



# THE ZARAHEMLA RECORD

Issue Number 2

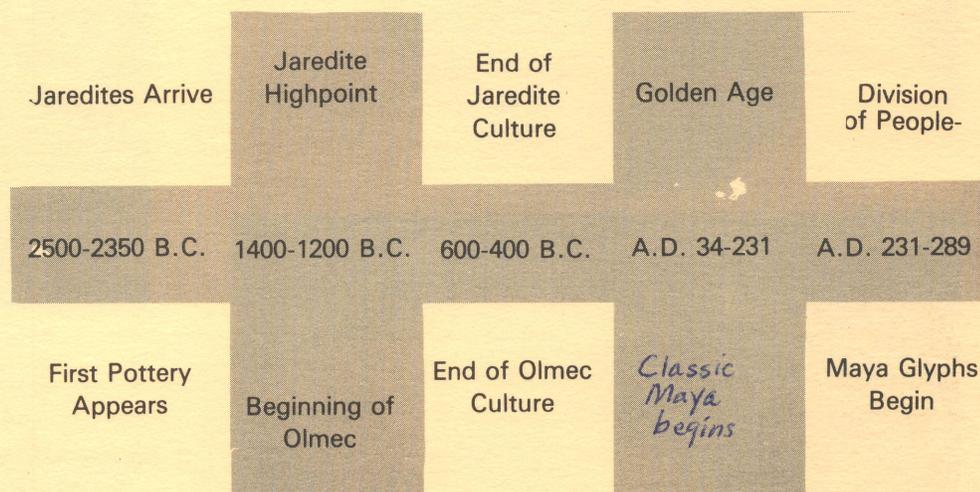
September 1978

"And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word..." Alma 9:18

## The BOOK OF MORMON and MESOAMERICAN Outlines Compared:

### Beginning, Highpoints and Endings

By Raymond C. Treat



The most important type of evidence at the present time supporting the Book of Mormon is a correlation of the outlines of the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican archaeology at strategic points along the approximately 2800 years of their common history. To understand the reason for this it is necessary to understand that archaeological information is only partial information. Therefore, most archaeological information is subject to more than one interpretation. There is abundant evidence in Mesoamerican archaeology supporting the Book of Mormon, but in many cases a non-believer could offer an opposing interpretation to explain the evidence. However, the reconstruction of a long culture history is less subject to interpretation since more data is gathered to construct it than any other single type of archaeological evidence. This is because a chronological outline is the first thing archaeologists try to reconstruct. The chronology is basic to understanding most other types of archaeological evidence.

As implied in the title, we will limit our discussion to the beginning, highpoint and ending of the two major cultures represented in the Book of Mormon - the Jaredites and the combined Mulekite, Nephite and Lamanite culture (see Figure 1). Of course, these last three groups produced distinctive cultures at different times but for the purposes of this article they can be considered as one culture since they merged during the Golden Age.

### THE JAREDITES

#### Beginning

We do not know the exact date for the arrival of the Jaredites to the New World but 2500-2350 B.C. is probably the most reasonable range of time to consider (see *People, Places and Prophecies* by Verneil W. Simmons, p. 26). The evidence from Mesoamerican archaeology correlates very well with this

time range. The first pottery is dated within this range. The so-called Pox pottery from Puerto Marquez, Guerrero and the Tehuacan Valley is dated 2300-2400 B.C. and the newly discovered Swasey pottery from Belize goes back to this time. Pottery is one of the most important types of evidence in Mesoamerican archaeology and the first appearance of pottery is always significant. Mesoamerica itself becomes known as a culture area soon after the appearance of pottery.

#### Highpoint

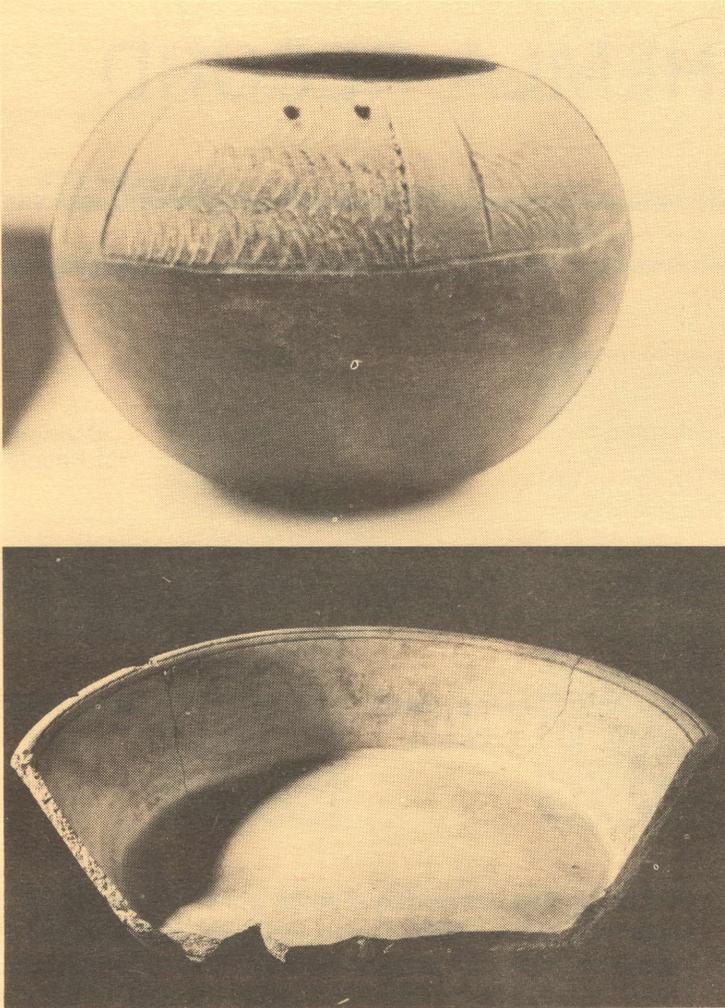
Archaeology necessarily deals with physical things. Therefore an archaeological highpoint is defined in terms of the quantity and quality of material remains. Spiritual values of a culture are much more difficult to detect. Based on written history we know that spiritual highpoints almost always precede material highpoints. Thus there is a time lag between a spiritual highpoint and its physical expression.

Again, we do not have exact dates from the Book of Mormon, but we do have a genealogy. There is a good correlation between the most likely time period for the Jaredite highpoint and Olmec highpoint. Olmec is the name given to the major archaeological group living during the time of the Jaredite highpoint. The time period of these coinciding highpoints is 1400-1200 B.C. (see *Peoples, Places and Prophecies* p. 37). These dates line up well with Old World history, the genealogy of Ether and Olmec archaeology.

The first recognized Olmec phase begins at 1200 B.C. at the site of San Lorenzo, Veracruz. Therefore, we assume the spiritual climax which provided the impetus for Olmec material culture at 1200 B.C. must have preceded it.

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OUTLINES (Continued from page 1.)



The two most common ceramic forms used during Olmec times.  
 Upper: tecomate or neckless jar, used mostly for cooking.  
 Lower: flat bottomed bowl with outflaring sides, probably used as a serving dish.

**Ending**

The archaeological date for the ending of the final Olmec phase is around 600 B.C. Thus, there is an obvious correlation between the demise of the Jaredites as a culture and the end of the Olmec.

There is also an Olmec-related phase recognized that is sometimes called Modified Olmec which follows the end of this final "pure" Olmec phase. This is also confirmation of Book of Mormon evidence. The continued use of Jaredite names and traditions among the Mulekites strongly suggests that not all of the Jaredites took part in the final battle. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Olmec gradually lost their identity after 600 B.C.

**MULEKITES, NEPHITES AND LAMANITES**

**Beginning**

These three cultures are distinct from the Jaredite culture and can be treated as a single non-Jaredite culture for the sake of this article. Their actual arrival to the New World is given as 600 B.C. for the combined Nephite-Lamanite group and 587

B.C. for the Mulekites. Without going into details, it is possible to detect a significant culture change in Mesoamerica at this time. This can be seen in the architecture and ceramics. There is a definite break in ceramic traditions around 550 B.C.



Ceramic vessel from Vistahermosa dated about 550 B.C.  
 This vessel represents ceramics from the post-Olmec period, most likely from the Mulekite culture.

**Highpoint and Ending**

The date of 300 A.D. has long been accepted as the beginning of the Classic Maya, the beginning of the Maya highpoint. This date of 300 A.D. was based on the Thompson correlation of the Maya glyph dates. However, according to the Book of Mormon, the beginning of the highpoint (Golden Age) occurred some 250 years earlier. For this reason, many Book of Mormon scholars rejected the Thompson correlation in favor of the Spinden correlation, which was 260 years earlier. We can now say that the Thompson correlation, almost universally accepted by archaeologists, is in essential agreement with the Book of Mormon. The glyphs, which the Thompson correlation dates, do not represent the highpoint of Maya civilization, but the beginning of its downfall. Let us explain.

The beginning of the Classic Maya has traditionally been defined by the appearance of three major traits: polychrome pottery, the corbelled vault technique of architecture and hieroglyphic dates. These were all thought to appear at the same time as the glyph dates of 289 A.D. (rounded off to 300 A.D.). Recent evidence now allows Maya archaeologists to say that polychrome pottery and the corbelled vault began as early as 100 A.D. Therefore, we can say that the Classic Maya began at 100 A.D. and not at 300 A.D. as previously thought. Allowing for the same kind of time lag as was explained under the Jaredite highpoint, the 100 A.D. beginning is in agreement

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# A PATRIARCHAL VIEW OF ISRAEL

By Wayne E. Simmons

## PART I

This is a good day to talk about our "roots". Alex Haley wrote about his heritage in the memorable book, *Roots*, which has captured much of the present generation's admiration expressed in their purchase of more than a million hardcover copies --priced at \$12.50 each. Haley tells us that his mother often seemed embarrassed by references to her parents' slave past. His grandmother's reaction was, "If you don't care who and where you come from, well / *does*."<sup>1</sup> Many of the roots of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are identified with Israel by ancient and modern prophets, whether they talk about her covenants and inheritance, or her promise of destiny as God's people. Very early in the Restoration Movement, Joseph Smith in his second vision was prompted to see the ties between himself and the Israelite writers of scriptures, when the messenger, Moroni, cited an important passage as fundamental to the young man's mission:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.<sup>2</sup>

This scripture was twice repeated in the Doctrine and Covenants<sup>3</sup> and lends itself to much reminiscence as to who are our fathers, and what of Elijah, who in the words of Christ was to come and *restore all things*.<sup>4</sup> Although this Elijah is not identified positively for us, many Latter Day Saints believe that he was personified in John the Baptist who came and instituted Aaronic priesthood and authoritative baptism on May 15, 1829 as the Elias of prophecy. Since that day many men, women and children have celebrated their covenants in gospel ordinances newly restored, and thus, their hearts have been turned to their fathers, who were of ancient Israel. And no doubt, many stalwarts of ancient Israel, whether in Paradise or already resurrected are made joyously aware of their children of faith in these latter days.

Our world conferences have traditionally opened with the singing of the hymn, *Redeemer of Israel*, by W.W. Phelps.

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### Statement of Purpose

The Zarahemla Research Foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation chartered under the laws of the state of Missouri. This is a non-church sponsored association. A major aim of the Foundation is to provide information and audio-visual materials to assist in Book of Mormon ministries. ZRF is open to all who desire to improve their understanding and use of the Book of Mormon.

A major goal of this newsletter is to provide a bridge of understanding between the scientific-oriented field of archaeology and Book of Mormon studies. Keeping abreast of archaeological information is a full-time job, hence few people are in a position to devote the time needed to this subject. Yet, there is a wealth of information and enlightenment there that remains to be tapped. This newsletter hopes to draw on the finds of those who are in a position to give time to these areas of research and make this information available to interested church members.

Many inspired sermons compare the latter day church with the Israelites, redeemed from bondage in Egypt, wandering in the Sinai desert, led by a prophet and guided by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.<sup>5</sup> We, like them, desire entry into a promised land. It is small wonder that we have come to identify ourselves as *Latter Day Israel*, savoring the promise in which ancient Israel was identified as the Lord's people, special and holy in their calling. It seems evident that Israel was the Lord's church in former days, for from Jacob's time to Christ there is no record of any other that enjoyed His divine promise. Too, many in our age have sought their patriarchal blessings, in the spirit of the children's hearts being turned to their fathers, and have been given knowledge of their spiritual lineage from Abraham, and from Israel. This is according to divine direction offered to patriarch-evangelists more than 75 years ago.<sup>6</sup>

Then, of course, there are many New Testament scriptures which attest to the fact that any person, no matter what his lineage might be, is counted as a child of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and of spiritual Israel, an inheritor of the promises and covenants of God made to Abraham's faithful seed or posterity.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Paul warned that not all who are of Israel by lineage are counted as spiritual Israel if they are not of the gospel.<sup>8</sup> So, most of us in the church feel that we are of Israel one way or another, by lineage or adoption. Yet this begs the question, "Am I *really* of the children who look to ancient Israel as fathers?" How shall I identify myself? A converted Gentile, adopted into Israel? A lineal Israelite through evidence of my patriarchal blessing? Or shall I treat all references to Israel as outdated and anachronistic as do many of the Protestant and Catholic writers? Our early Restored Church tended to call all "outsiders", Gentiles, and no doubt they stirred up unnecessary hostility by such nomenclature. What shall now be our terminology for the devout Catholic, Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian who also believes in Christ and who has a baptismal relationship with Him according to his church's provision. Are they Gentiles for not being of our church?

This church really needs to make up its mind on these searching questions. While we await any official pronouncement, permit me to react, reasoning from a rather extensive base of latter day scriptures. I believe that we are a latter day expression of Israel, whether by lineage or adoptive right. We are latter day Israel in spiritual terms. I suspect that the real key to our identification with Israel lies in the restoration of everlasting priesthood to this church.

The Jews no longer claim any priesthood, except to believe every man is a priest in the sense of publishing the one-ness of God to the Gentile nations. The Protestants repudiate priesthood in performance of gospel ordinances, and speak of Jesus Christ as the only priest known to them, seeing each person as his own advocate or priest. The Catholic and Orthodox churches claim priesthood from the day of Christ through Peter, but they do not recognize priesthood as existing from the beginning of mankind. They now view Israel as apostate,

Israel (Continued from page 3)

and see no virtue in her descendants having priestly rights in this age, and they state that all this ended with Christ's great sacrifice at the cross.

Our church is taught that priesthood is linked to the fathers since the time of the fall of man.<sup>9</sup> We look back to Adam as the first high priest and see authority to perform spiritual ordinances restored in Christ's day to Israel in the Old World, then lost in the great apostasy and restored in Joseph Smith's day. We are taught to look for priesthood's lineal course even among present day Jews and other remnant peoples, although it is presently hidden from the world.<sup>10</sup> We await the righteousness of the sons of Levi (Malachi 3:3), and we denominate our Melchisedec Priesthood as "sons of Moses," and those of the lesser priesthood as "sons of Aaron." In her priesthood, this church affirms that she is latter day Israel, and will continue, I believe, so long as her priesthood are divinely called and perform the ordinances of the gospel in the purity of her instructions.

Jacob gave great promises to Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, saying: "Let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." *Genesis 48:16*. Jacob crossed his hands when he gave each of the brothers his blessing, and did not bestow any special birthright on Manasseh as the elder, but unto Ephraim, the younger.<sup>15</sup> Thus, he told Joseph that his younger son should be greater and that his seed should become a multitude of nations. Without doubt, Ephraim was scattered among the nations, and seems to have lost identity as a tribe except as people of Anglo Saxon heritage have come into the Restored Gospel and have been shown lineage from Ephraim. It has been suggested that the word, *Saxon*, in old English, was derived from the phrase *l-saac's son*.<sup>16</sup>

Lehi, the first Book of Mormon prophet, obtained the Brass Plates and learned by them that he was of Manasseh, Joseph's older son.<sup>17</sup> We may therefore suppose that many of the indigenous peoples of North and Central America are of the tribe of Manasseh. Indeed, many patriarchal blessings given to American Indian members of the church bear testimony of this branch of the house of Joseph as represented among them.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is definitely a divine enterprise in which Ephraim and Manasseh are called together, here in the Americas which is Joseph's land, to unite these two elements to build up Joseph's seed in the last days, bringing to pass many prophecies. The church as presently constituted, seems referred to as Ephraim in certain prophecies. In Section 108 of the Doctrine and Covenants, people of the Northern Kingdom who were taken captive by the Assyrians in 588 B.C. are to make a return in the last days. They are to have prophets who will respond to God's call and will come to Zion:

And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And then shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim; and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. *Section 108:6c, d*

In the next section of writing on Israel in the latter days, I propose to deal with the question of the work of Lehi's seed, and with the stick of Joseph, or stick of Ephraim, which I

believe is the Book of Mormon. Also, I propose to examine the prophecies which speak of the "Gentile Nations."

\* \* \* \* \*

### TRIBES OF ISRAEL

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. *Gen. 49:1*

There are many prophetic scriptures that promise certain lands to the house of Israel in the latter days. Some of the language of prophecy give hints as to inherent characteristics of Israel's diverse peoples as well. Notable among such scriptures are those recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch, giving Jacob's own blessing to his sons, and to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.<sup>12</sup> Moses also records his own blessings for some of the tribes, in the last days of his life.<sup>13</sup> Because some of Israel's tribal descendants have found their way into the church by covenant in these times, it may be of value to search for tribal characteristics that they bring to Latter Day Israel, both good and bad, that will be inherent in their natures. This list is necessarily defective, for little is said about some of the tribal elements, and of what is said, some of the meanings are still quite obscure.

*See Tribes of Israel Chart page 5*

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Wayne Simmons* has served the church some 35 years as a priest, elder, seventy, President of Seventy, high priest and patriarch-evangelist. He spent much of his time in the Spanish-speaking area of the church. Prior to World Church appointment in 1950, he served as principal of the Lincoln School in San Jose, Costa Rica, and director of the American Cultural Center in Caracas, Venezuela.

He and his wife, Verneil, are keenly interested in the archaeology, history and geography, and outreach to the Book of Mormon peoples. Brother Simmons is retired now from World Church appointment and lives at McAllen, Texas.

*Raymond Treat* is an archaeologist specializing in Mesoamerica. He has a Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of the Americas and has completed the classwork for a Ph.D. in Anthropology at Arizona State University. He excavated the site of Vistahermosa, located in western Chiapas, Mexico, for the New World Archaeological Foundation. Uncovered was evidence of an Olmec occupation dating to 1000 B.C. He holds the office of elder in the church.

### WE GOOFED

We inadvertently lost the address of Mrs. John N. Smith. If anyone can give us her correct address we would greatly appreciate it.

### BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

In case you missed the first issue of the Zarahemla Record and would like a copy just drop a note to the Zarahemla Research Foundation, Box 864, McAllen, Texas 78501 and we will send you one.

## Tribes of Israel

	Jacob's Blessing	Moses' Blessing
1. Reuben:	(Note: Because he violated his father's concubine, he lost his birthright to Joseph, Rachel's first-born.)	To become numerous in last days.
2. Simeon	Unstable as water, not to excel. Instrument of cruelty like Levi. Divided and scattered.	(Nothing recorded.)
3. Levi	Instrument of cruelty like Simeon. Divided and scattered.	Levi's Urim and Thummim to go to "holy one" (Christ?) To teach Israel judgements, law and covenants. To be priests.
4. Judah	As valiant lion. Sceptre and kingly rights his, until Shiloh (Christ?). Strength and beauty. To prosper.	Valiant in prayer. To preside over needs of his people.
5. Zebulun	Seafarer and merchant man of sea.	World traveler. To call people to kingdom. Riches of seas and sands.
6. Issachar	Strong beast of burden. Lazy. Easy to enslave.	Same promise as to Zebulun.
7. Dan	To judge his people. Power to destroy adversaries as an adder against horseman.	A lion's whelp who shall "leap from Bashan."
8. Gad	A troop to overcome him but to triumph at last.	Like a lion. Power of intelligence. Comes as lawgiver and judge.
9. Asher	Posterity to be well-provided for, and to yield "royal dainties."	Blessed with children. Acceptable to his brethren. His "foot dipped in oil." Shoes to be of iron and brass. Strong.
10. Naphtali	Like a loosed deer. Good counselor.	Satiated with favor and with Lord's blessing. To possess west and south.
11. Joseph	Fruitful, to cross sea. Many persecutors. Aid from Christ. Blessings of heaven and of earth, of posterity. Greater blessings than given to Jacob's progenitors. Separate from brethren.	Joseph's land, precious for the things of heaven, waters and things under the earth. Fruits brought forth by sun and moon, and for chief things of ancient mountains and precious things of everlasting hills. Horns as unicorn. To push people together to ends of the earth. Ten thousands of Ephraim and thousands of Manasseh. To possess birthright. <sup>14</sup>
12. Benjamin	To raven as a wolf. To devour prey and divide spoil.	Beloved of Lord. To dwell safely beside him. To "cover him" and "dwell between his shoulders."

### A PATRIARCHAL VIEW OF ISRAEL

#### Bibliography

- (1) Christianity Today, *From These Roots*, May 6, 1977 Cheryl Forbes. Page 24
  - (2) Malachi 4:5,6
  - (3) Doctrine and Covenants Section 26:2c and 95:3e
  - (4) Matthew 17:11-13
  - (5) Exodus 13:21
  - (6) Doctrine and Covenants, Section 125:3b
  - (7) Ephesians 2:11-13
  - (8) Romans 9:6
  - (9) Doctrine and Covenants, Section 104:18
  - (10) Doctrine and Covenants, Section 84:3a,b
  - (11) Doctrine and Covenants, Section 83:6a-d
  - (12) Genesis 48:13-20 and Genesis 49:1-27
  - (13) Deuteronomy 33:6-25
  - (14) 1 Chronicles 5:1
  - (15) Jeremiah 31:9
  - (16) *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birth-right*, J.H. Allen. P. 294
  - (17) 1 Nephi 1:165-168 and Alma 8:3
- For reference to captivity of Northern and Southern kingdoms, note the following:

From 2 Kings 17:6,23, Jeremiah 31:6-9, Hosea 7:11 and 8:8 and 9:3 and 10:6 and 11:3-5 and 12:1. Northern Kingdom led away to Assyria.

*2 Esdras 13:39-48 (Apocrypha)* And whereas thou sawest that he gathered another peaceable multitude unto him; those are the ten tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. But they took his counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through this country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time; and now when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again, that they may go through: therefore sawest thou the multitude with peace. (See 2 Kings 18:9-12)

For the fall of the Southern Kingdom see 2 Kings 25:1-12 and 2 Chronicles 36:11-20. For their return from Babylon, beginning with the decree of Darius to rebuild the temple, see Ezra 1:1-4 and Ezra 2:1-64. Return to Jerusalem, *Ezra 10:6-9*.

# New Translation

## AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

There are two parallels between the recent major earthquake in Guatemala and the upheaval which destroyed the unrighteous part of the Nephite-Lamanite culture at the time of the crucifixion of Christ.

First, similar areas were affected. Mesoamerica is clearly the primary area for Book of Mormon history and Guatemala is in the center of Mesoamerica.

Secondly, there was a spiritual response to both upheavals. The ancient storm contributed to the spirit of repentance among the survivors. In like manner, Christians outside the Restoration Movement report a great spiritual revival among the Guatemalan people since the 1976 earthquake.

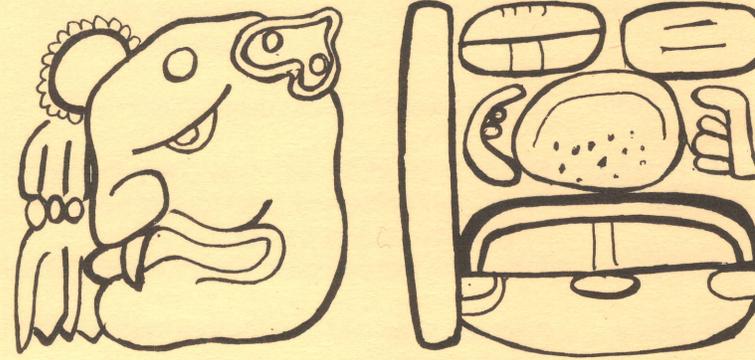
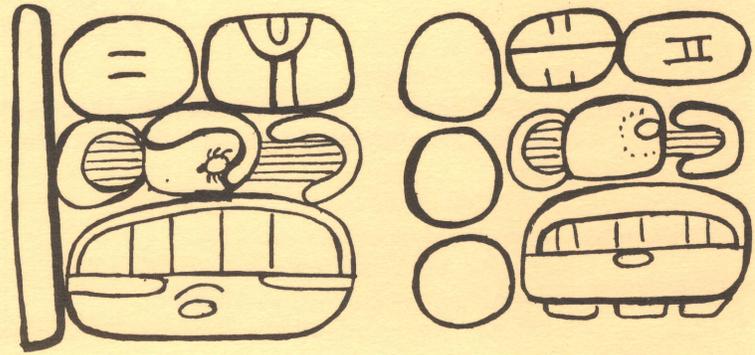
Is there any significance in these two parallels? I believe there is. There is a message here for us - a message to prepare ourselves for a greater work. Let us heed the message of the Guatemalan earthquake and prepare ourselves to make proper use of the Book of Mormon (see Third Nephi 12:1-5). Can we expect any less spiritual power or miracles than experienced by Alma and the sons of Mosiah as a result of their concern over the spiritual welfare of their Lamanite brethren (who incidently were most likely located in an area which includes present-day Guatemala City)?

## SAA MEETING

The annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, held in Tucson, Arizona, May 3-5 this year, was attended by Mary Lee and Ray Treat for the Zarahemla Research Foundation. The SAA is the leading organization for archaeology in the New World. The three-day meeting offers an opportunity for archaeologists to present papers on theoretical topics and on their latest work. Attending these annual meetings is one of the best ways to keep up to date on the latest findings in archaeology which pertain to the Book of Mormon. It is often years before much of this information is available in published form.

As it turned out, the last session proved to be the most interesting. The session was organized around the topic of linguistics and archaeology. A report on recent research in the Mixteca Alta, located in the northern part of the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, demonstrated a correlation between linguistic and ceramic boundaries during the Postclassic (A.D. 900-1521). The combination of ceramics and linguistics is one of the more exciting areas of study for correlating the outlines of the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican archaeology.

Linguistics is an important line of evidence in Mesoamerican archaeology. Articles describing the contribution of linguistics to a better substantiation of the Book of Mormon will appear in future issues.



## Lehi was here !



*(Continued from page 2)*

with the Book of Mormon account of the conversion of the remaining Nephites-Lamanites and the beginning of their Golden Age. The glyph dates around 300 A.D. actually mark the end, not the beginning of the Golden Age.

By A.D. 231 (Fourth Nephi 1:39), a division occurred among the people. As mentioned above, the earliest glyph date known so far is A.D. 289. Again allowing for the time lag, it is reasonable to accept the interpretation that the hieroglyphic stelae, which we now know give information about kings and rulers, were the beginning of a Lamanite tradition of rulers glorifying themselves.

Archaeologists have developed a complex outline of the culture history of Mesoamerica with reasonably accurate dates.

The Book of Mormon is also an outline of the cultural history of Mesoamerica with reasonably precise dates, from an entirely independent source.

The many points of correlation between the two outlines go beyond the realm of chance. This type of correlation, as stated in the introduction, represents the strongest presently available information supporting the Book of Mormon. Obviously, the explosion of information presently coming forth from Mesoamerican archaeology will produce more details to fill in the broad outline in the near future.

# WHEAT AND BARLEY: PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY

The Book of Mormon states that wheat, barley and other Old World food sources were available in the New World (See Mosiah 6:12, 1 Nephi 5:216, Ether 4:19-20). However, there has been no archaeological evidence up to now that any of these Old World food sources were present in the New World prior to European contact in the 1500's. Herein lies a problem and an opportunity. While this seeming discrepancy may be a problem to some, it does, in fact, represent one of the Lord's greatest opportunities.

In order to properly evaluate this question the following aspects will be discussed: (1) the limitations of archaeology in regard to identifying food, (2) pollen and phytoliths - tools of identification and (3) divine timing.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AND FOOD

The first limitation on the recovery of food-remains in Mesoamerican archaeology is the scarcity of the evidence. Organic material such as food-remains, baskets and clothing quickly decay in the tropical climate characteristic of most parts of Mesoamerica. The best preservation occurs in dry caves. Elsewhere preservation is almost non-existent.

A second limitation until recently has been a relative lack of interest in recovery of food-remains. In Classic Maya archaeology, for example, the emphasis has traditionally been on hieroglyphs, stone architecture, and more recently on settlement patterns (the way in which buildings are arranged on the landscape). Much previously overlooked information is now being uncovered since there is a greater emphasis on finding out how the Maya produced enough food to sustain their civilization.

A third limitation is related to what is called research design in archaeology. A research design is simply a plan for an excavation. Excavations are undertaken with specific problems in mind. No project, no matter how large, has the time or money to recover all of the available information from a site. The type of problem determines how the excavation will be carried out and what kinds of information will be sought. If the research design implies, for example, that wheat was not known in the New World (which is the current assumption in archaeology) then ancient wheat will not be looked for and hence not recognized. If some grains of wheat are actually found, it is all too easy to say that they were deposited by a modern rodent and let the matter go at that. Archaeology is not a precise science and much of the evidence is subject to interpretation. A prime example of how a faulty research design can hamper the collection of archaeological information was briefly alluded to above. The traditional view has been that the Classic Maya produced most of their food in shifting fields called *milpa* agriculture. The work at Tikal in Guatemala demonstrated that the Classic Maya population was too high to be supported primarily by this type of agriculture (see *The Zarahemla Record*, Issue No. 1). This information forced the research design about Maya agriculture to be changed. As a result, some long-held ideas about Classic Maya archaeology are being discarded. The new ideas are more in harmony with the Book of Mormon.



Carbonized seeds from Vistahermosa, Chiapas, Mexico.  
Estimated date 600 B.C.

## POLLEN AND PHYTOLITHS

Palynology, or the study of pollen grains, is a scientific discipline over a hundred years old. Pollen grains are made up of a cellulose-like material that is practically indestructible. Because the pollen grains of most plant genera or species are distinctive enough to be recognized, they represent an excellent tool for the reconstruction of past vegetation and climate. Archaeology has benefited a great deal from the study of pollen from archaeological sites. However, pollen grains of the grass family genera and species are so much alike that their identification has not been worked out to any degree of satisfaction. The grass family includes all the cereal grains such as wheat and barley. If wheat pollen grains were found in an archaeological site, it would be impossible to identify them as wheat. Phytoliths provide a solution to this problem.

Phytoliths are fossilized plant cells of silicon. Silicon is taken up by the plant in solution. The plant cannot utilize silicon so it is deposited in the cells, mostly in the leaf cells, where it takes on the shape of the cell walls. Like pollen grains, plant cells have distinctive shapes and when the plant dies and decomposes the phytoliths retain their shape and become part of the soil. Phytoliths are so numerous that they can make up to two percent of the soil by weight. Their use has been pioneered by soil scientists and has interested some archaeologists. As you may have already guessed, the greatest promise in the use of phytoliths for identification has been found to be with the grass family. Thus we have the scientific means of identification of wheat now becoming possible.

## TIMING

It is not irresponsible to say that it is only a matter of time before evidence from phytoliths and possibly other sources will demonstrate to the scientific community and the world that the New World did make use of Old World food sources. This will indeed be a dramatic testimony in support of the Book of Mormon.

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Wheat Continued from page 7

For the present we are still living under the principles of Third Nephi 12:3-5:

And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, *to try their faith*, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation. Behold I was about to write them all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbid it, saying *I will try the faith of my people*; therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord.

R.C.T.

#### UPDATE ON THE BOOK OF MORMON GAME

In the first issue of *The Zarahemla Record* we announced a release date of April for a Book of Mormon game created by Dana Simmons and produced by the Zarahemla Research Foundation. This is our first effort in game production and we expected delays but one thing we did not realize was the difficulty in finding a suitable company to manufacture the game. We think one has finally been found. As soon as a release date and price is available you will be notified.

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