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Title

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Abstract Review of *Mapping the Action Found in the Book of Mormon* (1987), by Harold K. Nielsen.

Harold K. Nielsen, author and compiler, *Mapping the Action Found in the Book of Mormon*. Orem, UT: Cedar Fort, 1987. v + 106 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by John L. Sorenson

This 106-page book was compiled to help readers of the Book of Mormon "visually see the names of peoples and places and travels in relation to each other" in order to contribute to their interest in and understanding of the scriptures. The format has a map, generated on a computer, on each right-hand page facing a text consisting of a 10-70 word synopsis of each chapter of the Book of Mormon (more historical and geographical than the chapter synopses in the present edition of the scripture). For example, Map 9 refers to synopses of Alma 5-15 which face it. On the standardized base map(s) are marked sites and routes referred to in that section of the text with brief action notes adjacent on the map. No maps are provided to accompany the synopses between Helaman 5 and 4 Nephi 1:47, nor is one given for the Book of Ether. At the end are chronological and alphabetical lists of scriptural "clues" used to construct the maps.

Heavy paper covers and a rugged spiral binding which allows the pages to lie flat make the little volume very functional. The text is easy to read (there are a few typos), the maps less so, although even they are usable by a determined student with unhampered eyesight.

A specific disclaimer is given at the beginning that there is no intention to identify places in terms of present-day geography, since "the whole face of the land was changed" at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (although three of the maps date after that event and display the same features as those dating B.C.).

When the maps are viewed as a purely internal geography, as the author intends, we immediately see how complex Book of Mormon geography is. Errors, omissions, and arbitrary assumptions show through despite the years of study the author must have put into preparing the work. Joseph Smith, of course, handled the subject far more consistently in the few weeks he spent dictating most of the book!

Some physical features are placed on the map quite arbitrarily. For example, the river Sidon is shown beginning almost at the east sea coast, where no mountains are indicated

even though the head of the river was “away up” (Alma 16:6). The river then flows northwest to exit into the west sea, despite the lack of any hint of that in the text.

The maps also fail to accommodate many “clues” or requirements from the scriptures. A few examples are (1) the map’s placement of Shemlon (within sight of Nephi, Mosiah 11:12; 19:6), Shilom, and Lehi-Nephi does not square with the account in the book of Mosiah of Lamanite armies from Shemlon coming “up” through or around Shilom to attack Zeniff’s people in Lehi-Nephi (Mosiah 10:7-8, 20; 19:6). (2) While the people of Ammon were moved into Melek to protect them against Lamanite attack, Maps 16 and 17 have them completely vulnerable in their new land, as an enemy army passes almost over them. (3) Regarding the city of Aaron, linked geographically to both Ammonihah and Nephihah (Alma 8:13; 50:14), the author inserts two separate Aarons, without textual warrant. (4) The cities of Judea, Antiparah, Cumeni, and Zeezrom are in the same “quarter of the land” with Manti (Alma 58:1, 30-31), and all are strategic points keeping Lamanite armies from moving down on Zarahemla (Alma 56:14-15, 24-25); Map 21 fails completely to make sense of this. (5) The distance separating Zarahemla, the hill Amnihu and Gideon (one long day’s travel—Alma 2:15-16, 20, 26-27) shows up as at least twice the three-day distance between Melek and Ammonihah (Alma 8:6). (6) Limhi’s exploring party, which reached the Jaredite battleground, is neither mentioned nor mapped, presumably being “too hot to handle.”

Perhaps these geographical difficulties do not harm the author’s purpose, but the alert reader’s faith in the author’s mastery of his subject and of the reliability of the maps generated may be undermined as a result.