

1 Nephi

Chapter 2 - continued

1 Nephi 2:6 **When He Had Traveled Three Days in the Wilderness, He Pitched His Tent:**

According to Daniel Ludlow, the exact distance of the Valley of Lemuel from Jerusalem is not made clear in the Book of Mormon. The superscription to the First Book of Nephi (wherein Nephi states that Lehi "taketh three days' journey into the wilderness with his family" from the *land* of Jerusalem) seems to indicate a distance between the two locations which can be covered in a three-days' journey. However, some students of the Book of Mormon interpret 1 Nephi 2:4-6 to mean that Lehi and his group traveled an indefinite number of days until they arrived "in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea"; then they traveled through *that wilderness* for three days to the Valley of Lemuel. [Daniel H. Ludlow, [A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon](#), p. 92]

1 Nephi 2:6 **When They Had Traveled Three Days in the Wilderness (Hilton Theory):**

According to the Hiltons, after Lehi [and family] reached the "borders" of the Red Sea, they continued to travel for "three days" (1 Nephi 2:6) before they pitched their tents at the valley they called Lemuel. Nephi doesn't mention how long it took them to travel from the city of Jerusalem to the Red Sea; however, we know that the trip covers over 200 miles. But how fast do camels move? Donkeys? For this information the Hiltons relied on the assistance of Salim Saad, an experienced camel rider and a former British Army officer. Stationed in the Wadi al 'Araba, he had become friends with many desert Bedouins. He explained that a loaded donkey caravan can travel twenty miles in six hours. Drawing on his astonishing library of Arab history, he showed us an example of a camel caravan consisting of thousands of camels averaging twenty-four miles a day on the *Haj* (Islamic pilgrimage) from Cairo to Mecca. The famous archaeologist Nelson Glueck, a novice camel rider, reported he personally averaged thirteen miles a day on a camel ride from Jerusalem to Aqaba. Pliny tells of a journey from Timna in Yemen to Gaza on the Mediterranean Sea coast in Palestine that required "sixty-five stages," which presumably meant sixty-five days on the road. From Timna to Gaza is a distance of 1,534 miles, an average of twenty-four miles per day.

Thus Lehi's family probably required nearly two weeks to get to the borders of the Red Sea. Another three days' travel time was required to get them to the Valley of Lemuel. If we take into

consideration the added time that might be needed because of adverse weather conditions of extreme heat or cold, and the slow movement caused by provisions, we might expect the journey to take at least two and perhaps three weeks.

[Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, p. 49]

1 Nephi 2:6 When He Had Traveled Three Days in the Wilderness, He Pitched His Tent, in a Valley, by a River of Water (Potter Theory) :

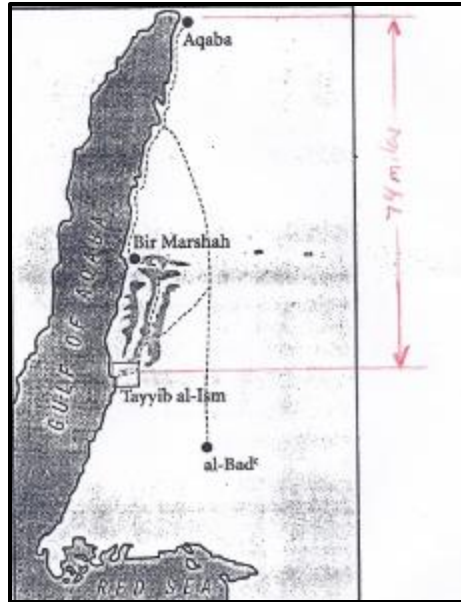
The valley of Lemuel was "in the borders" (1 Nephi 2:8). This valley was also a journey of "three days in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:6). According to George Potter, if the meaning of "borders" can be correlated with mountains, and if the term "wilderness" is associated with Arabia and started at the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, then the search for the location of the valley of Lemuel becomes much more specific.

Frankincense trail expert Nigel Groom noted that a loaded camel travels "slightly less than 21/2 miles an hour" and "rarely exceeds 25 miles" per day.ⁱ Alan Keohane, who actually lived and traveled with a Bedouin tribe for a year reports that they traveled up to 40 miles in a day when they were traveling to winter pastures.ⁱⁱ Reasonably speaking, Lehi's family could have traveled by camel on the good trails proposed anywhere from 25-30 miles a day. Potter records:

To be conservative, we felt we had to have an odometer reading of less than 75 miles. As our trail odometer read seventy-one miles from Port Aqaba, the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim changed course from due south to southwest and headed toward Jabel (Mount) Mazenfah and the Red Sea. At the seventy-three mile marker we came to the eastern-most grove of the oasis of the Waters of Moses. (see illustration) One mile further down the valley the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim narrowed into a spectacular canyon. In the canyon we came to the small [continuously running] river. (see illustration) [Amazingly we had duplicated what would have been a "three days" journey "in the wilderness" and come to "a river of water" which was "in a valley" (1 Nephi 2:6) and now we were about to set up our camp (or "pitch our tents") by that river.]

When one thinks about it, Nephi's account is truly exceptional. There appears to be only one perennial river in all of Saudi Arabia, a country almost the size of Europe, and Nephi's words still lead to it. How could [Joseph Smith] have known the specific geography seen when travelling south along the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba? How could he have known the name of the mountains in Midian is "the Borders." How could he have known there are two mountain ranges in Midian, one near and the other nearer the Red Sea? How could he have known there was a good camel trail through the shoreline mountains of "Rocky Arabia," and that the trail led to [a unique] place--a river of flowing water. There can be only one explanation. Nephi [had actually traveled this trail.]

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 21, 32-34, 74]



1 Nephi 2:6 **When he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent, in a valley, by a river of water (Potter Theory)**
[Illustration]: A Three Day Journey. A map adapted from a general map of the area of the travels of George Potter and Craig Thorsted. (George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1999, p. 58) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Collection]



1 Nephi 2:6 **When he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent, in a valley, by a river of water (Potter Theory)**
[Illustration]: The desert stream that runs "continually" toward the Red Sea. [George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1999, p. 62]

1 Nephi 2:6 **When They Had Traveled Three Days in the Wilderness (Christensen Theory):**

In contrast to the Hiltons' theory which has Lehi's group traveling an additional "three days in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:6) after reaching the Red Sea from Jerusalem, Keith Christensen proposes another scenario. According to Christensen, Lehi's family entered the "wilderness" from near the land of their inheritance, which was well south of Jerusalem, and the total time spent to get to the valley of Lemuel (near Aqaba) was three days. The average rate of travel for a party such as Lehi's would have been about 35 miles a day for a total of 105 miles. Camel caravan speeds are about 3 miles per hour with thirty miles being a good average for the day, and sixty miles being the absolute maximum. The usual estimate for a good day's march is reckoned by Arab writers at between twenty-eight and thirty miles (Nibley, p. 60). So using round figures, the wilderness Lehi entered could have been about 100 miles north of the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba and his land of inheritance could have been somewhat further north. The idea of *only* a three day journey in the wilderness seems to be reinforced by the headnote summary paragraph for the book of First Nephi.

[B. Keith Christensen, The Unknown Witness, pp. 45, 226, unpublished]

1 Nephi 2:6 **River of Water:**

According to Hunter and Ferguson, it is only in the springtime that most of the stream beds in Palestine and the desert by the Gulf of Aqaba contain water. In fact, the writers note that the Hebrew language has one word, "nahar", for "river of water" (see 1 Nephi 2:6) and another for the dry stream bed, "nachal."

[Milton Hunter and T. Stuart Ferguson, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, p. 77]

1 Nephi 2:6 **Water:**

The Hiltons explain that the history of Arabia is written with water, not ink. Where there is water, there is life--that is the inescapable fact of Arabian life--and the great oases of the Arabian peninsula do not move from place to place. . . . As the Hilton's traveled through the Middle East, they never saw a fresh-water source devoid of people; where water is so precious, it is unlikely that many waterholes are unknown.

In the journey of Lehi's family through the wilderness, no waters are reported gushing miraculously from their own rocks of Horeb as Moses had produced with the touch of his rod. The family, therefore, must have traveled and survived as other travelers of their day did in the same area, going from public waterhole to public waterhole. Of course they also had the heaven-sent Liahona to help them find watering places along any route the Lord may have chosen, but the human-made wells so important in crossing the worst desert areas would have been only along established routes like the frankincense trail.

The frankincense trails were designed to follow the line of oases or ancient wells. On a modern map, drawn by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Natural Resources, the [our proposed] route shows 118 water holes at an average distance of thirty kilometers (eighteen miles) from each other. Lehi could not have carved out a route for himself without water, and for a city dweller to discover a line of water holes of which desert-dwellers were ignorant is an unlikely prospect, nor does the text suggest that the Lord

took them to undiscovered water. [Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, p. 27, 33]



1 Nephi 2:6 **Water (Illustration):** Old hand-dug water wells average every 18 miles on the "Lehi Trail" of the Hiltons. This one was found in the Tihama of Saudi Arabia. [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi, p. 109]

1 Nephi 2:6-7 When He Had Traveled Three Days in the Wilderness . . . He Built an Altar of Stones, and Made an Offering unto the Lord:

Nephi recorded of his father Lehi "that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness . . . that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God" (1 Nephi 2:6-7). According to David Seely, this statement may simply be due to the historical fact that Lehi and his family traveled for three days before they stopped for a significant rest. But the note on the three days' journey may also be Nephi's way of saying that Lehi and his family were acting in accordance with an understanding of the law of Moses found in Deuteronomy 12.

According to Deuteronomy 12, after Israel entered the promised land the place of sacrifice was to be confined to a single altar at the place where the Lord would choose to put his name (see Deuteronomy 12:5-6, 10-11, 13-14). While the temple in Jerusalem is not specified at the time of Deuteronomy 12, in biblical tradition that temple became the authorized place. When King Solomon dedicated the temple, he declared it to be the place where the Lord would put his name (1 Kings 8:29).

Yet even after the temple was built, sacrifices and offerings continued throughout Israel, most notably at the high places (1 Kings 12:26-33; 2 Kings 16:4), which were uniformly condemned by the prophets (Isaiah 57:7; Hosea 10:8; Amos 7:9). Matters changed during the reigns of two later kings of Judah. Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.) "removed the high places" and eliminated idolatry throughout Judah so that the religion in Judah was reformed (2 Kings 18:4). Later, Josiah (640-609 B.C.) finally centralized worship in Jerusalem according to the injunction in Deuteronomy 12 (2 Kings 23:7-9, 15). It should be remembered that during his reign a book was discovered in the temple that many scholars believe was some form of the book of Deuteronomy.

According to one of the Dead Sea Scrolls called the Temple Scroll, all nonsacrificial slaughter within the boundaries of three days' distance from Jerusalem were prohibited. Put another way, only sacrifices beyond a three-day journey from the temple in Jerusalem were acceptable under the law of Moses. Thus one might ask, Was Lehi conforming to a Mosaic requirement when he traveled 3 days in the wilderness before he built an altar and offered sacrifice?

Before one jumps to any conclusions, they need to consider the fact that the patriarchs of old, officiating with Melchizedek Priesthood authority, built altars and offered sacrifice in various locations. Furthermore, the Church of Jesus Christ builds temples throughout the world. This suggests that the centralized worship apparently prescribed in Deuteronomy 12 was either misunderstood or was part of the lower law. It is also possible that the injunction of Deuteronomy 12 concerning altars, sacrifices, and temples applied only to the land of Israel as suggested by Deuteronomy 12:1.

[David R. Seely, "Lehi's Altar and Sacrifice in the Wilderness," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies , vol. 10, num. 1, 2001, p. 67]

Note* If Lehi held the Melchizedek Priesthood, and calculated his three day journey into the wilderness from the southern borders of the land of Israel that was covenanted to Abraham rather than from the borders of the city of Jerusalem, he would have been free of any violation here. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 2:7 **He Built an Altar of Stones:**

After Lehi reached the Valley of Lemuel "he built an altar of stones" (1 Nephi 2:7). Brant Gardner notes that an altar of stones was a typical Arab/Hebrew wilderness altar. However he asks, Why was the sacrificial site not a pit ringed by stones? Or why was it not simply a brush pyre?

The elevation of stones probably served two purposes: the first was to create a miniature "high place" which through its symbolic elevation provided a sacred location. The second was that the use of stones connected the altar to the natural order, and built a symbolic miniature sacred mountain upon which the offer of sacrifice would be effective.

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi2.htm>, p. 8]

1 Nephi 2:7 **He Built an Altar of Stones, and Made an Offering unto the Lord:**

George Potter and Richard Wellington note that an altar must first be purified by an anointing (Exodus 40:10). Randolph Linehan suggests that when the temple in Jerusalem was rededicated, the altar was purified for sacrifices in a ceremony called the *Naphthar* or *Nephi* ceremony. He cites 2nd Maccabees of the Apocrypha 1:33-36. Given the importance that the altar ceremony was to Lehi, we perhaps have a clue as to the Hebrew origins of Nephi's name.

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 10, Unpublished] [See the commentary on the name Nephi in 1 Nephi 1:1]

1 Nephi 2:7 **Altar of Stones:**

The form "altar of stones" (1 Nephi 2:7) instead of the customary English form "stone altar" conforms to standard Hebrew construction, called the "construct state." Examples from the Bible are "gods of gold" (Exodus 20:23), "altar of stone" (Exodus 20:25), "bedstead of iron" (Deuteronomy 3:11),

"helmet of brass" (1 Samuel 17:5), "house of cedar" (2 Samuel 7:2), "throne of ivory" (1 Kings 10:18), "girdle of leather" (2 Kings 1:8), and "pulpit of wood" (Nehemiah 8:4).

[D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, pp. 32-33]

1 Nephi 2:7 **Altar of Stones:**

In Nephi 2:7 we find that Lehi and Nephi offered sacrifices upon an "altar of stones" after keeping their covenants with the Lord. The fact that they offered sacrifice on an altar of stones is full of covenant symbolism.

In Exodus 20:24-26 God instructed Moses to tell the people to make an altar of earth (*mizbah*) or (unhewn) stones (*mizbah*), upon which to sacrifice their offerings. . . . The form of this passage, in which God tells Moses to pass on this instruction to the people, suggests that it, like the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the chapter, was addressed to each Israelite individually . . .

[Tyndale House, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol 1, p. 36]

According to Lenet Read, from earliest times, stones have been employed in symbolic use in various ways to testify of Christ and his earthly work. Anciently, offerings to God were made on altars built of stones "not hewn" (that is uncut) by tools of human hands (see Exodus 20:25). Jacob, after an encounter with the Lord at Bethel where eternal promises [covenants] were made, set up a stone for a pillar, signifying the presence of the Lord in that place (see Genesis 28:10-22). Daniel saw the kingdom of God as a stone "cut out without hands" that "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35). Under Mosaic [covenant] law stones symbolized judgment and justice, stoning being the means by which those who committed the most serious crimes were put to death.

[Lenet Hadley Read, "All Things Testify of Him--Understanding Symbolism in the Scriptures," in The Ensign, January 1981, p. 7]

Note* The common word "stone" is used in the Bible with a variety of references . . . figurative as well as literal. Notably the "stone" image is used in the New Testament to describe the person of Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels, for example, the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-11 and parallels) is followed by the Lord's citation of Psalms 118:22, which is obviously applied to himself ("The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner"). [Tyndale House, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol 3, pp. 1488-1489]

In Romans 9:29-33 we find:

And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

What shall we say then? that the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone (see Isaiah 8:14-15);

As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah 8:14-15 reads as follows:

And he ["The Stone"--the Rock upon which all covenants are built] shall be for a sanctuary [or covenant Church]; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel . . . and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

In Psalms 50:5 and 51:17 we read:

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice [upon altars of stone]. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart . . .

At the time John the Baptism was *baptizing* in the river Jordan, he said unto the Pharisees and Sadducees, who touted themselves as covenant children through birth, "think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these *stones* [or covenants with the Lord] to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:9)

In 3 Nephi 9:19-20 we read:

And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites . . .

. . . he [Alma the elder] began to establish a [covenant] *church* in the land . . . which was called Mormon; . . . (Alma 5:3) . . . And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma *did establish the [covenant] church* among the people, yea, the first [covenant] church which was established among them after their transgression. . . . Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. . . . And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, *unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them*. And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; . . . (3 Nephi 5:12, 23, 25-26)

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, *as unto a living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. (1 Peter 2:3-5).

Jesus said unto Peter, "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]



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1 Nephi 2:7 **He built an altar of stones and made an offering (Illustration):** Lehi built an altar from stones and made an offering to God. Illustrators: Jerry Thompson and Robert T. Barrett. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [Book of Mormon Stories](#), p. 6]



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1 Nephi 2:7 **[Lehi] built an altar of stones and made an offering unto the Lord (Illustration):** Lehi Building an Altar of Stones in the Valley of Lemuel. Lehi built an altar and "gave thanks unto the Lord." Artist: Clark Kelley Price. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., [The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families](#), 1999, p. 5]

1 Nephi 2:7 **Altar of Stones:**

Hugh Nibley attests that to this day the Bedouin makes sacrifice on every important occasion, not for magical and superstitious reasons, but because he "lives under the constant impression of a higher force that surrounds him." St. Nilus, in the oldest known eyewitness account of life among the Arabs of the Tih, says, "they sacrifice on altars of crude stones piled together." That Lehi's was such an altar would follow not only from the ancient law demanding uncut stones (Exodus 20:25), but also from the Book of Mormon expression "an altar of stones" (1 Nephi 2:7), which is not the same thing as "a stone altar." Such little heaps of stones, surviving from all ages, are still to be seen throughout the south desert. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 62-63]

According to Hunter and Ferguson, the law of Moses required that if an altar were built of stones that they be unhewn stones (Exodus 20: 24-25). An example of such an altar in the New World is the one at the early site of Cuicuilco just south of Mexico City. It is a well-fashioned altar of river stones. [Milton Hunter and Stuart Ferguson, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, p. 77]

1 Nephi 2:7 **An Offering unto the Lord:**

McConkie and Millet explain that throughout the generations following the death of Aaron and the translation of Moses, the sacrifices in ancient Israel were of various types, such as trespass or sin offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings (see Bible Dictionary, LDS Edition of King James Version of the Bible, pp. 765-67). The Book of Mormon writers made no attempt to elaborate upon the nature or types of their offerings (see 1 Nephi 2:7). The Aaronic Priesthood was the province of the tribe of Levi, and thus was not taken by the Nephites to America. It would appear, therefore, that the sacrifices performed by the Lehite colony were carried out under the direction of the higher priesthood, which comprehends all the duties and authorities of the lesser. [Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 31]

1 Nephi 2:8 **He Called the *Name* of the River:**

John Tvedtnes notes that the words used by Nephi to record the naming of the river, ". . . he called the name of the river, Laman," (named the name) is an idiom not used in English but present in Arabic as well as Hebrew.ⁱⁱⁱ
[John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey," in BYU Studies, Vol. 11, No. 1, Provo, p. 57]

1 Nephi 2:8 **River Laman:**

Lehi named the river by which they first camped "the river Laman" (1 Nephi 2:8). Hugh Nibley asks rhetorically, by what right do these people rename streams and valleys to suit themselves? No westerner would tolerate such arrogance. But Lehi is not interested in western taste; he is following a good old Oriental custom. Among the laws "which no Bedouin would dream of transgressing," the first,

according to Jennings-Bramley, is that "any water you may discover, either in our own territory or in the territory of another tribe, is named after you." So it happens that in Arabia a great *wady* (valley) will have different names at different points along its course, a respectable number of names being "all used for one and the same valley. . . . One and the same place may have several names, and the *wady* running close to the same, or the mountain connected with it, will naturally be called differently by members of different clans," according to Canaan, who tells how the Arabs "often coin a new name for a locality for which they have never used a proper name, or whose name they do not know," the name given being usually that of some person. However, names thus bestowed by wandering tribesmen" are neither generally known or commonly used," so that we need not expect any of Lehi's place names to survive. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 75]

1 Nephi 2:9 The Waters of the River Emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . This River, Continually Running (Potter Theory):

George Potter begins his argument by noting that according to Hugh Nibley, Hogarth argues that Arabia "probably never had a true river in all its immense area."^{iv} The United States's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reports that Arabia has, "no perennial rivers or permanent water bodies."^v The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Agriculture and Water, with the assistance of the US Geological Service (USGS) spent 44 years surveying the kingdom's water resources. Their study consisted of seismic readings, surface and aerial surveys and even landsat satellite photo analysis. They concluded that Saudi Arabia may be the world's largest country without any perennial rivers or streams.^{vi} The satellite photograph of northwest Arabia reveals a terrain that appears as arid and barren as the surface of the moon. Clearly from space, it appears impossible to find a river in this naked desert land of granite mountains, dark lava flows, sandstone hills, and sandy wadis where dried up rivers last ran during the previous ice age.

Some author's attempts to explain why their proposed "River Laman" is not at this time a "continually running" stream are grounded on the idea that significant changes in the Near East climate have taken place since Lehi's time. Kelly Ogden presented a version of this theory in the LDS Church News in 1996.^{vii} It is also alluded to in the Book of Mormon itself (see 1 Nephi 2:6 footnote 6b, Joel 1:20:

The beasts of the field cry also unto thee; for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

However, this theory does not square with Biblical or meteorological history. Midian was the land where Moses lived with his father-in-law Jethro (D&C 84:6-7). While there, Moses lived in a desert. (Exodus 3:1) Scientists, including those of the United States Geological Service, cite of Arabia: "The past 6000 years have been marked by more arid conditions, similar to those of the present."^{viii} Hugh Nibley explains: "though some observers think the area enjoyed a little more rainfall in antiquity than it does today, all are agreed that the change of climate has not been considerable since prehistoric times--it was at best almost as bad then as it is now."^{ix}

So where is this "river" which "emptied into the . . . Red Sea," and which is described as "continually running" (1 Nephi 2:9)? First of all, the "river of water" mentioned in 1 Nephi 2:6 was probably only a small stream. When translating Nephi's description of the river, the Prophet Joseph Smith did not specify the size of the river. The Semitic language expert, Dr. Hugh Nibley notes that, "The

expression 'river of water' is used only for small local streams."^x

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, pp. 39, 42-43]

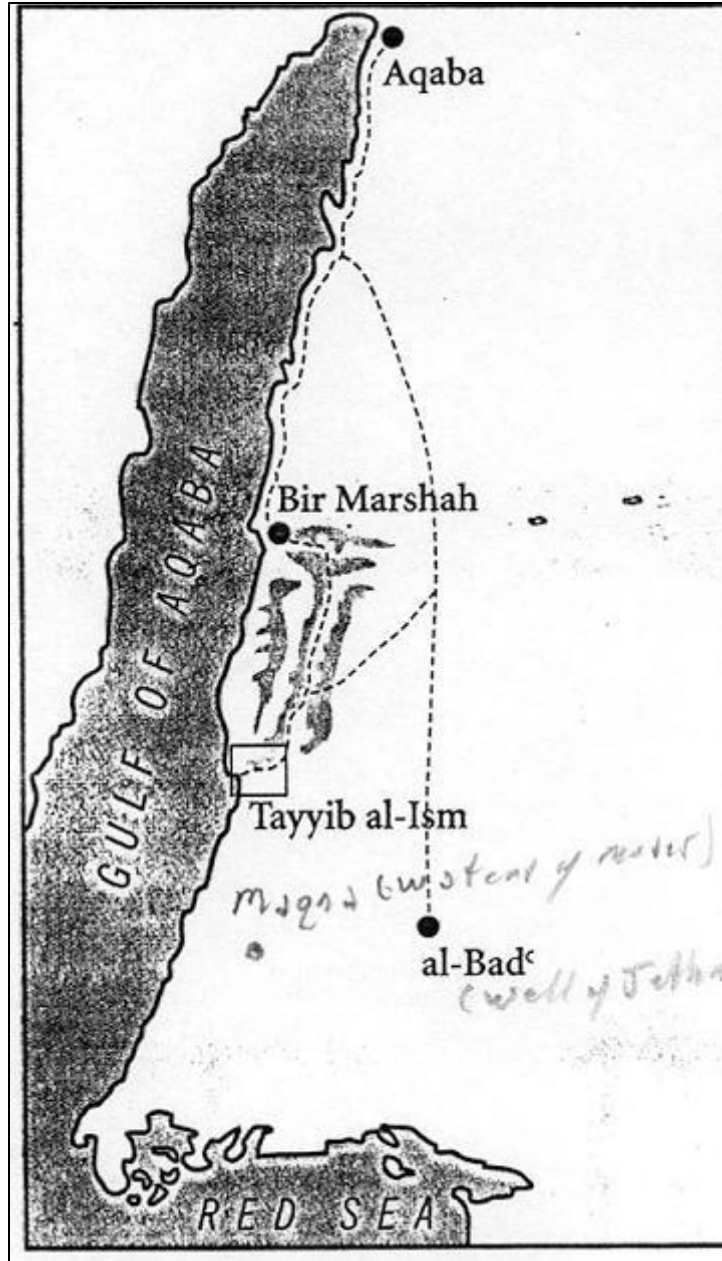
In May 1995, George Potter and Craig Thorsted were searching for one of the Arabian candidates for Mount Sinai when they stumbled on a "continually running" stream by the Red Sea. This stream was part of a valley complex that seemed to fulfill all the requirements for the "valley of Lemuel."

Potter and Thorsted had first traveled to al-Bad to explore the Wells of Jethro, the priest of the ancient land of Midian. (see illustration)



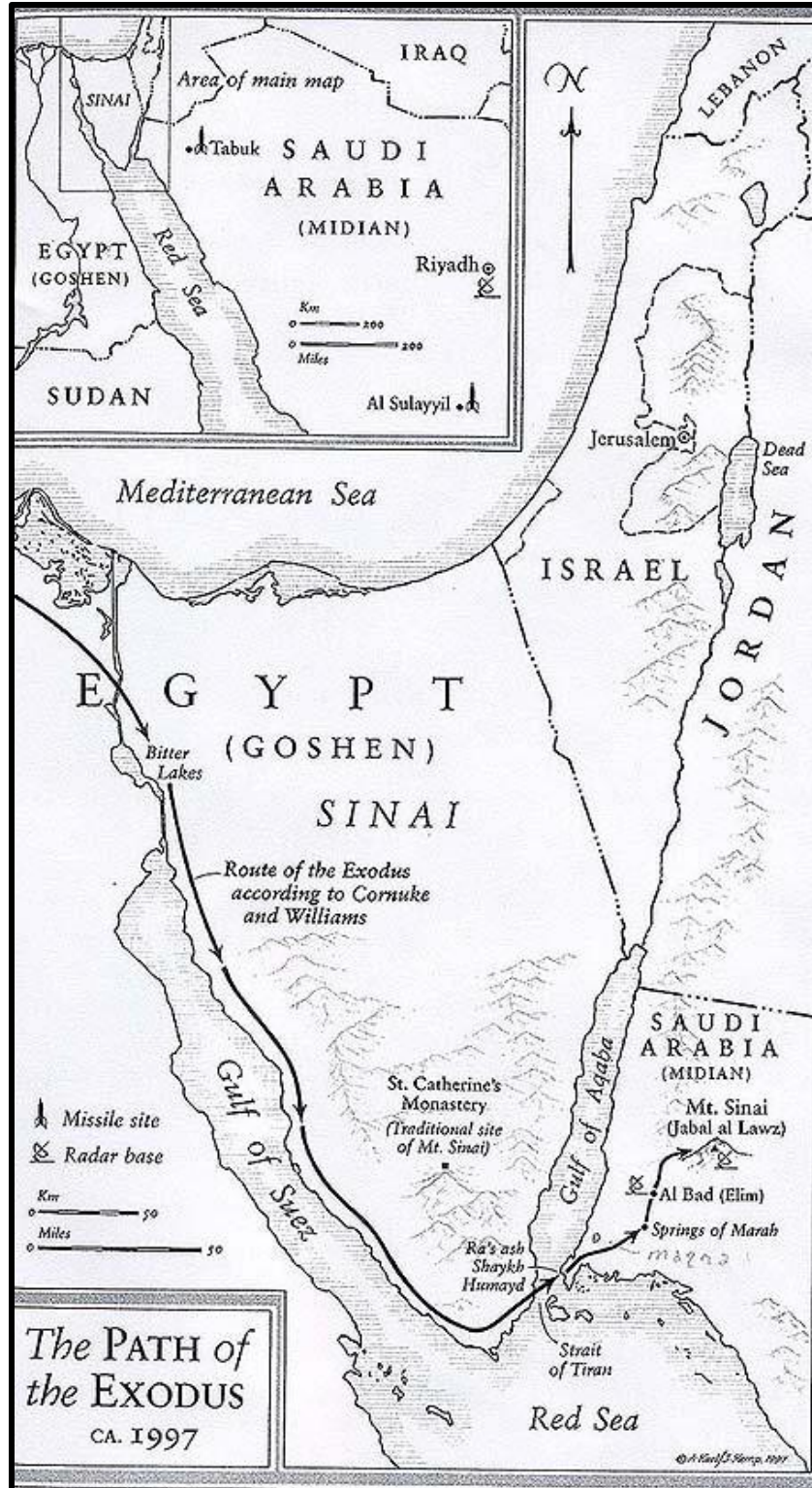
1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Larger of Wells of Jethro, al-Bada'a. Photo by George Potter. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 45]

On a suggestion from a town official, they traveled 20 miles west to the village of Maqna where supposedly the Waters of Moses were located. (see illustration)



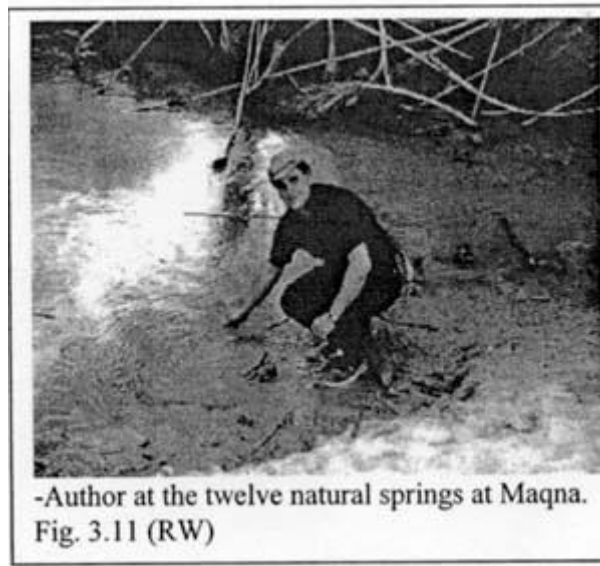
1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Map showing the location of Maqna (the Waters of Moses) and al-Bad (the Well of Jethro). Adapted from a sketch by Timothy Sedor. (George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1989, p. 58) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Collection]

According to local tradition, Maqna had been the first camp of Moses after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba (**see illustration**),



1 Nephi 2:9 The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]: The Path of the Exodus. Adapted (Howard Blum, The Gold of Exodus, 1998, preface) [Alan C. Miner, Personal

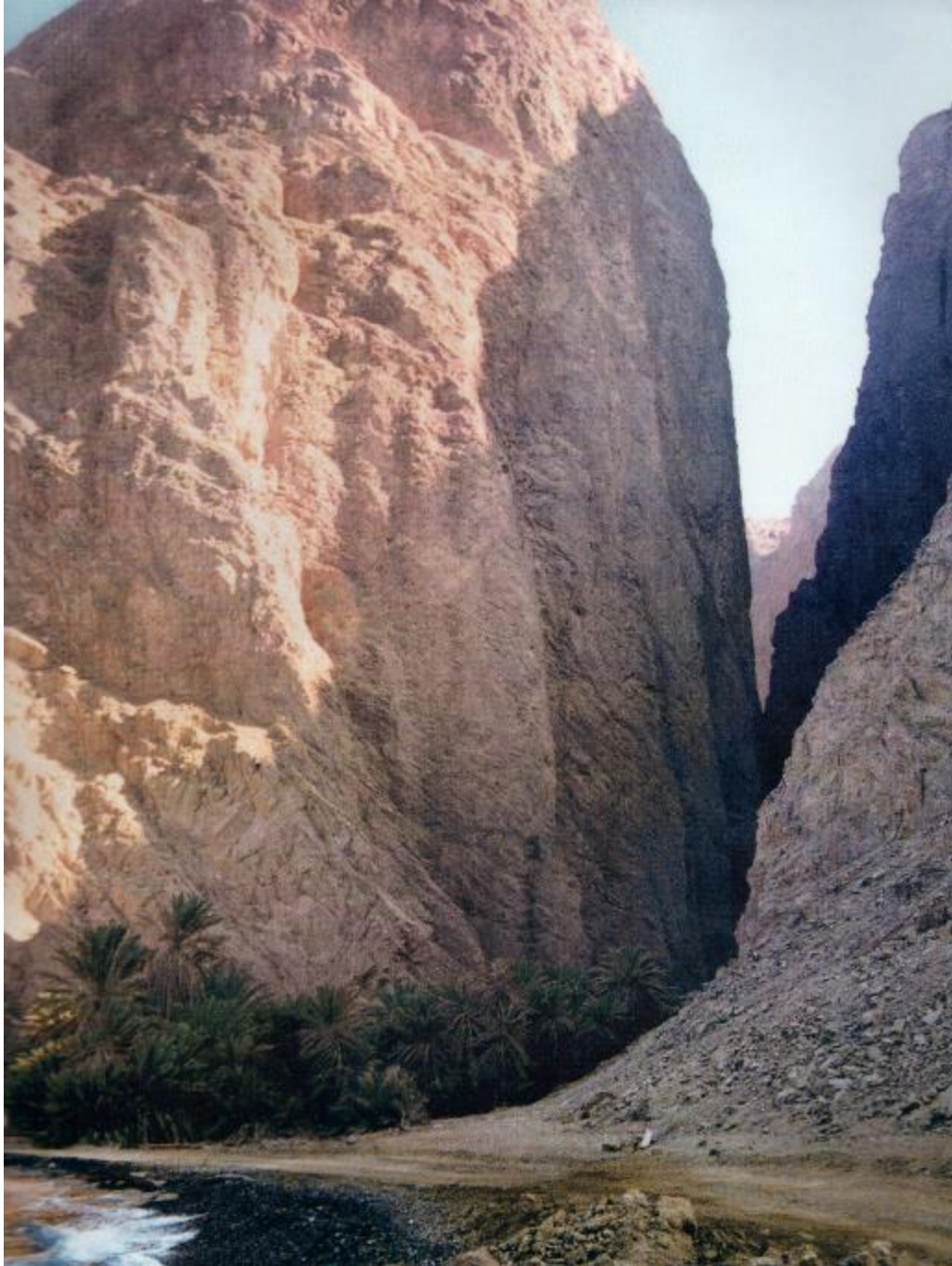
The Waters of Moses was where Moses had touched his staff to the rock and 12 springs gushed forth (**see illustration**), one for each tribe (see Qur'an 7:160).



1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** George Potter at the twelve natural springs at Maqna. 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. 46]

However, they were additionally directed to another site 12 miles to the north.

Eight miles north of Maqna, Potter and Thorsted found that the southern end of a mountain range forced them towards a small coastal road running northward along the Red Sea. After 4 more miles they came upon a magnificent narrow canyon. (**see illustration**)



1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Narrow canyon opening up on the shores of the Red Sea, which George Potter and Craig Thorsted came upon while traveling eight miles north of Maqna in search of the Waters of Moses. Photo by George Potter. (George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1989, inside back cover) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Collection]

They decided to walk up this canyon and after 33/4 miles it opened into a beautiful oasis with several wells and three large groves of date palm trees. However, what caught their interest most was the stream that

started in the canyon near its upper end and ran down the wadi virtually all the way to the sea.

Potter and Thorsted found that the stream in the canyon met all of the physical criteria for the valley of Lemuel and the river Laman.

(1) This valley lies just over 70 miles (on the ground, not in a direct line) south of Aqaba. Thus it was within a journey of "three days in the wilderness" by foot or camel ride beyond the northeast tip of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:5-6).

(2) If Lehi gave the river a name (1 Nephi 2:8) then it might not have been a major stream. Otherwise, in the hot dry Near East, a permanent settlement and a name would have already been in place.

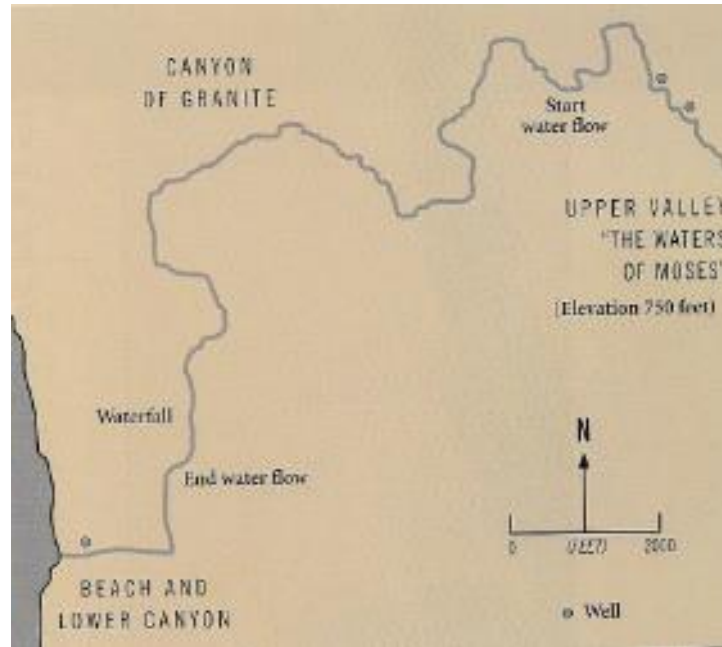
(3) The "waters of the river [Laman] emptied into the . . . Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:9).

(4) Lehi referred to the stream as "continually running" (1 Nephi 2:9).

Potter and Thorsted confirm that after having visited the valley in the months of January, April, May, November, and December, and after colleagues have visited in July and August, they have observed that "the volume of water in the river seems rather constant throughout the year (even though from 1995 to 1999 the volume seems to have decreased perhaps 50 percent due to the continued effects of pumping the water in the upper valley)."

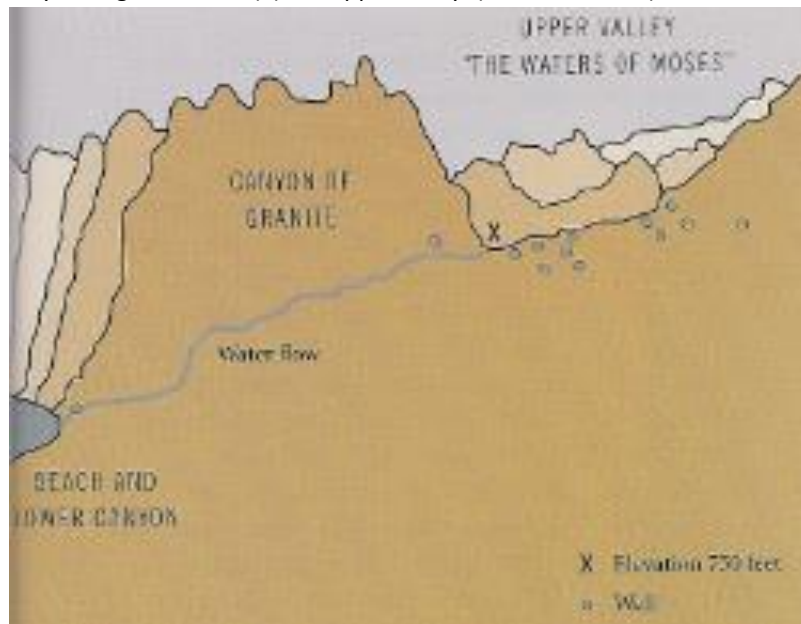
A consulting geologist, Wes Garner, gave the following explanation for this water system (see illustration):

When the occasional rains fall in the long wadi to the north, they are trapped in the sands. This watershed of sand runs southward for 20 miles until its downward course to the sea is blocked by the granite underpinnings of the towering cliffs to the west. (Richard Wellington, Potter's writing and exploring companion, has estimated the size of the watershed to be approximately 105 square miles). This subterranean rock runs deep beneath the surface, forming a dam. The subsurface waters are thus trapped at the upper end of the canyon in an underground reservoir. The canyon and its stream run westward from the area of this underground reservoir for $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles, starting at an elevation of 750 feet and ending at sea level in the Gulf of Aqaba. The floor of the canyon descends steadily. Within a few hundred feet, a spring begins to flow as the canyon floor drops to the level of the underground reservoir. The waters form the small river that runs above ground almost the rest of the way. At the point where the river comes to a level grade in the canyon floor, it runs just underground, leaving the soil moist. But soon the grade increases in its descent, and the river reappears. It is last seen as it reaches a gravel bed in the lower part of the canyon about $\frac{3}{8}$ mile from the beach. From there, the water runs underground to the gulf where it feeds a well used by the coast guard post a short distance away. (see illustration)

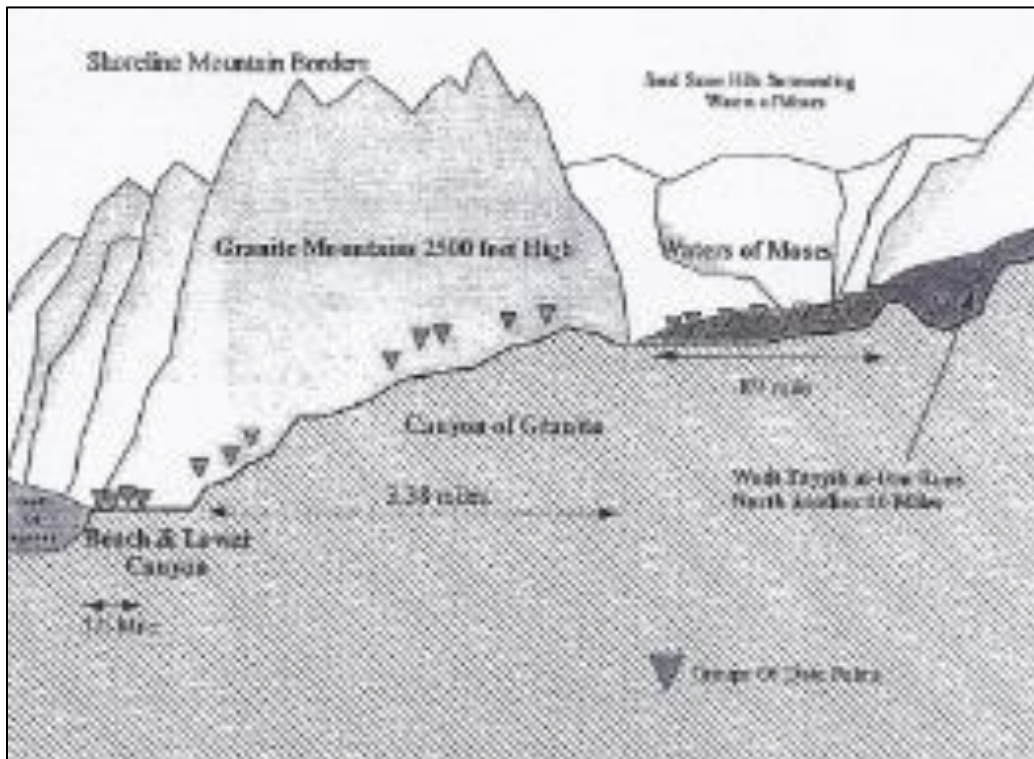


1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Sketch of the winding 33/4 mile course of the canyon, Tayyib al-Isn (east-west). The exit on the Gulf of Aqaba lies southwest of the point at which one enters the canyon from the upper valley. Sketch courtesy of Timothy Sedor. [George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1989, p. 57]

The narrow gorge or valley, cut through a massive granite mountain, was composed of three sections starting from Potter and Thorsted's beach area on the shores of the Gulf of Aqaba: (1) the lower canyon, (2) the canyon of granite, and (3) the upper valley, (see illustration).

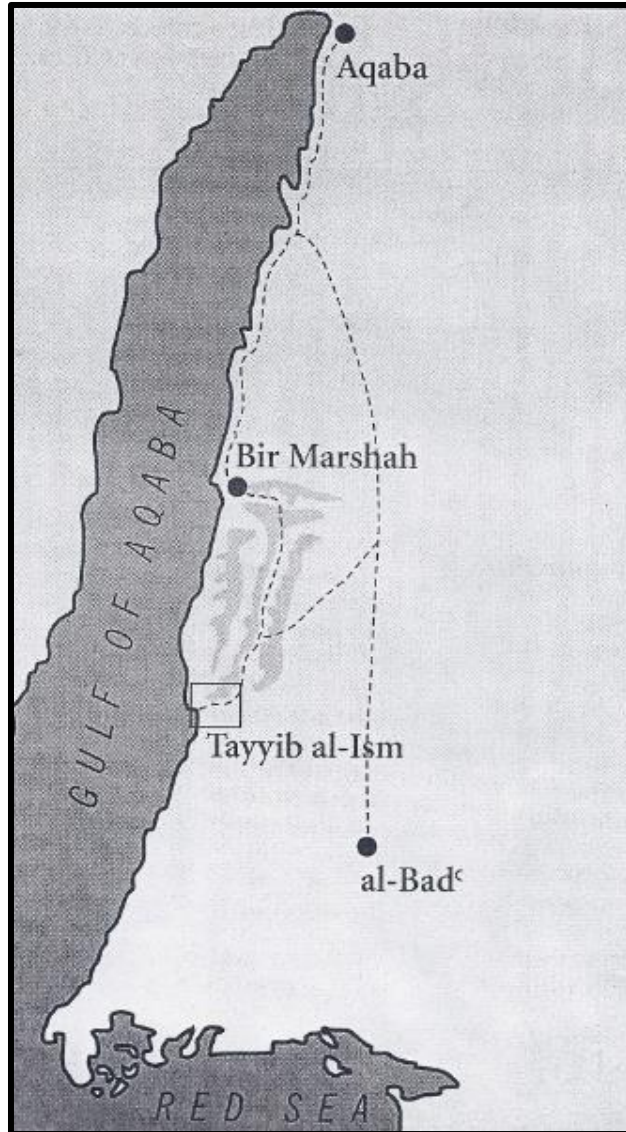


1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Cross-section of the canyon showing the drop of the stream from the upper end (750 feet) to sea level. Courtesy of George D. Potter. [George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1989, p. 63]



1 Nephi 2:9 **The waters of the river emptied into the . . . Red Sea . . . this river, continually running (Illustration):** Cross Section Model of the Valley Lemuel. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 69]

The upper valley (or what local people called the Waters of Moses) was situated at the south end of a twelve mile long wadi--known as Wadi Tayyib al-Ism (**see illustration**).



1 Nephi 2:5 **The borders near . . . nearer the Red Sea (Illustration):** Hilton Theory and Potter Theory compared: According to the Hilton Theory, Lehi took another branch of the trade route from Aqaba to al-Bada'a. Adapted from a general map of the area of the travels of George Potter and Craig Thorsted. (George D Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 8, Num. 1, FARMS, 1999, p. 58) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Collection]

This upper valley spread out over approximately one square mile with several hundred palm trees and 12 wells. The canyon of granite consisted of an approximately 33/4 mile long fracture in the granite mountain which permitted the stream to flow towards the Red Sea. The 2,000 foot height of the canyon walls provided a dramatic shelter from the intense 120 degree Fahrenheit heat and torrential winds. The lower canyon walls ended within 60 feet of the waters of the gulf.

If Lehi's camp were upstream a bit from the mouth, in the shade of the precipitous cliffs, as one might suppose, the stream would still have appeared to Lehi to flow right into the Gulf. However the reason the river does not reach the Red Sea today is simple. The elevation of the floor of the canyon is not the same as it was at the time of Lehi. According to geologist Garner:

in Lehi's era this lowest part of the canyon was submerged by the Red Sea. Where the river ends today was below the surface of the Red Sea in ancient times. . . . During the 2,600 years since Lehi would have camped in the area, the canyon floor has risen out of the Red Sea, perhaps as much as 200 to 400 feet.

Again, we believe that the river does not flow the same today as it did in 600 B.C. or even in 1970 (A.D.). Evidence suggests that up to just a few years ago a greater volume of water ran through the canyon. such a river would have undoubtedly run the entire distance to the Red Sea regardless of the changes in height of the floor of the lower canyon.

Even though only a small flow remains from what was probably a much larger stream, this desert river flows continuously, and, in so doing, it washes away any assertions that there are no qualified candidates for the river of Laman in Midian. Even the name of the Wadi (Tayyib al-Ism) possibly alludes to this unique attribute. It's name is now written *Tayyib*, or "good" a rather odd placename. It is possible that over time, the name has become confused with another arabic placename, *Thaab*, meaning "flowing water."^{xi}

[George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 8, Num.1, FARMS, 1989, pp. 54-63] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:2; 3 Nephi 25:4]

1 Nephi 2:9 **Fountain of the Red Sea:**

Nephi mentions that "the waters of the river [Laman] emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:9). According to Hugh Nibley, the 100 mile long northeastern extension of the Red Sea, (or the sector where Lehi's party possibly first came upon the sea) is not an open sea at all, and is not the Red Sea, . . . but opens out to the sea at its mouth. A glance at the map will show that there is a northwestern extension of the Red Sea also, closely resembling the one on the northeast. This western arm anciently had the mysterious and much-discussed name of "Yam Suph," Sea (or fountain) of Weeds (or rushes)." If the one on the west was called a "yam" (or fountain), what is more natural than that its twin gulf to the east should bear the same designation? [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 76]



1 Nephi 2:9 **Fountain of the Red Sea (Illustration):** View at sunset across the Gulf of Aqaba near the border of modern Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Lehi refers to such an area in the record as the "fountain of the Red Sea." [Scot and Maurine Proctor, [Light from the Dust](#), pp. 28-29]

1 Nephi 2:9 O That Thou Mightest Be Like unto This River, Continually Running into the Fountain of All Righteousness:

After fleeing from the land of Jerusalem, Lehi's family came down by the Red Sea and traveled in the wilderness until they came to a valley with a river of water (1 Nephi 2:5-6) After offering sacrifices and giving thanks to the Lord, Lehi spoke to his eldest birthright son, Laman, saying: "O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness" (1 Nephi 2:9). This statement was obviously metaphorical, but the extent of this metaphor is worth investigation.

According to Ted Chandler, Nephi (and presumably Lehi) intentionally paralleled his narrative with historical narratives. Thus we find that in their exodus from what was considered by the children of Israel as the Promised Land, Lehi's group traveled a course opposite to that of the Israelites when they originally crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan near Jericho.

With respect to the historical subject of "fountains" Josephus describes "a fountain by Jericho." Originally, this fountain of water had "a sickly and corruptive nature," causing harm to vegetation and new-born children. Elisha prayed over the fountain and made it "wholesome and fruitful." Josephus says

that the ground watered by the fountain grew "most excellent gardens that are thick set with trees," and that the area produced honey and balsam. According to Chandler's proposed exodus route, Lehi's family would have viewed this area on their journey into the wilderness.

In another reference to Israelite history and fountains, Josephus says that after Samson repented of his pride, God "raised him up a plentiful fountain of sweet water at a certain rock; whence it was that Samson called the place the Jaw-bone, and so it is called to this day." As William Whiston, the translator, pointed out, the Hebrew word for "jaw-bone" is Lehi: "This fountain, called Lehi, or the jaw-bone, is still in being. . . ." (See Josephus 12984, 1:77, 329; 2:334-35)

[Ted Chandler, "Recent Defenses of the Book of Mormon," www.mormonstudies.com/defense2.htm, p. 1]

[See the commentary on the name of Lehi in 1 Nephi 1:4

Note* The Bible refers to this incident in Judges 15:16-19:

And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi. And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

The footnote at the bottom of the LDS Bible defines "En-hakkore as "the spring of him who calls." So, one might ask, Could Lehi's use of the "fountain" metaphor be alluding to any of the following:

- (1) Samson's repentance episode?
- (2) the "sweet waters" which were an answer to Samson's prayers to avoid death?
- (3) the name "Lehi" which was where Samson was miraculously delivered by the Lord?
- (4) the Lord's restitution to life of the sickly waters by Elisha?

In other words, was Lehi metaphorically asking Laman to realize that he had been miraculously delivered by the Lord and to repent and live up to his responsibilities as the eldest son of "Lehi."? [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Additional Note* There is another "river continually running into [a] fountain" worthy of note on the route going south along the barren west side of the Dead Sea. At the present-day site of En-gedi, there is a nature preserve trail going back up into the wadi David. As visitors hike along this nature trail they can view herds of grazing Ibex (wild goats which live on the steep, rocky slopes) and Hyrax (rabbit-size rodent-looking animals) sunning themselves upon the rocks. About a mile up into the wadi, visitors come upon a natural wonder, a continually flowing waterfall which cascades from the upper rim of an open circular cavern into a refreshing pool below. Some visitors choose to continue their hike beyond the upper rim to a cave above, but many biblical tour groups choose to stop at the refreshing pool in order to recount the story of David and Saul which took place in these surroundings many years before.

In the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel, chapter 24, we find that when king Saul learned that David was in the wilderness of En-gedi, he took three thousand of his chosen men and went after him to kill him because he knew he was destined to be Israel's future king. But the men of David hid in the cliffs

among the caves. Saul, in need of going to the bathroom, entered a cave and shed his robe. In this vulnerable position, David had a chance to kill him and assume Saul's leadership position, but chose not to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. Instead he secretly cut off some of the skirt of Saul's robe. When Saul eventually left the cave and was apparently down the wadi some distance, David hollered out to Saul and made him aware of what had taken place and that it was a token of David's loyalty to the Lord's anointed king. "And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." (1 Samuel 24:16-17)

The lesson of David's loyalty to the Lord's anointed at this "river continually running into the fountain" at En-gedi could also have been alluded to in Lehi's admonition to his son Laman at the river Laman in the valley of Lemuel. In fact, it might have been a subtle warning to Laman concerning his not-so-total support of his father, who was the Lord's anointed.

[Alan C. Miner, [Personal Notes](#)]

1 Nephi 2:9 O That Thou Mightest Be Like unto This River, Continually Running into the Fountain of All Righteousness:

Kelly Ogden writes that all hills, rock outcroppings, wadis, and other topographical details were and are given names in the Near East. The ancient Hebrew people loved imagery and figures of speech. The most powerful way to illustrate a truth was to find something in human nature or conduct that corresponded to something in nature. If only Laman could be like this river, continuously flowing toward the source of righteousness! The prophet Amos pled with northern Israelites to "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty [or everflowing] stream" (Amos 5:24). [D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in [Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon](#), Part 1, p. 24] [See 1 Nephi 20:18]

1 Nephi 2:10 Like This Valley, Firm and Steadfast, and Immovable:

Lehi rhetorically challenged Lemuel to be like "this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable" (1 Nephi 2:10). Hugh Nibley questions who, west of Suez, would ever think of such an image? We, of course, know all about everlasting hills and immovable mountains . . . but who ever heard of a steadfast valley? The Arabs to be sure. For them the valley, and not the mountain, is the symbol of permanence. It is not the mountain of refuge to which they flee, but the valley of refuge. The great depressions that run for hundreds of miles across the Arabian peninsula pass for the most part through plains devoid of mountains. It is in these ancient riverbeds alone that water, vegetation, and animal life are to be found when all else is desolation. They alone offer men and animals escape from their enemies and deliverance from death by hunger and thirst. The qualities of firmness and steadfastness, of reliable protection, refreshment, and sure refuge when all else fails, which other nations attribute naturally to mountains, the Arabs attribute to valleys. [Hugh Nibley, [An Approach to the Book of Mormon](#), F.A.R.M.S., pp. 234-235]

1 Nephi 2:10 This Valley, Firm and Steadfast, and Immovable (Potter Theory):

Lehi described the valley as "firm, steadfast, and immovable" (1 Nephi 2:10). According to

George Potter, while the very image of Arabia is that of sand dunes, desert plains and sand stone hills melting away by the wind into the great sand deserts, it would seem unlikely that such a valley could be found. Thus the valley of Lemuel must have been impressive. As Albert Einstein noted, "Not everything that counts can be counted; and not everything that can be counted counts." A garden-variety valley would not have found its way to the plates.

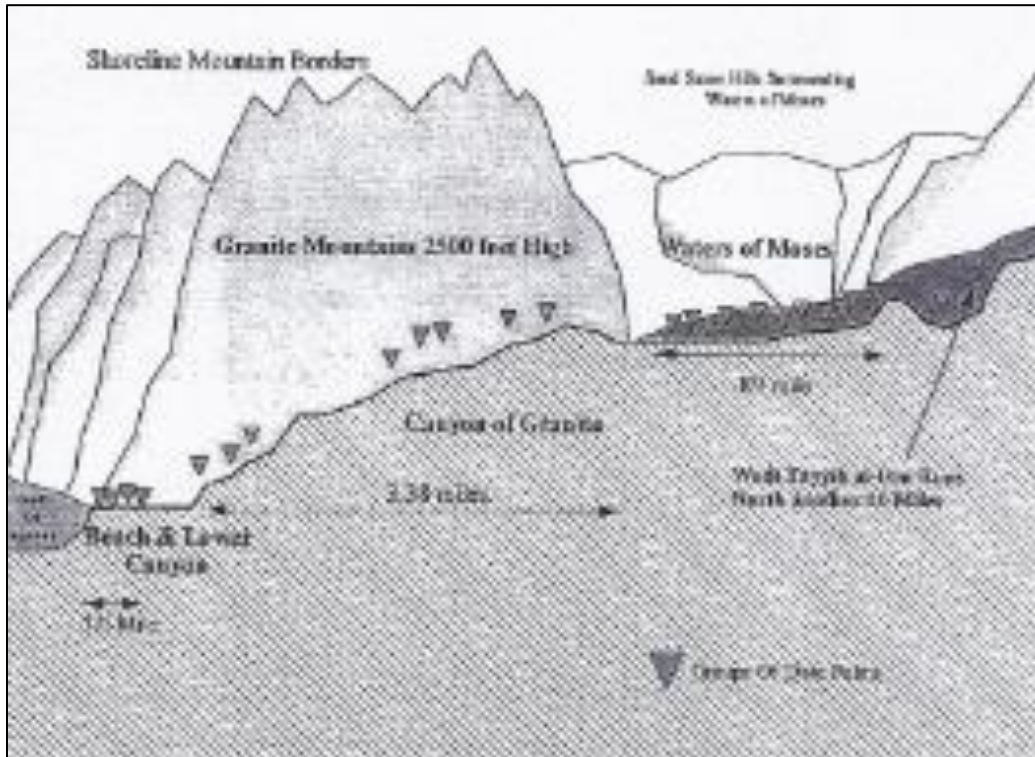
The grandeur of the valley, which I believe was the site of Lehi's first wilderness camp, is difficult to portray in words or even photographs. The valley consists of three sections. I refer to these as the Upper Valley or the Waters of Moses (9/10ths of a mile long), the Canyon of Granite (the valley of Lemuel proper, 33/8ths miles long), and the Lower Canyon (3/8ths of a mile long). These three geological features are found together at the western end of the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (**see illustration**).

Coming from the north, the first section of what I call the "Valley Lemuel" that Lehi would have entered would have been what local residents call the Waters of Moses. This oasis is located in the last mile of the wadi Tayyib al-Isim before it veers west and enters the shoreline mountains where a narrow canyon leads through the mountains to the sea. This upper valley is a pleasant jewel, with several hundred palm trees and twelve wells, spread out over approximately half a square mile. The date palms and the wells suggested to us that this could have been the second campsite of Moses after crossing the Red Sea. The site he called "Elim." Moses recorded finding twelve wells and three score and ten palm trees (Exodus 15:27). As implied in the name (Waters of Moses), the idea that Moses camped here was not new to the local "Midianites."

The second section I call the "Canyon of Granite." This great fracture in the granite mountain border provides a passage to the sea. The "Canyon of Granite" provides a pleasant environment year round, even during the terrible heat of an Arabian Summer. On several occasions I have escorted groups into the Canyon of granite. Each time those in the party are astounded by the sight of the canyon. Not once has anyone seeing the canyon questioned its qualifications as a candidate for the "firm, steadfast, and immovable" valley of Lemuel. The towering cliff walls of the valley are so tall that it is difficult to photograph the canyon. Small groupings of date palms, berries, gourds, patches of tall grass and grain and other plants are found intermittently throughout the Canyon of Granite. . . . Temperatures average between 115° and 125° Fahrenheit in the Midian region of Arabia during the summer months. The Canyon of Granite would have been an ideal camp in which to wait through these months before continuing south in the Fall.

The final section of the "Valley Lemuel" I term the "Lower Canyon" (see illustration) and the beach (**see illustration**). The Granite Canyon ends in a section that has a flat floor a few feet above sea level. This level area of the canyon runs for about 3/8ths of a mile. This is perhaps the most impressive section of the canyon. Here the height of the canyon walls are at their maximum. The granite cliffs rise over 2,000 feet straight up from the canyon's floor. The floor of the lower canyon was underwater during the time of Lehi. Dr. Wes Garner noted that the valley floor has risen over two hundred feet since Lehi's era. The smooth stone bed of the lower canyon and the cave-like undercuts at the base of the walls would have been caused by wave action over countless years. Yet even now, the lower part of the canyon starts within sixty feet from the waters of the Gulf. Not surprisingly, the canyon ends just as Nephi indicated, with the stream "empt[y]ing into the Red Sea. The beautiful palm laden beach cove, with its narrow canyon exit from giant granite cliffs is a spectacular scene.

Does the river run through a firm, steadfast, and immovable valley? Yes. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, pp. 48-49, 81, 65-73]



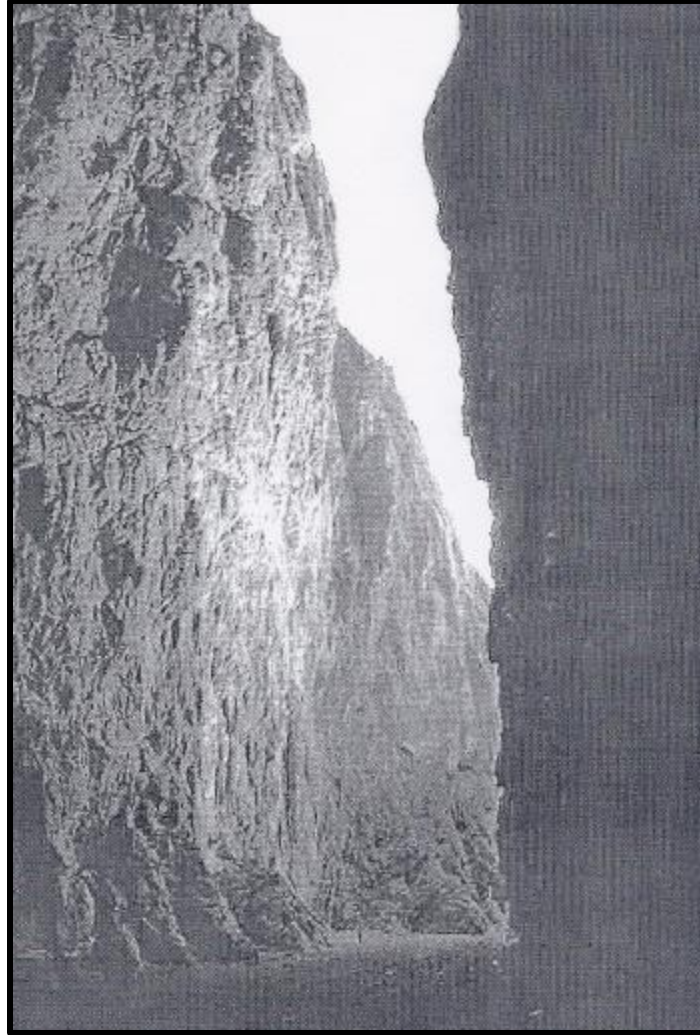
1 Nephi 2:10 **This valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Cross Section Model of the Valley Lemuel. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 69]



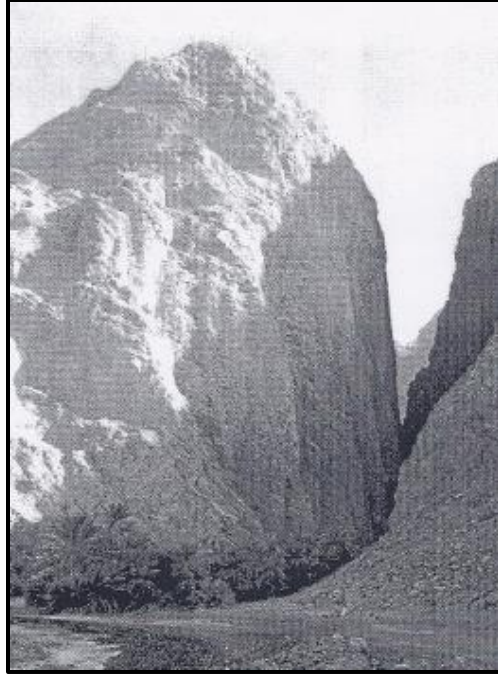
1 Nephi 2:10 **This valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** West most of three groves of date palms found in the upper valley or Waters of Moses. Photo by JS. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 49]



1 Nephi 2:10 **This valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** The Canyon of Granite. Three adults walking through the canyon, only half way to cliff face in background. [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 80]



1 Nephi 2:10 **This valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Sunset in the Lower Canyon, notice the man standing in the canyon floor. 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. 72]



1 Nephi 2:10 **This valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Shoreline ending of the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Photo by GW [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 48]

1 Nephi 2:11 This He Spake Because of the Stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel:

“The neck typifies the spirit and attitude of nations and men, usually denoting callousness and hardness (2 Ne. 6:10; Prov. 29:1). Men having necks of ‘iron sinew’ (1 Ne. 20:4) or having ‘stiffness of necks’ (2 Ne. 25:12; 1 Ne. 2:11) are those who are unable to glance sideways at the concerns of their neighbor or to look upward toward their Creator.” (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, A Guide to Scriptural Symbols, “Neck”)

Note* It is noteworthy that in the parallelistic structure of the text, the words “firm and steadfast, and immovable” in regards to keeping the commandments is paralleled by the word “stiffneckedness” in regard to Laman and Lemuel’s constant murmuring and disobedience.

10 And he [my father] also **spake** unto Lemuel [**saying**]:

O that thou mightest be like unto this valley,
firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!

11 Now

this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel;
for behold

they did murmur in many things against their father,
because he was a visionary man, and
[because he] had led them out of the land of Jerusalem,
to leave [their house]
[and] the land of their inheritance,

and their gold,
and their silver,
and their precious things,
to perish in the wilderness.

And this they said he had done [or they murmured against their father]

[Alan Miner Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 2:11,13 Neither Did They Believe That Jerusalem . . . Could Be Destroyed According to the Words of the Prophets:

According to Potter and Wellington, the apparently strong reaction of the people of the city to Lehi's message, their hard-hearted rejection to the call of repentance from a Prophet of the Lord, can best be understood in the light of the events of the previous century. In 701 Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, mounted a campaign against Syria and Palestine with the aim of capturing the road to Egypt in preparation for his campaign against the Egyptians. Egypt's allies surrendered one by one as the Assyrian army approached and the Egyptian army was defeated at Eltekeh in Judah. Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem. Attempts to buy off the Assyrian army proved fruitless (2 Kings 13-16) and without allies Hezekiah's position seemed hopeless. Yet, at this time of near desperation, the Prophet Isaiah came forward to bolster the courage of the people by saying "He shall not come into this city . . . For I will defend the city to save it . . ." (Isaiah 37:33,35). Despite attempts to incite insurrection in the ranks of the defenders Hezekiah's resistance was successful. Sennacherib cut short the attack and left Palestine with his army which, according to the Old Testament (2 Kings 19:35), had been decimated by an epidemic, leaving some 185,000 dead.

In the years that followed, this event would be recounted until "Later generations could ascribe this deliverance to nothing less than a supernatural intervention, second only to one which had secured the freedom of the Israelites from the Egyptian captivity."^{xii} Regarding this event Professor Benjamin Mazar wrote:

Embellished by legendary accretions, it strengthened the popular view of the impregnability of the city, and the ultimate sanctity and inviolability of mount Zion and the Temple. This confidence remained intact through subsequent generations down to the last years of the monarchy, until the day that the city walls were breached, the defending forces overwhelmed, and the city itself destroyed by the armies of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar."^{xiii}

In Laman and Lemuel we see the perfect embodiment of that same mindset:
Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father. (1 Nephi 2:13)

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript (July 2000), p. 2]

Note* How could the Jews at Jerusalem feel that the city was impregnable until the final destruction in 587/6 B.C. when in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had just taken 10,000 people, including the royal family, the palace officials, members of the army and all the craftsmen and smiths to Babylon (see 2 Kings 24:14-16)? [Alan C. Miner, [Personal Notes](#)] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 17:22]

1 Nephi 2:11,13 Neither Did They Believe That Jerusalem . . . Could Be Destroyed According to the Words of the Prophets:

In considering the chronological theories of those who propose that Lehi left Jerusalem after 597 B.C. (historically considered as the "first year of the reign of Zedekiah" -- 1 Nephi 1:4), one might wonder how Laman and Lemuel could say that they did not believe "that Jerusalem . . . could be destroyed" (1 Nephi 2:11,13). History records that the events preceding the reign of Zedekiah resulted in the overpowering of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the deportation of 10,000 of the most important and wealthy people (2 Kings 24:14). Perhaps in reading 1 Nephi 2:11-13, we should not stress the words "could be destroyed" and instead stress the phrase "according to the words of the prophets."

If Laman and Lemuel truly believed what they said, and had survived all these historical events, they might have felt that the worst was over. But why would they feel that way? One reason has to do with which "prophets" Laman and Lemuel were referring to. Although Jeremiah foretold an exile of 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10), the false Jewish prophets in both Babylon and Judah argued that it would last only two years (see Jeremiah 28:1-4). Zedekiah, along with the false prophets and princes surrounding him, looked to Egypt as a way of rebuilding Judah's army and making a stand against Babylon. Laman and Lemuel knew that the army of Egypt had forced the Babylonians to withdraw from Israel once before in 601 B.C. Perhaps they felt that with only a two year exile "according to the words of [their] prophets," and Zedekiah's alliance with Egypt, they would have been secure in Jerusalem. [Alan C. Miner, [Personal Notes](#)] [See Appendix A]

1 Nephi 2:11,13 Neither Did They Believe That Jerusalem . . . Could Be Destroyed According to the Words of the Prophets:

According to Gerald Lund, in those last ten years of the reign of Zedekiah, the question that was asked again and again by the Jews was, Is Jerusalem really going to be destroyed? This was partly because the false prophets were confusing the people and partly because the Jews couldn't believe "God's people" would ever fall. . . . During the reign of Zedekiah, who was appointed to replace Jehoiachin as the ruler in Jerusalem, Zedekiah did not learn a thing from the previous tragedies brought on by Nebuchadnezzar, nor did the people of Judah. In Jerusalem, false prophets began to abound, predicting that Babylon would be overthrown and the captives returned. While both Jeremiah and Ezekiel strongly denounced these men (see Jeremiah 28, 29; Ezekiel 13), their presence added to the general confusion abounding in Jerusalem.

In the face of Nebuchadnezzar's successes in Palestine and the eventual fall of Judah, four important questions naturally arose in the minds of the people:

1. *Is Jerusalem really going to be destroyed?*
2. If God is really God, and we are really his chosen people, why is he allowing this to happen?

(See Ezekiel 4-24)

3. If we are being destroyed for being like the other nations (which Ezekiel and other prophets had said many times), then why aren't those nations destroyed?

4. What will this tragedy mean for the covenant? What will happen to all of the promises God has made about Israel's eventual triumph and salvation?

In the writings of Ezekiel, these four basic questions seem to be understood and answered

As for the question of whether Jerusalem was really going to be destroyed, Ezekiel gives an unqualified, resounding, thundering, Yes! It is the major theme of chapters 4-9, 11-12, 15, 19, 21-22, and 24. They all say Jerusalem has had it. That is a pretty hard answer to miss. Ezekiel himself went through several topological or symbolic actions to dramatize the coming disaster. For example, in chapter 4 he took a tile and drew a picture of Jerusalem on it. Then he put an iron pan against it. In that same chapter, by command of the Lord, he had to lie on his side for so many days, symbolizing the captivity, and then he was told to cook his bread with cow dung to symbolize that the people in Judah would eat defiled bread in coming times. In chapter 5 Ezekiel cut his hair and divided it into thirds, burning some and scattering some, again symbolizing what the people would suffer. In chapter 12 he moved his whole household, showing that the house of Judah was going to be moved out of their dwelling place in Jerusalem. In chapter 24 we read that Ezekiel's wife died on the very day Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem . . . The Lord said in essence that the death of Ezekiel's wife would serve as a type and symbol of Jerusalem's destruction. . . . Ezekiel was told not to mourn for his wife. Jerusalem was the bride of Jehovah, but there could be no mourning, for her tragedy was just and fully deserved.

[Gerald N. Lund, "Ezekiel: Prophet of Judgment, Prophet of Promise," in Isaiah and the Prophets , pp. 80-87]

1 Nephi 2:13 They Were Like unto the Jews at Jerusalem, Who Sought to Take Away the Life of My Father:

According to John Tvedtnes, one is intrigued by the possibility that the secret combination among the Nephites had its origin in Jerusalem. Who, then, brought the organization to the New World? While it is true that the Jaredites had such a conspiratorial group, the knowledge of its exact nature, including its oaths, was kept from the Nephites even after the Jaredite record was translated by king Mosiah₂ (Alma 37:29). So one possible answer is Laman and Lemuel or the sons of Ishmael, whose rebelliousness and attempts to slay Lehi and Nephi betray their true allegiance (1 Nephi 7:16-19; 16:37; 17:44; 2 Nephi 1:24; 5:3). Hugh Nibley hinted that Laman and Lemuel may have had such ties (see his discussion of the Laban incident in Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites*, 91-99). Nephi noted that they did not believe their father's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem "and they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father" (1 Nephi 2:11-13; see also 1:20; 2:1; 7:14). He also recorded their declaration "that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people" (1 Nephi 17:22). This declaration is reminiscent of the words of Giddianhi, the leader of the Gadianton band nearly six centuries later, who wrote that his "society and the works thereof I know to be good" (3 Nephi 3:9). [John A. Tvedtnes, "The Elders at Jerusalem in the Days of Lehi," in The Most Correct Book, pp. 72-73] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 2:1; Alma 51:8]

1 Nephi 2:14 **The Valley of Lemuel (Hilton Theory):**

The "valley of Lemuel" (1 Nephi 2:14) seemed to be a safe place for Lehi to rest. Its location according to some was probably "three days" beyond the governing borders of Judah (which stopped at the tip of the Red Sea) and therefore presumably beyond the reach of any political powers in Jerusalem that might harm him or his group. Just as important, or more, the valley was blessed with a "continual" flow of water (see 1 Nephi 2:9). Because of such conditions described, the Hiltons feel that the best location for the Valley of Lemuel is al-Bad in the Wadi El Afal. George Potter, however, proposes a valley at the southern end of the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim as a candidate for the Valley of Lemuel. Nevertheless, what is important to consider here is that both of these areas are situated in the same area as the ancient land of Midian.

According to the Hiltons, this area in northwest Saudi Arabia had a vast livestock population: the armies of Israel, after conquering Midian, took as booty 675,000 sheep plus much other treasure (Numbers 31:43). Jethro, "the priest of Midian" and father-in-law of Moses, lived as a Bedouin in the land of Midian. (Exodus 2:16, 3:1). Concerning the presence of other people in Lehi's time, there can be no doubt that nomadic Bedouin tribes occupied the Arabian peninsula from ancient times. [Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, pp. 27, 28, 33]

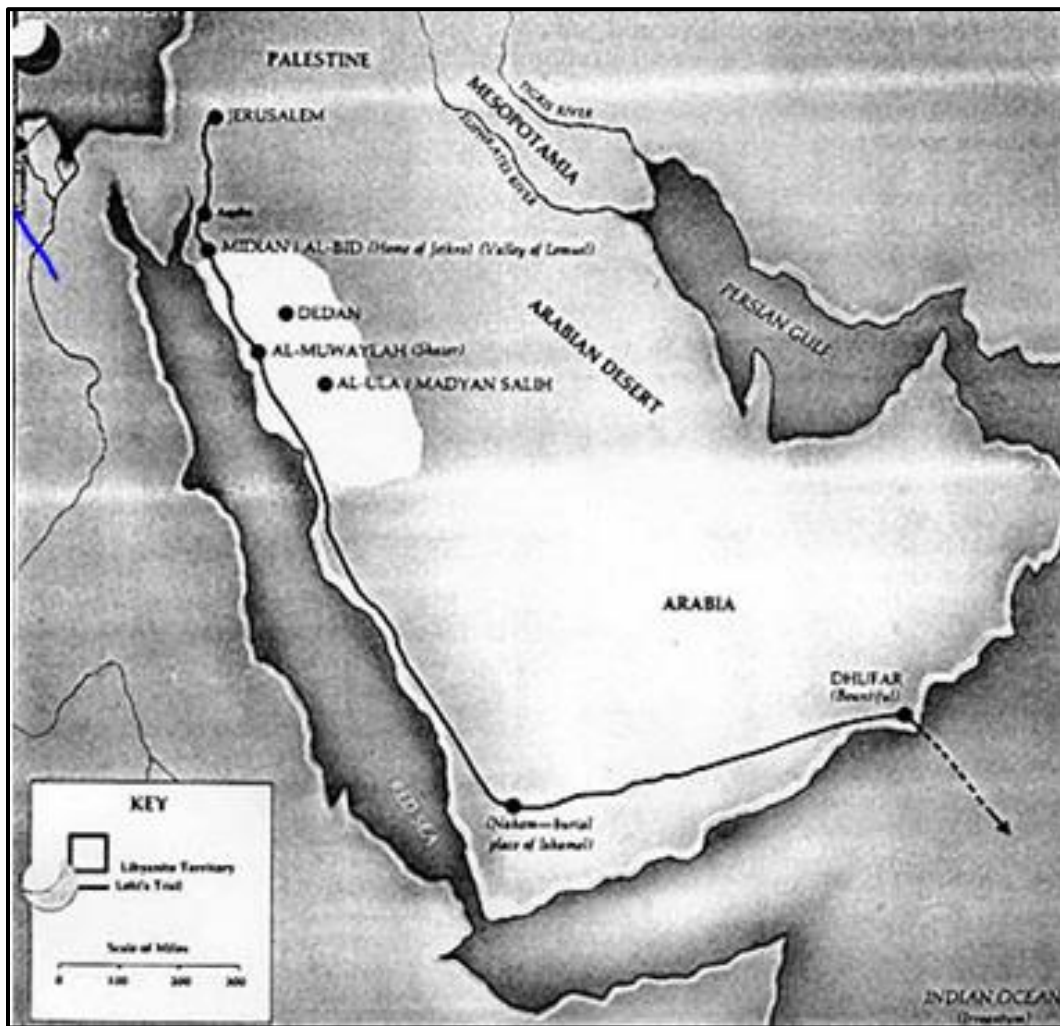
Lynn and Hope Hilton note that from earliest times, the Midianites lived on the east shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, ca. 1,500 to 1,000 B.C. We know of them through 68 separate Bible references from Genesis to Habakkuk.^{xiv} Although they were caravaneers and stock raisers, and somewhat nomadic, they did build cities, the foremost, their capital, Jethro of Midian, being located at al-Bad, Saudi Arabia. They left an extensive archaeological record buried in the ruins of 56 ancient city sites which have been identified as Midianite.^{xv} Their nation was bounded by Wadi Tayyib al-Isim ("The good name") on the north, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea on the west, Wadis Tiryam and Sadr on the south, and the desert on the east

Midianites are descendants of Midian, the son of Abraham and his plural wife Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4). In the days of Moses, the Midianites were a powerful people, kin to the Hebrews, but often in conflict with them. Midianites have been identified in the Bible as early as the second millennium B.C. They are mentioned by name as early as 1700 B.C. as those who carried Joseph, son of Jacob, into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 37:28). Their archaeological remains are found today. In contrast, no Midianite shards were discovered by the 1980 Saudi Archaeological survey done in the area north of Tayyib al-Isim or south of Wadi Sadr.^{xvi} These limits identify the boundaries of ancient Midian.

The Midianites were absorbed by succeeding civilizations, including the Dedanites. The Dedanite kings were in power when Lehi and Nephi made their visit about 600 B.C. However, when Lehi arrived in this area, he would have probably lived among the descendants of Midian while he remained in the Valley of Lemuel. The Dedanites prospered in this area from approximately 1,000 to 500 B.C. We know of the Dedanites because the Bible makes eleven references to them between Genesis and Ezekiel.^{xvii} The location of the ancient capital city of Dedan^{xviii} is just four kilometers north from the modern city of al-Ula. Later, after the fall of Dedan, the Lihyanites built their capitol on top of Dedan. The Lihyan ruin is called al-Kieribah.

[Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi: New Evidence of Lehi and Nephi in Arabia, 1996, pp. 78-80]

Note* The Book of Mormon reader should take note of the striking coincidences here between the life of Moses and the life of Nephi. Moses and Nephi were both forced to flee to the same land of Midian (see Exodus 2:15). While there they both were married (see Exodus 2:21), both were in the company of a father holding the priesthood (see Exodus 2:16), both talked with the Lord (see Exodus 3:2), and both were prepared and called to lead their respective children of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land (see Exodus 3:7-10). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 16:14]



1 Nephi 2:14 **The Valley of Lemuel (Illustration):** Kingdom of Liyan (Lehi-an) 500 B.C. - 200 B.C. and "Lihyanite Territory." These illustrations show that the area where Lehi first camped was associated with the Land of Midian (the land where Jethro lived) and the name of Lehi. [Hope A. and Lynn M. Hilton, "The Lihyanites," p. 7]

1 Nephi 2:8,14 (The River Laman) . . . the Valley of Lemuel:

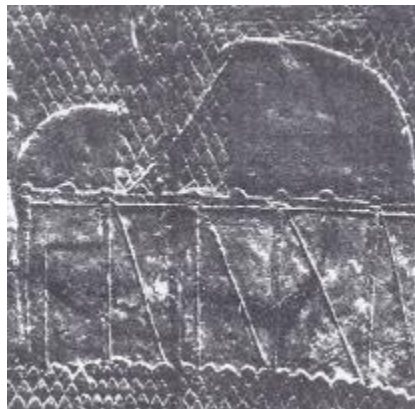
According to Hugh Nibley, even more whimsical and senseless to a westerner must appear the behavior of Lehi in naming a river after one son ("the river Laman" -- 1 Nephi 2:8), and its valley after another ("the valley of Lemuel" -- 1 Nephi 2:14). [For example, the Provo River descends through Provo Canyon, and where I live in Springville, Hobble Creek descends through Hobble Creek Canyon.) But the Arabs don't think that way. In the Mahra country, for example, "as is commonly the case in these mountains, the water bears a different name from the wadi." Likewise we might suppose that after he had named the river after his first-born the location of the camp beside its waters would be given, as any westerner would give it, with reference to the river. Instead, the Book of Mormon follows the Arabic system of designating the camp not by the name of the river (which may easily dry up sometime), but by the name of the valley. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 76]

1 Nephi 2:15 My Father Dwelt in a Tent:

According to Hugh Nibley, to an Arab the phrase "my father dwelt in a tent" (1 Nephi 2:15) says everything. "The present inhabitants of Palestine," writes Canaan, "like their forefathers, are of two classes: dwellers in villages and cities, and the Bedouin. As the life and habits of the one class differ from the those of the other, so do their houses differ. Houses in villages are built of durable material; . . . on the other hand, Bedouin dwellings, tents, are more fitted for nomadic life." An ancient Arab poet boasts that his people are "the proud, the chivalrous people of the horse and camel, the dwellers-in-tents, and no miserable ox-drivers." [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 51] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 16:6]

1 Nephi 2:15 Tent

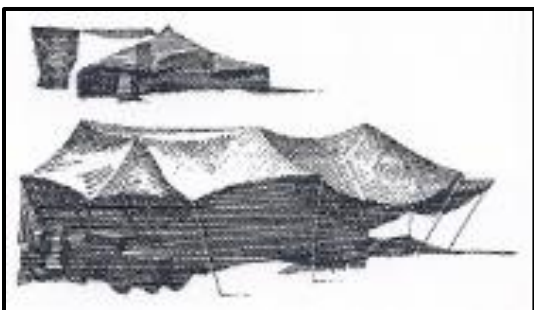
In the ancient Near East, to dwell in a tent was considered a great honor, especially compared to living in a house in the city. It represented living close to and trusting in the Lord. Also, the father's tent was considered the center of the whole community (see Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 243) [Cited in Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, p. 6]



1 Nephi 2:15 **Dwelt in a tent (Illustration):** A tent used by King Sennacherib near Lachish, Palestine, is supported by poles and cords. The upper canopy was designed to catch the cooling breezes, and imitates those built in Assyrian houses. Relief from Nineveh, 704-681 B.C. [Tyndale House, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol. 3, p. 1534]



1 Nephi 2:15 **Dwelt in a tent (Illustration):** Typical bedouin tent made of goats' hair. [Tyndale House, [The Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#), Vol. 3, p. 1534]



1 Nephi 2:15 **Dwelt in a tent (Illustration):** The typical Arab tent, or *beit shaar* (house of hair) has not changed substantially with time. It provides cooling shade in summer and, with the sides down, warmth in winter. The tents are traditionally made of camel or goats hair that is spun and then woven into a fabric as thick as a carpet. Lehi's tents may have been like this, or they may have been more elaborate, with geometric panels like those we found on a tent in Cairo. [Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, [In Search of Lehi's Trail](#), p. 70]

1 Nephi 2:16 Exceedingly Young, Nevertheless Large in Stature:

By comparing the term "exceeding young" (1 Nephi 2:16) referring to Nephi at this time with a reference to him as a "man" given later on in 1 Nephi 4:31 ("and now I, Nephi, being a *man* large in stature" -- italics added), some have theorized that a number of years had passed in between these two verses. However, immediately after verse 2:16, which uses the term "exceeding young," the text says that Nephi, "having great desires to know of the mysteries of God . . . did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me." Soon after this experience, Nephi explains that "I returned from speaking with the Lord to the tent of my father." Lehi then commanded Nephi to return for the plates, and this trip for the plates is the account that contains Nephi's reference to himself as a "man." Because Nephi parallels being "exceedingly young" with being "large in stature," and because we don't know exactly the amount of time that passed between Nephi's descriptive terms "exceedingly young" and "man"; perhaps we can entertain the idea that the word "stature" connotes more than just physical size: (1) Nephi, by being large in "stature," might have been more capable than his older brothers not only physically, but mentally,

emotionally, and spiritually to do all that the Lord required of him; but much more important; and (2) Nephi might have felt he was "exceedingly young" because it was "exceedingly" unusual for a "man" at his "young" age to be visited by the Lord (2:16). Nephi came to know that even for a man "large in stature," in order to do things properly, he needed to receive "much strength of the Lord" (1 Nephi 4:31). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 2:16 **Exceedingly Young:**

If we assume that Sariah was 18 years old at the birth of Laman, and Laman was 22 years old when Lehi left Jerusalem, Sariah would have been close to 40 years old at that time. If Jacob was born 3 years later, she would have been 43, and if Joseph came along 2 years after Jacob, Sariah would have ended her childbearing years at the age of 45 (which age is not completely unreasonable). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that when Lehi left Jerusalem, Sam would have been about 18 years old and Nephi would have been about 14-16 years of age, or "exceedingly young" (1 Nephi 2:16). Certainly these ages are estimates, but they accommodate the scriptural story. The reader should realize that there are many factors embedded in the scriptural story that have to be satisfied when one attempts to shift the ages. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 2:16 **I Did Cry unto the Lord:**

The phrase "to cry" is a Hebraism meaning *to pray* (compare Psalms 30:2, "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me"). [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 7]

1 Nephi 2:17 **He Believed in My Words:**

Brant Gardner notes that in the relationship of Nephi and Sam ("he believed in my words") we find one of the clearer examples of two of the Gifts of the Spirit: "To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful." (D&C 46:13-14) [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page," <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi2.htm>, p. 14]

1 Nephi 2:20 **Inasmuch As Ye Shall Keep My Commandments, Ye Shall Prosper:**

David Seely notes that King Josiah (640-609 B.C.) was a contemporary of Lehi. In the course of Josiah's religious reforms, a book was discovered in the temple that many scholars believe was some form of the book of Deuteronomy. Josiah's reforms are described in language similar to that in Deuteronomy, and the nature of the reforms closely follows the laws found only in Deuteronomy. These reforms are significant for Book of Mormon studies since Lehi grew up in Jerusalem during the reign of Josiah and must have been influenced by the religious reforms that affected the lives of everyone living there.

According to Seely, in recounting the history of his father's exodus some thirty to forty years

after the fact, Nephi was undoubtedly influenced by the scriptures contained on the brass plates, which contained the five books of Moses--and thus the book of Deuteronomy (see 1 Nephi 5:11). The language and theology of the Book of Mormon seem heavily dependent on Deuteronomy, perhaps more than any other biblical book. The very basis of the oft-repeated covenant in the Book of Mormon that "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper" (1 Nephi 2:20) reflects the theology of Deuteronomy: "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do" (Deuteronomy 29:9).^{xix} [David R. Seely, "Lehi's Altar and Sacrifice in the Wilderness," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 10, num. 1, 2001, p. 67] [See Vol. 6, Appendix C]

1 Nephi 2:20 Ye . . . Shall Be Led to a Land of Promise:

With reference to the words of his father Lehi, Nephi declares that he had "great desires to know of the mysteries of God" and that he "did cry unto the Lord and behold he did visit me" (1 Nephi 2:16). He then quotes the Lord as saying to him: "And as much as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands" (1 Nephi 2:20). Nephi also stated that when he returned from speaking with the Lord he entered the tent of Lehi, who then told Nephi that he had had a dream that Nephi and his brothers needed to return to Jerusalem to acquire the plates of Laban which contained a record of the Jews and the genealogy of Lehi's forefathers (1 Nephi 4:13-14).

According to Potter and Wellington, it seems reasonable to assume that at this point in time, both Nephi and his father realized that they would not be returning to live in Palestine, thus the need for the plates of brass. It would also seem likely that Lehi shared this information with the entire family, for Nephi, in rallying his brothers for a second attempt in acquiring the plates from Laban, reminded them that the plates would be necessary "that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers" (1 Nephi 3:18-19). However, it is not certain if Lehi's party knew at this point that they would be traveling the length of Arabia and building a ship large enough to take them to a land of promise across the many waters. One should keep in mind that in the years that surrounded the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, many other Jews fled into central Arabia seeking new homes far from the persecutions of King Nebuchadnezzar.^{xx} There were many Jewish settlements in Saudi Arabia, Dedan, Khaibar, and Medina (Qura'Arabiyyah)^{xxi} in that era which indicate that other migration parties from Palestine entered Arabia looking for a "land of promise" in its wilderness. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 70] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 13:12; 17:36-38; 2 Nephi 1:5; Ether 2:8]

1 Nephi 2:22 Inasmuch As Thou Shalt Keep My Commandments, Thou Shalt Be Made a Ruler and a Teacher over Thy Brethren:

In the Lord's first recorded speech to Nephi, He explained the conditions surrounding some special promises to him:

1. Nephi would be led to a land of promise and would prosper (1 Nephi 2:20).
2. Nephi would be made a ruler over his brethren (1 Nephi 2:22).
3. Nephi would be made a teacher (minister) over his brethren (1 Nephi 2:22).

4. If Nephi's brethren rebelled against the Lord, they would be cursed with a sore curse (1 Nephi 2:23).

These promises all came to be dramatically fulfilled. Nephi's testament to the fulfillment of these promises might be a reason why the writings of Nephi were divided into two books (First Nephi and Second Nephi). Nephi could have very easily written just a single book, therefore he must have had some purpose behind his decision to write two books. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [For further discussion of this situation, see the commentary on 1 Nephi: Title "His Reign and Ministry"]

1 Nephi 2:22 **Thou Shalt Be Made a Ruler . . . over Thy Brethren:**

The Jewish custom was for the first-born son to receive the largest inheritance, with some notable exceptions:

Ephraim was chosen over Manasseh (Genesis 48:14, 20, 26),

Isaac was chosen over Ishmael (Genesis 17:19-21 [25-28]),

Jacob was chosen over Esau (Genesis 27:19:41),

and Joseph was chosen over Reuben (1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 7]

1 Nephi 2:23 **In That Day:**

The phrase "in that day" is a Hebraism for *on that day* (compare Exodus 10:28, "And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die"). [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 7]

NOTES

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- i. Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade*, London: Longman, 1981, pp. 173, 211.
 - ii. Alan Keohane, *Bedouin, Nomads of the Desert*, London: Stacey International, 1994, p. 36.
 - iii. John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey," in *BYU Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Provo, p. 57.
 - iv. (Nibley, (1), pp. 79-80.
 - v. (LDS Infobase, CIA World Report).
 - vi. (Water Atlas of Saudi Arabia, p. XV).
 - vii. Kelly Ogden, *LDS Church News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News), 6 January 1996.
 - viii. Ministry of Agriculture and Waters, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the cooperation of the Saudi Arabian United States Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and The US National Geographic Center and the United States Geological Service, *Water Atlas of Saudi Arabia*, Riyadh: Saudi Publishing, 1984, p. 9.
 - ix. Hugh Nibley, *Collective Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 5, pp. 50-51.
 - x. Hugh Nibley, *Collective Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 6, p. 256.
 - xi. Groom, *Dictionary of Arabic Topography and Placenames*.
 - xii. Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 42.
 - xiii. Mazar, 57.
 - xiv. A sample of Bible references on "Midian": Genesis 37:28, Exodus 2:15-16, Exodus 4:9, Numbers 25:15, Numbers 31:2-3, Judges 6:14, 1 Chronicles 1:46; also one reference in D&C 84:6 to "Jethro."
 - xv. *Archaeology*, "Description of Midianite Antiquities," *ATLAL, The Journal of Saudi Arabian* (Ministry of Education, Department of Antiquities and Museums, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1980-1981), vol. 4, plate 81, vol. 5 plate 93.
 - xvi. Michael Lloyd Ingraham, et. al., "Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwest province," *ATLAL* (1979), vol. 3, 74-75.
 - xvii. A sample of Bible references on "Dedan": Genesis 25:3, Jeremiah 25:23, Isaiah 21:13, Ezekiel 25:13, Ezekiel 38:13.
 - xviii. Garth Bawden, *ATLAL*, (1979), vol. 3, 70.

^{xix.} See Ellis Rasmussen, "Deuteronomy," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:378-79.

^{xx.} Abdulla al-Wohaibi, *The Northern Hijaz, in the Writings of the Arab Geographers 800-1150* (A.D.). Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1973, 196-197.

^{xxi.} Abdulla al-Wohaibi, *The Northern Hijaz, in the Writings of the Arab Geographers 800-1150* (A.D.). Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1973, 196-197, 201, 208.