token of silence. (Leviticus 13:45; 2 Samuel 15:30; 19:4;
- (l) Cutting the flesh (Jeremiah 16:6, 7; 41:5); beating the body (Ezekiel 21:12; Jeremiah 31:19;
- (m) Employment of persons hired for the purpose of mourning. (Ecclesiastes 12:5; Jeremiah 9:17; Amos 5:16; Matthew 9:23;
- (n) Akin to the foregoing usage the custom for friends or passers-by to join in the lamentations of bereaved or afflicted persons. (Genesis 50:3; Judges 11:40; Job 2:11; 30:25; etc.)
- (o) The sitting or lying posture in silence indicative of grief. (Genesis 23:3; Judges 20:26; etc.)
- (p) Mourning feast and cup of consolation. (Jeremiah 16:7, 8;

2. The period of mourning varied.

- (a) In the case of Jacob it was seventy days. (Genesis 50:3;
- (b) In the case of Aaron (Numbers 20:29), and Moses (Deuteronomy 34:8) it was thirty.
- (c) In the case of Jacob (Genesis 50:10), and Saul (1 Samuel 31:13) it was seven, which may have been an abridged period in the time of national danger.

[William Smith, "Mourning" in **Dictionary of the Bible**]

1 Nephi 16:35 **Our Father Is Dead . . . We Have Suffered Much Affliction, Hunger, Thirst, and Fatigue (Aston Theory):**

According to the Astons, two closely related Semitic roots are possible for the term *Nahom*, NHM and NHM. What is important is that both these roots related in significant and

very specific ways to the experiences of Lehi's group while at Nahom. The first root, N_HM has the basic meaning of "to comfort, console, to be sorry," so in Hebrew we see it used extensively in connection with mourning a death. In Arabic the root (NAHAMA) refers to a "soft groan, sigh, moan."

The second root, NHM, is also found in biblical Hebrew and means to "roar," "complain," or "be hungry." Similarly, in ancient Egyptian it refers to "roar, thunder, should," which are similar to the Arabic meanings of "growl, groan, roar, suffer from hunger, complain." This clear association with hunger may well have reference to the fasting usually associated with mourning for the dead anciently.

It is hard to imagine any place-name that would be more appropriate in view of what Nephi tells us happened there ("our father [Ishmael] is dead . . . we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue" -- 1 Nephi 16:35). Not only do the two roots of *Nahom* refer unquestionably to both mourning and consoling (and perhaps also to fasting) in connection with Ishmael's death and burial, but they seem to go still further and echo the complaining and the rebellion that followed his burial.

[Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, pp. 12-13]

1 Nephi 16:35 **We Have Wandered Much in the Wilderness:**

Terrence Szink notes that Lehi's family did not always use the Liahona to its full potential; some five hundred years later, while delivering this spiritual compass to his son, Alma said:

Because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey; therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions. (Alma 37:41-42)

This disobedience contributed to the group's eight years of wandering in the wilderness. (1 Nephi 17:4) Since the relationship between Lehi's party, the Liahona, and the Lord was one of faith and trust, the Liahona served well as a Christological symbol. Alma compared it to the words of Christ:

Behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land. And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ if we follow their

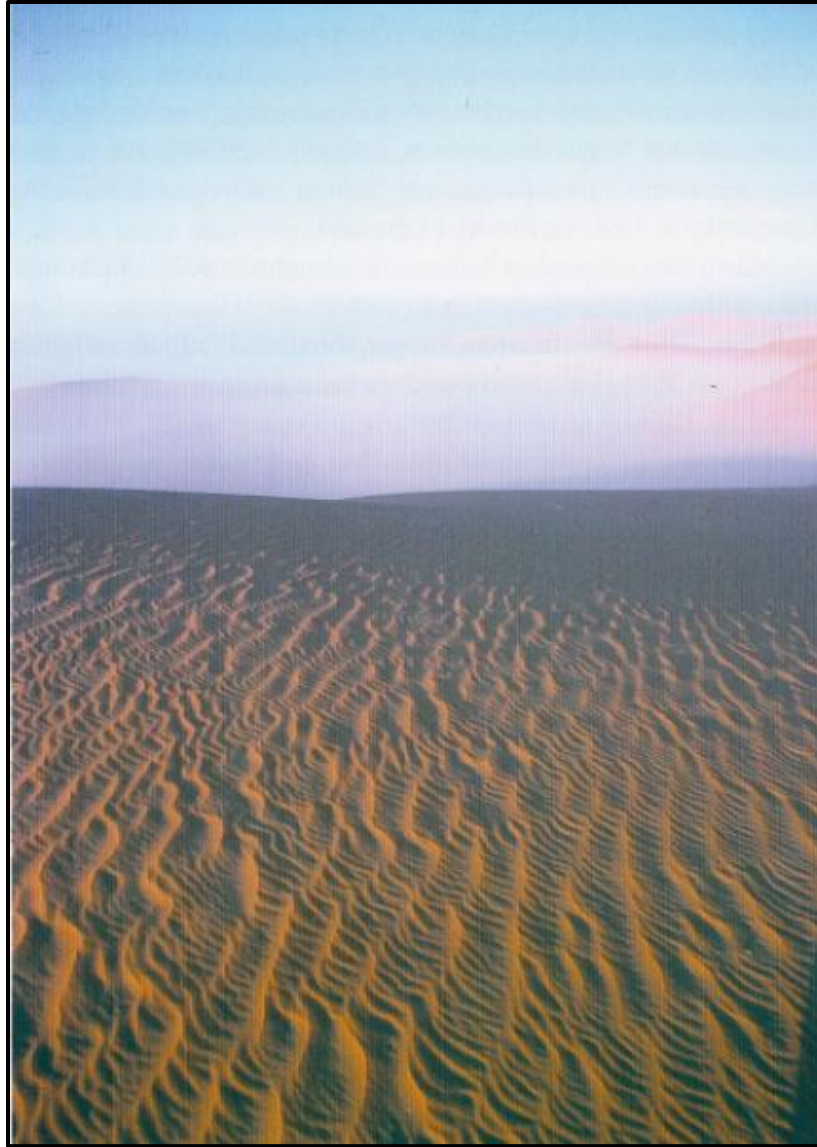
course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. (Alma 37:44-45)

[Terrence L. Szink, "To a Land of Promise," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, p. 62]

1 Nephi 16:35 We Have Suffered Much Affliction, Hunger, Thirst and Fatigue (Potter Theory):

Potter and Wellington note that between Najran and this first trail branch to the east, Lehi's family would have encountered a number of wells. The first well was Bi'r Khadra, about 15 miles out of Najran, the second at Al Muyayan another 30 miles further on. Sayh well was another 30 miles after that and then finally two wells came in rapid succession: Qurra about 20 miles after Sayh and bi'r Al Mahashimah, which marked the break where the trail headed to the east. (see illustration below) However, of all the branches heading east, this was the only place where there was no city at the junction point, and according to Groom, the next well on this eastern trail was at Mushayniqah some 60 miles across the edge of the rub'al Khali.^{lxviii} Furthermore, after leaving Najran, one had to travel over 140 miles in order to reach the next fertile area (the settlements of wadi Jawf to the south). According to the TPC maps there are no areas of cultivation marked between the two oases. Thus there are indeed possibilities for Lehi's family to have "suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst and fatigue" (1 Nephi 16:35) during this part of the journey, especially if hunting proved unprofitable as the terrain would seem to dictate. But how and why did this suffering take place. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 150-151]

1 Nephi 16:35 We Have Suffered Much Affliction, Hunger, Thirst and Fatigue (Illustration--Potter Theory): The towering dunes of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter, sap the strength of the traveler who faces the full force of the sun. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 162]



1 Nephi 16:35 **We Have Suffered Much Affliction, Hunger, Thirst and Fatigue (Illustration--Potter Theory):** The sand dunes of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter, are a terrible place to get lost. Without food or water, no one survives long. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Lehi in the Wilderness, p. 112]

1 Nephi 16:35 **We Have Suffered Much . . . Thirst:**

Camille Fronk notes that Doughty observed that "the Arabians inhabit a land of dearth and hunger" and that "many times between their waterings, there is not a pint of water left in the greatest sheykhs' tents." He also noted that when scant water was available, it was often unwholesome "lukewarm ground-water" or else infected with camel urine."^{lxix} [Camille Fronk, "Desert Epiphany: Sariah & the Women in 1 Nephi," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, FARMS, pp. 12, 80]

1 Nephi 16:36 [The Daughters of Ishmael] Were Desirous to Return Again to Jerusalem:

If the daughters of Ishmael "were desirous to return again to Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 16:36), can we surmise that the destruction of Jerusalem had not taken place yet? Why would these daughters want to return when according to Spackman they left during a respite in the siege? Had enough time already passed to where Jerusalem was now destroyed? This verse needs to be explained in terms of Randall Spackman's chronological theory. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 16:37 [Nephi] Who Has Taken It upon Him to Be *Our Ruler and Our Teacher*:

Note* There is a repetitive theme in the books of First Nephi and Second Nephi concerning Laman and Lemuel's rejection of Nephi as their ruler, their teacher, and their king (see 1 Nephi 3:29; 16:37-38; 18:10; 2 Nephi 5:19). It is interesting to note that the Pharisees reacted the same way to Christ:

And they said unto him, We have the law, and the prophets; but as for this man we will not receive him to be our ruler; for he maketh himself to be a judge over us.
Then said Jesus unto them, The law and the prophets testify of me; yea, and all the prophets who have written, even until John, have foretold of these days. . . . (JST Luke 16:16-17)

[Notes from a talk by Matthew B. Hilton, December 31, 2000]

1 Nephi 16:38 [Nephi] Worketh Many Things by His Cunning Arts, That He May Deceive Our Eyes:

According to research by Robert F. Smith, shortly after the appearance of the Liahona at the door of Lehi's tent, Laman began complaining that Nephi "worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:38). While the Book of Mormon does not tell us whether the Liahona functioned partly on geomagnetic principles, Nephi did say that it contained two spindles, one of which functioned as a directional pointer, and that the body was made of "fine brass" (1 Nephi 16:10, 28). Brass is an excellent noncorroding and nonmagnetic case for a compass. Those who are familiar with modern compasses might naturally ask whether the Liahona worked on a similar principle, with a magnetic function for one spindle, and a possible azimuth setting for the other. Perhaps part of Laman's skepticism was based on some familiarity with just such a technology.

But what sort of "cunning artifice" did Laman imagine Nephi employed in order to transmit divine messages to the surface of the ball-shaped Liahona (1 Nephi 16:28-29)? . . .

Although we do not know specifically what Laman had in mind, it is worth noting that the function of magnetic hematite was well understood in both the Old and New Worlds before Lehi left Jerusalem. Magnetite, or *lodestone* is, of course naturally magnetic iron (Fe₃O₄), and the word *magnetite* comes from the name of a place in which it was mined in Asia Minor by at least the seventh century B.C., namely Magnesia. Parenthetically, Professor Michael Coe of Yale University, a top authority on ancient Mesoamerica, has suggested that the Olmecs of Veracruz, Mexico, were using magnetite compasses already in the second millennium B.C. This is based on Coe's discovery during excavations at San Lorenzo-Tenochtitlan of a magnetite "pointer" which appeared to have been "machined" and which Coe placed on a cork mat in a bowl of water in a successful test of its function as a true floater-compass.

Whatever the nature of the Liahona, it is intriguing to note that certain properties of compasses might have been familiar to those who were blessed with its guiding functions, and that those who were skeptical of Nephi and the Liahona might have logically turned to those characteristics in seeking to find a plausible rationalization.

[Robert F. Smith, "Lodestone and the Liahona," in John W. Welch ed., Reexploring the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 44-46]

1 Nephi 16:38 He Worketh Many Things by His Cunning Arts . . . That He May Lead Us Away into Some *Strange Wilderness* (Potter Theory):

Laman and Lemuel complained that Nephi wanted to be their leader and teacher and that he wanted to "lead us away into some strange wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:38). If they were already in the wilderness, what would be a "strange" wilderness? They had essentially traveled the main frankincense trail the length of Arabia. they had described this as being in the wilderness. What could be different about this "strange wilderness"?

Alma would seem to give us some insight into the answer to this question and what happened to the family at this time. In Alma we read:

concerning the Liahona . . . it did work for them according to their faith in god; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold it was done. Nevertheless . . . they were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and *they did not progress in their journey; Therefore, they tarried* in the wilderness, or *did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst*, because of their transgressions. (Alma 37:38, 40-42)

There are a number of reasons why Alma's words might apply to the events at Nahom:

(1) Alma uses the word "tarry" to describe this time in the wilderness, the exact same word Nephi uses at Nahom (see 1 Nephi 16:33) The only other time this word was used was at the valley of Lemuel, where the family was clearly not lost, nor did they suffer hunger and thirst. It would therefore seem likely that Alma is here referring to the time they "tarried" to bury Ishmael.

(2) Alma informs us that when the Liahona was not functioning they "did not travel a direct course." Compare this with the statement of Ishmael's daughters describing the time prior to tarrying at Nahom: "and we have *wandered much in the wilderness*, and we have suffered much *affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue*" (1 Nephi 16:35). Previous to Nahom is the only occasion we read that Lehi's family suffered from hunger *and* thirst, exactly the afflictions Alma describes.

(3) Alma notes that "they did not progress in their journey." In a similar comment on the family's journey, King Benjamin notes that "they did not prosper nor progress on their journey, but were driven back" (Mosiah 1:17) Thus it would appear that the family lost their way and were forced to backtrack. If this was the case, we realize that Lehi's tarrying at Nahom was not to relax and replenish their supplies in a fertile location, but it was when they "were afflicted with hunger and thirst because of their transgression."

Using this reasoning, Potter and Wellington now propose an explanation of the "strange wilderness" that Laman and Lemuel spoke of. They write that after leaving Najran the family would encounter the first huge dune desert on their journey. Southeast of Najran is Ramlat Dahm, an arm of the rub'al Khali (the Empty Quarter). The trail skirts to the west of the dunes hugging the side of the mountains. If the Liahona had pointed for them to head east through the terrible desert of the Rub'al Khali, the family would have undergone extreme hardship. The sand dunes are huge and the soft sand quickly drains the strength of the traveler. It should not go unnoticed that Nephi uses the word "wade" (1 Nephi 17:1) in describing the journey eastward from Nahom.

A final correlation deals with Laman and Lemuel's complaints at Nahom: "he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes . . . he *has thought* to make himself a king and a ruler over us" (1 Nephi 16:38) In a future record of Zeniff, we find that one of the major traditions of the Lamanites that caused them to hate the Nephites, and which was passed down through generations, was that Nephi "took the lead of their journey in the wilderness" (Mosiah 10:13). In Laman's complaint, he used the past tense ("he has thought") showing that this event had already taken place by the time they tarried at Nahom.

If the family left the oasis city of Okhdood (Najran) and continued on the trail, they

would have initially headed east along the wadi Najran and then after some 25 miles turned to the south-southeast. To the west of the trail were mountains and to the east the sand dune desert of Ramlat dahm. The route had little choice but to run along the edge of the mountains to avoid the soft sand. After 25 miles they would have come across the first well, Al Mayayn. The trail now turned to the southeast and 25 miles later the family would have encountered the second well at Sayh. Proceeding another 25 miles in a southeast direction, the trail suddenly took a number of twists and turns. (see illustration) In the space of a little over 40 miles it turned first to the north, then south, then west then south, skirting around the edge of the sand dunes. At this point the route split into two. Ten miles before the fork was the well of Qurra and at the split was the well of Bi'r al Mahashimah. The trail to wadi Jawf continued south while to route to Dhofar took many twists around Jabal al Burm, northeast, southwest, south, west, then southeast. Is it possible that here the Lord chose to test the group and chasten them? If here the Liahona led them into the edge of the Rub'al Khali they would have waded through the dunes until eventually the Lord brought them to a well and they made camp there. Presumably, the family had become hopelessly lost in the desert only to rest in the spot where they rejoined the trail? Somewhere in that wandering, hunger, thirst, and afflictions, Ishmael had died. Whether Nephi had been told the name of Nahom as the place they were going to beforehand, or whether they found this fact out later after rejoining the trail is unknown. Potter and Wellington propose the location for Nahom to be somewhere in the 50 miles north of jabal al-Lawdh (N16°10', E45° 05') and south of wadi Khabb.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 145-152]

1 Nephi 16:38 He Worketh Many things by His Cunning Arts, That He May Deceive Our Eyes . . . He Has Thought to Make Himself a King and Ruler over Us:

Concerning Nephi's wrongdoings, Laman and Lemuel complain at Nahom that "he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes . . . he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us" (1 Nephi 16:38) In a future record of Zeniff, we find that one of the major traditions of the Lamanites that caused them to hate the Nephites, and which was passed down through generations, was that Nephi "took the lead of their journey in the wilderness" (Mosiah 10:13). In Laman's complaint, he used the past tense ("he has thought") showing that this event had, at least in part, already taken place by the time they tarried at Nahom.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 146]

1 Nephi 16:39 After They Were Chastened by the Voice of the Lord They Did Turn Away Their Anger:

According to Matthew Roper, the scholar Damrosch notes that the Hebrew term *naham* is sometimes applied to contexts involving "cases of regret or change of heart," frequently "when the repenter is meditating murder."

Repentance [or change of heart] then involves either the decision to kill, or conversely, the decision to stop killing. . . . usually it is God who repents, either negatively or positively; negatively, by deciding to destroy his people; positively, by commuting a sentence of destruction.^{lxx}

This explanation clearly fits the context of 1 Nephi 16:34-39, where Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael contemplate the murder of their father Lehi and their brother Nephi, the Lord is angry with them, and after being chastened by the Lord they turn away their anger and repent of their sins. The Lord also apparently turns away his wrath and does not destroy them with hunger.

[Matthew Roper, "Unanswered Mormon Scholars," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 9/1 1997, p. 122]

NOTES

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- i. J. Gasperetti, D. L. Harrison & W. Buttiker, *Fauna of Saudi Arabia*, 1985, Vol. 7, p. 397. Pro Entomologia, c/o Natural history museum, Basle, Switzerland.
 - ii. Arabian mammals. Jonathon Kingdon. 1990. (Harcourt Brace Janovich publishers, London).
 - iii. Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London: MacMillan Education Ltd, 1970, pp. 19-20, 54.
 - iv. Andrew Taylor, *Traveling the Sands: Sagas of Exploration in the Arabian Peninsula*, Dubai, Motivate,
 - v. Richard Francis Burton, *The Gold-Mines of Midian, and the Ruined Midianite Cities (1878)*, Oleander, Cambridge, 1979, p. 177.
 - vi. Springs are found on the border of Midian, at Aqaba and wadi Sharma (al Mweleh) but these springs are not found with a river. We found three other places where surface water forms on the eastern side of Jebel al-Lawz, but again, no river accompanies these small springs.
 - vii. Hilton (2), 44.
 - viii. Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, Vol. 1 (originally published by Cambridge University Press, 1888), New York: Dover Publications, 1979.
 - ix. Taylor, p. 18.
 - x. Taylor, p. 64.
 - xi. Waleed Al-Mansour, Interview with George Potter, Damman, Saudi Arabia: January 10, 2000.
 - xii. Randolph Llinehan, personal communication with George Potter. Besides several law degrees, Linehan has a degree in Political Science and Anthropology from Yale University.
 - xiii. Waleed al-Mansour, histories of his family, provided to the authors during personal interviews, April 1999.
 - xiv. Ibid.
 - xv. Keohane, pp. 10, 11.
 - xvi. Taylor, p. 52.
 - xvii. Groom (2), p. 191.
 - xviii. Groom (2), 206.
 - xix. Diodorus Siculus. *Bibliotheca Historica*: Vol. III, 43 f. Vols 1-3 edited by Fredericus Vogel, vols 4-5 edited by Curtius Theodorus Fischer, in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Leipzig, 1888-1906).

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- xx. The north celestial pole is not constant and while Polaris, or the pole star, is near the north celestial pole at the moment it has not always been so. The earth is not spinning absolutely still on its axis but is "wobbling," somewhat like a top, so that the projection of the earth's axis onto the heavens describes a full circle every 26,000 years. This is known as *precession*. The net result is that in 600 B.C. the north celestial pole was approximately 14° (ignoring the minor effects of mutation) from Polaris somewhere between Ursa Minor and Draco. Thus if Nephi were using a "pole star" for navigation it would not have coincided absolutely with true north (in the same way that Polaris is not on the earth's axis of rotation) and his measurements would consequently be a few degrees off absolute. See Donald Menzel, *A Field Guide to the Stars and Planets* (London: Collins), 329-331.
- xxi. DeL'isle, G. "Carte de la Turquie, de l'Arabie et de la Perse." 1701, [from Atlas de la Geographie. Paris 1715?] fol. BM. Maps. 37.f.13. Also in "G.R. Tibbetts, *Arabia in Early Maps* (New York: Falcon Oleander Press, 1978), 110.
- xxii. Groom (1), *A Dictionary of Arabic Topography and Placenames*.
- xxiii. DeL'isle, G. "Carte de la Turquie, de l'Arabie et de la Perse." 1701, [from Atlas de la Geographie. Paris 1715?] fol. BM. Maps. 37.f.13. Also in "G.R. Tibbetts, *Arabia in Early Maps* (New York: Falcon Oleander Press, 1978), 110.
- xxiv. Musil, 312.
- xxv. Groom (1), *A Dictionary of Arabic Topography and Placenames*.
- xxvi. Michael McKinnon, *Arabia, Sand, Sea, Sky*, (London: Guild Publishing, 1990), 28.
- xxvii. Hilton (1) 104-106.
- xxviii. Examples of maps showing the Frankincense trail inland and no coastal route include: Brian Doe, *Monuments of South Arabia*, 96-97, 1983. Falcon Oleander Press; William Facey, *The Story of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia*, (London: Stacey International, 1994), 34. Department of Antiquities and Museums, *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities*, (Riyadh: Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1975), i.; A.R. al-Ansary. Qaryat al-Fau: *A Portrait of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia*, (London: Groom-Helm Ltd), p. i; *Rand McNally Historical Atlas of the World*, Rand McNally & Co., Chicago; Robert Stoker, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic*, . . . , (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 8; William Facey, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (London: Stacey International, 1990), 72; Richard F. Nyrop, *Area Handbook for the Yemens* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 11; Radhi Daghfous, *Le Yaman Islamique des origines jusqu'a l'avenement des dynasties autonomes*. Tome I (Tunis: Universite de Tunis, 1995), 95; al Saud, 136, Plate 54; Chris Scarre, *Smithsonian Timelines of the Ancient World* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1993), 159.
- xxix. *The Heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Washington D.C.: GDG Publications, 1990), 36.
- xxx. Ministry of Agriculture and Water, *Atlas of Soil, General Soil Maps*, (Riyadh: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1985), made in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey.
- xxxi. Hilton (3), 129.
- xxxii. Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 6, 229-230.

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- xxxiii. Groom, *Dictionary of Arabic Topography and Placenames*.
- xxxiv. al-Wohaibi, 217.
- xxxv. al-Wohaibi, 215.
- xxxvi. al-Wohaibi, p. 204.
- xxxvii. Ministry of Education Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 10.
- xxxviii. Hitti, 17-18.
- xxxix. Lynn and Hope Hilton (1), 75.
- xl. Ministry of Education, 15.
- xli. Lynn and Hope Hilton (1), 97-99.
- xlii. al-Wohaibi, p. 198.
- xliii. al-Wohaibi, 196.
- xliv. Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Aluadinah and Meccah* (New York: Dover Publication, 1964), 1:345.
- xlv. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970): 136.
- xlvi. The Asir, *Saudi Arabia at a Glance*. Broadcast on Saudi channel, 20th June 2000.
- xlvii. Groom, 193.
- xlviii. Hilton (2), 138.
- xlix. Andrew Taylor, p. 8.
- i. Niel Holland, email to the authors, December 5, 1998.
- ii. Miller & Morris, 216.
- iii. Neil Holland, email to the authors, December 5, 1998.
- iiii. The Phoenicians called the Rock Hyrax "shaphan." When the southern Iberian coast was first colonized they mistook the rabbits for the hyrax and named the new territory "land of the hyraxes (or Shaphan)." Spain therefore owes its name to these humble animals.
- liv. H. Kummer, A. A. Banaja, A. N. Abu-Khatwa, A. M. Ghandour, *A Survey of Hamadryas Baboons in Saudi Arabia. Fauna of Saudi Arabia*, 1981, Vol. 3. (Basle, Switzerland: Pro Entomologia, c/o Natural History Museum), 441.
- lv. Stark, 302-303: records:
This northern road is a shortcut to the Minean lands. It still exists and is used by caravans between Hadhramaut and Yemen whenever there is a condition of comparative tranquility along that wild border. I was in the Hadhramaut at such a time, and met

one of these caravans coming by way of 'Aba and Shabwa. The following itinerary for this route was written down by the grandfather of the present 'Attas Sayyids of Huraidha in Wadi 'Amd, and I copied it from his MSS. In Huraidha he collected the names from beduin, and I give it for what it may be worth. No European has been along this way.

'Arudh 'Ain (border of Hadhramaut) 'Aba (marked on maps) Mlais (tiny hamlet) Mishainiq (spring) Shira (wadi, good water) Hadhbar a; Ja'aid (hill in wilderness with water) Khailaifa (little water) Najran: 8 days altogether.

lvi. Jenner & Groom, map of South Arabia.

lvii. A first trail turned east at Mecca and another trail turned east at Najran, however both trails passed north of the Dhofar region (Potter and Wellington's proposed Bountiful) to near Muscat on the Gulf, so they do not merit any further discussion here).

lviii. In: Kiernan, 31.

lix. Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 79.

lx. For further discussion, see Bruce J. Boehm, "Wanderers in the Promised Land: A Study of the Exodus Motif in the Book of Mormon and Holy Bible," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 189-90.

lxi. Ross T. Christensen, *Ensign*, August 1978.

lxii. Nigel Groom, "A sketch map of South West Arabia. Royal Geographical Society, London, 1976.

lxiii. S. Kent Brown (4), "'The Place That Was Called Nahom': New Light from Ancient Yemen" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 8, Number 1 (Provo Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1999), 66.

lxiv. Salibi, 34.

lxv. *From the Queen of Saba to a Modern State*. 2. <http://www.gpc.org/ye/ancient0.html>

lxvi. Walter W. Muller (2), 7.

lxvii. Some might wonder why Potter and Wellington oppose the two sites which bear the name NHM today. These sites have certainly been suggested in the past by a number of scholars. **(note i)** But in their opinion, neither the mountain Jabal Nehm in the present day mountainous Nihm tribal lands, nor the Nehem burial ground on Jabal Yam seem to do that. They give the following reasons:

(1) Nephi tells us that they turned east at Nahom. Here they were starving. Yet the proposed burial site at wadi Jawf was only 15 miles from the capital city of Ma'in (QRNW), and some 8 miles from the city of Nesca (NSQ). How could the family be starving to death in a fertile oasis wadi which supported a population of tens of thousands and whose capital city Ma'in, meaning "spring-water," was only a few hours walk away? Admittedly these towns were not to reach their zenith until many hundreds of years after Lehi's time but settlements undoubtedly existed in wadi Jawf in 600 B.C., and probably not inconsiderable in size.

(2) Both Jabal Nihm and wadi Jawf Nehem are close to mountains that were undoubtedly excellent hunting lands in Lehi's time. Previously Nephi had met with great success hunting in the mountains at Shazer and also when the bow broke. Here the family would have been camped below the mountains Jabal at Tiyal at 11,520 feet and Jabal Sara

at 10,500 feet. today, even with the encroachment of man, almost all of the larger carnivores in Arabia (Leopard, Striped Hyena, Arabian Wolf, Caracal, Wild Cat) are found in the western mountains (see note iv) indicating the presence of ample game there. By this stage in the journey the men were accomplished hunters so starving in the mountains seems completely contrary to what is known about the area in antiquity.

(3) Wadi Jawf could hardly be described as a "wilderness" in any sense of the word. It was one of the most fertile areas of Arabia, and perhaps one of the wealthiest lands of its time. Indeed the relatively small area of Southern Arabia historically supported half the populations of the whole Peninsula.

(4) The Minaeans of the area were idolatrous. (see note viii) It has been suggested that Ishmael's body was transported to Nahom in order to bury his body in the cemetery there. Why would the family go to the effort of transporting the dead body of Ishmael all the way to a hill burial site in Wadi Jawf only to leave him in a pagan cemetery? And why this burial ground, since there must have been many others in the well-populated area covered by the principality of Nahom? Furthermore, one cannot overlook the fact that the name "Nahom" is related to a Hebrew verb "Naham" meaning "to console oneself." The assumption is always made that NHM and Nahom are synonymous but it is certainly possible that they are not the same. It is even possible that Nahom was a Jewish colony and totally unrelated to NHM.

(5) Nephi states that they reached Nahom by traveling south-southeast. To reach Jabal Nihm traveling in this direction would have taken Lehi through the heart of the Asir mountains. There was no ancient route through the mountains running in this direction. Also the camel was not an animal of the mountain, the camel trails often took large detours to avoid them.

(6) Wadi Jawf also makes little sense as the location for Nephi's story. To make it fit, the story must be distorted almost beyond recognition. "Tarrying" must be interpreted to mean planting crops, yet this area was inhabited at that time. . . . The arable land was produced and maintained through irrigation. Lehi would have had neither the resources nor the permission to tamper with the rights to these lands. The phrase "we must perish in the wilderness with hunger" must now mean "we don't like it here amidst all this fertility and abundance."

(7) Finally, one has to ask how the family of Lehi could have been lost in wadi Jawf. Not only was it populated but also travel by camel was confined to within the wadi by the mountains to the north and south. The family was supposedly wandering lost in a limited area without running into any of the numerous inhabitants or seeing any of the towns, villages or farms. To have reached the burial ground identified with the name NHM, the family would have had to travel up the entire length of the wadi, which is only 25 miles wide, pass what would become the ten walled cities of the Minaeans and still believed they were lost. A most unlikely scenario.

lxviii. Taylor, 129, 137.

lxix. Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (New York: Random House, 1936), 190, 259.

lxx. David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 128-9.