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Who are the Lamanites?

For over one hundred and seventy years LDS leaders and most LDS members have considered the American Indians to be the direct descendants of the Israelites in the Book of Mormon. However, in recent years there has been a growing number of LDS scholars claiming a limited geography for Book of Mormon lands, thus greatly reducing the possible number of people that could be literal descendants of Lehi's family.

Dan Egan, writing for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, observed:

Generations of Mormons grew up with the notion that American Indians are descended from a lost tribe from the House of Israel, offspring of a Book of Mormon figure named Lehi, who left Jerusalem and sailed to the Americas around 600 B.C.

For faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lehi's story is neither fable nor parable. It is truth. Historical fact. . . .

The problem is mainstream science has failed to back that story. Instead, archaeologists, linguists and genetic experts outside Mormon culture say all the evidence points to Asia as the place from which American Indians originated. ("BYU Gene Data May Shed Light on Origin of Book of Mormon's Lamanites," by Dan Egan, *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 30, 2000, p. B1)

Lost Tribes of Israel?

The origin of Native Americans has been a matter of speculation since the days of Columbus. In the early 1800's many authors were promoting the concept that the Indians descended from part of the lost tribes of Israel. For example,

in 1823 Pastor Ethan Smith of Vermont (no relationship to Joseph Smith) wrote his popular book, *View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America*. In it he referenced a number of books which argued for the Israelite ancestry of the American Indian. [See <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomindianorigins.htm> Dan Vogel's book, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, can be read on line at <http://www.xmission.com/~research/central/vogel1.htm>]

While the Israelite/Indian theory is rejected by scientists today, it is reflected in Joseph Smith's first literary work, the Book of Mormon, published in 1830 in New York.

Joseph Smith claimed that in 1827, on a hill in western New York, a heavenly being delivered into his hands a long hidden record of the "ancient inhabitants of the Americas" (1981 Introduction to the Book of Mormon). The angel instructed him that the record, "written upon gold plates,"



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gave “an account of the former inhabitants of **this continent**, and the source from whence they sprang” (“Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” at the front of the Book of Mormon).

Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon portrays a land devoid of people after the flood, preserved by God for those who will “serve him” (Ether 13:2). After “the waters had receded from off the face of this land” God established two major civilizations.

The book recounts that the first migration to the New World was the Jaredites at the time of the Tower of Babel. Their story does not appear at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, but is inserted near the end in the Book of Ether. This group was directed by God to gather their families, flocks, seeds, etc., and prepare for a voyage to a new land,

which the Lord God had **preserved for a righteous people**. And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that **whoso should possess this land of promise**, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off. . . (Ether 2:7-8)

This passage claims that America was without inhabitants prior to the arrival of the Jaredites (about 2200 BC). They grew into a great nation but fell into wickedness and terrible wars. Prophets were then sent to warn the people that if they didn’t repent “God would send or bring forth **another people** to possess the land, **by his power**” (Ether 11:21). The last wicked leader was told that all the people would be slaughtered in war and that he alone would live to see the next righteous people God would bring to inherit the promised land.

The second civilization in the promised land, told at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, was made up of two separate groups, the family of Lehi and the followers of Mulek. They were all Israelites who, directed by God, fled Jerusalem about 600 BC and travelled to America. The Book of Mormon informs us that Lehi, a prophet,

came out of the land of Jerusalem, who was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren. (Alma 10:3)

Lehi prophesied that others would be kept from the land as long as his descendants remained righteous:

There shall **none** come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.

Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. . . . And behold, it is wisdom that **this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations**; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance.

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and **they shall be kept from all other nations**, that they may possess this land **unto themselves**. (2 Nephi 1:6-9)

These passages leave no room for other people to have been in the land other than those mentioned in the record. Lehi’s family eventually divided into two groups, the righteous Nephites, who were “white” (2 Nephi 5:21), and the wicked Lamanites, who were cursed with a “skin of blackness” (Alma 3:6).

The other group was led by Mulek, a son of Biblical King Zedekiah (Helaman 6:10). They later joined with the Nephites.

After 550 years in the new world the people multiplied and filled the whole land:

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to **cover the face of the whole earth**, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east. (Helaman 3:8)

Through the years they received various religious instructions, engaged in many wars, witnessed the appearance of Christ in the New World, and eventually met for their final battle at the Hill Cumorah. The Introduction in the current edition of the Book of Mormon further states:

After thousands of years, **all were destroyed** except the **Lamanites**, and they are the **principal ancestors of the American Indians**.

Simon Southerton, a former LDS bishop and a molecular biologist, in his new book, *Losing a Lost Tribe*, observed:

There is no mention of any non-Israelite people in the New World during the thousand-year period covered by the Book of Mormon. The narrative includes descriptions of large civilizations with populations reaching into the millions and the practice of Christianity, a written language, metallurgy, and the farming of several Old World domesticated plants and animals. In addition, the immigrant Hebrew Christians found horses, oxen, cattle, and goats in the New World.

Anthropologists and archaeologists, including some Mormons and former Mormons, have discovered little to support the existence of these civilizations. Over a period of 150 years, as scholars have seriously studied Native American cultures and prehistory, evidence of a Christian civilization in the Americas has eluded the specialists. In Mesoamerica, which is regarded by Mormon scholars to be

the setting of the Book of Mormon narrative, research has uncovered cultures where the worship of multiple deities and human sacrifice were not uncommon. These cultures lack any trace of Hebrew or Egyptian writing, metallurgy, or the Old World domesticated animals and plants described in the Book of Mormon. (*Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, Simon Southerton, Signature Books, 2004, Introduction, p. xiv-xv)

Revelations Regarding the Lamanites

The Book of Mormon prophesies that the day would come when the record of the Nephites and Lamanites would be given into the hands of the Gentiles, who will then perform missionary work among Lehi's descendants:

And now, I [Nephi] would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, . . . there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the **remnant of our seed**.

And then shall the **remnant of our seed** know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that **they are descendants of the Jews**. (2 Nephi 30:3-4)

In one of Joseph Smith's earliest revelations in 1828, God instructed him that

this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the **Lamanites**, . . . for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records . . . that the **Lamanites** might come to the knowledge of **their fathers**, and that they might know the promises of the Lord . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 3:18-20)

Joseph Smith and early Mormons believed they had a mandate from God to take the Book of Mormon to all Lehi's descendants, the American Indians.

One problem facing those who would shrink the Book of Mormon lands to the Mayan areas of southern Mexico and Guatemala is reconciling their view with the pronouncements in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Several revelations declare that all the Indians in America are descendants of the Lamanites, not just those in a very small area.

In March of 1830, God instructed Martin Harris, a local farmer, to financially assist with the printing of the Book of Mormon

that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, . . . (*D&C* 19:26-27)

In an effort to fulfill this purpose, in 1830 Joseph Smith gave several revelations instructing LDS leaders to

go on a mission to the "Lamanites" or the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was instructed:

Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, . . . you shall go unto the **Lamanites** and preach my gospel unto them; . . . and no man knoweth where the **city Zion** shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be **on the borders by the Lamanites**. . . .

Thou shalt not leave this place until after the conference; . . . before thou shalt take thy **journey among the Lamanites**. (*D&C* 28:1-14)

Later Independence, Missouri, was revealed to be **Zion** (*D&C* 56:1-3) and thus "on the borders by the Lamanites" was obviously the western side of Missouri.

In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 32:1-2, October 1830, we read:

And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold, I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall **declare my gospel** and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart.

And that which I have appointed unto him is that he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun., into the **wilderness among the Lamanites**.

In *D&C* 30:5-6, Joseph Smith gave a similar revelation to Peter Whitmer:

Behold, I say unto you, Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver; . . . but give heed unto the words and advice of your brother, . . . for I have given unto him power to **build up my church among the Lamanites**; . . .

According to Joseph Smith, in 1831 God instructed Newel Knight to

take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of **Missouri**, unto the **borders of the Lamanites**. (*D&C* 54:7-8)

If the Book of Mormon events took place in southern Mexico and Guatemala, as LDS scholars now want to claim, why would God send the missionaries to the western border of Missouri? The American Indians located between Missouri and the east coast were not descendants of the Indians in Mexico.

Joseph Smith and his successors have traditionally identified both North and South America as the habitation of the people of the Book of Mormon. Writing in 1842 Joseph Smith stated that the American Indians are the descendants of those who kept the record:

In this important and interesting book [the Book of Mormon], **the history of ancient America is unfolded**, from its **first settlement** by a colony that came from the Tower of Babel, at the confusion of languages, to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian Era. We are informed

by these records that **America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races** of people. The first were called **Jaredites**, and came directly from the Tower of Babel. The **second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem**, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. . . . The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. **The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country.** (*History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, 1976, vol. 4, p. 537)

It is obvious from this quote that Smith did not believe that there were inhabitants in America before the time of the Tower of Babel. He stated that the “first settlement” was the Jaredites and the “second” group was “from the city of Jerusalem.” He consistently designated all Native Americans as “the remnant” of the Book of Mormon people.

In the book *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Smith is quoted as saying:

Much has been said and done of late by the general government in relation to the **Indians (Lamanites)** within the territorial limits of the United States. One of the most important points in the faith of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, through the fullness of the everlasting Gospel, is **the gathering of Israel (of whom the Lamanites constitute a part)** that happy time when Jacob shall go up to the house of the Lord, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, . . . when He will turn to them a pure language, and the earth will be filled with sacred knowledge . . .

The Book of Mormon has made known who **Israel** is, upon **this continent**. And while we behold the government of the United States gathering the **Indians**, and locating them upon lands to be their own, how sweet it is to think that they may one day be gathered by the Gospel! (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1979, pp. 92-93)

Joseph Smith’s account of the 1834 journey of “Zion’s Camp” was published in the *Times and Seasons*, an early LDS paper. In this account he claimed to know by “the spirit of the Almighty” that a skeleton found in Illinois was that of a warrior who was killed in the last Book of Mormon war:

We encamped on the bank of the [Illinois] river until Tuesday the 3rd during our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the **ancient inhabitants of this county, Nephites, Lamanites, &c.**, and this morning I went up on a high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. . . . The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a **Lamanitish arrow**, which evidently produced his death, Elder Brigham Young retained the arrow . . . The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being

opened to my understanding **by the spirit of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite**, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from **the hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains**. His name was **Zelph**. . . . one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the **last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites**. (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 1076. For more on Zelph, see <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/zelfh.htm>)



Drawing of Joseph Smith preaching to the Indians.

Notice that Indians in North America are identified as Lamanites; no distinction is made between Indians in Central, South or North America. In all of the early LDS Church revelations and publications the message is the same; American Indians are declared to be descendants of the Book of Mormon people.

Proclamation of the Twelve

In 1845, the year after Joseph Smith’s death, the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a “Proclamation” to the world leaders regarding the end times and the future restoration of the Lamanites. In this official statement the North and South American Indians are clearly identified as the descendants of the Lamanites. In it we read:

KNOW YE: — That the kingdom of God has come, as has been predicted by ancient prophets, . . . This High Priesthood or Apostleship, holds the keys of the kingdom of God, . . . Being established in these last days for the restoration of all things . . . in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Son of Man. . . . We also bear testimony that **the “Indians”** (so called) of **North and South America are a remnant of the tribes of Israel**, as is now made manifest by the discovery and revelation of their ancient oracles and records.

And that they are about to be gathered, civilized, and made one nation in this glorious land. . . .

For be it known unto them that we now hold the keys of the priesthood and kingdom which is soon to be restored unto them. . . . The city of Zion, with its sanctuary and priesthood, and the glorious fulness of the gospel, will constitute a standard which will put an end to jarring creeds and political wranglings, by uniting the republics, states, provinces, territories, nations, tribes, kindred, tongues, people, and sects of North and South America in one great and common bond of brotherhood. . . .

Let the government of the United States also continue to gather together, and to colonize **the tribes and remnants of Israel (the Indians)**, and also to feed, clothe, succor, and protect them, and endeavor to civilize and unite; and also to bring them to the knowledge of **their Israelitish origin** . . .

He has given us the Holy Priesthood and Apostleship, and the keys of the kingdom of God, to bring about the restoration of all things as promised by the holy prophets of old.—And we know it.

He has revealed the origin and the Records of the aboriginal tribes of America, and their future destiny.—And we know it. (*Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints*, New York, April 6th, 1845, sixteen page pamphlet)

This statement by the LDS Twelve Apostles takes on official status as there was no president of the church at the time. Joseph Smith was killed in 1844 and his successor had not been appointed. In 1845 the Twelve Apostles constituted the highest authority in the LDS Church.

Brigham Young's Era

The collective writings of LDS leaders since the days of Joseph Smith have clearly taught that the descendants of the “Lamanites” are scattered across all of North and South America, as well as in the islands of the Pacific.

Preaching in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1853, Brigham Young identified the Indians in Utah Territory as Lamanites:

Do you pray for **Israel**? You will no doubt answer in the affirmative. These **Indians** are the **seed of Israel**, through the loins of Joseph who was sold into Egypt; they are the children of Abraham, and belong to the chosen seed; were it not so, you would never have seen them with dark, red skins. This is in consequence of the curse that has been placed upon them, which never would have come upon them . . . had their fathers not violated the order of God . . . They are of the House of Israel . . . **We are here in the mountains, with these Lamanites** for our neighbors. . . . Never permit yourself to sleep in your houses until your doors are made perfectly secure, that the Indians cannot come in and kill you in your sleep. . . . Are you sure you have faith enough to control the ungovernable nature of the **Lamanites**, or subdue a Gentile mob? (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, pp. 106-107)

President Young also declared that the Nephites and Lamanites “are the fathers of the present aborigines of our country” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 179). Young often made reference to the American Indians in Utah Territory as “Lamanites.” (See *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, pp. 162, 170-171; vol. 5, p. 236; vol. 7, p. 336; vol. 11, p. 264)

In 1871 Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

Let me here observe that the Book of Mormon, . . . gives an account of the first settlement of this country by these inhabitants, showing that they are not the ten tribes, but they are the **descendants of one tribe**, and they came to this country about six hundred years before Christ. The people when they first landed consisted of only two or three families; and instead of landing on the northwest coast of North America, they landed on the **southwest coast of South America**. . . . About fifty years before Christ the **Nephites**, as the righteous portion was called, sent forth numerous colonies into **North America**. Among these colonies there was one that came and settled on the southern borders of our great lakes. Both nations became very wicked. . . . (“The Blessings of Joseph—The American Indians,” *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, pp. 10-11)

Pratt then described the appearance of Christ to the people in America and how he ordained twelve apostles:

The twelve disciples went forth and preached the Gospel, commencing in **South America**, and then went into **North America**, until **all the people both in North and South America were converted**, . . . About two centuries after this, the Nephites fell into wickedness: the **Lamanites**, who dwelt in the southern portion of **South America**, also apostatized; and they began to wage war with the Nephites, who were their enemies; and being exceedingly strong they drove all the Nephites out of **South America** and followed them with their armies up into the **north country**, and finally overpowered them. They were gathered together **south of the great lakes** in the country which we term **New York**. The Lord ordered that the plates on which the records were kept should be hid, and one of the prophets knowing that it was the last struggle of his nation, hid them in the **hill Cumorah, in Ontario county, in the State of New York** . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, p. 11)

The concept that the Nephites and Lamanites occupied all of North and South America was consistently taught throughout the nineteenth century.

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Twentieth Century Statements

The designation of American Indians as Lamanites continued throughout the twentieth century. In a 1911 message of the LDS First Presidency we read:

The revealer of these [Book of Mormon] plates, who proclaimed himself a messenger from God, gave his name as Moroni, and stated that he was one of many prophets who, when in mortality, had ministered to a people called **Nephites, a branch of the house of Israel, formerly inhabiting this land**. The Nephites were the civilized ancestors of the **degenerate Lamanites, or American Indians**. The writings of these prophets, . . . had been buried in a hill anciently called **Cumorah**, in which place of deposit the youthful prophet, directed by the angel, discovered them. (*Messages of the First Presidency*, compiled by James R. Clark, Vol. 4, pp. 232-33)

Apostle Orson F. Whitney, speaking at the October 1918 LDS Conference, stated:

There was an American prophet named Nephi. He came from Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of the Savior—came with his father, Lehi, and an Israelitish colony, and **both South and North America were eventually peopled by their descendants**. Those who followed Nephi were known as Nephites, while a degenerate faction who had for their leader Nephi's brother Laman, were termed Lamanites. **These were the ancestors of the American Indians**. (*Conference Report*, October 1918, p. 39)

Speaking in 1922 Apostle George F. Richards declared:

Afterwards, Mulek, with a colony from Jerusalem came to this country. These colonies were located in the **southern part of North America**, in Central America, and in the **northern part of South America**. And all this land, as well as that into which they migrated to the **north** and to the **south** was designated by the Lord as **the land of promise**. (*Conference Report*, October 1922, p. 81)

Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, in 1923, taught that there were millions of Lamanites in North and South America:

For this very purpose, therefore, were these plates preserved, to bring to pass the redemption of the children of father Lehi, known in **North and South America, in Central America, and in Mexico, as the American Indians** and some of the natives upon the isles of the sea. . . . I have seen the hand of the Lord at work in preparing the way for their redemption, . . . when these thousands, yea **these millions of Lamanites** on this Western Continent **who have the blood of Lehi** in their veins, or of his descendants, shall be touched by the power of the Almighty, and the day of their redemption, when it does come, will be one of power. (*Conference Report*, October 1923, p. 29)

One of the recommended books for a missionary to read is *Jesus the Christ*, by LDS Apostle James E. Talmage. He identified the American Indians as Lamanites:

The Mission of Columbus and Its Results. — Unto Nephi, son of Lehi, was shown the future of his people, including the degeneracy of a branch thereof, afterward known as **Lamanites and in modern times as American Indians**. The coming of . . . Columbus; and the coming of other Gentiles to this land, out of captivity, is equally explicit. . . . The establishment of a great Gentile nation on the American continent, the subjugation of the **Lamanites or Indians**, the war between the newly established nation and Great Britain, . . . are set forth with equal clearness in the same chapter [I Nephi 13]. (*Jesus the Christ*, by James E. Talmage, Deseret Book, 1976 ed., p. 757)

In another popular book by Apostle Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, we read:

The **Nephites** advanced in the arts of civilization, built large cities, and established prosperous commonwealths; yet they often fell into transgression, and the Lord chastened them by permitting their **hereditary enemies** to be victorious. It is traditionally believed that they spread northward, occupying a considerable area in Central America, and then expanded eastward and **northward** over part of what is now the **United States of America**. The **Lamanites**, while increasing in numbers, fell under the curse of divine displeasure; they became dark in skin and benighted in spirit, forgot the God of their fathers, lived a wild nomadic life, and **degenerated into the fallen state in which the American Indians — their lineal descendants — were found by those who rediscovered the western continent in later times**.

The final struggles between Nephites and Lamanites were waged in the vicinity of the **Hill Cumorah, in what is now the State of New York**, resulting in the destruction of the Nephites as a nation, about 400 A.D. (*Articles of Faith*, by James E. Talmage, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982 ed., p. 260; 1984 ed., pp. 235-236)

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

When Columbus discovered America, the native inhabitants, the **American Indians** as they were soon to be designated, were a people of mixed blood and origin. **Chiefly they were Lamanites**, but such remnants of the **Nephite** nation as had not been destroyed had, of course, mingled with the Lamanites. . . . **Thus the Indians were Jews by nationality** (D. & C. 57:4), their forefathers having come out from Jerusalem, from the kingdom of Judah. (2 Ne. 33:8-10) . . . But with it all, for the great majority of the descendants of the **original inhabitants** of the Western Hemisphere, **the dominant blood lineage is that of Israel**. The **Indians** are repeatedly called **Lamanites in the revelations to the Prophet**, and the promise is that in due course they “shall blossom as the rose” (D. & C. 49:24), that is, become again

a white and delightful people as were their ancestors a great many generations ago. (*Mormon Doctrine*, by Bruce R. McConkie, Bookcraft, 1979 ed., pp. 32-33)

LDS Apostle LeGrand Richards wrote in *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*:

The Book of Mormon gives a very definite account of **who the American Indians are** and how they came to the western hemisphere. The **first people** of whom we have record who occupied the western hemisphere were the **Jaredites** . . .

Lehi and his family were led from Jerusalem 600 B.C. by the hand of God to the **land of America**. . . . However, shortly after their arrival there, because of the wickedness of the followers of two of the sons of Lehi—Laman and Lemuel—the Lord cursed them, and to separate them from their brothers caused that their skin become dark . . .

Those who were thus cursed succeeded in destroying all the white people, save twenty-four souls, about A.D. 384.

The **dark-skinned people** who occupied the **land of America** from that time on were called, in the Book of Mormon, **Lamanites**, which are the people known generally as the **American Indians, who are of the house of Israel**. (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, by LeGrand Richards, Deseret Book, 1979 ed., pp. 72-73)

At the October 1950 LDS Conference, Apostle Spencer W. Kimball, who later became the 12th President of the LDS Church, explained:

You will be interested to know that there are some **forty thousand Lamanite members of the Church** in the world, including the islands of the sea. There are probably **ten thousand Lamanite members in North America in the Mexican missions and the Indian mission**. There are **902 Lamanite members in the English-speaking missions in the Eastern, Northern, Central States, and other North American missions**. . . . We have baptized 1823 **Lamanites** in the last two-and-a-half years in the three missions that specialize in Lamanite proselyting in **North America**. (*Conference Report*, October 1950, p. 66)

Spencer W. Kimball was called the apostle to the Lamanites. In the preface of the book *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* we read:

President Kimball's **patriarchal blessing**, which he has quoted on occasion for its indication that he had a **special calling to serve the Lamanites**, says more than just that. Note the several elements "(1) You will preach the gospel to many people, (2) but more especially to the **Lamanites**, (3) for the Lord will bless you with the gift of the language and power to portray before that people the gospel in great plainness."

As to (1), the scope of his preaching effort, there is no leader of the Church, past or contemporary, who has

preached to so many people. As to (2), he has reached out especially to **the Lamanites, the North American Indians and all the peoples of Central and South America and Polynesia who share that heritage**. As to (3), one cannot doubt that he has spoken with power and plainness both to Lamanites and to the rest of Israel. (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, Compiled by Edward Kimball, Bookcraft, 1982, p. xix)

Further on in the same book Kimball is quoted as saying:

Who are the Lamanites? **The term Lamanite includes all Indians and Indian mixtures, such as the Polynesians, the Guatemalans, the Peruvians, as well as the Sioux, the Apache, the Mohawk, the Navajo, and others**. It is a large group of great people. . . .

Lamanites share a royal heritage. I should like to address my remarks to you, our **kinsmen of the isles of the sea and the Americas**. . . . There are probably **sixty million of you** on the two continents and on the Pacific Islands, **all related by blood ties**. (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 596)

In the October 1985 LDS Conference, Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley, who later became the 15th president of the church, referred to the thousands of people attending the dedication of the Mexico City Temple as Lehi's descendants:

Now, recently, when the Mexico City Temple was dedicated, they came by the thousands. . . . **Most of them have the blood of Lehi in their veins**. The shackles of darkness have fallen from their eyes, as promised by the prophets of the Book of Mormon. They have become "a pure and a delightful people" (2 Ne. 30:6). (*Ensign*, Nov. 1985)

At the October 1986 LDS Conference, H. Verlan Andersen, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, commented:

During the past few years, my wife and I have served as missionaries in **Latin American countries**. . . . It has been deeply satisfying to work with those lovable and believing people and to see the prophecies of the Book of Mormon being fulfilled as **hundreds of thousands of the descendants of Lehi join the Church**. The day of the **Lamanites** has truly arrived. ("Missionary Work Is the Lifeblood of the Church," H. Verlan Andersen, *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 23)

In 1987 President Hinckley observed that seventy-five percent of the people attending the dedication of the Guatemala City Temple were "descendants of Father Lehi" (*Ensign*, March, 1987, p. 2).

The designation of Indians in South America as "Lamanites" has become so accepted that members in Ecuador even use the designation. In the June 1992 *Ensign* we read:

The dominant culture here [in Otavalo, Ecuador] is that of the Otavalo Indians . . .

Otavaleño Church members designate themselves “**Lamanites**” and refer to members of mixed European and Indian descent as “Latinos.” No one seems bothered by the distinction, though it is seldom heard in other areas of the country, where Latinos are in the majority. . . .

At a stake conference, **Lamanite** and Latino members greet each other warmly as brother and sister. (“Ecuador,” by Don L. Searle, *Ensign*, June 1992, p. 33)

When the San Diego, California, Temple was dedicated in 1993, there were so many Spanish-speaking people in attendance that three sessions were conducted in Spanish. President Hinckley prayed:

This temple will be used by many of the **sons and daughters of father Lehi**. We thank Thee for their faithfulness. We thank Thee for this day when Thou art remembering Thine ancient covenant in behalf of these Thy children, from whose eyes the shackles of darkness are now falling. Bless the **posterity of Lehi**, we pray Thee. (“News of the Church,” *Ensign*, July 1993, p. 77)

At the October 1995 LDS Conference Ted Brewerton, emeritus member of the Seventy, identified all the Indians in the Americas as descendants of Lehi:

Many migratory groups came to the Americas, but none was as important as the three mentioned in the Book of Mormon. **The blood of these people flows in the veins of the Blackfoot and the Blood Indians of Alberta, Canada; in the Navajo and the Apache of the American Southwest; the Inca of western South America; the Aztec of Mexico; the Maya of Guatemala; and in other native American groups in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands.**

These choice native people recognize the truth of the Book of Mormon, which was recorded for them **by their own ancestors**. (“The Book of Mormon: A Sacred Ancient Record,” Ted E. Brewerton, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 30)

Current LDS authors have followed their church leaders in identifying American Indians as Lamanites. The article “Native Americans” in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, contains a long discussion of the LDS Church’s missionary efforts among the American Indians. The terms “Lamanite” and “Native American” are used interchangeably. The article also mentions George P. Lee, the first Native American to serve as a General Authority:

In 1975, George P. Lee, a full-blooded **Navajo** . . . was appointed as a General Authority. He was the first Indian to achieve this status and served faithfully for more than ten years. Elder Lee became convinced that the Church was neglecting its mission to the **Lamanites**, and when he voiced strong disapproval of Church leaders, he was excommunicated in 1989. (“Native Americans,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow, Macmillan, 1992, p. 985)

Speaking in the April LDS Conference in 1976, George P. Lee equated the Navajos with the Lamanites:

I have a testimony of **the Book of Mormon, the history of my forefathers**. America was founded so that the gospel could be restored and so that this sacred record could be brought back to my people and to anyone who will listen. (“But They Were in One,” George P. Lee, *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 99; see *Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 73)

Speaking at the October 1997 LDS Conference, President Hinckley said:

We were recently with the **Navajo Nation** at Window Rock in Arizona. . . .

It was difficult to hold back the tears as we mingled with **these sons and daughters of Father Lehi**. In my imagination I have seen him weeping for his progeny who for so long have walked in poverty and pain.

But the shackles of darkness are falling. . . . They have come to know and love the gospel. They have become pure and delightful. (“Look to the Future,” Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 67)

While attending the 1999 dedication of the new temple in Guayaquil, Ecuador, President Hinckley commented:

It has been a very interesting thing to see the **descendants of Father Lehi** in the congregations that have gathered in the temple. So very many of these people **have the blood of Lehi in their veins**, and it is just an intriguing thing to see their tremendous response and their tremendous interest. (“News of the Church,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, p. 74)

At the dedication of the temple in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in April of 2000, President Hinckley prayed for the descendants of Lehi:

We remember before Thee **the sons and daughters of Father Lehi**. Wilt Thou keep Thine ancient promises in their behalf. . . . May they recognize their Redeemer and be faithful and true Saints of the Most High. (“News of the Church,” July 2000, p. 74)

President Hinckley obviously intends the Native Americans to believe they are “sons and daughters of Father Lehi,” that they “have the blood of Lehi in their veins,” and that they are literally Lehi’s descendants.

Book of Mormon Lands

If Lamanites can be found anywhere from North America to Chile, one assumes those areas are part of the Book of Mormon lands. However, BYU professor John L. Sorenson tries to avoid the obvious implications of the church leaders’ statements by focusing on internal clues to Book of Mormon sites. He maintains that

the Church took no position on **specific** Book of Mormon locations. . . . Church authorities from the time of Joseph Smith to the present have come to no consensus, made no authoritative statement, and reported no **definitive** solution to the question of Book of Mormon geography. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, John L. Sorenson, Deseret Book, 1985, p. 4)

By narrowing the discussion to identifying “specific” and “definitive” Book of Mormon sites, instead of general outlines for Book of Mormon lands, he makes it seem that there are no authoritative statements about the location for Lamanites. Thus he avoids the problem that church leaders for the past one hundred and seventy years have maintained that the Book of Mormon lands included North and South America, and all American Indians have been described as descendants of Lehi’s family.

Sorenson tries to determine the geography for the Book of Mormon by cross-referencing different entries to estimate distances between cities mentioned in the book. However, his model requires the Nephites to change their directional system (*Ancient American Setting*, p. 38), so that North/South becomes East/West. The “East Sea” is thus located north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. If Lehi’s group could navigate across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific to land in the Americas, we assume they could determine North and South from the heavens. Then why would they change their directional concept?

John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper argue for a very limited Book of Mormon geography yet concede it must accommodate

a population of more than two million. At their greatest the inhabitants occupied numerous cities with extensive public buildings, kept many written records, fought in large-scale wars, and carried on extensive trade. (“Before DNA,” by John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, pp. 7-8)

Unfortunately for the LDS Church, no evidence of such a Christian/Israelite civilization has ever been found. In fact, shrinking the Book of Mormon lands to 400 miles of Mesoamerica should increase the probability of finding some trace of the civilization.

Simon Southerton commented:

Despite wide acceptance by leaders and members of this global view of Book of Mormon geography, most “serious” Book of Mormon scholars, particularly those at Brigham Young University, maintain that this hemispheric geography is out of the question. The scholars at BYU have experienced great difficulty in trying to align descriptions of travel times, population growth, and the geographical proximity of travel times, population growth, and the geographical proximity of events with the vast territories

of North and South America. Throughout the 1,000-year history of the Nephites and Lamanites, their major population centers were relatively fixed within several days march of each other. One would expect cultures of the type described in the Book of Mormon to have left significant traces of their presence. . . .

Dozens of alternative models of geography have sprung up over the years. . . . However, there is only one serious contender accepted by most Mormon academics, which proposes that most Book of Mormon events took place in a restricted part of Mesoamerica. Only in Mesoamerica are there ruins of civilizations of the magnitude evident in the Book of Mormon.

LDS scholars support this local or “limited geography” approach to Book of Mormon topography as presented by Professor John L. Sorenson . . . The Lehiite lands, according to his view, must have been restricted to a 400-mile-long section of Mesoamerica that spans the cultural region of southern Mexico and northern Central America. . . . There are obvious difficulties with the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, not the least of which is that a 125-mile crossing, as the crow flies, is a formidable “day and a half’s journey” on foot. Another glitch is that the east and west seas mentioned in scripture have to be shifted almost 90 degrees because they are essentially south and north of the narrow neck of land. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 156-57)

Other models for Book of Mormon geography have been suggested. Ralph Olsen, LDS author and chemist, has proposed a totally different Book of Mormon geography. He feels the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia is the true location of the story (“A Malay Site for Book of Mormon Events,” Ralph A. Olsen, *Sunstone*, March 2004, p. 30). His map and theory seem just as plausible as Sorenson’s and he doesn’t need to change the directional system.

Vern Holley, in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, feels the author of the Book of Mormon had the Great Lakes area of North American in mind for his story. While we are not advocates of Mr. Holley’s theory that Solomon Spalding wrote the Book of Mormon, he does have a good alternate setting for a limited geography for Smith’s story. His map of the area even has some parallel names with the Book of Mormon (<http://sidneyrigdon.com/vern/vernP3.htm>, see page 54).

Joseph Smith could have easily adapted such a local area for his story without the need to borrow it from some other source. Having a mental picture of an area with which one is already familiar would make it easier to tell a story to someone and keep the various locations in mind. Also, the Book of Mormon would have a ready audience since there was great public interest in the mound builders said to have inhabited the areas of New York and the Ohio valley.

LDS scholars have dismissed the Great Lakes area since they are looking for locations that have remains of large cities, like those of the Mayas. By limiting the Book of Mormon lands to Mesoamerica LDS scholars have supposedly solved the problem of knowing where to look for ruins. It also eliminates the problem of how to feed and move mass armies from southern Mexico to New York. Mesoamerica is full of ruins. Unfortunately, the buildings are adorned with carvings of various deities and Mayan inscriptions, and do not refer to Israelites.

In order to explain why Book of Mormon cities have not been found some Mormons have used 3 Nephi 8. This chapter tells that at the time of Christ's crucifixion, "in the thirty and fourth year" after Christ's birth, God brought judgment upon the wicked people in America. (One wonders why such judgment wasn't poured out on those in Jerusalem, where Christ actually died?) There were great earthquakes in Book of Mormon lands "till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth," some cities were "sunk," terrible fires destroyed others, whirlwinds carried people off, until many people and cities were destroyed. However, other cities were spared. This devastation continued for three hours, until "the whole face of the land was changed." This was followed by three days of "thick darkness." The righteous survivors were then able to gather at the temple in Bountiful to see the risen Christ. Obviously the area was still recognizable and the temple still standing. Also, since later writers in the Book of Mormon do not seem to have a problem determining where these various cities were located, one would think they could be found today. But where is the evidence of such cities and catastrophic events in Mesoamerica at approximately 32-34 AD?

Language Problems

The Book of Mormon states that the people spoke Hebrew but wrote in reformed Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4; Mormon 9:33). Writing in 1923, B. H. Roberts, LDS general authority and historian, was already aware that there was a serious problem regarding the vast number of languages in America compared with the Book of Mormon claim that the people spoke Hebrew. Roberts quoted from Frederick Dellenbaugh, author of *The North Americans of Yesterday*:

"Not only does the differentiation of the stock languages indicate antiquity, but that of the dialects adds strong testimony. . . . the difference which is presented between the Cakchiquel and the Maya dialects could not have arisen in less than two thousand years." [*The North Americans of Yesterday*, 1906, pp. 19-22]

The above, it must be remembered, is said of a difference between two American dialects, not between two stocks. . . . Obviously it would take a very much longer time to produce the divergence represented by language stocks than by dialects. And if, as stated in the passage above, the difference between the Cakchiquel and Maya dialects could not have arisen in less than 2,000 years, how many thousand years would it require to produce language stocks—which are so much more widely divergent than dialects? And from the Book of Mormon standpoint, it should be remembered, all these stocks came into existence since the Nephite debacle at Cumorah 400 A.D. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, by B. H., Roberts, edited by Brigham D. Madsen, Signature Books, 1992, p. 81)

Roberts goes on to quote from the 1902 book, *The Discovery of America*:

John Fiske says: "The aboriginal American, as we know him, with his language and legends, his physical and mental peculiarities, his social observances and customs, is most emphatically a native and not an imported article. . . . There is not a particle of evidence to suggest any connection or intercourse between aboriginal America and Asia within any such period as the last twenty thousand years." (*The Discovery of America*, by John Fiske, vol. 1, p. 24, as quoted in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, p. 86)

One hundred years later, scientists still maintain the same position. LDS scholars John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper concede what non-LDS scholars have been saying for years. The multiple languages found in the Americas at the time of Columbus could not have developed from Hebrew in just one thousand years (the time between the end of the Book of Mormon record and the arrival of Europeans). People have lived in America for thousands of years, with multiple languages, prior to the time the Jaredites supposedly landed. In their article "Before DNA," LDS authors Roper and Sorenson acknowledge:

Indications are strong that there was **considerable linguistic differentiation** in Mesoamerica as early as 1500 B.C. Latter-day Saint students of the Book of Mormon should understand that **long prior** to Lehi's day, Mesoamerica was **already** linguistically complex. Moreover, many archaeological sites were occupied **continuously**, or so it appears, **for thousands of years** without clear evidence in the material remains of any replacement of the culture of the inhabitants. That continuity suggests, although it does not prove, that many of those people probably did not change their tongues.

All this means that the old supposition by some Latter-day Saints that the **Hebrew** tongue used by Lehi's and Mulek's immigrant parties became foundational for all ancient American languages is **impossible**. (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 17)

Simon Southerton commented on the complexity of languages in the Americas:

Another impetus for the restricted geography is the obvious fact that the Americas were widely inhabited thousands of years before the arrival of the Jaredites in 2200 BC. The astounding array of cultures and languages encountered by early Europeans could not have originated from the Hebrew said to have been spoken by the Nephites and Lamanites of AD 400. The only plausible explanation for Mormon apologists is that the two groups of Semitic immigrants—the Lehites. (Lamanites and Nephites) and Mulekites—occupied a **restricted area** in the Americas (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, p. 159)

Others in the Land?

Besides the language problem, there is also the problem of population sizes in the Book of Mormon. The small immigrant groups in the story simply reproduce at an impossible rate for a civilization without the aid of advanced medicine and technology for mass food production. Lehi's group and Mulek's followers, arriving approximately 600 BC, would probably not include more than thirty to fifty adults of child-bearing age. (See the chapter "Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes," by John C. Kunich, in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*.) Yet after only four hundred years the Lamanites, alone, suffered the loss of 3,000 men in battle. Since most armies represent a fraction of the total population, one is faced with an amazing population number at that time. Southerton gave the following summary of Book of Mormon battle numbers:

About one-third of the Book of Mormon is devoted to a rather tedious procession of battles between the Lamanites and Nephites. The casualties arising from these conflicts provide frequent indications of the size of these displaced Hebrew populations. For example, in 190 BC a single battle claims the lives of 3,000 Lamanites (Mosiah 9:18). By 90 BC similar battles claim almost 20,000 lives (Alma 2:19). It is not uncommon for tens of thousands to be slain in a single year in the Book of Mormon. In addition, the book notes the departure of thousands of men, women, and children from the main centers of civilization into the "land northward."

. . . During the last hundred years of their recorded history, these two nations pitch against each other in a seemingly irrational series of wars in which hundreds of thousands are slain. In the final battle, in approximately AD 385, a massive Lamanite army slaughters 230,000 Nephite men, women, and children (Morm.6). The Lamanite population capable of sustaining an army of that size, capable of inflicting such carnage, must surely number into the millions. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 12-13)

To get around this obvious population dilemma, LDS apologists maintain that the indigenous people joined with the Jaredites and Lehites, thus allowing for faster growth than could have been accomplished otherwise. Southerton points out the problems for LDS apologists who argue that the Jaredites and Lehites intermarried with indigenous people. The Book of Mormon simply does not mention any other groups:

An important consequence of this compression of the geography and acknowledgment of the presence of non-Book of Mormon peoples is having to explain how the large numbers of native peoples who lived throughout the Americas interacted with those described in the golden-plate account. Unfortunately, the Book of Mormon offers little assistance in this regard. There is no indication in the record that the Jaredite or Lehite parties came into contact with any native people whose origin could not be accounted for in the book . . . (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 159-160)

LDS scholars acknowledge that Lehi's group was a small colony when it landed but argue that they soon incorporated indigenous people into their society. They maintain that many of these other people probably joined the Lamanites, which would explain their rapid growth. Thus the term "Lamanite" does not need to mean that one was a descendant of Laman. Brent Metcalfe responds to this argument in his article "Reinventing Lamanite Identity":

Indeed, a careful reading of the Book of Mormon reveals that the narrative says nothing of indigenous "others" and in fact prophetically precludes them. . . .

When ancestry is identified, *all* post-Jaredite peoples—Nephites and non-Nephites, good and bad, groups and individuals—consistently trace their pedigree back to the founding Israelite immigrants. Ammon, for instance, says that he is "a descendant of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 7:13; see also v.3) who "was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness" (Mosiah 25:2), and Mulek was "the son of Zedekiah" the Jewish King (Hel. 6:10; cf. Omni 1:15). Nephite dissident Coriantumr "was [also] a descendant of Zarahemla" (Hel. 1:15). . . .

Lamanite king Lamoni, readers learn, is "a descendant of Ishmael" (Alma 17:21; cf. V.19). Centuries after the Lehites disembark on their new promised land, a group of Lamanites "who joined the people of the Lord" did not include Nephite dissenters "but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel" (Alma 56:3).

Lamanite doesn't necessarily refer to a descendant of Laman, nor *Nephite* to a descendant of Nephi—but **they are universally described by Book of Mormon narrators as Israelite**. . . .

Book of Mormon readers are not told of a single Nephite or Lamanite who descended from anyone other than an Israelite. . . . [LDS scholars] have yet to explain cogently

why all Book of Mormon characters—God included—seemingly know nothing about the hordes of indigenous people that the revisionist theories require; why Joseph Smith’s revelation of the Book of Mormon is trustworthy enough to extract a detailed limited geography, yet his revelations about Amerindian identity and origins are flawed, if not erroneous; and why their word should count more than that of LDS prophets on the one hand, and that of secular scholars on the other. (“Reinventing Lamanite Identity,” by Brent Lee Metcalfe, *Sunstone*, March 2004, pp. 21-23)

At the August 2004 Sunstone Symposium, David Anderson presented a paper entitled “The Secrets of Nim’s [Necessary, Inferred Mayans]: When the Book of Mormon was Dictated, Were There ‘Others’ in it?” He outlined the four stages defenders have gone through in trying to identify the Book of Mormon people:

1. Originally Mormons taught all American Indians are Israelites and descend from Lehi.
2. When research started pointing to Asians as the ancestors of the American Indian, Mormons revised their claims to say there may have been others in the land but they didn’t mix with the Israelites.
3. As the population numbers in the Book of Mormon came under greater scrutiny, it was claimed that others in the land mixed with the Lamanites (and possibly with the Mulekites), thus enabling the huge growth.
4. Now that DNA has established that almost all American Indians descend from Siberians, LDS defenders claim the descendants of Lehi intermarried and lost their genetic identity. (My summary of his points, not his specific wording. A tape of the talk can be ordered from <http://www.sunstoneonline.com>.)

If the Israelites of the Book of Mormon landed in an already populated country why is there no specific reference to these other people? Were there no battles for supremacy worthy of mention? No conversion stories of these “others” when they turned to the God of Israel? Surely encountering various pagan groups, who far outnumbered Lehi’s group, all speaking different languages, would have merited a line or two. Are we to believe that these pagans meekly joined the small group of Israelites? All through the Old Testament there are references to the civilizations surrounding the Israelites and their battles. Why aren’t there similar references in the Book of Mormon?

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Hill Cumorah

This downsized Book of Mormon geography also necessitates relocating the Hill Cumorah to southern Mexico (see *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, p. 350). According to LDS scholars, Moroni must then transport the plates from Mexico to New York, rebury them, and after hundreds of years, appear to Joseph as an angel and lead him to their secret location. Then Smith mistakenly thinks that the hill where the plates are buried is the same hill mentioned in the last battle of the Book of Mormon.

Simon Southerton commented on the reason to relocate Cumorah:

Why would hundreds of thousands of Lamanites and Nephites march from Mesoamerica to New York to fight a final battle of extermination? To account for this anomaly, Mormon scholars have concluded that there are in fact two Cumorahs. The Hill Cumorah referred to in the Book of Mormon is not the one in New York State from which the gold plates were recovered. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, p. 159)

However, the LDS Church still endorses the location of the Hill Cumorah in New York. In 1990 an LDS bishop in Oklahoma was asked about the location of the Hill Cumorah, and the bishop wrote to the LDS First Presidency for clarification. In a letter dated October 16, 1990, the Secretary to the First Presidency answered:

Dear Bishop Brooks:

I have been asked to forward to you for acknowledgment and handling the enclosed copy of a letter to President Gordon B. Hinckley from Ronnie Sparks of your ward. Brother Sparks inquired about the location of **the Hill Cumorah mentioned in the Book of Mormon, where the last battle between the Nephites and Lamanites took place.**

The Church has long maintained, as attested to by references in the writings of General Authorities, that the Hill Cumorah in western New York state is the same as referenced in the Book of Mormon. [See photo of original letter at <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm>]

Every summer the LDS Church presents a pageant on the hill in New York, where Joseph Smith unearthed the plates, depicting the Book of Mormon story (see <http://www.hillcumorah.org>). This pageant certainly leaves people with the impression that the last battle of the Nephites happened in New York.

However, knowing the problems associated with moving two large armies from Mexico to New York, LDS scholars propose a location for the Hill Cumorah and the last battle in southern Mexico. But to do so they must ignore all of the statements of LDS Church leaders.

How Wrong Can a Prophet Be and Still Be a Prophet?

LDS apologist Michael R. Ash admitted the new limited geography and arguments for “others” in the land goes against the past statements of church leaders:

What about scriptures and statements by **Joseph Smith** that appear to suggest there were no “others” in the land upon Lehi’s arrival?

It seems likely that **Joseph Smith** would have understood the Book of Mormon according to **rumors** and **suppositions** of his day—a hemispheric geography with the Lehtes as the primary progenitors for the Native Americans. . . . Joseph’s **opinions** on the subject do not, however, constitute **revelation**. . . . While Joseph’s **opinions** might be interesting, they can be **discarded** when they **conflict** with revealed doctrine, **scientific facts, or in-depth examination**. (“Were the Lehtes Alone in the Americas?,” by Michael R. Ash, www.fairlds.org).

If Mormons are free to discard statements of their leaders when they “conflict” with “scientific facts, or in-depth examination” why not reject the Book of Mormon entirely? There is not one piece of archeology or ancient script to establish that the Lehtes ever existed. “Facts” show that Mesoamerica has been continuously inhabited by descendants of Siberian people, not Israelites. How does one determine when to ignore the prophet’s statements? Are current LDS scholars to be considered more authoritative on Book of Mormon people and geography than Joseph Smith, prophets or apostles?

In another article, Michael Ash implies that Joseph Smith arrived at his inaccurate view of Book of Mormon geography through a “cursory reading and superficial understanding”:

This [hemispheric geography theory] is a **natural** interpretation of Book of Mormon geography based on a **cursory** reading and **superficial** understanding to the Book of Mormon text. It is likely that **Joseph Smith**, his contemporaries, and most Saints—perhaps even most Saints today—have **unquestioningly** accepted this as an accurate model for Book of Mormon geography. Related to this view is the common belief among LDS that Book of Mormon people were the founding inhabitants of all native peoples of both North and South America. . . .

Joseph and other LDS leaders were not (and are not) immune to their **own opinions**, thoughts, and even **misconceptions** based on tradition. (“Where Did Book of Mormon Events Take Place?,” www.fairlds.org)

Where is the “revealed doctrine” on Lamanites? Joseph Smith supposedly spent a number of evenings conversing

with the angel about the Book of Mormon. Wouldn’t he be in the best position to have an informed opinion? Was he guilty of “misconceptions” about the Book of Mormon? If, after the angel took Joseph to the hill, Smith concluded he had visited the Hill Cumorah of Book of Mormon fame, who is to say that he was wrong? Why do the revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* refer to American Indians in western Missouri as “Lamanites”?

DNA and Lamanites

The search for Lamanites has taken on greater significance with the use of DNA to determine the ancestors of the American Indians. LDS scholars now admit there were vast numbers of people in North and South America prior to the time assigned for the arrival of either the Jaredites or the two groups of Israelites that came about 600 BC. LDS scientists D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens argue that these earlier migrations explain why DNA links “99.6%” of American Indians to Asians and that descendants of Lehi are “unlikely to be detected by genetic analysis.” They wrote:

Our perspective is that of active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who view the Book of Mormon as an accurate, correct account of actual historic events that occurred on the American continent. We are also biologists. . . . **As biologists we accept the published data dealing with Native American origins and view those data as reasonably representing American-Asian connections.** . . .

We propose that . . . the children of Lehi . . . [act] as leaven with bread. The leaven is, of necessity, only a small ingredient in bread, not the bread itself. We propose that the children of Lehi are the leaven of the Abrahamic covenant in the New World, **unlikely to be detected by genetic analysis** of modern New World inhabitants. (“Who Are the Children of Lehi?” by D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 38)

Later in the same article we read:

The data accumulated to date indicate that **99.6 percent of Native American genetic markers** studied so far exhibit Siberian connections.” (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 41)

Author Brent Lee Metcalfe commented on this new position:

We are witnessing the reinvention of the Book of Mormon—not by skeptical critics, but by believing apologists. Most Mormons likely believe what the Book of Mormon introduction teaches—that “the Lamanites . . . are

the **principal** ancestors of the American Indians.” They hold this belief oblivious to the fact that over the last few decades LDS scholars at Brigham Young University and elsewhere have substantially altered this traditional view.

Findings from multidisciplinary studies of the Book of Mormon have increasingly led LDS scholars to shrink and dilute the book’s American Israelite (or *Amerisraelite*) population. [LDS] Apologetic scholars now recognize (1) that Book of Mormon events could not have spanned North, Central, and South America, and (2) that modern Amerindians are predominately of East Asian ancestry. . . . As BYU geneticist Michael Whiting stipulates, a hemispheric colonization model for the Book of Mormon “is indeed incorrect” and “appears falsified by current genetic evidence.”

Many LDS apologists envision the Book of Mormon’s founding Israelite colonists as a small group who interacted in varying degrees with the vast indigenous populations of Mesoamerica. In time, sustained widespread exogamy with these “others” effectively extinguished the Israelites’ unique Middle Eastern genetic signature. Accordingly, Lamanites and Nephites are defined by something other than Israelite ancestry. Such theories turn traditional understandings of Book of Mormon lands and peoples, including Joseph Smith’s revelations, on their head.

While perhaps affording revisionist Book of Mormon studies a veneer of scientific respectability, these apologetic efforts to reinvent Lamanite identity face some formidable challenges . . . (“Reinventing Lamanite Identity,” by Brent Lee Metcalfe, *Sunstone*, March 2004, p. 20)

In another article, LDS scientist Trent D. Stephens observed:

The Book of Mormon purports to present a history of three major groups of people who migrated to the Americas from the Middle East. . . . Ultimately, the Lamanites destroyed the Nephites and remained as the only representatives of Middle Eastern colonization in the New World.

In **contrast** to this account, data from numerous molecular population genetic studies suggest that the ancestors of extant Native Americans came from **Siberia**. **No genetic evidence specifically supports the hypothesis that Native Americans descended from Middle Eastern populations.** (“Now What,” by Trent D. Stephens, *Sunstone*, March 2004, p. 26)

Simon Southerton pointed out:

It came as no surprise to most scientists to learn that the DNA of living indigenous Americans was most homologous with the DNA of Asians. Well before the structure of DNA had been determined, the Asian source had been accepted through the steady accumulation of over a century’s worth of research from many disciplines. It was, and still is, widely accepted that the first waves of colonization occurred around or before 14,000 years ago from Siberia by way of the Bering Strait. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, p. 73)

Mitochondrial DNA

Over the last twenty years there has been great interest in DNA research, and especially in mitochondrial DNA. Nancy Shute, writing for *U.S. News & World Report*, commented:

Mitochondrial DNA has proved a marvelous tool for tracing human history. Mothers pass it down to offspring almost intact—unlike nuclear DNA, the genetic material commonly used in criminal investigations. (“Haven’t Got a Clue? Maybe DNA Will Do,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 24, 2000)

The problem for Mormonism is that mitochondrial DNA supports the view that the principal ancestors of Native Americans were people from eastern Asia.

Mormon defenders have maintained that Lehi’s family group would have only been a drop in the bucket of the American Indian’s gene pool, which would explain why they don’t show up in the DNA samples. However, it’s worth mentioning again that the Introduction to their own Book of Mormon claims that “the Lamanites . . . are the **principal** ancestors of the American Indians,” not an insignificant group.

LDS scientist Thomas W. Murphy, chair of the Department of Anthropology at Edmonds Community College in Washington, wrote:

Now that quantitative scientific methods can indeed test for an Israelite genetic presence in ancient America, we learn instead that virtually all Native Americans can trace their lineages to the Asian migrations between 7,000 and 50,000 years ago. While molecular anthropologists have the technological capability to identify descendants of ancient Hebrews, no traces of such DNA markers have appeared in Central America or elsewhere among Native Americans. . . .

From a scientific perspective, the Book of Mormon’s origin is best situated in early nineteenth-century America, . . . The Book of Mormon emerged from an antebellum perspective, out of a frontier American people’s struggle with their god, and not from an authentic American Indian perspective. (“Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” by Thomas W. Murphy, in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, Signature Books, 2002, p. 68)

Writing in *Anthropology News*, Thomas Murphy and Simon Southerton observed:

Genetic research into Native American and Polynesian origins is sending shock waves through Mormon communities around the world. The Book of Mormon, claimed as scripture by 11 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), purports to tell of three migrations from the ancient middle East to the Americas. The title page

claims that the descendants of the migrants from Jerusalem “are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” Mormon folklore, likewise, postulates a Middle Eastern heritage for Polynesians.

Southerton has completed a book-length manuscript on the subject [*Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*]. Simon Southerton, a plant geneticist, . . . resigned his position as bishop and withdrew his church membership. In Mar 2000, he published the story of his disillusionment on the Internet. [<http://www.exmormon.org/why1ft125.htm>] He “failed to find anything that supported migration of Jewish people before Columbus” and found “no reliable scientific evidence supporting migrations from the Middle East to the New World.”

. . . Investigation of mitochondrial DNA of more than 5,500 living Native Americans reveals that 99.4% can be traced back to Asia primarily via maternal lineages known as A, B, C, D and X. Only 0.6% came from Africa or Europe, most likely after 1492. Lineages A through D are only found in Asia. While the X lineage also is found in Europe and the Middle East, Asian and American lineages have distinctive markers that indicate an ancient separation long before the events described in the Book of Mormon. Similar results from nearly 1,000 paternal lineages substantiate a Northeast Asian origin of American Indians. Likewise, approximately 99% of the Polynesians surveyed to date can trace their maternal lineages back to Southeast Asia. The other 1% almost certainly came from Europe in the recent past. . . .

Folk biological claims of an Israelite ancestry, a curse with a dark skin, and a whitening of dark-skinned Native American and Polynesian Mormons fail to stand up to scrutiny among scientifically literate Latter-day Saints. (“Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons,” by Thomas W. Murphy and Simon Southerton, *Anthropology News*, February 2003, p. 20)

The lack of evidence that Israelites came to America and grew to a major population prior to the arrival of the Europeans certainly raises serious questions about the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

In response to criticism of the Book of Mormon and recent DNA studies that show the American Indians are descended from Asians, the LDS Church has posted on their official web site a set of links to various LDS apologists, under “Mistakes in the News.” The site prefaces the links with this statement:

Recent attacks on the veracity of the Book of Mormon based on DNA evidence are ill considered. Nothing in the Book of Mormon precludes migration into the Americas by peoples of Asiatic origin. The scientific issues relating to DNA, however, are numerous and complex. Those interested in a more detailed analysis of those issues are referred to the resources below.

However, in an apparent effort to allow for deniability if any problems arise from referring people to these sites, the church adds the following disclaimer:

The following are not official Church positions or statements. They are simply information resources from authors with expertise in this area that readers may find helpful. (<http://www.lds.org/newsroom/mistakes/0,15331,3885-1-18078,00.html>)

If these statements do not represent the “official church position” why refer people to them? One is left to wonder why the LDS prophet is not able to give an official clarification on the matter. They concede that Asian migrations to America happened but present no evidence that Israelite migrations occurred.

Is “Faith” Enough?

In light of the continuing statements by LDS Church presidents and apostles linking American Indians with “the sons and daughters of Father Lehi,” they owe the public an explanation. Where is the evidence for Israelite migrations to America?

LDS author John M. Butler concluded one must look to faith:

A spiritual witness is the only way to know the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Although DNA studies have made links between Native Americans and Asians, these studies in no way invalidate the Book of Mormon despite the loud voices of detractors. (“A Few Thoughts From A Believing DNA Scientist,” by John M. Butler, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 36)

Since all of the evidence points to the Book of Mormon being a nineteenth century work it seems unworthy of “faith.” Christianity calls us to faith, but it grows out of confidence that there were historical people and events recounted in the Bible.

There are thousands of manuscripts, artifacts, and inscriptions attesting to the record in the Bible. In a recent article, Dr. Paul L. Maier discusses various archaeological items relating to the historicity of the Bible:

The Existence of Hittites. Genesis 23 reports that Abraham buried Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah, which he purchased from Ephron the Hittite. Second Samuel 11 tells of David’s adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. A century ago the Hittites were unknown outside of the Old Testament, and critics claimed that they were a figment of biblical imagination. In 1906, however, archaeologists digging east of Ankara, Turkey, discovered the ruins of Hattusas, the ancient Hittite capital at which

is today called Boghazkoy, as well as its vast collection of Hittite historical records, which showed an empire flourishing in the mid-second millennium BC. . . .

The Merneptah Stele. A seven-foot slab engraved with hieroglyphics, . . . boasts of the Egyptian pharaoh's conquest of Libyans and peoples in Palestine, including the Israelites: "Israel—his seed is not." This is the earliest reference to Israel in nonbiblical sources and demonstrates that, as of c. 1230 BC, the Hebrews were already living in the Promised Land.

Biblical Cities Attested Archaeologically. In addition to Jericho, places such as Haran, Hazor, Dan, Megiddo, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh, Gezer, Gibeah, Beth Shemesh, Beth Shean, Beersheba, Lachish, and many other urban sites have been excavated, quite apart from such larger and obvious locations as Jerusalem or Babylon. Such geographical markers are extremely significant in demonstrating that fact, not fantasy, is intended in the Old Testament historical narratives; . . . Israel's enemies in the Hebrew Bible likewise are not contrived but solidly historical. . . . Such precise urban evidence measures favorably when compared with the geographical sites claimed in the holy books of other religious systems, which often have no basis whatever in reality.

Shishak's Invasion of Judah. First Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 12 tell of Pharaoh Shishak's conquest of Judah in the fifth year of the reign of King Rehoboam, the brainless son of Solomon, and how Solomon's temple in Jerusalem was robbed of its treasures on that occasion. This victory is also commemorated in hieroglyphic wall carvings on the Temple of Amon at Thebes.

The Moabite Stone. Second Kings 3 reports that Mesha, the king of Moab, rebelled against the king of Israel following the death of Ahab. A three-foot stone slab, also called the Mesha Stele, confirms the revolt by claiming triumph over Ahab's family, c.850 BC, and that Israel had "perished forever." ("Archaeology—Biblical Ally or Adversary?" by Paul L. Maier, Ph.D., Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 12-19)

The article discusses a number of other finds, such as the Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, the burial plaque of King Uzziah, Hezekiah's Siloam Tunnel inscription, the Sennacherib Prism, and the cylinder of Cyrus the Great. These all relate to Biblical issues.

We realize that lack of evidence is not the same as "proving" something did not happen. However, one would expect the Book of Mormon civilization to have left a similar level of artifacts, cities and manuscripts as there are for the Bible. Yet not one artifact, manuscript or inscription has been found in the Americas to support the Book of Mormon Israelite civilization.

Israelite Identity

One of the distinct traits of the Israelites has been their determined effort to remain separate from other groups. In spite of their minority presence in every area they have lived, they have managed to keep their own identity. Simon Southerton, who has major reservations about the Bible, acknowledges there is evidence for the existence of Israel 3,000 years ago:

The Israelites entered Canaan in about 1250 BC and settled in the hills to the south. After conquering the Philistines and the native Canaanites under the leadership of King David in 1000 BC, Canaan became known as the Land of Israel, Israelites tracing back both culturally and genetically to the people occupying this small geographic region approximately 3,000 years ago. . . . Blood ties link the nations and ethnic groups living in close proximity to modern Israel. . . . Unlike the Jews [who have spread out over Europe] several Middle Eastern populations have remained in Palestine for the last three thousand years, and knowledge of their genetic makeup helps shed light on the genetic makeup of the Israelites. . . .

Given the Jews' deep spiritual ties to Palestine, it is somewhat ironic that they have spent most of their history in exile. Of the estimated 14 million Jews living today, most are derived from two ethnic groups known as Ashkenazim and Sephardim, distinguished by their most recent place of exile. Ashkenazic Jews, . . . have resided in northeastern Europe for centuries, . . . Sephardic Jews . . . previously lived around the Mediterranean, predominantly in Spain . . . Most Sephardic Jews now share present-day Israel with a similar number of Ashkenazim.

. . . Jews are more closely related to other Semitic populations than they are to European people or to the more distant African populations. However, somewhat unexpectedly, Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews share closer genetic ties with each other than they do with groups in neighboring Semitic communities. . . . In spite of their disparate histories, both Jewish communities have maintained a high degree of isolation from surrounding foreign populations. . . .

Clearly, Middle Eastern populations represent branches of the European bough of the human family tree. In some cases it is possible to differentiate between Israelite and European lineages and thus distinguish Israelite ancestry from European ancestry. The Y chromosome is particularly suited for this type of research because it is packed with information that can be tapped to identify Israelite-specific DNA lines. A remarkable demonstration of this capacity comes from work among Jews who, through tradition, traced their ancestry back to the ancient patriarch Moses. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 121-125)

Southerton then discusses the descendants of Aaron and Levi:

According to the Biblical record, after the exodus from Egypt in approximately 1500 BC, Moses instigated an important patriarchal tradition among the tribe of Levi when he set apart the male descendants of his brother Aaron to serve as priests . . . Jews inheriting this responsibility are known as the Cohanim, or the Cohen Jews. . . .

The strict father-to-son inheritance of priestly responsibility mimics the inheritance of the Y chromosome, raising an intriguing question. Is there a unique Y chromosome lineage among Cohens that could have survived the 120 or so generations since Aaron? . . .

Based on surveys of Jewish gravestones, about 5 percent of male Jews around the world belong to the priestly tribe . . . Skorecki [head of molecular medicine at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, Israel] and his colleagues tested Cohanim, Levites, and Israeli Jews of Ashkenazic and Sephardic origin for a range of unique DNA changes on their Y chromosomes. Remarkably, they found that about 50 percent of Cohens in both ethnic groups possessed virtually identical Y chromosomes. This molecular surname was found in about 15 percent of Israeli Jews and 5 percent of Levites but was essentially absent in non-Jewish Semitic populations. . . . [One] possibility is that the Cohen lineage may be the Y chromosome of the genealogical father of all Israelites, Abraham, who is understood to have lived about 500 years earlier than Aaron. The research shows conclusively that the inception of the Jewish priesthood predated the division of world Jewry into Ashkenazic and Sephardic ethnic groups over 1,000 years ago.

Skorecki's team found further intriguing evidence that the Cohen Y chromosome may have belonged to Aaron. . . . Since the approximate rate of mutation in the Y chromosome is known, it was possible to estimate the time when the original ancestral Cohen Y chromosome existed in a single individual. This was calculated to have been approximately 3,000 years ago, a date that corresponds very well with the biblical account of Moses and Aaron living about 3,300 years ago. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 125-127)

The Lemba Tribe

Simon Southerton tells of the Lemba people, a tribe in southern Africa, who have claimed for decades that they were descended from Jews. With DNA technology their claim was able to be tested and verified:

In Zimbabwe a black Bantu-speaking people numbering about 50,000 had claimed to be descended from Jews from the Middle East who had traveled to Africa centuries earlier. Known as the Lemba, their oral tradition was of ancestors arriving by boat from a lost city called Sena and that the original party consisted entirely of males who were

shipwrecked off the east coast. The Lemba claim to Jewish ancestry was based on scant evidence but included tribal customs such as circumcision, food taboos, and use of biblical names. On the surface, their customs could be Judaic or derived from Muslim or Afghani cultures. . . .

In light of these findings, scholars decided to see if there was in fact a Jewish presence in the paternal genealogies of the Lemba by comparing Lemba, Bantu, and Semitic Y chromosomes . . . It was discovered that a surprisingly high proportion of Lemba Y chromosomes have Semitic origins. **About 70 percent of Lemba Y chromosomes are Semitic** and the remaining 30 percent are common among surrounding Bantu populations. **About one in ten Lemba male lineages proved to be virtually identical to the Cohen paternal lineage**—powerful evidence that Lemba oral traditions were based on historical facts rather than myth. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 127-128)

The Lemba DNA study was also mentioned in *Science*. Of particular interest is the fact that the boatload of Jewish males migrated to Africa in about the same time frame as the Lehaites supposedly came to America in the Book of Mormon. Yet Lemba DNA can still be traced back to the Israelites:

Genetic evidence also supports the oral tradition that the Lemba, who are now Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa, derive from Jews who migrated from the Middle East to Yemen 2700 years ago and from Yemen to southern Africa 2400 to 2000 years ago. More than 50% of Lemba Y chromosomes carry haplotypes that are common among Jewish populations but absent in their African neighbors. Genetic analysis has also confirmed the distinctiveness of the Cohanim, or traditional Jewish priesthood. ("Genomic Views of Human History," by K. Owens. and M. King, *Science*, 1999, 286:451-453)

If DNA can establish that the Lemba descended from a boatload of Israelites 2,400 to 2,000 years ago, where is the DNA evidence that Israelites lived in Mesoamerica during the same time period?

LDS scientist Trent Stephens assumes that DNA from the small number of Book of Mormon Israelites would have been lost through the years. He concludes that

Middle Eastern colonization in the Americas may have been **very small** compared to the remainder of the population, and, as a result of two major bottleneck events, no genetic evidence of a Middle Eastern origin is present in the extant population, **nor is such evidence likely to be forthcoming**. . . .

With the significant number of studies that have already been conducted concerning the genetic profiles of extant Native American populations, it does not seem likely that additional studies of this kind will present new data that differ significantly from that already accumulated. ("Now What?," by Trent D. Stephens, *Sunstone*, March 2004, p. 27)

Simon Southerton commented on this problem:

Whiting suggests that another obstacle to detecting Lamanite lineage among Native American populations arises out of uncertainty about where the Lamanites might have been located or where their descendants might be . . . Since the chief geography apologist, Sorenson, and numerous others have identified Mesoamerica as the only possible candidate for the territory described in the Book of Mormon, it would be reasonable to examine the research that has been carried out among native tribes from this region.

In fact, the DNA lineages of Central America resemble those of other Native American tribes throughout the two continents. Over 99 percent of the lineages found among native groups from this region are clearly of Asian descent. Modern and ancient DNA sample tested from among the Maya generally fall into the major founding lineage classes . . . The Mayan Empire has been regarded by Mormons to be the closest to the people of the Book of Mormon because its people were literate and culturally sophisticated. However, leading New World anthropologists, including those specializing in the region, have found the Maya to be similarly related to Asians. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, pp. 190-191)

Southerton goes on to discuss testing that has been done on ancient Mayan skeletons buried 500 to 2,500 years ago. No evidence emerged of Hebrew origins. The research showed the same type of Asian ancestry found throughout the Americas.

Finding Phoenician DNA

Another example of the use of DNA is found in the October 2004 *National Geographic*. Rick Gore, in the article “Who Were the Phoenicians?”, discusses the search for descendants of the Phoenicians using DNA. Gore relates that the Phoenicians “dominated the Mediterranean Sea” from the ninth to sixth centuries BC but are now “a vanished civilization.” During the height of their glory the Phoenicians spread around the coastal areas. Gore states that after scientists collected thousands of samples of DNA they were able to conclude that “modern Lebanese people share a genetic identity going back thousands of years” to the Phoenicians (“Who Were the Phoenicians?” by Rick Gore, *National Geographic*, October 2004, pp. 34-49).

If Israelites actually arrived in America in 600 BC, one would think scientists could identify them as they have identified Phoenician descendants. The title page of the Book of Mormon states that the record was specifically “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel” to bring them to a knowledge of Christ. If the Lamanites can not be identified, how is the message to be

taken to them? It would seem that the Lord’s promise in the Book of Mormon has failed.

And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his condescensions unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, **he has promised** unto us [Lehites] **that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed**, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel (2 Nephi 9:53).

The LDS scientists are not able to identify a single person who is of the “seed” of Lehi “according to the flesh.” LDS scholars concede that DNA for American Indians shows “99.6%” are from Siberian ancestry and that there is a lack of DNA evidence for Israelites in the Americas prior to Columbus. The LDS Church should publicly explain to their people that American Indians are not literal descendants of Lehi or Israel.

Sorry, You’re Not a Lamanite

The 1997 LDS manual *Gospel Principles* announces:

Great numbers of Lamanites in North and South America and the **South Pacific** are now receiving the blessings of the gospel. (*Gospel Principles*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, p. 268)

LDS missionaries throughout North and South America present the Book of Mormon to Native Americans with the claim that it is the religious record of their forefathers. With approximately 5 million members in Central and South America and the Pacific islands, the church is faced with a problem. Obviously many of these people assume they are direct descendants of Lehi. Simon Southerton wrote:

One hundred and seventy years after its publication, the Book of Mormon still holds center stage in the unfolding drama of Mormonism. As a direct consequence of this book, **most Native American Latter-day Saints throughout the Americas regard the Israelite Lehi to be a blood relative**. In sermons, prayers, magazines, lesson manuals, and books, leaders have repeatedly spoken of the Lamanite birthright of native peoples. With full prophetic support, the modern Lamanite family has expanded to include not only Native Americans but also the Polynesians. . . (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, p. 37)

The anonymous author of the article “Reframing the Book of Mormon” observed:

As the limited-geography, limited-population paradigm becomes more visible, many faithful members are looking for guidance. In the discussion period following a January 2003 presentation at BYU, a young Peruvian student named Jose summed up the dilemma. He told the audience and

panelists how he grew up believing he was a **Lamanite** and now felt “overwhelmed with the surprise coming from the science. . . . We don’t know where the Book of Mormon took place. We don’t know where the Lamanites are. If we don’t know who the Lamanites are, how can the Book of Mormon promise to bring them back? **It’s an identity crisis for many of us** that [must] be understood.” (“Reframing the Book of Mormon,” *Sunstone*, March 2004, p. 19)

Evidently the same Peruvian student was interviewed for an article in the *Seattle Times*. Reporter Patty Henetz wrote:

While the work of the BYU scholars is confined mostly to intellectual circles, some church members who have always identified themselves with Mormon teachings on the people known as Lamanites are suffering crises.

“It’s very difficult. It is almost traumatizing,” said Jose Aloyza, a Midvale, Utah, attorney and Peruvian native who likened facing this new reality to staring into a spiritual abyss. “It’s that serious, that real. **I’m almost here feeling I need an apology.** Our prophets should have known better. That’s the feeling I get.” (“DNA Results Challenge Core Mormon Beliefs,” Local News, *Seattle Times*, Aug. 14, 2004)

If the Indians of North and South America are from Asiatic ancestry, why do the LDS prophets, apostles and missionaries keep telling them they are descended from Father Lehi?

As more and more American Indians, who assume they are literal descendants of Lehi, become aware of the shifting position of the church it could lead to growing dissention in the ranks. Simon Southerton commented:

It seems that among the obstacles facing the church, the real stumbling block is not the failure to find evidence for horses, metallurgy, or the wheel in the New World, or the fact that there is no evidence for a Hebrew influence in Mesoamerica, or the preponderance of Asian DNA among living Native Americans and Polynesians. The real challenge comes from a failure to openly confront the evidence and state what it means for the church, as well as a failure to accommodate the apologists, who themselves feel hemmed in by the church’s insistence that members believe tenets that are clearly untrue. . . . The theories of the apologists concerning a minuscule Lehi colony that existed in some unknown corner and had no lasting impact on the Americas are equally unsatisfying to mainstream scientists. Orthodox Mormons cannot conceive of such a reinterpretation of the Book of Mormon, and therefore the current prophets are reluctant to publicly address the problems. . . .

The Brethren no doubt recognize that to change the way Mormons think about the Book of Mormon would bring disruption and turmoil and risk undermining the foundation on which many people have based their religious convictions. . . . Millions of members feel a familial bond with Father

Lehi, an emotion that frequently plays a central role in people’s conversion to the church. The General Authorities are aware of just how deep-seated and crucial these feelings are in the processes of conversion and retention. (*Losing a Lost Tribe*, p. 206)

Will the LDS leaders ever state publicly that the principal ancestors of Native Americans came from Asia rather than from Jerusalem? Will they clarify who is a Lamanite? Will the prophet ever announce the location of Book of Mormon lands? Will LDS missionaries stop telling potential Native American converts that the Book of Mormon is the record of their ancestors? Can these issues be resolved without doing great damage to church growth? The answer to all of these questions is probably “No.”

It is time for the LDS leaders to face the issues. Some have suggested that the church should drop the Book of Mormon historical claims, and view it as an inspired allegory. However, it is still not worthy of belief. Thomas Murphy observed:

As Mormons, we have a moral and ethical obligation to discontinue this view of Native American origins and publicly disavow the offensive teaching that a dark skin is a physical trait of God’s malediction. (“Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” by Thomas W. Murphy, *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, Signature Books, 2002, p. 68)

The Book of Mormon, along with its racist teaching, is a product of the nineteenth century, not an historical account of God’s dealing with Israelite immigrants to America. For more information on the LDS attitudes toward Native Americans, see Armand Mauss’ book, *All Abraham’s Children*.

For those desiring more information on DNA issues, we recommend Simon Southerton’s new book, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, and the film, *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

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We are now carrying several of the top Christian magazines at a 20% discount (plus mailing charge, if mailed). Some of the magazines that we have are: *Christianity Today*, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, *Bible Review*, *Christian Research Journal*, *Worship Leader*, *Discipleship Journal*, *Charisma*, *Marriage Partnership*, *Pray*, *Guideposts* and others. A complete list of magazines is on our web site: www.utlm.org.

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LDS Church Ordains Two New Apostles

With the death of two apostles this year the LDS Church was faced with the need to find two replacements. In spite of the fact that at least one third of the LDS Church membership is Latin American, the church turned to a North American and a German, both of whom are white. One is left to wonder why there was not more national or racial diversity sought.

In a 1996 interview for the *Washington Times*, President Hinckley was asked why there were no non-Americans in the Council of Twelve:

With overseas growth, the church’s second-tier leadership of 70 men now has Asians and Europeans, and Mr. Hinckley said non-Americans will **someday** sit in the top-tier Council of Twelve Apostles.

“I don’t know when it will come, but I think it will come,” he said. “Just the growth of the church will bring that about. We’re no longer a Utah church.” While 17 percent of the membership lives there, **30 percent lives in Latin America.** (“Mormon’s Reach Extends Much Farther Than Utah,” by Larry Witham, *Washington Times*, Dec. 15, 1996, p .26)

The *San Francisco Chronicle* asked President Hinckley a similar question in 1997:

Q: When The Chronicle did a series last year on the global impact of the Mormons, we spoke to Mormons in Japan, Russia and Mexico, and some say the church has not moved fast enough to give power and authority to Mormons from **other ethnic groups.**

A: **It’ll come.** It’s coming. It’s coming. We have people from Mexico, Central America, South America, Japan, Europe among the general authorities [in the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy]. And that will increase, I think, inevitably. As we become more and more a world church, we’ll have greater world representation. (“Sunday Interview,” by Don Lattin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 1997)

When President Hinckley was interviewed in 1999, he was asked:

Q: As the church grows overseas, some foreign members have called for more autonomy from Salt Lake City. Do you envision that happening?

A: Never have heard of such a thing, I never have. I’ve been all over this world with the people of this church, everywhere. . . . I don’t find any dissidents. We have representation from all of these places. . . .

Q: What are the major challenges of your rapid growth?

A: Two things: leadership and building buildings to accommodate that growth. Now, all of our local leaders across the world are volunteer workers, and **they have to be trained, and that’s a great challenge . . .**

Q: Despite the globalization, the top leadership is still largely comprised of **white American males.** Do you plan to take affirmative steps to **diversify** your top leadership?

A: We’ve had diversity in our top leadership. We’ve had a man from Brazil, for instance, who’s black. Wonderful man. We have people from Japan and Germany and elsewhere in our top leadership. . . . As the church grows across the world, we’ll have more and more of that, I have no doubt whatsoever. It isn’t a matter of affirmatively doing anything. It’s a matter of finding worthy and able leadership, wherever they may be. (“Leading a World Faith Explosion with Roots in Small-Town America,” by Teresa Watanabe, *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1999)

Below is a list of the top ten languages spoken by LDS Church members, taken from the LDS Church web page, as of 2003:

<i>English</i>	5,828,000
<i>Spanish</i>	3,681,000
(mostly Mexico, Central and South America)	
<i>Portuguese</i> (mostly Brazil)	907,000
<i>Tagalog</i> (Philippines)	165,000
<i>Cebuano</i> (Philippines)	126,000
<i>Japanese</i>	117,000
<i>Ilokana</i> (Philippines)	109,000
<i>Samoan</i>	102,000
<i>Tongan</i>	76,000
<i>Korean</i>	75,000
(Quick Facts, www.newsroom.lds.org)	

Of particular interest is the fact that after English, the next nine languages are spoken by non-Anglo-Saxons. Evidently there was not one “worthy” and “able” man amongst these millions of people that would qualify for the position of apostle. Notice that German didn’t even make the list.

On the next page is a reprint of an article from Institute for Religious Research (<http://www.irr.org/mit/>), used by permission.

[**Bold** type has been added for emphasis.]

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MORMON CHURCH APPOINTS 2 NEW APOSTLES: NON-ANGLOS NEED NOT APPLY?

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In the 170-plus year history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, every member of Quorum of the Twelve (apostles) has been a white male of American or European heritage. This pattern remains unbroken following the October 2, 2004 announcement at its General Conference of two new apostles – David A. Bednar, an American and Dieter F. Uchdorf, a German. The two fill the vacancies left by the deaths of apostles Neal A. Maxwell and David B. Haight, who died several months ago within weeks of each other.

Though over half of the Mormon Church's 12 million members are now in countries outside North America, and more than a third (4.25 million) are Latin Americans, the Quorum of the Twelve remains a solidly white body. It's difficult to imagine that Mormons of color will not be disappointed and perhaps dismayed by this development.

There are a number of non-Anglos in the Quorums of the Seventy, most of whom are of Hispanic descent. However, none has ever been elevated to the position of apostle, even though many of them have been Seventies for 10 years or more. Currently these include Carlos Amado, Claudio Costa, Walter Gonzalez, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Francisco Viñas, and Adhemar Damiani. All of these are members of the first and second quorums of the Seventy, and the majority have more years seniority at this level than either Bednar or Uchdorf.

Mormon membership in Germany, homeland of new apostle Dieter Uchdorf, is less than 37,000; in all of Europe –West, Central and Eastern combined – Mormon membership is barely 393,000. By comparison, the Church boasts memberships of nearly a million in Mexico, 850,000 in Brazil, and in excess of 500,000 in both Chile and the Philippines. Yet in terms of qualification for the Mormon hierarchy, the message to these faithful Mormons of color seems to be, non-Anglos need not apply.

[Statistical data taken from the *Deseret Morning News* 2004 Church Almanac, published in Salt Lake City, Utah, 2004.]

Reprint of an article from Institute for Religious Research.
(<http://www.irr.org/mit/>)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

May 2004. Subject: The definition of “priceless:”
The look on Jerald and Sandra Tanner's faces when they finally discover (most likely in the next life) —

1) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints *really* is the Lord's true Church.

2) Joseph Smith and his successors *really* are all prophets of the Lord.

3) The Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price *really* are true. and....

4) After leaving the true Church themselves, they led or kept others away as they spent their entire lives slandering the Lord, His Church, and His servants...

May 2004. As an Ex-Mormon (Fifth generation) and now a born again Christian, I thank God for your faithfulness! ... I know it must be hard for you, but God is supporting you mightily. . . .

May 2004. you are wasting your time . . .

May 2004. Your work will last beyond you, and still bearing fruit for the Lord, helping people out of the Mormons, and proactively preventing others from entering. The rest of the Body has to just USE it! Don't be discouraged. The last time the Mormons came here, I spent three hours with them, partly because the two of YOU have done such excellent work and I know I am not spouting mere hearsay, but researched material. So thank you!!

May 2004. Over 15 years ago, you helped us more than you know. We were stationed in England with the Air Force. Only 1 week after our big day at the London Temple, God saved me and my husband. Our lives were so tore-up, but God was so good to us. You guys sent us all the info we needed, for the help we needed.

May 2004. I have spent 10 years of my life dedicated to Mormonism. Only recently did I come to the knowledge that I believed in something that was not true. I am working through my feelings and have asked a Christian pastor to help me learn how to live without the church. I understand that some people do not think that any type of brainwashing occurs in the Mormon Church but, I believe that it does.

May 2004. why are you so bitter against the church. remember president [N. Eldon] tanner i was a good man you are evel sorry 4 you you are streghten my testimony

May 2004. yeah, i have a question for the Tanners....when are you going to grow up and come back to the truth? Stop doing what the Apostle Paul did for a while....fighting against the church. You guys are absolutely waisting your time ... We will pray for you “in the temple.”

June 2004. Thank you again for being there to educate those of us who were taught to believe in “the church” rather than the Bible.... I'm 73 now, raised in the church, and remember when some of the teachings and rules and regulations were different from now. Your article about the change of allowing Blacks to hold the priesthood because of Brazil made so much sense because those of us living in Miami knew many of the Brazilians are mixed....

June 2004. Our pastor recently played the video, “The Mormon Puzzle.” Thank you for being an integral part of that film. It is very good and our LDS friends have to really reach to be offended by it. It is something that enables them to start thinking on their own about what they have been taught and what the Bible actually says.

June 2004. If people really want to know about Mormonism, why dont they ask and LDS member themselves? It seems kind of pointless to ask the enemy, dont you think?

June 2004. All your arguments are built upon the idea that everything ever said by every Mormon leader who ever existed must unequivocally be true, or else the church must be false; ... This is not true.

I know you are good people and I once had a pleasant, friendly visit at the Tanner home, and I believe you are sincere, but I fear that you are wasting some great abilities and efforts on a profession of fault-finding and criticism.

June 2004. Some twenty years ago I read a study that concluded the vast majority of Japanese high school students were unaware their country was ever occupied by the United States. They know nothing of the war.... History has been successfully erased in Japan. I tell you this because I have just returned from a visit to Mountain Meadows. The whitewash left me with a parallel sense of outrage. History has been successfully erased in the Mormon Church. Your mission may seem hopeless at times, but I pray God may bless it all the same.

June 2004. Many of your comments are disturbing, and coming from a man of 22 years old, I can say that my testimony of the Gospel came through the Holy Ghost, the spirit from which I only pray you have not driven yourselves too far away. There are many concepts that you are either altering/changing that you yourselves know how they are.

June 2004. Thank you for all the material you have sent. . . . You may be interested in knowing how I heard about you. The mailman left it [our newsletter] in my mail box by mistake. Since it wasn't in an envelope and looked interesting, I read it and put it back in the mailbox so it could go to its rightful owner. Hope the check helps a little.

July 2004. Saw a piece about you on *City Confidential*. I was a Mormon for five years before I found the whole thing to be a fraud. I live within blocks of the Oakland Temple, but took out my own endowments at SLC Temple back in the days when they still had live “sessions.”... Joseph Smith Jr. was an ignorant, but clever fraud whose only interest was in gaining power over a large group of people.... I later joined the Masonic Lodge, and was immediately struck with the fact that Joe Smith stole a great deal of the symbols, and even the rituals of Freemasonry for use in the temple.

July 2004. As an ex-Mormon myself I have come to greatly appreciate your website as a good source to research the history and background of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Your life-long work is a tremendous help in sorting out the complexities of this false religion....

July 2004. what makes you think that the things that you write about the mormon faith aren't already known by the mormons? what makes you think that your faith is anymore perfect than the mormon faith? ... what if joseph smith brags about being a great prophet? your bragging that your religion is better than his. ... you are only feasting on the naive and weak of heart. Sincerely—fed up

July 2004. Kudos to UTLM for trying to do good in world. i did read your SLCM via finding it on literature stack outside library of UCSC in santa cruz, CA. so, it shows you that it gets around. one of your subscribers put copies there maybe?

July 2004. ... I joined the LDS church several years ago while an officer in the US Air Force. The LDS church is the ONLY church that has been able to answer numerous questions that NO OTHER church could answer.... One can point out faults here and there until the sun goes down, but the bottom line is indeed that the Book of Mormon is true and I received a spiritual manifestation of this via God.

July 2004. ... I see now why over the years some really good people left the Mormon church and had fellowship with one another instead of attending LDS Sacrament.... I know my resignation shall be a tremendous shock to my family.

I want to say thank you and your husband for the good work you have been doing to make the truth available so others may judge for themselves. I won't waste my time being bitter, but I sure hate having been so deceived for almost 40 years.

July 2004. ... I joined the church in '96 and was active for two years. After learning that an entire active member family was covertly trying to convert me to polygamy (bear in mind I was a member of the mainstream LDS church, not a fundamentalist version), I became inactive, but retained my LDS-taught beliefs.... The doctrines seem extremely complex, and NO ONE could ever answer my questions.... When I brought these contradictions to the attention of the local branch President, whom I dearly love as a friend, he could not answer. Instead, he chastised me for seeking after the “secret things of the Bible.” I was very surprised and saddened by his response, but it turned out to be the best answer he could've given me, for it served to further my continued studies of the Bible.... Thank God I've kept my faith in Jesus Christ, and in fact it's stronger than ever.

July 2004. Hi, I am a “Mormon” and I enjoy my religion very much. I appreciate how much thought you have put into researching our church, I wish that you could put thought in to researching it's truths. You might find that they are good and that they feel good.

July 2004. ... I can not begin to say how much you have helped me get through to some Mormon friends. You provide a very valuable service with great information. It seems that there is a movement growing (at least on the internet) of several groups like yours—Former Mormons who have become Christians who are determined to spread the truth about the gospel.

July 2004. As an ex-Mormon myself I have come to greatly appreciate your website as a good source to research the history and background of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Your life-long work is a tremendous help in sorting out the complexities of this false religion....

July 2004. Some years ago I asked your help,... My constant search has been ongoing all these years, and I am blessed indeed to move toward a personal relationship with our loving inclusive triune God. May God continue to bless Sandra and Gerald Tanner.

August 2004. You really need to post on your website who you are and why you think you have so much information.

You have stated falsehoods on your site- most of it dependent on the hope that the reader knows hardly anything about the Book of Mormon.

August 2004. I joined the LDS-Church in 1995 not in order of their theology as I know now but cause of the feelings which the missionaries called The Holy Ghost.... Today I know that I understood their terms of God and so on in my way and not in the way Mormons think....

On your website is a very important part called *Terminology Differences* which is eyeopening. After reading that Mormonism reminds me of Orwells 1984!

August 2004. ... I am from Oregon. I've been a Christian my whole life, but a friend of mine is Mormon. I've bought about 10 books from your website to try and show her the truth. She's really doubting Mormonism now....

August 2004. Subject: Journal of Discourses
It was interesting reading some of the speeches of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. I'm glad they're accessible to people. Thanks. As I read a few things that were uncomfortable, like those aspects of Joseph and Brigham that you are exposing, I realized that these men were imperfect, as are all men.... Words uttered and deeds performed had mistakes along the way. Are you and I more "perfect" than they? ...

August 2004. Let me tell you about the situation here in Scotland ... The L.D.S. Church, with a claimed membership of 25,000+ and growing, are making ground with the lapsed or "non-active" members of mainstream churches, or those who feel disillusioned/disenfranchised!

When the L.D.S. came to me, they must have thought it was Christmas come early—I didn't slam the door, or tell them to *?#! I agreed to read the BM! Then I got hold of a copy of David [Persuittie] excellent book, "*J[oseph] S[mith] and the Origins of the B.M.*" 2nd ED. and then I got myself a copy of the original 1830 B.M.... Of course, it's not every day that the L.D.S. missionaries come across an awkward old sod like me, who is willing to read the B.M. and isn't afraid to question it!... Scotland really needs a "Lighthouse Mission" to counterbalance the aggressive proselytizing of the L.D.S. over here....

September 2004. I have read a couple of your articles, and I must say, you guys are cowards. Anybody could write better lies than that, it was just obvious that you website was not credible. How can any man claim to be Christian and not follow the basic Christian principle of honesty?

September 2004. As usual your press tells half truths and out and out lies, but I guess when you have no morals thats ok.

October 2004. I have been reading a great deal of material about the Mormon Church. I continue to be amazed at the way unsuspecting people can be deceived by an organization based on such lies and distortions of the Truth! Even more amazing is how these same people will spew such vitriol at you in the face of such well-documented evidence debunking their church. They accuse you of hate-mongering, but I have seen no such attitude in your material.

October 2004. Subject: Are you an imbecile? Are you that stupid to think that the LDS church get there doctrines and teachings only from the Bible?

October 2004. THANKS for your website and the good information you sent me. I was born and raised in the Mormon church and thankfully ... I decided to find the truth. I accepted Christ as my saviour just a few weeks ago, and what a feeling of peace! I can't even described how I feel.... It's just incredible. The more I read about the mormon church the more I can't believe I bought all that crap! It's just crazy!... I usually read your stuff online, so keep putting it there for those of us who can't afford books!

BTW, Sandra, enjoyed your comment on the latter-day lampoon interview [<http://www.latterdaylampoon.com/interviews/sandratanner/>] about letting the church borrow your stone. Totally cracked me up.

New and Recently Added Titles

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