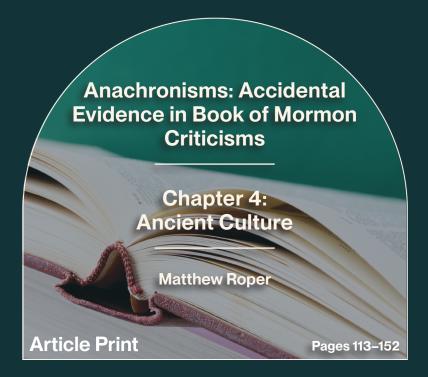


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Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms

Matthew Roper

[Editor's Note: We are pleased to present chapter 4 from a book entitled Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms. It is presented in serialized form in this volume of Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship.]

Chapter 4: Ancient Culture

nother set of alleged anachronisms can be grouped under the category of ancient culture and cultural practices mentioned in the Book of Mormon. These include items relating to religious practices, institutions, physical structures, agriculture, tools and technologies, and law. These have been contrasted negatively with known cultural settings in ancient America and the ancient Near East.

84. Jew as a Preexilic Term

Status: Confirmed (1845–1965)

Critics' Claim: Some critics have claimed that the term *Jew*, which Nephi uses in reference to the people of Jerusalem, is incorrect and that that term was not applied until several centuries later.¹

Response: The term *Jew* can be traced to the Hebrew word *Yehudi*, and — contrary to the previously mentioned assumption — was actually used during preexilic times. It was originally applied to members of the tribe of Judah, but after the division of Solomon's Kingdom (into

the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah), the term was applied more generally "to *all* residents of the Southern Kingdom, irrespective of their tribal status." The Prism of Sennacherib King of Assyria (figure 33) refers to "Hezekiah the Jew."

85. Sacrifice Outside the Temple

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some critics have claimed that it would have been inappropriate for a righteous Israelite to offer sacrifices outside of the temple of Jerusalem in Lehi's day.⁴

Response: Documents discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that sacrifices were permitted outside the land of Israel if the children of Israel were more than three days from the Jerusalem temple. Significantly, Nephi indicates that when his family offered sacrifice they were more than three days journey from land of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 2:6), which is consistent with that stipulation.⁵

86. No Pre-Columbian Christians

Status: Unconfirmed

Critics' Claim: Some have dismissed the Book of Mormon because no evidence for pre-Columbian Christianity has been identified by archaeologists.⁶

Response: There is currently no archaeological or historical evidence for pre-Columbian Christianity. One may ask, however, what exactly would constitute evidence for an ancient version of Christianity in the archaeological record if it once had existed in ancient America. As one scholar observes:

The history, especially of Southeast Asia, shows how easily religions may disappear or be submerged in local cults. Amongst the Cham of Annam, Hinduism and Buddhism had been firmly established for almost a millennium and a half from the second to fifteenth century. Yet Buddhism disappeared completely after the fall of the Cham kingdom in 1471 and Hinduisim declined so rapidly that its influence at present is hardly recognizable. Amongst the non-Musslim Badui and Tenggerese of Java, traces of Hinduism and Buddhism are exceedingly slight, although these must have been the predominant religions as late as the sixteenth century. The



Figure 33. Side two of a six-sided clay prism, written on behalf of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. (Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Six-sided clay prism, side 2, written on behalf of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and containing narratives of his military campaigns, 704–681 BC," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Six-sided_clay_prism,_side_2,_written_on_behalf_of_Sennacherib,_king_of_Assyria,_and_containing_narratives_of_his_military_campaigns,_704-681_BC_-_Oriental_lnstitute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC07601.JPG.)

Batak of Sumatra were under Buddhist and Hindu influences from probably the third to fourteenth century, but in the nineteenth century they were pagans.⁷

Brant Gardner also observes that Old World Christians in antiquity adopted symbols from Greek and Roman culture to portray many Christian ideas in ancient art and architecture. New World Christians would not have used these in an ancient American setting but could only have used pre-Columbian cultural iconography and architecture, whose meaning may not be obvious to the modern observer. Hence "the absence of Old World Christian iconography is not evidence of the absence of Book of Mormon Christianity."⁸

87. Feasts, Customs, Festivals in the Text

Status: Confirmed (1966-2024)

Critics' Claim: Some claim that the Book of Mormon provides no evidence that its writers had a knowledge or understanding of any of the customs, feasts, and festivals of ancient Israelite culture.⁹

Response: Although the Book of Mormon is only an abridgment with a narrow purpose of leading people to Christ, there is abundant evidence that the ritual culture of ancient Israel provides the context for much of its teaching and history.¹⁰

88. 600 Year Chronology

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some critics have claimed that the Book of Mormon prophecy that Christ would come 600 years after Lehi left Jerusalem does not fit the historical timeline. If Lehi left Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah (597–596 BC) it would be less than 600 years between Lehi's departure and the birth of Jesus.¹¹

Response: If one assumes that Jesus was born around 5–4 BC, as many scholars today believe, Lehi's 600-year prophecy to his children fits remarkably well with the ancient Mesoamerican 360-day "year." ¹²

89. Justification for Killing Laban

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that Nephi's killing of Laban was an act of murder that would be inappropriate for an ancient prophet.¹³

Response: While the description of Nephi's killing of Laban would not be justified under modern Western legal standards, Nephi was an *ancient* Israelite prophet, not a modern one. Some killings, even some that occurred outside of warfare, were considered justified in ancient Israel. Scholarship on the laws of homicide indicate that Nephi's slaying of Laban was a justified killing under the Law of Moses.¹⁴

90. Seantum's Confession

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that the account of Seantum's confession for the murder of his brother is inconsistent with proper jurisprudence.¹⁵

Response: John W. Welch has shown that Seantum's confession, although inadmissible under modern English law, would have been acceptable under the Law of Moses.¹⁶

91. Temples Outside Jerusalem

Status: Confirmed (1845–1965)

Critics' Claim: The idea of an Israelite, such as Nephi, building and constructing a temple outside Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:16) seemed absurd to many early readers of the Book of Mormon.¹⁷

Response: We now know of several examples of Israelite temples that were constructed outside of Jerusalem including the Jewish Fortress at Tel Arad in southern Judah and Elephantine, which was built by a group of Jewish colonists in Egypt.¹⁸ Perhaps most surprising is the recent discovery of a temple at Tel Moza, only a few miles from Jerusalem itself.¹⁹

92. Non-Levitical Priests

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that the idea of a non-Levitical priesthood, as represented in the Book of Mormon before the time of Christ (2 Nephi 5:26; Mosiah 29:42), is inaccurate.²⁰

Response: Many scholars now recognize that, in addition to an Aaronic priesthood, there were also non-Levitical priests.²¹ This can be seen in kings who sometimes functioned in a priestly role. Non-Levitical

prophets also seem to adopt priestly roles or are described in priestly terms by biblical writers.²²

93. Synagogues by 600 BC (OW)

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that Nephi's reference to synagogues (2 Nephi 26:26) is historically inaccurate because the synagogue was unknown until several centuries later in the ancient Near Fast.²³

Response: Scholarship currently indicates that early forms of what eventually became synagogue worship by the time of Christ actually began before the destruction of the first temple in 587 BC. This would be consistent with Nephi's statement.²⁴

94. Synagogues (NW)

Status: Unconfirmed

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that no archaeological evidence for pre-Columbian synagogues have ever been found.²⁵

Response: While it is true that no formally designated synagogues have been found in ancient America, there are many examples of buildings found by archaeologists that could easily have served in the capacity of a synagogue or non-sacrificial place of worship. Moreover, it is not clear how one would determine whether it was once a synagogue or not.²⁶ Without some inscription explicitly describing the location as a Hebrew-influenced place of worship, archaeologists would likely just label such a structure as a shrine or temple.

95. Native Traditions

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that there are not native American traditions that could be seen as supportive of the Book of Mormon.²⁷

Response: There are many examples of traditions that can be viewed as supportive of the Book of Mormon.²⁸

96. Civilization

Status: Confirmed (1829–1844)

Critics' Claim: Some early critics claimed that the Book of Mormon was inconsistent with what was known about pre-Columbian cultures, which were widely believed to be uncivilized at the time.²⁹

Response: In 1841 John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood published *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, which introduced many English readers to the Maya ruins of Mesoamerica.³⁰ The volumes included multiple illustrations, as shown in figure 34. As Stephen's biographer observed, "The acceptance of an 'Indian civilization' demanded, to an American living in 1839, an entire reorientation" as most Americans had never viewed native peoples in such a way.³¹ Evidence for the sophistication of pre-Columbian civilization in ancient Mesoamerica is now widely acknowledged.³²

97. Large Cities

Status: Confirmed (1829–1844)

Critics' Claim: Some early critics claimed that there is no evidence that large cities (Mosiah 27:6) existed in pre-Columbian times.³³

Response: Beginning with reports in the 1830s and the widely published works of Stephens and Catherwood, and continuing until the



Figure 34. Main temple at Tulum, by Frederick Catherwood. (Frederick Catherwood, Views of Ancient Monuments, en.wikipedia.org/wiki /Frederick_Catherwood#/media/File:TulumCatherwood1844.jpg.)

present day, there is now abundant evidence that cities, some of very significant size, existed in pre-Columbian times.³⁴

98. Book of Mormon Cities Identified

Status: Unconfirmed

Critics' Claim: No Book of Mormon cities have been identified. 35

Response: While this is true, the challenge is not the absence of ancient cities dating to the time of the Book of Mormon, but rather identifying cities in locations consistent with the description in text. For most cases, it is currently impossible to determine what cities were called during the time of the Book of Mormon. As archaeologist John Clark explains, many examples of Mesoamerican cities and artifacts have been found, but they are masked by modern designations and labels such as Olmec, Maya, and so forth. "If we stumbled onto Zarahemla, how would we know? The difficulty is not with evidence but with epistemology."³⁶

99. Temples

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that temples (Alma 16:13) were unknown in ancient America.³⁷

Response: There are numerous examples of temples in ancient America that have been identified by archaeologists.³⁸

100. Kings

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that pre-Columbian peoples did not have kings (1 Nephi 9:4).³⁹

Response: There were kings in ancient Mesoamerica going back to Book of Mormon times.⁴⁰

101. Palaces

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that palaces, which are mentioned in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 11:9; Alma 22:2), did not exist in pre-Columbian times.⁴¹

Response: Many examples of ancient Mesoamerican palaces have been identified by archaeologists (see figure 35).⁴²

102. Prisons

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some critics have claimed that prisons (Mosiah 7:7; Alma 21:13-15; 26:29; Helaman 5:21) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.⁴³

Response: Evidence shows that there were various kinds of prisons in ancient Mesoamerica.⁴⁴

103. Barns

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that barns, which are mentioned by Jesus (3 Nephi 1:26), did not exist in pre-Columbian times.⁴⁵

Response: Barns or buildings for storing grain and other agricultural products were known. Among the Aztecs, "One of the chief tasks of the native government was the accumulation of sufficient reserves in



Figure 35. Palenque palace and watch tower. (*Wikimedia Commons*, s.v. "The Palace and watch tower – Palenque – panoramio," commons.wikimedia.org /wiki/File:The_Palace_and_watch_tower_-_Palenque_-_panoramio.jpg.)

the granaries to cope with these disasters [swarms of locusts, rodents, and excessive rain and snow]."46 They were also known to the Maya. "Thatched and adobe storehouses have been excavated at Ceren, and each was associated with a home, suggesting household use. The storerooms contained bins for ears of maize, as well as baskets, ceramic pots, and gourds for storing maize kernels, beans, chili peppers, and other items. All these storage containers were kept off the floor to keep them dry; stones elevated pots, and baskets were hung from thatched roofs. Chili peppers, strung together in what today are called *ristras*, hung from kitchen rafters. In some regions today, grains often are stored in wooden lattice bins built into trees, where they are kept dry and out of reach of many animals. Such storage bins would not survive from preconquest times."47

104. Glass

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Moroni states that the sixteen stones that the Lord touched with his finger "were white and clear, even as transparent glass" (Ether 3:1). Some critics have claimed that reference to glass in the Book of Mormon is inaccurate and that glass was not known in the ancient world until more recent times.⁴⁸

Response: Scholars are currently uncertain as to when the first glass was made, but several kinds of glass were being fabricated in Egypt from an early time and in Mesopotamia from ancient times. "Archaeologists have found glass beads dating to as early as the third millennium BCE. Glazes based on the same materials and technology date earlier still." Examples of Egyptian glass dating from the Bronze Age display various colors including red, green, yellow, and several shades of blue, some of which are translucent. 50

What has been termed as *glass* can also be found in the New World. Most prominent is volcanic glass, which played a crucial role in Mesoamerican ritual and economy.⁵¹ According to Helen Haines and Michael Glascock, "Obsidian is a naturally occurring glass created through pyroclastic volcanic activity."⁵² As described by another scholar, Ecuadorian blades made from obsidian were "as transparent as window glass."⁵³

Mesoamerica cultures also valued "glass-like shards" of quartz crystal for both its practical and divinatory value.⁵⁴ Some samples could easily be described as "white," "clear," and "transparent," as

mentioned in the book of Ether. When speaking to Mexican informants in the sixteenth century, the Catholic historian Bernardino de Sahagún was told about crystal, which was described to him as follows: "It is translucent, very transparent, clear. It is clear, very clear, exceedingly clear." ⁵⁵

105. Arts

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: The Book of Mormon says that the people flourished in "every kind of art" (Helaman 12:2), but some have claimed that there is no evidence for the arts in pre-Columbian times.⁵⁶

Response: Examples of pre-Columbian art are now abundant.⁵⁷

106. Heliocentric Astronomy

Status: Unconfirmed

Critics' Claim: Mormon's reference to the idea that the earth moves around the sun (Helaman 12:15) seems to reflect a heliocentric view of astronomy that did not exist in pre-Columbian times.⁵⁸

Response: There is currently no evidence for a heliocentric view in pre-Columbian times. However, it can't be gleaned from the text how culturally prominent this view was or where Mormon derived it.

107. Lunar Calendar

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: The Book of Mormon makes reference to the people of Zarahemla counting moons (Omni 1:21), but some have claimed that ancient American peoples were unfamiliar with the lunar calendar.⁵⁹

Response: The people of Zarahemla, who encountered the wounded king Coriantumr, would have been familiar with a lunar calendar as part of the Israelite heritage. ⁶⁰ Some Mesoamericans also appear to have used a lunar calendar. ⁶¹

108. Early Cement

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that cement (Helaman 3:7, 11) was absent from the Americas in pre-Columbian times.⁶²

Response: "When I was a young unmarried man," recalled President Heber J. Grant in 1929,

another young man who had received a doctor's degree ridiculed me for believing in the Book of Mormon. He said he could point out two lies in that book. One was that people had built their homes out of cement and that they were very skillful in the use of cement. He said there had never been found and never would be found, a house built of cement by the ancient inhabitants of this country, because the people in that early age knew nothing about cement. He said that should be enough to make one disbelieve the book. I said: "That does not affect my faith one particle. I read the Book of Mormon prayerfully and supplicated God for a testimony in my heart and soul of the divinity of it, and I have accepted it and believe it with all my heart." I also said to him, "If my children do not find cement houses, I expect that my grandchildren will." He said, well what is the good of talking to a fool like that?63

Cement was indeed known in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (see figure 36), and archaeologists have now confirmed it.⁶⁴

109. Archaeological Evidence

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some make the broad claim that there is no archaeological evidence for the account in the Book of Mormon.⁶⁵

Response: Critics who make this claim often never specify what would constitute such evidence, nor are the challenges of assessing archaeological evidence regularly addressed. While there are many things mentioned in the Book of Mormon that cannot at present be verified through archaeological evidence, other things can be. Latterday Saints can point to many examples from archaeology—including many items mentioned in this paper—that lend plausibility to the account in the Book of Mormon.⁶⁶

110. Chariots

Status: Partially Confirmed (1845–1965)

Critics' Claim: Chariots are mentioned during the reign of the Nephite judges (a span of just over a century), once during the preparation



Figure 36. Cement was used in ancient sites such as Teotihuacan. (Juan Carlos Fonseca Mata, *Wikimedia Commons*, s.v. "Ciudadela en Teotihuacan," commons .wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ciudadela_en_Teotihuacan.jpg.)

for a royal feast (Alma 18:9-10), and later in preparation for a siege as the people were gathering "provisions" (3 Nephi 3:22). Some have claimed that the references to chariots in the Book of Mormon are out of place.⁶⁷

Response: The sparse references to "chariots" in the Book of Mormon may imply a limited use over a relatively brief period in Book of Mormon history. Reference to chariots in association with horses and cattle may suggests that some of these animals were used to pull such conveyances. However, they are never said to have been used in battle, nor are they directly associated with the repertoire of weaponry mentioned in the text. Thus, the view that they were battle chariots is unlikely.⁶⁸

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, archaeologists working in central Mexico discovered miniature ceramic wheeled vehicles, which early experts called "chariots" or "toys" (figure 37).⁶⁹ They have been found in funerary contexts, possibly suggesting a religious or ritual purpose from the Classic and Postclassic periods, and they bear a remarkable resemblance to similar objects known from



Figure 37. Ceramic example of a wheeled figurine from Veracruz, Mexico, circa 450–650 AD. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, rawpixel.com /image/11797054/dog-wheeled-platform.)

Mesopotamia and central Asia. This persuaded some scholars that the Mesoamerican objects may have been introduced from the Old World. Whatever the case, these objects clearly show that some ancient Mesoamericans had a knowledge of the wheel, which is a puzzle since currently there is little evidence to suggest that the wheel had any significant influence on the development of pre-Columbian civilization.

If the "chariots" described in the Book of Mormon do refer to wheeled vehicles, the possibility that their remains could have become lost to the archaeological and historical record should not be discounted (especially if their production and use was limited to begin with). During one of the battles between the Spanish forces of Alvarado and the highland Maya of Guatemala, it was reported that the Maya had what might be described as ammunition carts on rollers which could be moved from place to place as needed during the battle. Although they were known and used just a few hundred years ago, examples of such carts have yet to be found or identified by archaeologists.

111. Pearls

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that pearls (4 Nephi 1:24) were

unknown in pre-Columbian times.72

Response: Pearls were a valued item of trade in ancient

Mesoamerica.73

112. Silk

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that silk (Alma 1:29; Ether 9:17;

10:24) was unknown in pre-Columbian times.74

Response: Both silk and silk-like fabrics were known in pre-Colum-

bian Mesoamerica.75

113. Linen

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that references to linen (Alma 1:29; Ether 9:17; 10:24) in an ancient pre-Columbian text are out of place.⁷⁶

Response: Linen can refer to cloth made of flax or hemp but also may reference something that resembles linen cloth. Evidence from pre-Columbian Mesoamerica shows that there were fabrics that could be considered linen.⁷⁷

114. All Manner of Grain

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that grain (Mosiah 11:3; Alma 11:7; Helaman 11:17; Ether 9:17) was unknown in pre-Columbian times.⁷⁸

Response: We now know that there were a variety of grains available in pre-Columbian times. These include, in addition to pre-Columbian barley, two species of amaranth, huauzontle, chia, millet, and three kinds of teosinte.⁷⁹

115. Wheat

Status: Unconfirmed

Critics' Claim: Some claim that wheat (Mosiah 9:9) was unknown in pre-Columbian times.⁸⁰

Response: No examples of pre-Columbian wheat have thus far been identified by archaeologists.

116. Barley

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that barley (Mosiah 9:9) was unknown in pre-Columbian times. One author wrote, "It is the somewhat stubborn fact that *barley* was never found upon either of these western continents until imported by Europeans in modern times!"81 Another critic asked.

But where is the proof of this extraordinary assertion? It seems very probable that, if Americans had once had wheat and barley, they would not have given up their cultivation and use, and yet they were not to be found in America when the Europeans came.

He then noted that while ancient pre-Columbian sites were known in Peru, Arizona, and Ohio, for example, "not a vestige of wheat or barley has ever been found" at any of these sites. ⁸² "In this book we are told . . . that barley was among the produce of the earth; whereas all respected scholarship is absolutely positive in its authority" that barley is only a modern New World crop. ⁸³ "The only grain known in America was maize. ⁸⁴ "The findings of early American archaeology do not substantiate the claim that such items were known among the ancient Americans," in particular "wheat" and "barley. ⁸⁵ "The aboriginal New World did not have wheat [and] barley. ⁸⁶ "Barley never grew in the New World before the white man brought it here!

If there was no barley in America until the white man came, then Alma 11:4–19 must be false. If God were the one that wrote the Book of Mormon, is it not a reasonable assumption that he would have known there was no barley in the New World? The Book of Mormon... falls short of authenticatable [sic] truth.⁸⁸

Response: Discoveries made in recent decades have identified domesticated pre-Columbian barley in a variety of locations in the Americas dating back to Book of Mormon times. Beginning in the

1980s, archaeologists and botanists began to identify a species of pre-Columbian domesticated barley, known as "little barley," in the Americas (figure 38). It is now recognized as having been an important pre-Columbian crop that was cultivated from an early time. "Perhaps the most startling evidence of Hohokam agricultural sophistication came last year when salvage archaeologists found preserved grains of what looks like domesticated barley, the first ever found in the New World."⁸⁹

In addition to samples identified at the site near Phoenix, "extensive archaeological evidence also points to the cultivation of little barley in the Southwest and parts of Mexico." Samples have been found at other North American pre-Columbian sites throughout the central and eastern United States. Concerning the discovery and identification of samples in Illinois and Oklahoma, two researchers state, "[This project reveals a] previously unidentified seed type now identified as little barley (hordeum pussillum), and there are strong indications that this grain must be added to the list of starchy—seeded plants that were cultivated in the region by [sic] 2000 years ago." It is reasonable to



Figure 38. "Little barley" is distinctive because of the small size of its spikelets. (Matt Lavin, *Flickr*, flickr.com/photos/plant_diversity/6180951213.)

conclude that we are looking at a North American domesticated grain crop whose existence has not [previously] been suspected."92

117. Corn

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some critics have claimed that references to corn

(Mosiah 9:9) are anachronistic.93

Response: Several varieties of corn were known during Book of

Mormon times.94

118. Grapes

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that grapes (2 Nephi 15:2; 3 Nephi

14:16) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.95

Response: Grapes were known and are mentioned in historical sources. Pre-Columbian specimens have even been recovered from archaeological sites in Mexico.⁹⁶

119. Wine

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that wine (Mosiah 11:15; 22:7; Alma 55:8-11, 30; 3 Nephi 18:2) was completely unknown in pre-Columbian times.⁹⁷

Response: Various kinds of fermented beverages that can be characterized as beers and wines were known and used in pre-Columbian times. ⁹⁸ According to one expert, "There is no reason why the term 'wine' should not be retained to include the many varieties of liquor made by savage and semi-civilized races from the sap of trees. The latex of vegetable stems is sufficiently homologous with the juice of fruits, as that of the grape, to be classified with it in a genus [of beverages] distinct from fermented grain."⁹⁹

120. Salt

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that reference to salt by Jesus (3

Nephi 12:13; 16:15) would have been incomprehensible to the Nephites because salt was unknown in ancient America.¹⁰⁰

Response: Salt was well-known in pre-Columbian times.¹⁰¹

121. Highways

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that references to highways (3 Nephi 6:8; 8:13) is out of place for a book describing an ancient American people.¹⁰²

Response: Many notable examples of extensive highways have been discovered by archaeologists.¹⁰³

122. Roads

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that roads (3 Nephi 6:8; 8:13) were

unknown in pre-Columbian times.104

Response: Roads were well known. 105

123. Leprosy (NW)

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that reference to leprosy (3 Nephi 17:7) in ancient America is implausible.¹⁰⁶

Response: Evidence from Mesoamerican historical texts and pre-Columbian art shows that several skin diseases were known in Mesoamerica that could be described as leprous (see figure 39).¹⁰⁷

124. Machinery

Status: Confirmed (1845–1965)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that the reference to "machinery" (Jarom 1:8) seems out of place in an ancient American text.¹⁰⁸

Response: Several ancient American cultures developed a variety of machines in different industries. While most of these were simple by modern standards, they were nevertheless crucial to their cultural development.¹⁰⁹ When Europeans encountered native societies, they sometimes commented on these peculiar items. For instance, a historical account of a battle between the Spaniards and the Maya of



Figure 39. Image of possible pre-Columbian leprosy. (Scripture Central Staff, "Leprosy.")

Guatemala mentions that the Maya had "several military machines, formed of beams on rollers, to be moved from place to place" to resupply weapons to their army.¹¹⁰

125. Axes

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some Critics have claimed that "axes" (Alma 5:52) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.¹¹¹

Response: Axes were used in ancient Mesoamerica as tools, and are attested in pre-Columbian art from an early period. 112

126. Tools to Spin

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed spinning tools (Mosiah 10:5;

Helaman 6:13) were unknown in ancient America.¹¹³

Response: Spinning tools among pre-Columbian societies are

archaeologically well-attested.114

127. Tools to Till Soil

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that pre-Columbian peoples did not have tools to till the soil (Ether 10:25).¹¹⁵

Response: Tilling tools were known. 116

128. Tools to Hoe

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that ancient Americans did not

have hoeing tools (Ether 10:25).117

Response: Hoeing tools were known and used in pre-Columbian

times.118

129. Tools to Thrash

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that ancient Americans did not

have tools with which to thrash grain (Ether 10:25).119

Response: They did possess grain-thrashing tools in pre-Columbian

times.120

130. Pruning Tools

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that ancient Americans lacked

tools with which to prune (Jacob 6:2).121

Response: Pre-Columbian peoples had pruning tools. 122

131. Tools to Plow

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that pre-Columbian peoples did

not have tools with which to plow (Ether 10:25).123

Response: Plowing can be done without the help of animals and pre-

Columbian peoples had plowing tools.124

132. Sickles

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that sickle tools were completely

unknown to ancient Americans (Alma 26:5).125

Response: Sickle tools were known. 126

133. Many Buildings

Status: Confirmed (1829–1844)

Critics' Claim: Some critics claimed that there were no real buildings (2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 9:8; 11:8-15; 23:5; 3 Nephi 8:14; Ether 10:5-6) in ancient America.¹²⁷

Response: Examples of pre-Columbian buildings in ancient America, including Mesoamerica, are ubiquitous and many examples date to Book of Mormon times.¹²⁸

134. Geographical Correlations

Status: Partially Confirmed (1966-2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that there are no geographical references in the Book of Mormon that match up with any real-world locations.¹²⁹

Response: There is substantial evidence for the geographical information provided by Nephi about their wilderness journey in the Old World (see chapter 6, "Old World Journeys by Land and Sea"). While there is still a great deal of work to be done in terms of the ancient American setting for Book of Mormon events, several potential geographical correlations have been suggested.¹³⁰

135. Navigation

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that ocean navigation (1 Nephi 18:21) was unknown in pre-Columbian times.¹³¹

Response: It has become increasingly apparent that oceanic navigation was practiced for several thousand years in pre-Columbian times.¹³²

136. Lawyers

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that lawyers (Alma 10:14; 3 Nephi 6:11) did not exist in pre-Columbian times.¹³³

Response: Mesoamerican historical and ethnographic sources describe individuals who acted in the role of advocates and prosecutors before judges, which are functionally equivalent to lawyers.¹³⁴

137. Judges

Status: Confirmed (1966–2024)

Critics' Claim: Some have claimed that there were no judges (Mosiah

29:28-29; 3 Nephi 6:21, 23, 25, 27) in pre-Columbian times. 135

Response: Historical and ethnographic sources indicates that there were judges who adjudicated various matters in ancient

Mesoamerica.136

Summary of Results

From 1830 until 1844 a total of eighteen items relating to ancient culture and the Book of Mormon were discussed by writers, only four of which could be confirmed by 1844 (figure 40). In the following 120 years (1845-1965) the number had risen to twenty-eight, six confirmed, three partially confirmed, and nineteen unconfirmed (figure 41). During the last fifty-nine years (1966–2024) there were a total of fifty-three items, forty-six of which were confirmed, two partially confirmed, and five unconfirmed (figure 42).



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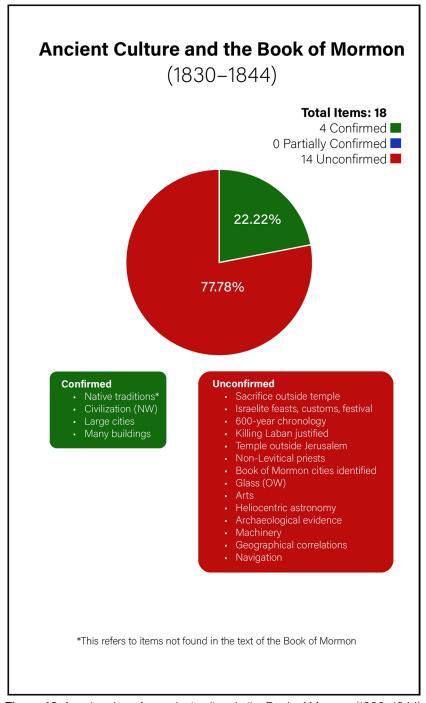


Figure 40. Anachronisms for ancient culture in the Book of Mormon (1830–1844).

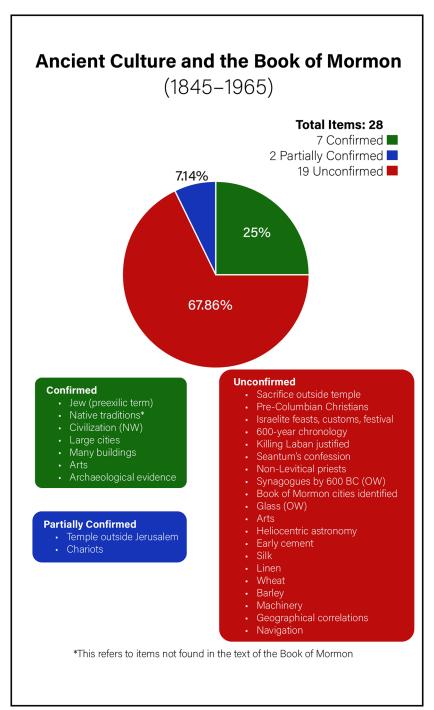


Figure 41. Anachronisms for ancient culture in the Book of Mormon (1845–1965).

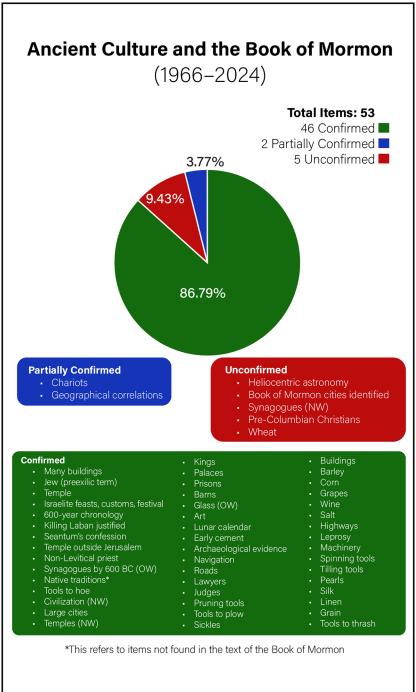


Figure 42. Anachronisms for ancient culture in the Book of Mormon (1966–2024).

Notes

- 1. "Another aspect of this problem is the references in the Book of Mormon to 'the Jews.' Even if it could be established that the term 'Jews' was applied to the Israelites as early as 600 B.C., why would the Israelite Nephi, very early in the Book of Mormon, refer to his own people as 'the Jews' in a way that assumes he is talking about another people?" William D. Russell, "A Further Inquiry into the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," Sunstone 7, no. 5 (1982): 22.
- 2. Yehoshua M. Grintz, "Jew," in Encyclopaedia Judaica, ed. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: MacMillan, 1971-72), 10:22, emphasis added; Solomon Zeitlin, "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," Jewish Quarterly Review 43, no. 4 (1953): 365-79. The term is used in this political sense by the historian of the book of Kings. See 2 Kings 16:6; 25:25. Significantly, the term Jew is used most frequently in the book of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi and Nephi. In his record, the term sometimes appears in a legal or religious context, as when the Jews witnessed a contract made by the prophet (Jeremiah 32:12), or by God when addressing covenant obligations (Jeremiah 34:9). But the term more often occurs in a political context. King Zedekiah, for example, feared those Jews who dissented over to the Babylonians (Jeremiah 38:19). In another instance, a Jewish captain warned his governor that if he was assassinated, "all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish." Jeremiah 40:15; emphasis added. Therefore, Nephi's usage of the term seems entirely appropriate.
- 3. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 287–88.
- 4. Origen Bacheler, *Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally* (New York: printed by the author, 1838), 31.
- Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, 2nd ed. (Boston: Brill, 2014), 1:689; David Rolph Seely, "Lehi's Altar and Sacrifice in the Wilderness," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 10, no. 1 (2001): 62–69, 80; Scripture Central Staff, "Sacrifices Outside Jerusalem," Evidence 120, 15 December 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence /book-of-mormon-evidence-offering-sacrifices-outside-of-jerusalem.
- 6. M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible, or, The Book of Mormon: Is It from God?* (New York: Ward & Drummond, 1887), 320.
- D. P. Singhal, India and World Civilization (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1969), 2:66–67.
- 8. Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 195.
- 9. "We should naturally suppose that, coming, as Lehi and his family are represented to have done, from Jerusalem, there would be some traces of Jewish manners and customs among the people. But we are disappointed. Nephi did, indeed, build a temple, after the manner of Solomon's temple. But we see no account of sacrifices and of national festivals." Jason Whitman, "Notices of Books: The Book of Mormon," The Unitarian 1 (1834): 44, 48. G. B.

- Hancock, Mormonism Exposed (Marionville, MO: A. Doggett, 1902), 71. Jack Free, Mormonism and Inspiration (Concord, CA: Pacific Publishing Company, 1962), 125, wrote, "As important as the Passover was, and is, among all people of Jewish descent, the Book of Mormon (said to be a history of Jewish descendants) makes no mention of its people ever keeping the Passover, nor even hints that its people knew anything about it." J. Roy H. Paterson, Meeting the Mormons: A Study of the Mormon Church in Scotland and Elsewhere (Edinburgh: Home Board of the Church of Scotland, 1965), 43.
- 10. Scripture Central Staff, "Lehi's Sacrifices," Evidence 115, 26 November 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-lehi-s-sacrifices; Scripture Central Staff, "What Sacrifices Did Lehi Offer to God in the Wilderness?," KnoWhy 545, 9 January 2020, scripturecentral.org/knowhy /what-sacrifices-did-lehi-offer-to-god-in-the-wilderness; Scripture Central Staff, "Abinadiand Pentecost," Evidence 156, 22 February 2021, scripture central .org/evidence/abinadi-and-pentecost; Scripture Central Staff, "Autumn Festival," Evidence 65, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence /book-of-mormon-evidence-autumn-festival-context-in-jacob-s-speech; Scripture Central Staff, "Covenant Renewal Formula," Evidence 54, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence -covenant-renewal-formula; Scripture Central Staff, "Mosiah's Coronation," Evidence 56, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of -mormon-evidence-mosiah-s-coronation; Scripture Central Staff, "Peace Treaty," Evidence 172, 22 March 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book -of-mormon-evidence-peace-treaty-in-a-jubilee-year; Scripture Central Staff, "The Passover Tradition," Evidence 43, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral. org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-the-passover-tradition; Scripture Central Staff, "Trumpet and Jubilee," Evidence 171, 22 March 2021, scripture central.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-trumpet-imagery-and-the -year-of-jubilee; Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," in King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom," ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1998), 147-223.
- E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed (Painesville, OH: printed by the author, 1834),
 Andrew B. Hepburn, An Exposition of the Blasphemous Doctrines and Delusions of the So-Called Latter-day Saints, or Mormons (Sheffield, UK: Mary Thomas and Son, 1852), 11–12; William Sheldon, Mormonism Examined [...] (Brodhead, WI: printed by the author, 1876), 7–9; Paul Jones, The Bible and the Book of Mormon (Logan, UT: printed by the author, 1912), 4–6.
- 12. Robert F. Smith, "Book of Mormon Event Structure: The Ancient Near East," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 98–101; John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 270–76.
- 13. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed, 26.
- 14. Scripture Central Staff, "Slaying of Laban," Evidence 99, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-legal-context-of-laban-s-death; Scripture Central Staff, "Was Nephi's Slaying of Laban

- Legal?," KnoWhy 256, 2 January 2017, scripturecentral.org/knowhy /was-nephis-slaying-of-laban-legal; John W. Welch, "Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 119–41; John W. Welch, "Narrative Elements in Homicide Accounts," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 27 (2017): 206–38.
- 15. "At a later period occurred the trial of Nephi for the murder of Seezoram, the Chief Judge. The real murderer was the judge's brother, who is forced to confess by a series of confessions based on threats such as would undoubtedly be rejected by the judge of an English criminal court. Finally comes the statement, 'because of this fear and this paleness which has come upon your face, behold, we know that thou art guilty." James Williams, "The Law of the Book of Mormon," American Law Review 34 (1900): 222.
- 16. See Scripture Central Staff, "Seantum's Trial," Evidence 216, 26 July 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/seantums-trial; John W. Welch, "The Trial of Seantum," in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008), 323–34.
- 17. Sheldon, Mormonism Examined, 69.
- 18. Stephen D. Ricks, "Israel's Alternate Altars: Israelite-Jewish Temples, Sanctuaries, and Shrines beyond Jerusalem," in *Steadfast in Defense of Faith: Essays in Honor of Daniel C. Peterson*, ed. Shirley S. Ricks, Stephen D. Ricks, and Louis C. Midgley (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2023), 319–30. Scripture Central Staff, "Temples Outside Jerusalem," Evidence 165, 15 March 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-temples-outside-jerusalem.
- 19. Shua Kisilevitz and Oded Lipschits, "Another Temple in Judah!," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 46, no. 1 (2020): 40–49.
- 20. Alexander Campbell, "Delusions," in *Millennial Harbinger*, ed. Alexander Campbell (Bethany, VA: printed by the editor, 1831), 2:91; Bacheler, *Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally*, 30–31.
- 21. See, for example, Joshua G. Mathews, *Melchizedek's Alternative Priestly Order:* A Compositional Analysis of Genesis 14:18–20 and Its Echoes throughout the Tanak (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013); Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11–122, 328–30; Carl Edwin Armerding, "Were David's Sons Really Priests?," *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by His Former Students*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 75–86; John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 332–34.
- 22. Marvin A. Sweeny, "Prophets and Priests in the Deuteronomistic History: Elijah and Elisha," in *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History: Portrait, Reality, and the Formation of a History*, ed. Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person Jr. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 35–49; Nicholas P. Lunn, "Prophetic

- Representations of the Divine Presence: The Theological Interpretation of the Elijah-Elisha Cycles," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9, no. 1 (2015): 49–63.
- 23. "Investigation has shown, however, that the origin of the synagogue in Palestine was either during the Exile or more probably during the period of Persian domination after the Exile, though no express mention is made of it until after the second century before Christ.... The Book of Mormon represents Lehi and his family taking something from Jerusalem which did not exist until years after their time." Jones, Bible and the Book of Mormon, 12, see p. 18. See also Arthur Haire Forster, Four Modern Religious Movements (Boston: Gorham Press, 1919), 63; Gordon H. Fraser, What Does the Book of Mormon Teach? (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 73; Latayne Colvette Scott, The Mormon Mirage: A Former Mormon Tells Why She Left the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 83; James R. White, Letters to a Mormon Elder (Port St. Lucie, FL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 1990), 175.
- 24. For example, scholarship has suggested that city gates functioned as a sort of protosynagogue. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 28–33; Scripture Central Staff, "Why Did Alma and Amulek Preach in Synagogues?," KnoWhy 124, 17 June 2016, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/why-did-alma-and-amulek-preach-in-synagogues. See the overview provided by A. Keith Thompson, "Nephite Insights into Israelite Worship Practices before the Babylonian Captivity," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 3 (2013): 155–95, journal .interpreterfoundation.org/nephite-insights-into-israelite-worship-practices -before-the-babylonian-captivity/; William J. Adams Jr., "Synagogues in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 4–13, 76, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss1/3/.
- 25. Scott, Mormon Mirage, 83.
- 26. Sorenson, Ancient American Setting, 236.
- Bacheler, Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally, 33; One Who Hates Imposture, Mormonism Dissected (Bethania, PA: Reuben Chambers, 1841),
 J. M. Burgess, The Book of Mormon Contradictory to Common Sense, Reason, and Revelation (Liverpool: J. Blevin, 1850), 12–13.
- 28. ScriptureCentralStaff, "GreatSpirit," Evidence119,27 November 2020, scripture-central.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-the-great-spirit; Scripture Central Staff, "Horse and Elephant," Evidence 243, 21 September 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/horse-and-elephant; Scripture Central Staff, "Seven Lineages," Evidence 192, 11 May 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-seven-lineages; Scripture Central Staff, "Three Nephites and the Popol Vuh," Evidence 185, 19 April 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-three-nephites-and-the-popol-vuh; Scripture Central Staff, "Traditions of Ocean Migration," Evidence 190, 26 April 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-traditions-of-ocean-migrations; Scripture Central Staff, "Mesoamerican Traditions of Translation," Evidence 134, 7 January 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-mesoamerican-traditions-of-translation.

- 29. Philanthropist of Chester County, Mormonism Unmasked (Philadelphia: T. K. & P. G. Collins, 1840), 5–6. William Robertson, an influential historian in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, stated, "Neither the Mexicans nor Peruvians [were] entitled to rank with those nations that merit the name of civilized." William Robertson, The History of America (London: A. Strahan, 1800), 3:272.
- 30. John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841).
- 31. Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, Maya Explorer: John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and Yucatan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), 75.
- 32. Scripture Central Staff, "Advanced Civilization," Evidence 383, 5 December 2022, scripturecentral.org/evidence/advanced-civilization. For an overview of the context of this argument and its refutation, beginning with nineteenth-century discoveries subsequent to the publication of the Book of Mormon, see Matthew Roper, "Joseph Smith, Central American Ruins, and the Book of Mormon," in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 141–62.
- 33. For a summary of the context of this argument see Roper, "Joseph Smith, Central American Ruins, and the Book of Mormon," 141–62; Peter Bartley, *Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult* (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), 49.
- 34. Scripture Central Staff, "Advanced Civilization"; Marcello A. Canuto et al., "Ancient Lowland Maya Complexity as Revealed by Airborne Laser Scanning of Northern Guatemala," *Science* 361, no. 6409 (2018): 1–17.
- 35. Whitman, "Book of Mormon," 42, 48; Richard D. Hansen et al., "LiDAR Analyses in the Contiguous Mirador-Calakmul Karst Basin, Guatemala: An Introduction to New Perspectives on Regional Early Maya Socioeconomic and Political Organization," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 34, no. 3 (2023): 1–40.
- 36. John E. Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 42–43.
- 37. Thomas Key, *The Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 15th ed. (Marlow, OK: Utah Missions, 1997), 67.
- 38. Many kinds of Mesoamerican temples were known. Laurette Sejourne, "El templo prehispánico," *Cuadernos americanos* 149 (1966): 129–67; Scripture Central Staff, "Mesoamerican Temples," Evidence 257, 15 October 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/mesoamerican-temples.
- 39. Gordon H. Fraser, Is Mormonism Christian? (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 142.
- 40. Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008); Linda Schele and Mary Ellen Miller, The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art (New York: George Braziller; Fort Worth, TX: Kimbell Art Museum, 1986); Linda Schele and David Freidel, A Forest of Kings (New York: William Morrow, 1990); Linda Schele and Peter Mathews,

- The Code of Kings (New York: Scribner, 1998); Scripture Central Staff, "Why Did Nephi's People Want Him to Be a King?," KnoWhy 717, 13 February 2024, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/why-did-nephis-people-want-him-to-be-a-king.
- 41. Fraser, Is Mormonism Christian?, 142.
- 42. Jessica Joyce Christie, ed., *Maya Palaces and Elite Residences: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).
- 43. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 67.
- 44. Prisons are described in Mesoamerican historical sources. W. George Lovell, Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala: A Historical Geography of the Cuchumatan Highlands, 1500–1821, rev. ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 50–51; Geronimo de Mendietta, Historia Eclesiastica Indiana: A Franciscan's View of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, ed. and trans. Felix Jay (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 44–45; Scripture Central Staff, "Treatment of Prisoners," Evidence 220, 31 July 2021, scripturecentral .org/evidence/treatment-of-prisoners.
- 45. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 67.
- 46. Jacques Soustelle, *The Daily Life of the Aztecs* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1955), 161.
- 47. Lynn V. Foster, *Handbook to Life in the Ancient Maya World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 311.
- 48. This was "ages before glass was invented." Bacheler, Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally, 27; William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed (Warsaw, IL: Sharp & Gamble, 1841), 13; Amos H. Wickersham, An Examination of the Principles of Mormonism (Wilmington, DE: Allderidge, Jeandell, & Miles, 1843), 14–15; T. W. P. Taylder, The Mormon's Own Book (London: Partridge, Oakey, 1855), 13; Lamb, Golden Bible, 81; Enos T. Hall, The Mormon Bible (Columbus: Fred J. Heer, 1899), 14; Harry M. Beardsley, Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 77; George B. Arbaugh, Gods, Sex, and Saints (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1957), 21; Stuart Martin, The Mystery of Mormonism (London: Odhams Press, 1920), 166; Marvin Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered (Salt Lake City: printed by the author, 1979), 44; Peter Vokac, "More on the Nephites and the Book of Mormon," Biblical Archaeology Review 14, no. 6 (1988): 18.
- 49. CarolynWilke, "TheAncientOriginsofGlass," *KnowableMagazine*,18November 2021.
- 50. Bruce Bower, "Glassmaking May Have Begun in Egypt, Not Mesopotamia," Science News, 22 November 2016, sciencenews.org/article/glassmaking -may-have-begun-egypt-not-mesopotamia; Jeanette Varberg, "Between Egypt, Mesopotamia and Scandinavia: Late Bronze Age Glass Beads Found in Denmark," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 54 (2015): 168–81. See also Katherine T. Faber et al., "Looking Back, Looking Forward: Materials Science in Art, Archaeology, and Art Conservation," *Annual Review of Materials Research* 51 (2021): 435–60; Dan Klein and Ward Lloyd, *The History of Glass* (London: Orbis, 1984), 9–10.

- 51. See Marc N. Levine and David M. Carballo, eds., *Obsidian Reflections: Symbolic Dimensions of Obsidian in Mesoamerica* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014).
- 52. Helen R. Haines and Michael D. Glascock, "A Glass Menagerie of Meaning: Obsidian Exchange in Mesoamerica," in *The Maya in a Mesoamerican Context: Comparative Approaches to Maya Studies*, ed. Christophe Helmke and Jesper Nielsen (Markt Schwaben, Germany: Verlag Anton Saurwein, 2013), 198.
- 53. Betty J. Meggers, Ecuador (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), 56.
- 54. John J. McGraw, "Stones of Light: The Use of Crystals in Maya Divination," in Manufactured Light: Mirrors in the Mesoamerican Realm, ed. Emiliano Gallaga M. and Marc G. Blainey (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016), 207–8.
- 55. McGraw, "Stones of Light," 208-9.
- 56. Philanthropist of Chester County, Mormonism Unmasked, 5.
- 57. Mary Ellen Miller, *The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmecto Aztec*, 5thed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012); Mary Ellen Miller and Megan E. O'Neil, *Maya Art and Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014).
- 58. Lamb. Golden Bible. 235-36.
- 59. Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 42.
- 60. Roland de Vaux, *Social Institutions*, vol.1, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 183.
- 61. Mary Ellen Miller and Karl Taube, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya: An Illustrated Dictionary of Mesoamerican Religion* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 52.
- 62. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 67.
- 63. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, April 1929, 129.
- 64. Sophisticated cement technologies were known and used as early as the time of the Book of Mormon. David S. Hyman, *Precolumbian Cements: A Study of the Calcareous Cements in Prehispanic Mesoamerican Building and Construction* (PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 1970), i–ii; Scripture Central Staff, "Cement," Evidence 103, 19 September 2020, scripture central.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-cement; Scripture Central Staff, "When Did Cement Become Commonin Ancient America?," KnoWhy 174, 26 August 2016, scripture central.org/knowhy/when-did-cement-become-common-in-ancient-america.
- 65. One early critic complained that the Book of Mormon contains "no dates, localities, or connection of any sort with sober history." E. Henderson, *A Theological Dictionary Containing Definitions of All Religions and Ecclesiastical Terms* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1841), 538; Taylder, *Mormon's Own Book*, 8–9. Clark Braden said, "There are no relics, no remains, no fossils to sustain the Book of Mormon." E. L. Kelley and Clark Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Church of Christ* [...] (St. Louis, MO: Clark Braden, 1884), 171. See W. L. Crowe,

- The Mormon Waterloo (St. Paul, NE: printed by the author, 1902), 99–101; Samuel W. Traum, Mormonism against Itself (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1910), 141–42; Hal Hougey, Archaeology and the Book of Mormon (Concord, CA: Pacific Publishing, 1976), 3–24; Floyd C. McElveen, The Mormon Illusion (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1983), 60–65; Fraser, Is Mormonism Christian?, 143.
- 66. Among the archaeological evidence supporting the Book of Mormon are evidence for the account of the journey in the wilderness (including the site of Nahom, whose name is attested on ancient inscriptions dating to an appropriate time), attestations of other Book of Mormon names, and archaeological and cultural data from ancient America. See Scripture Central Staff, "Nahom," Evidence 163, 9 March 2021, scripture central.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-nahom; Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," 38–49, 71–74.
- 67. John A. Price, "The Book of Mormon vs. Anthropological Prehistory," *Indian Historian* 7, no. 3 (1974): 38; Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian*?, 142.
- 68. Royal Skousen's suggestion that the chariots refer to some kind of cart is persuasive. Royal Skousen, *The Nature of the Original Language*, part 4 of *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Studies, 2018), 721–25.
- 69. Desire Charnay, The Ancient Cities of the New World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 170–76. For an overview, see John L. Sorenson, Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013), 350–56, fig. 16.1.
- 70. Gordon F. Ekholm, "Wheeled Toys in Mexico," *American Antiquity* 11, no. 4 (1946): 222–28; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 350–56.
- 71. Carmelo Saenz de Santa Maria, ed., *Obras historicas de Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman*, (Madrid: Real Academia Espanola, 1972), 2:292.
- 72. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 70-71.
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- 79. Ricardo Ayerza Jr. and Wayne Coates, Chia: Rediscovering a Forgotten Crop of the Aztecs (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 43–80; Joseph P. Cahill, "Genetic Diversity among Varieties of Chia (Salvia hispanica L.)," Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution 51, no. 7 (2004): 773–81; Arthur Fisher, "Preserving a Diverse Lineage," Mosaic 13, no. 3 (1982): 50; John Sorenson, "Vive Zapato! Hurray for the Shoe!," Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6, no. 1 (1994), 338–39, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol6/iss1/11/.
- 80. Lamb, *Golden Bible*, 304; Charles A. Shook, *Cumorah Revisited* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1910), 382–83; Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism*, 55; Reed and Farkas, *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse*, 110.
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- 82. Shook, Cumorah Revisited, 382-83.
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- 94. Maize, a form of corn, was a central crop in Mesoamerica by at least the Early Preclassic period. Michael D. Coe, *Mexico*, 3rd ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1982), 37–42: "Maize may have been in use in Mexico as early as 7000 BCE." Chinique de Armas et al., "Starch Analysis and Isotopic Evidence of Consumption of Cultigens among Fisher-Gatherers in Cuba," 121.
- 95. Price, "Book of Mormon vs. Anthropological Prehistory," 38; Martin, *Maze of Mormonism*, 56; Jackson, "More on the Nephites and the Book of Mormon," 14–15; Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 15.

- 96. Alejandro C. Martínez Muriel, "Don Martín, Chiapas: Inferencias económico -sociales de una comunidad arqueológica" (master's thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1978), 125; Karla G. Huerta-Acosta et al., "The Genetic Diversity of Wild Grapes in Mexico," Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution 69 (2022): 1329-47; Scripture Central Staff, "Wine and Vineyards," Evidence 101, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-ofmormon-evidence-wine-and-vineyards. According to Shufeldt, Reports of Explorations and Surveys, 120, 126, "There is a native grape of a black color, a very tough skin, round, and rather larger than our Concord grape. It grows wild in great abundance, and, considering that it is unimproved by cultivation, is quite eatable and very juicy. At San Andres a wine is made of it, which is said to resemble claret, and competent judges declare it to be very good. . . . In the town of Santa Maria Chimalapa ... the liquor most in common use is known as aguardiente, or chinguirito, is colorless, and has the flavor of rum, for it is made from the juice of the sugar-cane. In nearly every Indian hut a primitive still is kept for this purpose."
- 97. Price, "Book of Mormon vs. Anthropological Prehistory," 38; Martin, *Maze of Mormonism*, 56; Jackson, "More on the Nephites and the Book of Mormon," 14–15; Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 15.
- 98. Scripture Central Staff, "Wine and Vineyards."
- 99. A. E. Crawley. "Drinks, Drinking," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1951), 5:73; Weston La Barre, "Native American Beers," *American Anthropologist* 40, no. 2 (1938): 224–34. Cacao was used in Preclassic times to make alcoholic beverages. Research by John Henderson and Rosemary Joyce show that cacao was used in northern Honduras from 1200 to 1100 BC. Rosemary A. Joyce and John Henderson, "From Feasting to Cuisine: Implications of Archaeological Research in an Early Honduran Village," *American Anthropologist* 109, no. 4 (2007): 642. Terry G. Powis et al., "The Origins of Cacao Use in Mesoamerica," *Mexicon* 30, no. 2 (2008): 36, pointed out, "It is important to note here that these cacao beverages were most likely fermented or alcoholic."
- 100. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 21–22.
- 101. Salt was a valued commodity in pre-Columbian times, and archaeology has revealed evidence of salt mining. Susan Kepecs, "Salt Sources and Production," in *The Postclassic Mesoamerican World*, ed. Michael E. Smith and Francis F. Berdan (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 126–30; Brian D. Dillon, Kevin O. Pope, and Michael W. Love, "An Ancient Extractive Industry: Maya Salt Making at Salinas de las Nueve Cerros, Guatemala," *Journal of New World Archaeology* 7, nos. 2–3 (1988): 37–41; Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala*, 50–51; Heather McKillop, "Underwater Archaeology, Salt Production, and Coastal Maya Trade at Stingray Lagoon, Belize," *Latin American Antiquity* 6, no. 3 (1995): 214–28. See also Scripture Central Staff, "Salt," Evidence 397, 21 March 2023, scripturecentral.org/evidence/salt.
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- 103. Lidar analysis has revealed over 177 kilometers of elevated Preclassic causeways in the Mirador Basin. Hansen et al., "LiDAR Analyses," 1–40; Scripture

- Central Staff, "Highways," Evidence 93, 19 September 2020, scripturecentral .org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-highways.
- 104. Scott, Mormon Mirage, 81-82.
- 105. See the information on highways in item 121.
- 106. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 47–48.
- 107. Scripture Central Staff, "Leprosy," Evidence 189, 26 April 2021, scripturecentral. org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-leprosy; Eduard Seler, "Leprosy in Old Mexican Documents," in *Eduard Seler, Collected Works in Mesoamerican Linguistics and Archaeology*, ed. Frank E. Comparato (Culver City, CA: Labyrinthos, 1991), 2:55–56; Annette I. Kern, Karl Kramer, and Ortwin Smailus, "Of Curing and Vultures," in *A Celebration of the Life and Work of Pierre Robert Colas*, ed. Christophe Helmke and Frauke Sachse (Munich: Saurwein, 2014), 294–95.
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- 111. Fraser, What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?, 59, 61.
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- 113. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 67.
- 114. StacieM.King, "ThreadProductioninEarlyPostclassicCoastalOaxaca,Mexico: Technology, Intensity, and Gender," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 22, no. 2 (2011): 323–43; Sharisse D. McCafferty and Geoffrey G. McCafferty, "Spinning and Weaving Tools from Santa Isabel, Nicaragua," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 19, no. 1 (2008): 143–56; Sharisse D. McCafferty and Geoffrey G. McCafferty, "Tickle Your Fancy? Spinning Feathers in Postclassic Cholula, Mexico" (paper prepared for the 64th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Chicago, March 1999).
- 115. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 68.

- 116. Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 175-204.
- 117. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 68.
- 118. Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 175-204.
- 119. Scott, Mormon Mirage, 83-84.
- 120. Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 196. See item 114, discussing grain.
- 121. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 68.
- 122. Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 175-204.
- 123. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 68.
- 124. Plowing was done by human means, and tools for plowing were known. Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 175–204. Furthermore, the disadvantages of lacking draft animals for transportation purposes may be less severe than may be assumed. See David C. Batten, "Horse Power: Wheat, Oats, Maize, and the Supply of Cities," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 10, no. 1 (1999): 99–103.
- 125. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 68.
- 126. Angel Palerm, "Agricultural Systems and Food Patterns," in Social Anthropology, ed. Manning Nash, Handbook of Middle American Indians (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 26–52; Rabiela, "Agricultural Implements," 175–204; Brian Hayden, "Past to Present Uses of Stone Tools in the Maya Highlands," in Lithic Studies among the Contemporary Highland Maya, ed. Brian Harden (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 160–234.
- 127. Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 67.
- 128. Canuto et al., "Ancient Lowland Maya Complexity," 1–17; Scripture Central Staff, "Advanced Civilization"; Roper, "Joseph Smith, Central American Ruins, and the Book of Mormon." 141–62.
- 129. Whitman, "Book of Mormon," 42, 48.
- 130. Evidence for the geographical setting for Lehi's journey through the wilderness is well grounded. Research on the ancient American setting for the Book of Mormon, while not definitive, continues to prove fruitful. See Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 138–89; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 119–43.
- 131. Philanthropist of Chester County, Mormonism Unmasked, 5-6.
- 132. Sonia Lombardo de Ruiz, "La navegacion en la iconografía maya," *Arqueología Mexicana* 6, no. 33 (1998): 40–47. Of course, the art of navigation need not have been derived from the Old World as some early readers assumed.
- 133. Thomas Key, A Biologist Looks at the Book of Mormon (Marlow, OK: Utah Missions, 1985), 5; Key, Book of Mormon in the Light of Science, 65.
- 134. Diego López Cogolludo, Los tres siglos de la dominacion española en Yucatan [...] (Campeche, MX: José María Peralta, 1842), 1:235, translated and quoted in Philip Ainsworth Means, History of the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan and of the Itzas (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1917), 13; Diego de Landa, Landa's Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan, ed. and trans. Alfred M. Tozzer (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1941),

- 231; Sandra Orellana, *The Tzutujil Mayas: Continuity and Change, 1250–1630* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 91; Scripture Central Staff, "Lawyers," Evidence 223, 9 August 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence /lawyers.
- 135. Key, Biologist Looks at the Book of Mormon, 5.
- 136. Francisco Avalos, "An Overview of the Legal System of the Aztec Empire," Law Library Journal 86, no. 2 (1994): 259–76; Bernardino de Sahagún, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex, trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe: School of American Research; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961), 11:15–16; Landa's Relación, 231; Orellana, Tzutujil Mayas, 92; Scripture Central Staff, "Mesoamerican Judges," Evidence 230, 30 August 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence /mesoamerican-judges.

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