Book of Mormon Event Structure: The Ancient Near East

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The Book of Mormon annals open in an ancient Near Eastern context. The archaeological-historical context is carefully outlined here within a systematic chronology that is tied to fixed, absolute dates of recorded astronomical events—particularly those from cuneiform eponym calendars. The resultant matrix allows those early Book of Mormon events to be understood in a rational, familiar, and meaningful way—that is, in a biblical context. In addition, an excursus is devoted to understanding the Arabia of the Book of Mormon as the Lehite exiles must have known it. Throughout it is clear that the world depicted by the Book of Mormon dovetails remarkably well with what we know of the ancient Near East.
Book of Mormon Event Structure: The Ancient Near East

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Abstract: The Book of Mormon annals open in an ancient Near Eastern context. The archaeological-historical context is carefully outlined here within a systematic chronology that is tied to fixed, absolute dates of recorded astronomical events—particularly those from cuneiform eponym calendars. The resultant matrix allows those early Book of Mormon events to be understood in a rational, familiar, and meaningful way, i.e., in a biblical context. In addition, an excursus is devoted to understanding the Arabia of the Book of Mormon as the Lehite exiles must have known it. Throughout it is clear that the world depicted by the Book of Mormon dovetails remarkably well with what we know of the ancient Near East.

This technical, bibliographical paper outlines the main events that occurred in the ancient Near East around the time of Lehi and Nephi and their immediate ancestors and is designed to aid in examining the strictures within which one must set the upper end of the Nephite chronological scale, i.e., the date of departure of Lehi from Jerusalem. In the course of doing that, I provide a consistent system of dating, along with some readily available sources, which

Nearly two decades ago, Professor John L. Sorenson asked me to prepare this piece as part of his larger program to place Book of Mormon events in real time and space. I especially wish to thank Cynthia Booras, Rebecca M. Flinders, and Marc-Charles Ingerson for their help in preparing this paper for publication.
the enterprising student will want to consult. Other modern sources differ only slightly in their accounts of these ancient Near Eastern dates and events, and I have covered some of the more important differences of opinion where appropriate. It must be emphasized, however, that most of the dates presented here are based upon and carefully tied to fixed, absolute dates of recorded astronomical events. As Jay Huber has pointed out, the interlocking nature of these astronomical events and the consequent “correlation between the Babylonian and Julian calendars” is in no way mere happenstance.¹

Given the nature of the Nephite annals, establishing the beginning of the scale is the sine qua non for understanding the entire spectrum of Book of Mormon dates. It is not only that Lehi was called to prophetic office “in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah” (1 Nephi 1:4, 2 Kings 24:17–18), but that he left Jerusalem in that same first year—fully six hundred “years” before the birth of Jesus Christ (3 Nephi superscription, 1:1; 2:6)—and the Book of Mormon applies a carefully computed and methodically recorded countdown to the date of that prophesied birth (1 Nephi 10:4, 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19; Helaman 14:2). Not only does any suggestion that we are dealing with “round-number” dating in the Book of Mormon seem implausible, but, among scholars, there is not the slightest question about the absolute status of 597 B.C. as the year when Nebuchadrezzar II first placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah. Aware of this scholarly unanimity, the Rev. Mr. Wesley P. Walters succinctly stated the dilemma for the Book of Mormon:

Smith was unaware that Zedekiah must be dated at 597 B.C. instead of the 600 B.C. date the Book of Mormon assigns him. He was unaware that the birth of Christ must now be placed some time prior to 4 B.C., ... so he wove into the fabric of the book a modern chronological error. The error was Dionysius Exiguus’, who set up the present system of dating time from the

birth of Christ in the sixth century A.D. He mistakenly equated A.D. 1 with the Roman year 754 (A.U.C.), whereas Herod the Great had died four years earlier in the Roman year 750 (A.U.C.); or, in 4 B.C. by our present dating system. The only way scholars can correct this error is to date the actual birth of Christ prior to 4 B.C., yielding less than 593 years between Zedekiah and the birth of Jesus.²

While certainly correct in stating that less than 593 solar years can be fitted between those two ends of the scale, and in suggesting that the consensus among scholars is that Herod died in early 4 B.C.,³ Walters was unaware that, within the predominant Mesoamerican calendar, “reckoning was not by those [365-day] years, but by tuns (360 days),”⁴ i.e., 600 Mayan tuns = 591.4 solar years, as correlated with the Book of Mormon first by Professor John L. Sorenson.⁵ No other “year”-system accommodates the

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² Independence (Mo) Examiner, 17 September 1977 (Church of Christ ad); Apostle Orson Pratt had long before noted the very same dating error of Dionysius in JD 15:254–55 (29 December 1872).


facts, and a similar 360-day count may already have been familiar to Lehi in the ancient Near East. Of course, Joseph Smith knew nothing of the ancient Mayan Long Count (so also with the redoubtable Orson Pratt, who came closer than anyone to an early and successful solution to the chronological question). Thus, evidence at first seemingly counter to the Book of Mormon, turns out on closer examination to be astonishingly favorable to its authenticity!

The following collection of data can be used to assist in discussion and further research on the upper end of the Nephite chronological scale. The main body of this paper covers the period from 793 to 445 B.C.,\(^6\) to which is appended an excursus on the Lehite sojourn in Arabia.

**Book of Mormon Event Structure: Ancient Near East**

**793–752 B.C.** Jeroboam II, king of Israel (coregent 793–782); late in his reign, in the mid-eighth century, the prophets Amos and Hosea began to preach in the Northern Kingdom where social and religious decay were rampant.\(^7\)

**792–740 B.C.** Uzziah/Azariah, king of Judah (accession to throne in 792, while his father was held captive by Israel), with his son, Jotham, coregent from 750 B.C. until his death.\(^8\) David Noel Freedman says that seismologists and

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archaeologists estimate the great earthquake in the land (Amos 1:1) at about 8.0 on the Richter scale.9

776 B.C. First Olympiad; Coroebus of Elis wins the only race (200 m dash).

c. 767 B.C. Pharaoh Shoshenq V, ruler of the eastern delta (ca. 767–730 B.C.; 22nd Dynasty).10

763 B.C. Eclipse, 15 June 763 B.C., in the 10th year of Ashur-dan III.11

753 B.C. Founding of the city of Rome (legendary) = 0 A.U.C. (ab urbe condita); year begins on April 21 festival; from 152 B.C. (601 A.U.C.), the year began when the consul took office (generally January 1, in the Julian calendar).

753–713 B.C. Pi‘ankhi [Pi, Piye, Paanchy], pharaoh of Nubian Dynasty 25, from Napata. He conquered all of Egypt; also called Userma‘atre, Menkheperre, and Seneferefret; he was the father of Shebitku and Taharqa; the Great Stele of Piankhy is dated to his 21st year = 734 B.C.;12 cf. Nibley on the ca. 1085 B.C., Dynasty 21 high-priest ‘Amon-Pi‘ankhy, whom

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Klaus Baer accepted as the son of Ḫerihor\textsuperscript{13}—though formerly saying he was not the son, but merely the successor to Ḫerihor.\textsuperscript{14}

**753–752 B.C.**

Zechariah, king of Israel, on death of his father Jeroboam, but was murdered within six months by Shallum ben Jabesh (752), who was in turn killed a month later by Menahem ben Gadi (752), all of which led to civil war.\textsuperscript{15}

**752–742 B.C.**

Menahem, king of Israel.\textsuperscript{16}

**752–732 B.C.**

Pekah ben Remaliah (Pakaha), rival king of Israel from Gilead; allied with Rezin of Damascus, against Assyria, and against Ahaz of Judah (for refusal to join their coalition).\textsuperscript{17} Took throne in Samaria from Pekahiah in 740 B.C. after assassinating him.\textsuperscript{18}

**750–732 B.C.**

Jotham, king of Judah (coregent 750–740 B.C., and overlapped with the Assyrian favorite, Ahaz, 735–732). Isaiah called as prophet to Judah (740–ca. 688 B.C.). Micah called as prophet to Judah around the same time as Isaiah, and he preached into the reign of Hezekiah.\textsuperscript{19}

**747 B.C.**

King Nabonassar of Babylon—his era begins.

**745–727 B.C.**

Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul), king of Assyria\textsuperscript{20} His inscription (ca. 735 B.C.) mentions the Arabic cities of Taymāʾ and Maššāʾ,\textsuperscript{21} the latter of which is the city of the only biblical Lemuel (Lemuʾel).\textsuperscript{22}


\textsuperscript{14} Klaus Baer, “The Mind of Ancient Egypt: Time,” Question and Answer Session, 21 August 1974, Education Week, BYU—contra Budge and Wilson.


\textsuperscript{17} Bright, *History of Israel*, 273.


\textsuperscript{19} Bright, *History of Israel*, 288–98; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 131–33.
742–740 B.C. Pekahiah, king of Israel, on death of his father, but was soon assassinated by Pekah ben Remaliah, his rival as well as his officer in Gilead.23

735–715 B.C. Ahaz, king of Judah as a vassal state to Assyria.24 Overlap of reign with Jotham, 735–732, due to pro-Assyrian faction.25 Edom was lost during the reign of Ahaz.26

734 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Gezer (Gazru) during his coastal campaign through Phoenicia and Philistia, and it is depicted on his palace relief at Nimrud and mentioned in his eponym calendar for that year.27

733–716 B.C. Accession of King Osorkon IV in Eastern Delta, Egypt; 22nd Dynasty.28

732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) destroyed Damascus and captured much of northern Israel (2 Kings 15:29, 16:9).29

20 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 125.
21 Frederick V. Winnett and William L. Reed, Ancient Records from North Arabia (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970), 101.
23 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 128–29.
24 Bright, History of Israel, 276.
25 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 133–34, 152.
29 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 151.
**SMITH, BOOK OF MORMON EVENT STRUCTURE**

732–723 B.C. Hoshea ben Elah, king of Israel, after killing Pekah; he immediately surrendered and paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III.\(^{30}\) Destruction of Megiddo IV and Hazor V by Pul in 733/732 B.C., with the coast, Galilee, and Transjordan converted into Assyrian provinces: Dor, Megiddo, and Gilead.\(^{31}\)

727–722 B.C. Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria.\(^{32}\)

725/724 B.C. King Hoshea taken prisoner by Shalmaneser V, after having allied himself with Egypt.\(^{33}\) Shechem destroyed 725/724 B.C. by the Assyrians.\(^{34}\) Siege laid to Samaria by Shalmaneser V.\(^{35}\)

722 B.C. Destruction of Samaria (Shamarain) and Northern Kingdom by Shalmaneser V, with deportation of northern tribes in 721 to Upper Mesopotamia and Media by Sargon II. Israel is never heard from again (2 Kings 17:5–6).\(^{36}\)

722–705 B.C. Sargon II, king of Assyria (from late December 722).\(^{37}\)

721 B.C. Eclipse 19 March 721 B.C., the first year of Mardokempados = 27th year of Nabonassar Era.\(^{38}\)

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30 Bright, History of Israel, 275; Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 134–38, 163–72.
32 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 125.
33 Bright, History of Israel, 275.
34 Ibid., 276.
35 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 163.
37 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 163–64.
38 Ibid., 229.
720 B.C. Stele of Paanchi (Pianchi) 11:1-6 (ca. 720 B.C.)//Jeremiah 1:4-5 (cf. Isaiah 49:5) // Stele of Darius I (ca. 522-486 B.C.), Tel el-Maskhuta, Egypt (near Ismailiya); these documents all share a common motif. Eclipses 8 March and 1 September 720 B.C., 2nd year of Mardokempados = 28th year of Nabonassar Era.

717 B.C. Carchemish ("City-of-Chemish") destroyed by Sargon II.

715-686 B.C. Hezekiah, king of Judah.

ca. 715 B.C. It'amra, king of Saba', South Arabia; contemporary with Sargon II of Assyria. Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II mention South Arabian queens Zabibe and Samsi, i.e., Saba' allied with Aribi. Sargon II mentions a Pharaoh who is possibly Bocchoris of the 24th Dynasty.

715-701 B.C. King Hezekiah of Judah centralized worship and "took away" the "high places" (bāmōt, 2 Kings 18:22), which may have included the razing to bedrock of the strata II and III temple at Tel Be'er Sheba', the stratum II altar being the best remaining evidence for it; Tel Sheba III = Tel Gezer VI = Israelite Iron II bc (eight and ninth centuries B.C.);

41 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 229.
42 Ibid., 174–76.
46 Bright, History of Israel, 281 n. 32.
Tel Sheba II = Lachish III = 'Arād VII = Israelite Iron II c (eighth century B.C.).

713 B.C.

Piankhy died by this date at the latest, 717/716 at the earliest, and Shabako² conquered all of Egypt by his second year (at least by 712 B.C.); Sargon II mentions Shilkannii/ Osorkon IV 'Akheperre' in 716 B.C. as Pharaoh, 22nd Dynasty, but in 712 B.C. is dealing with a king of Egypt who also rules Kush-Nubia, i.e., Shabako² (Piankhy never ruled north of Abydos and the Thebaid, and never met the Assyrians on his raid into North Egypt against King Tefnakht in 734 B.C. [Piye’s 20th year]). Shebitku became king in 702/701 B.C.²⁸

712 B.C.

Sargon II of Assyria negotiates with the Pir’u of Musri (the Pharaoh of Egypt), Shabako² of Nubia and Egypt (717/716–702/701 over Nubia, and 716/715 [or 713/712]–702/701 B.C. over all Egypt), who had recently defeated Osorkon IV, king of Northern Egypt (ending Dynasty 22).²⁹

705–681 B.C.

Sennacherib of Assyria (Sanherib),⁵⁰ upon death of Sargon; Hezekiah then allies himself

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with Egypt and prepares for rebellion. Aramaic *Wisdom of Ahiqar* dates itself to the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon.\(^51\)

Sometime after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., in “year 15,” oil and wine tax receipts (the Samaria Ostraca), containing seven of the clan names of the tribe of Manasseh known from Numbers 26:28–32 and Joshua 17:1–2, were produced in the north. Naturally this brings to mind that Lehi is of the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3). Archaeologist Bryant Wood takes this as evidence “that customs from Israel’s earlier tribal history survived well into the kingdom period.”\(^52\)


\[
\text{Shebitku king of Egypt; not coregent with Taharqa as erroneously suggested by John Bright;} \quad \text{\(702/701-690/689\) B.C.}
\]

Shebitku died in 690/689 B.C., and was immediately succeeded by his brother Taharqa.\(^54\)


\[
\text{Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) III was destroyed ca. \(701\) B.C. by Sennacherib of Assyria, which ended most of the production by Hezekiah of the famous lmlk storage jars.} \quad \text{\(701\) B.C.}
\]

Heavy tribute paid by Hezekiah to Sennacherib.

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\(^{52}\) Wood, “Biblical Archaeology’s Greatest Achievement,” 34.

\(^{53}\) Cf. Bright, *History of Israel*, Chronology Chart VI, with Shebitku dying 685/684 B.C.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>696–642 B.C.</td>
<td>Reign of King Manasseh of Judah (probably coregent 696–686); the prophets Zephaniah and Nahum (Naḥum) are contemporary; Manasseh paid tribute to both Esarhaddon and Asshurbanipal of Assyria; Manasseh sacrificed his own son by fire, among other pagan practices (2 Kings 21:6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690/689 B.C.</td>
<td>Accession of Pharaoh Taharqa (690–664 B.C.; biblical Tirhakah), following the death of his brother, Shebitku.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 688 B.C.</td>
<td>Death of Isaiah, following an unsuccessful campaign by Sennacherib of Assyria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>687 B.C.</td>
<td>Death of Hezekiah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 685 B.C.</td>
<td>Kariba'îl, king of Saba' (biblical Sheba/ Yemen), a contemporary of Sennacherib of Assyria. Biblical references to South Arabia can be found in 1 Kings 10:1–15, as well as in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Song of Songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>681/680 B.C.</td>
<td>Esarhaddon, king of Assyria (681–669 B.C.) upon assassination of Sennacherib. Esarhaddon established vassal treaties, 677–672 B.C., with Ba'āl of Tyre, appointed rulers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


56 Bright, *History of Israel*, 311.
58 Kitchen, “Late-Egyptian Chronology,” 225–33; contra Bright, *History of Israel*, Chronology Chart VI, and 299–302, who summarizes the controversy on dating these kings.
60 Bright, *History of Israel*, 310.
over various Egyptian nomes, including the nomarch of Athribis, Bk-n-nfy, and he had dealings with Arabs.

679 B.C. Magiddu/Megiddo, stratum III, had an Assyrian governor, probably since about 732 B.C., following the destruction of Megiddo IV by Tiglath-Pileser III.

676/672 B.C. The 26th Olympiad—games held in Sparta; Terpander of Lesbos wins the prize for music.

669/668 B.C. Assurbanapal, king of Assyria (669–633 B.C.) upon death of his father, Esarhaddon. He campaigned against Egypt 667–663 B.C., and had dealings with Arabs, also known as Osnappar/Asnapper (Ezra 4:10).

664 B.C. Psamtik/Psammetichus I, Pharaoh of Egypt (664–610 B.C.) upon death of his father’s enemy, Taharqa; beginning of Dynasty 26, the so-called Saitic Dynasty, because the capital was at Sais (biblical So) in the Delta (664–525 B.C.).

663 B.C. Thebes (biblical No-Amon) destroyed by the Assyrians under Assurbanipal, and Taharqa’s son, Tanut-Amon, was forced to retreat from Thebes to Kipkipi (back into his Nubian homeland), thus ending the 25th

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64 Stern, “Israel,” 46.
68 Aharoni, Archaeology of the Land of Israel, 251.
70 Kitchen, “Late-Egyptian Chronology,” 225–33; Kitchen, Ancient Orient, 82–84; Bright, History of Israel, 311, and Chronology Chart VI.
Dynasty (Nahum 3:8). Book of the prophet Nahum (Naḥum) composed ca. 663–612 B.C. The Pentateuch and Ruth were edited in the early seventh century B.C. ("J" redaction), though, as with Job, they are far more archaic; Job was redacted in the seventh century or early sixth century B.C. in North Israel or near Phoenicia, although, in its original form, it was composed in the Patriarchal period.

ca. 661 B.C. 'Amminadab, king of 'Ammon pays tribute to Asshurbanipal of Assyria.

ca. 652 B.C. Possible birth of Lehi (Lehi) at 70 years from 582 B.C.—an estimate only (cf. 1 Nephi 1:4, 18:7; 2 Nephi 1:4; 4:12; 5:28).

ca. 650 B.C. Jewish military fortress and community established on Elephantine Island, Egypt, during the reign of Manasseh of Judah and Pharaoh Psammetichus I of Egypt.

648 B.C. Birth of Josiah when his father, 'Amon, was 16 (2 Kings 21:19; 22:1).

ca. 645 B.C. Birth of Jeremiah at 'Anathoth, a Levitical village in Benjamin, just north of Jerusalem.

73 William F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), 244-49, 253, 258; cf. Pope, Job XXX-XL, who dates the Dialogue section to the seventh century, but argues at length for the ancient epic substratum. Cf. Song of Songs.
642–640 B.C.  
King 'Amon of Judah reigns. His father, King Manasseh, had named him for the Egyptian god of Thebes, 'Imn/Amon.

640 B.C.  
King 'Amon of Judah assassinated. Josiah/Yoshi'yahu takes the throne, at age eight, in 640 (his accession year; first regnal year in 639) (2 Chronicles 34:1); Josiah's expansion certainly went as far as Geba (Et-Tell), just south of Shiloh, and he may have annexed North Israel, including Galilee. Before Josiah's reform, despite the efforts of Hezekiah, there were numerous sanctuaries and temples in Palestine, e.g., large temples at 'Arad, Be'er-sheba, Lachish, Geba, Beth-El, etc. Most were defiled or destroyed by Josiah, thus centering worship on Jerusalem. Josiah's sons include (1) Johanan, b. 635? (2) Jehoiakim-Eliakim b. 634, (3) Jehoahaz-Shallum b. 632, and (4) Zedekiah-Mattaniah b. 618 B.C. (cf. 1 Chronicles 3:15)—their births when Josiah was 13, 14, 16, and 30 years of age, respectively (2 Kings 23:31, 36; 24:18, to his wives Zebudah and Hamutal).

630 B.C.  
Siege of Ashdod by Pharaoh Psammeticus I lasted for 29 years.

629/628 B.C.  
Reform movement and de facto independence of Judah initiated by King Josiah. The

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77 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 178–79.
82 Bright, History of Israel, 317, 322.
84 Stern, “Israel,” 46.
prophetess Huldah (Huldah) active during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:14–19).

**627 B.C.**  
Ashur-et'il-ilani of Assyria (627–623 B.C.); Nabopolassar of Babylonia (627–605 B.C.);\(^87\) call of Jeremiah of Anathoth, son of Hilkiah the priest, 627 B.C. (his prime secretary was the priest Baruch ben-Neriah [BrkYhw], at least after 605 B.C., and assisted by Baruch's brother Seraiah later), during the reform period initiated by King Josiah.\(^88\)

**626 B.C.**  
Chaldean (Aramaean) Nabopolassar becomes king of South Mesopotamia (626–605 B.C.; Neo-Babylonia);\(^89\) Scythian invasions from the Caucasus into Media, the Assyrian Empire, Palestine, and to the Egyptian frontier on horses; Scythians plundered the Temple of Aphrodite Urania in Ashkelon;\(^90\) Beth-Shean renamed Scythopolis; yet the Scythians (Ashkenaz) disappeared within a decade (Zephaniah 2:4, 7; Jeremiah 51:27; 2 Maccabees 4:47).\(^91\) Ca. 625 B.C. East Greek (Carian-Aegean) garrison at a small fortress near Jamnia (Yabneh-Yam) on the coast of southern Palestine, dated by a Hebrew ostraca and proved by the presence of Carian painted ware in considerable quantities there and at Tell el-Milh.\(^92\)

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\(^86\) Bright, *History of Israel*, 316–25; the reform climax came in 622 with the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple archives by Hilkiah the priest, and it ended in 609 B.C.


\(^91\) Keller, *Bible as History*, 272–73.

Birth date (traditional) of Lord Siddhārta Gautama of the Śakyas, the Buddha (Western historians prefer 566/553 to 486/473 B.C.); md. Princess Yasodhara, 608 B.C.; son Rahula born ca. 607 B.C. His Great Going Forth (break with past), 595 B.C., 6 years as an ascetic in raja yoga, then in the meditative Middle Way, and finally to the Bodhi Tree (the Enlightenment Tree) and the attack of Mara, there becoming The Buddha, The Enlightened One.93 Thales of Miletus (ca. 624–545 B.C.; others place the life of this Karian-Phoenician genius from 640 [Olympiad 35.1] to 562), predicted total solar eclipse of 23 May 585 B.C. (or 29 July 588),94 which stopped the war between Lydia and Media during the 19th year of Nebuchadrezzar II; Thales also mentions the use and properties of magnetite/lodestone (mined in Magnesia).

Pharaoh Yenalaman (Anlaman), ruler of pre-Meroitic Napata Kingdom, Nubia (623–593 B.C.) = King ‘Ankh-Re’ = Pyramid Nuri IV (Piankhi had ruled the same kingdom ca. 753–713 B.C.);95 Sin-shar-ishkum of Assyria (623–612 B.C.).96

Egyptian-Assyrian alliance entered into between 622 and 617 B.C.97

Lunar eclipse in 5th year of Nabopolassar, 22 April 621 = 127th year of Nabonassar Era.98

the ostracon is from ‘Arād stratum VI; cf. Ezekiel 27:11–13, where Yawan/Ionia is mentioned as an important center of trade (cf. Genesis 10:2).


98 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 179, 181, 229.
ca. 616 B.C. Megiddo became an Egyptian base before 616, but after 646 B.C., and remained under Egyptian control until 605 B.C. Megiddo stratum II fortress built by Pharaoh Psamtik I, or Josiah.99 The Egyptian army defeated the Babylonians under Nabopolassar on the upper Euphrates as they advanced against Asshur—in 616, or earlier.100 Birth of Jehoiachin.101

614 B.C. Cyaxares, ruler of Media (ca. 625–585), leads the Medes in the destruction of Asshur, and Neo-Babylonians help loot the city, having recently become allied with the Medes.102 Possible birth of Nephi ca. 614 B.C. at 18 years from 596 B.C. (cf. 1 Nephi 1:4, 2:16).

612 B.C. Nineveh destroyed by the Medes and Neo-Babylonians (Zephaniah 2:13; Nahum 3:1–3).103 Asshur-uballit, ruler of a rapidly waning Assyria (612–610 B.C.).104

610 B.C. Destruction of Ḫarran by the Medes and Babylonians, from whence the Assyrian government-in-exile flees—despite efforts by their Egyptian allies to aid them.105 Necho II (Niku; 610–594) succeeds his father, Psammetichus I, as Pharaoh of Egypt between July and September; also known as N-_kw, Wḥm-ib-R-t.106

609 B.C. Egyptian aid, including Greek mercenaries, rushed to the Euphrates (by Necho II) for the second year, in an effort to assist Asshur-uballit in retaking Ḫarran; Josiah attempted to oppose passage of the Egyptian army at

99 Malamat, "Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon," 274.
100 Bright, History of Israel, 316.
101 Ibid., 397; 2 Kings 24:8.
102 Bright, History of Israel, 315–16; Keller, Bible as History, 273.
103 Bright, History of Israel, 324; Keller, Bible as History, 273.
104 Bright, History of Israel, 294, 303; Stern, "Israel," 28.
105 Bright, History of Israel, 324; Stern, "Israel," 28; Malamat, "Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon," 273.
106 Malamat, "Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon," 274; Bright, History of Israel, 324.
Megiddo and was killed in battle.\textsuperscript{107} The Battle of Megiddo is evidenced by the destruction of Megiddo II at this time.\textsuperscript{108} Josiah’s death came shortly before Tammuz (Du’uz/Duzu = June–July) 609 B.C.; this was followed by the three-month reign of his son, Jehoahaz- Shallum at age 23 (2 Kings 22:1, 23:31; 2 Chronicles 34:1, 36:2; during Tammuz, Ab, and Elul = June/July through September/ October), while the Egyptians and Assyrians laid a two-month siege to Ḥarran (until Ulul) which failed; Necho then had Jehoahaz brought to his base at Riblah, Hamath; deposed him and exiled him to Egypt; and replaced him with his brother, Eliakim-Jehoiakim, whose accession was in Ethanim-Tishri (September–October), 609, but whose first regnal year began 1 Nisan 608 B.C. (2 Kings 23:31–34).\textsuperscript{109} During this period between the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon, Egypt gained control of Syro-Palestine and North Transjordan.\textsuperscript{110} Timnah/Tamna’a (Tell Batash), on the mid-Sorek River in the Shephelah, destroyed shortly after Josiah’s death.\textsuperscript{111}

608–598 B.C.

Jehoiakim-Eliakim, king of Judah at age 25 (2 Kings 23:36); prophet Uriah ben-Shemaiah of Qiryat-Yearim executed by Judahite officials, after fleeing for his life to Egypt, during the reign of King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 26:20–23).\textsuperscript{112} The prophet Habakkuk also preached during the reign of Jehoiakim,\textsuperscript{113} and the prophet Ben-Yoḥanan ben Igdaliah was active during the same period (Jeremiah 35:4 LXX).

605 B.C.

Battle of Carchemish, Simanu (May–June) 605 B.C., during 4th year of the reign of

\textsuperscript{107} Malamat, “Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon,” 273; Bright, History of Israel, 324.
\textsuperscript{108} Bright, History of Israel, 325 n. 39, citing 2 Chronicles 35:20–24.
\textsuperscript{111} Kelm and Mazar, “Three Seasons of Excavations,” 32.
\textsuperscript{112} Stern, “Israel,” 28.
\textsuperscript{113} Bright, History of Israel, 333.
Jehoiakim (4th regnal year beginning 1 Nisan 605; Jeremiah 46:2, 17, 22; 2 Kings 24:7). In 606, and now in 605, the Egyptians had had to face the Babylonians alone at the Euphrates River. This time, the Egyptians under Necho II were annihilated by the Babylonian troops under crown prince Nebuchadrezzar. 605 is also the first year of Nebuchadrezzar II of Babylon (605/604–562 B.C.; Jeremiah 25:1), i.e., Nabopolassar died 16 August 605 (= 8 Ab), and Nebuchadrezzar’s accession began 21 days later, 7 September (1 Elul)—his first regnal year beginning 1 Nisan 604 B.C.114 Nabu-kudurri-usur, “Nabû-My-Boundary-Protect”115 or “Nabû-My-Heir-Protect” = Nebuchadrezzar.116 In early 605, Jeremiah was put in stocks overnight by the chief of the temple police (Jeremiah 20:1–4);117 he was also prohibited from entering the temple ever again, and he did not enter from 604 to 598 B.C. (Jeremiah 36:5; Jeremiah 35 is prior to 605 B.C.).

**604–537 B.C.** Duration of 70 years of captivity of Judah, according to G. Larsson,118 i.e., from 29 Elul (October) 604 to 537 B.C. as 70 lunar years (Jeremiah 25:3, 11–12) = 67.8 solar years (= 24,780 days at 354 days per year [but 24,803.8 days at 354.34 days per year]). Larsson and others suggest that a token captivity of Jews began in 604 B.C. (including young Daniel-Belte-shazzar the Prophet, Daniel 1:1, 2 Chronicles 36:6–7).119 However, 70 years can also be figured in 360-day years from August (Ab) 586 to March (Adar) 515 B.C. (from destruction to rebuilt temple), or in lunar years from January (Tebeth) 588 to December 521 B.C. (from siege to Darius). However, the evidence for such a token captivity in either 604 or 605

116 Ibid., 226; Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 40 n. 100, claims that Nebuchadnezzar is a scribal error.
is inadequate, and Daniel 1:1 may refer to a deportation in 597.\textsuperscript{120} King 'Adon of 'Eqron sent his Aramaic letter, with address on the outside in demotic Egyptian, requesting aid from Pharaoh Necho ca. 604, 603, or 598 B.C. = Saqqarah Letter of 'Adon “to the Lord of Kings, the Pharaoh,” which was prompted by a threatening foray by Nebuchadrezzar’s army as far as Aphek on the Yarkon River.\textsuperscript{121} The script of this papyrus letter is contem­
porary with 'Arad stratum VI, late seventh century B.C.\textsuperscript{122} After a siege, Ascalon-Ashkelon was captured by Nebuchadrezzar II in December 604 B.C. The brother of the Aeolic lyric poet Alcaeus, who had been in Babylon, took part in the siege.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
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603 B.C. & Capture of Gaza by Babylonians (Jeremiah 46–47).\textsuperscript{124} \\
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da. 601 B.C. & Nebuchadrezzar II defeated by Necho II at Magdolus-Migdol, Egypt, in 601 or early 600 B.C. Necho then chased the Babylonian army to Philistia and conquered Gaza.\textsuperscript{125} This is the date of the prophecy of Jeremiah against Philistia (Jeremiah 46:1–2, 5, 13; 47:1)\textsuperscript{126} \\
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\textsuperscript{120} Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley, Peake’s Commentary on the Bible (London: Nelson and Sons, 1962), 592.


\textsuperscript{122} Joseph Naveh, “The Scripts in Palestine and Transjordan in the Iron Age,” in Near Eastern Archaeology, 278–79; 282 n. 12, J. T. Milik suggests that it was sent from Tyre, while others have suggested Gaza or Ashdod.

\textsuperscript{123} Albright, “Neglected Factors,” 230.

\textsuperscript{124} Malamat, “Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon,” 277 n. 33; cf. Bright, History of Israel, 327.

\textsuperscript{125} Herodotus, Histories II, 159; 2 Kings 24:1; cf. Josephus, Antiquities X, 88.

ca. 600 B.C. King ‘Aminadab (‘mndb) of ‘Ammon in Transjordan.'127 Kapila of India;128 other of the famous contemporaries of Lehi and Nephi, in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., were Arion of Lesbos, Periander of Corinth (both late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.), Terpander of Lesbos (mid-seventh century B.C.), Thales of Miletus (624-548/545 B.C.), Anaximander of Miletus (610-ca. 546 B.C.), Anaximenes of Miletus (fl. 545 B.C.), Tyrtaeus (mid-seventh century B.C.), Mimnermus of Colophon (mid-seventh century B.C.), Alcaeus (Asian Aeolic, fl. 620–580 B.C.), Sappho of Lesbos (Psappho; Asian/ Lesbian Aeolic, fl. 610–580 B.C.), Pitaccus of Lesbos (late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.), Archilochus of Paros (seventh century B.C.), Solon of Athens (630–560 B.C.), Bias of Ionia (sixth century B.C.), Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 582–500; taught that the spherical earth moves around a fiery fixed point, also taught by his follower Philolaus, who included the plurality of inhabited worlds),129 Polycrates (fl. 535–522 B.C.), Xenophanes of Colophon (ca. 560–478 B.C.), Peisistratus of Athens (ca. 600–527 B.C.), Cleisthenes of Athens (ca. 570–508 B.C.), Alcmaeon of Croton (ca. 550–475 B.C.), Draco of Athens (ca. 621 B.C.), Sanchuniathon of Berytus (Phoenician priest, early sixth century), King Croesus of Lydia (560–546 B.C.; capital at Sardis captured by the Persians in 546 B.C.; he was allied with both Pharaoh Amasis II and Nabonidus of Babylon), Zarathustra (Zoroaster; ca. 625–551 B.C.), Lao-Tzu (Tao), Kung Fu-Tzu (Confucius; ca. 551–479 B.C.), Sun-Tzu, Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha), Gosala (ca. 535 B.C.), and Vardhamāna the Mahāvīra


128 Campbell, Masks of God, 2:250, 255–58; Joseph Campbell, Masks of God (New York: Viking, 1959), 1:452, perhaps as early as the eighth century B.C.

129 Giorgio de Santillana and W. Pitts, “Philolaus in Limbo,” Isis 42 (June 1951): 128.
Jina (Jaina; ca. 540–468 B.C., or died ca. 485 B.C.). Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Jainism arising contemporaneously with Jeremiah and Ezekiel suggests to J. N. D. Anderson that “the possibility of some cross-fertilization of ideas . . . can by no means be discounted.” Moreover, were the Buddha and the Mahāvīra anti-Brāhmaṇic Kṣatriyas? Ca. 600 B.C., Pharaoh Necho II sent an expedition of Phoenicians by ship around the Cape of Africa from ‘Ezion-Geber Island (Jazirat Fara’un) on the Red Sea—the crew reported that the sun was observed on their right as they rounded the Cape, which Herodotus regarded as an error, though C. H. Gordon and Isaac Asimov regard such a report as excellent evidence of the authenticity of the voyage, and this may have been a repeat of earlier such voyages. By the seventh century B.C., Phoenicia had trading-posts at Mogador and Lixus on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and its bases and settlements elsewhere were already centuries old: Cyprus, Sicily (Motya), Malta, Sardinia (Nora, and Sulcis), Spain (Almuñecar, Cadiz, Utica, and Carmona), and North Africa generally (Libya, Carthage [“New-City”], etc.). The “Pillars of Hercules” was once the equivalent of the westernmost extent of

130 Hugh W. Nibley has covered many of these in An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 33–55, and in Since Cumorah, 239–41.


132 Herodotus, Histories IV, 42.


the Phoenician trade network, i.e., Lixus, Tingis (Tangier), and Gades (Cadiz). The Temple of Hercules at Gades (Cadiz-Gadeira) had two bronze columns with inscriptions called the “Pillars of Hercules.”

Prophets contemporary with Jeremiah and Lehi included Zephaniah (ca. 680–620), Huldah (622 B.C.), Habakkuk (ca. 609–598), Nahum (620–605?), Daniel, the unknown author of Lamentations, Ben-Yohanan ben Igdaliah (Jeremiah 35:4 LXX; ca. 605–537), Uriah ben Shemaiah (Jeremiah 26:20–23; ca. 609–598), and young Ezekiel, who was carried to Babylon in 597 (called in 593, and preached 20 years); Jeremiah himself was born ca. 643, near the end of the reign of Manasseh, and his ministry covered the period from 627–582 B.C.

598 B.C. In his 11th year, Jehoiakim revolted against Babylonian rule. At first, the local garrisons attempted but failed to control the rebellion. It is unclear whether Jehoiakim died while Nebuchadrezzar II was en route to Hatti-land (Syro-Palestine) to control the rebellion, or was captured and fettered by him after his arrival (Jeremiah 22:19; 2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:6). Nebuchadrezzar arrived with his army in Judah in Kislimu (late December 598/early January 597) of his seventh year—and immediately laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiachin (Coniah/Yokin), son of Jehoiakim, reigned three months and ten days (2 Kings 24:8; 2 Chronicles 36:9), i.e., from 9 December (22 Arakhsamnu) 598 to the capture of Jerusalem on Saturday, 16 March (2 Addaru) 597, or from 16 January (1 Tebeth) 597 to his exile and replacement on 22 April (10 Nisanu [Abib]) 597. Immediately upon the capture of Jerusalem,

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137 Bright, History of Israel, 336–37; many prophets were sent, 2 Chronicles 36:15–16; Iddo the prophet is probably not the same as Zechariah’s father, Zechariah 1:7; 2 Chronicles 12:15; 13:22.


Nebuchadrezzar deported 3,023 Jews (Jeremiah 52:28), but as many as 10,000 on 10 Nisan—just after the beginning of his 8th year on 1 Nisan (2 Kings 24:12–16; Ezekiel 40:1; 2 Chronicles 36:10). It was during this foray against Judah that Nebuchadrezzar destroyed the Citadel at ‘Arād (stratum VI), as well as the fortress at Kadesh-Barnea in the Negeb (= Tell el-Qudeirat).

597 B.C. Mattaniah-Zedekiah placed on throne at age 21 as king of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar II on 10 Nisanu (22 April) 597. This was his accession year (= 9th year of Nebuchadrezzar), but he was not officially crowned until at least 1 Tashritu (ca. 6 October) of that year, or on 1 Nisanu (ca. 1 April) of the following year—his first regnal year beginning then (either can be New Year’s Day). The Bible uses various methods of reckoning. It is not clear just which of these years is being referred to by Jeremiah 49:34 (Masoretic Text) as “in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah” (Jeremiah 25:20 Septuagint; cf. 1 Nephi 1:4). Lehi called as a prophet (1 Nephi 1:4–20); he and his family probably left Jerusalem in mid-April [Nisan] 596.
Nephi and his brothers probably returned in the summer to fall of 596 to obtain the clan records from Laban (1 Nephi 3:2–4:38), and Lehi’s brother-in-law Ishmael joined them all perhaps in the same year (1 Nephi 7:2–22; Zedekiah’s latest possible first official regnal year ends on 1 Nisan, ca. 21 March, 595 B.C.). Lehi’s Egyptian learning and language skills, his wealth, and his ability to move rapidly in the wilderness all indicate that he may have been part of the cosmopolitan “merchant aristocracy” of the day, which was a legacy of the Davidic and Solomonic period (Israel, Tyre, and Sidon then shared a trade agreement [khibur], and the international trade involved many nations from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and India). Whether as a caravaneer involved in trade, or as a skilled metallurgist (cf. the semi-nomadic Qenites), Lehi may have found himself in Egypt on more than one occasion—and for extended periods, if one is to judge by his expertise in Egyptian. The Lehites may have taken the most direct route south from Jerusalem through Hebron, ‘Arād Rabbat, and Zif, then down “the Way of Edom” to the Wādī ‘Arābah (and Tamar), and through the wadi via the “Way to the Red Sea.”

The wadi was Edomite during the seventh-sixth centuries B.C., including such cities as Punon/Feinan (Numbers 33:42), Sela/Umm el-Biyara, Teiman/Tawilan, and Bozrah/Buseirah (Isaiah 34:6; 63:1, Amos 1:12, Jeremiah 49:13, 22). The population of Judah, between 597 and 586 B.C., was now reduced from an eighth-century figure of 250,000 to around 125,000. More

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145 Zedekiah’s first regnal year; 1 Nephi 2:1–4; 3 Nephi superscription; the most probable birth and death dates for Jesus set controlling limits here, i.e., from 6 September 5 B.C.–A.D. 18 March 29.
than a decade after the end of the exile, in 522 B.C., the total population of Judah was only around 20,000.\textsuperscript{150}

\textbf{594 B.C.} Pharaoh Psammetichus II/Psamtik II/Nfr-\textsuperscript{R} II (594–589 B.C.) rules Egypt.\textsuperscript{151} He uses Jewish mercenary troops in his Nubian campaign.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{ca. 593 B.C.} Ezekiel ben-Buzi, the priest, received his call to prophetic office at Til Abubi, near Nippur, Babylonia (Ezekiel 1:1–2), and he served until ca. 571/570 B.C. (Ezekiel 29:17). His wife died ca. 587/586 B.C. (Ezekiel 24:18).

\textbf{592 B.C.} Jehoiakin (Ya-u-kinu), king of Judah in exile, mentioned in cuneiform stores receipts (ration records) in Babylon, in the 13th year of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar II, five years after the first fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:34).\textsuperscript{153}

\textbf{589 B.C.} Pharaoh Ḥophra/\textsuperscript{H} Apries/Ḥ\textsuperscript{R} IV (589–568 B.C.), the destroyer of Babylonian Sidon and Tyre in 587 B.C.; accession in February 589; deposed and executed by Amasis II in 570 (Jeremiah 44:30), fol-

\textsuperscript{150} Bright, \textit{History of Israel}, 365, and n. 57, citing Albright, \textit{Biblical Period}, 87, 110–11.

\textsuperscript{151} Malamat, “Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon,” 274.


ollowed by Nebuchadrezzar’s invasion soon thereafter.\textsuperscript{154} The ambassadors of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon met with King Zedekiah in Jerusalem to plan a revolt against Babylonian rule in light of the new king of Egypt, Apries/Hophra (Jeremiah 27:3; 2 Kings 24:20).\textsuperscript{155}

588 B.C. On 15 January of 588 (10th day of Tebeth in his 18th year), King Nebuchadrezzar arrived to put down the revolt—only three cities held out for any length of time, i.e., Azeqah, Lachish, and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 34:7; 2 Kings 25:1). This was in the 9th regnal year of Zedekiah.\textsuperscript{156} He soon deported 832 Jews as a preliminary move (deserters or captives? Jeremiah 52:29).\textsuperscript{157} Jeremiah purchased land and then was arrested as a deserter in the summer of 588 or 587 and was imprisoned for the duration of the siege (Jeremiah 32–33, 37:4–38:28);\textsuperscript{158} Jeremiah’s worst prison was named for “Malchiah son of the king,” i.e., for a “contemporary son of king Zedekiah.”\textsuperscript{159} Since several of the immediately preceding Davidides

\textsuperscript{155} Keller, Bible as History, 283.
\textsuperscript{156} Stern, “Israel,” 28; Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, 594.
\textsuperscript{157} Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, 592, and n. 17.
\textsuperscript{158} Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 190; if that is the imprisonment referred to in 1 Nephi 7:14, the bulk of the Lchites’ eight-year sojourn in the wilderness was spent tenting in the Wàdi Lemuel before moving on, SSE, into South Arabia—I Nephi 16:12–39, and then East around 19 degrees to the vicinity, perhaps, of modern Dhofar, I Nephi 17:1–4; cf. Josephus, Antiquities X, 112–15.
('Amon and Josiah) married and began begetting children in their early teens, it is quite possible that, when Zedekiah took the throne at age 21, he may already have had a son of age 8 named Malkiyahu, "My-King-is-Yahu," who could have been married and around age 16 when Jeremiah was placed in his dungeon. Moreover, polygyny was a regular practice of the kings of Judah and other prominent men, thus enhancing the likelihood of offspring (cf. Josiah). Total eclipse of sun in eastern Asia Minor (predicted by Thales) 29 July 588 B.C., during a battle between the Medes and Lydians in the 19th year of Nebuchadrezzar (or 23 May 585 B.C.).

588/587 B.C. Lachish II (Tell ed-Duweir) destroyed by the Babylonians, and it is to this burn level that the 21 Lachish "Letters" are to be dated. According to Y. Yadin, the ostraca represent drafts of the papyrus letters sent from Lachish to Jerusalem.

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587 B.C. The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem was lifted temporarily on 15 Tebeth (7 January) 587 with the approach of the Egyptian army under Pharaoh Apries. This may refer only to an Egyptian foray along the Phoenician coast, as described by Herodotus, in which Apries conquered Tyre and Sidon (Jeremiah 37:5). However, the Egyptians suffered defeat by the Babylonians on 7 Nisan (29 April) and the siege of Jerusalem was then reinstituted. 164

586 B.C. In the 11th year of Zedekiah/the 19th year of Nebuchadrezzar, 165 the walls of Jerusalem are breached on 19 July (9 Tammuz) and the temple destroyed from 15 thru 18 August (7-10 Ab) 586 B.C. by Nebu-zar-Adan, captain of the guard (= Nabû-Seri-Idinnam), the grand vizier of Babylonia. 166 King Zedekiah is captured near Jericho, after escaping from Jerusalem by night in late July or early August 586. He is taken to Nebuchadrezzar's headquarters at Riblah, where his sons (except for MalkiYahu/Mulek, who escaped; Helaman 6:10; 8:10) are slaughtered before him and his eyes are put out; he is then taken to Babylon for a life of imprisonment (2 Kings 25:4, 6-7). 167 On 5 Tebeth of the 12th year (= 6/8 January 585 B.C.), after a five-month journey from Jerusalem, a refugee reports the


165 Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, 594.


167 As Benjamin Urrutia points out to me, a series of five "all" in Hebrew in verses 1-10 makes the lack of "all" with "sons" very conspicuous in verse 7; cf. Jeremiah 32:5.
destruction. Since it would have taken not less than two months for the news to have traveled into southernmost Arabia, the Lehiites may have sailed away by October/November 586 B.C., with news of the destruction of Jerusalem only coming via revelation after landfall in the New World (2 Nephi 1:4). Moreover, New World landfall for the Lehiites may have come as early as July–August 586. Around this time, another group, including a son of King Zedekiah named Mulek (possibly the Phoenician form of his name), left the Middle East by an unknown route and sailed to the New World. A major deportation of Jews followed the destruction (2 Kings 25:11). Lamentations was written in Judah by an unknown eyewitness and contemporary of Jeremiah. Edom now took advantage of the defeat of Judah by moving into the Negeb proper, including ‘Arād and ‘Elath level V (2 Kings 16:6), and even turned some Jewish escapees over to the Babylonians (Obadiah 1:14; Psalm 137:7). By the end of the sixth century B.C., the Edomites had occupied southern Judah.

585 B.C. Thirteen-year siege laid to Tyre by Nebuchadrezzar without more than an acknowledgment of Babylonian suzerainty.

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169 Perhaps they set sail into the Arabian Sea (Irreantum means “many waters,” as in Jeremiah 51:13) during the northeast (winter) monsoon season after a couple of years in Bountiful. This would mean that they moved southeast. It is also possible that they sailed northeast toward India and Indonesia in March or April with the southwest (summer) monsoon; Rabin, “The Song of Songs,” 209; John L. Sorenson, “Winds and Currents: A Look at Nephi’s Ocean Crossing,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 53–56 (see Excursus herein on Arabia).
170 They probably traveled via the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and possibly with Phoenician and Egyptian help; cf. Omni 1:15–16; Helaman 6:10; 8:21 (Jeremiah 43:6–7).
173 Bright, *History of Israel*, 344 n. 6.
174 Ibid., 352; Ezekiel 26–29.
Revolt against Gedaliah, the governor of Judah under Babylonian suzerainty (23rd year of Nebuchadrezzar II). Gedaliah was assassinated by Jews led by one Ishma’el, a member of the exiled royal house (2 Kings 25:22–26; Jeremiah 40:6–41:18; cf. Gedaliah Seal, Lachish stratum I). Ishmael escaped to ‘Ammon. A third deportation followed, and this effectively depopulated Judah, although some scholars now claim that the decimation of population was not as great as earlier believed. Small groups of Jews escaped into Egypt, where Jewish communities already existed and where King Jehoahaz had been in exile since 609 B.C. (2 Kings 25:26, Isaiah 30:1–2; 31:1; Jeremiah 24:8; 43:7; 44:1); these escapees included the friends of Gedaliah—who escorted the daughters of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 43:6–7) and took Jeremiah, against his will, to Tahpanhes (Daphne/Tell Defneh), Egypt (where he spoke his last words) (Jeremiah 43:8–13, and 44). Jeremiah’s scribe there, Seraiah, edited his work and completed his biography by 570 B.C., when Amasis led a mutiny and deposed Pharaoh Hophra, followed by Nebuchadrezzar’s invasion of Egypt in 568 B.C. (Jeremiah 44:30).

573 B.C. 25th anniversary of exile of Judah, 10 Nisan (28 April) 573, which was in the 14th year

178 Bright, History of Israel, 352; Seraiah’s Hebrew version of Jeremiah is now known only in the Greek LXX translation, while that of his brother, Baruch, was edited in Babylon and is the source of the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text derived from there and transmitted by the rabbis.
after the conquest of 586 B.C. (Ezekiel 40:1). 179

572 B.C. Siege of Tyre lifted by Nebuchadrezzar II, 180 although Aradus (Arwad) and Sidon were destroyed. The Phoenician priest of Ba‘al-Shamem, Sanchuniaton, fled from Tyre to Berytus/Beirut—he was a contemporary of Thales of Miletus. 181

570 B.C. Accession of Pharaoh ‘Aḥ-mose II/Amosis II/Hnms-fb-Rc (570–525 B.C.), a friend of Polycrates and a patron of the arts—he greatly expanded trade with Greece. 182

568 B.C. Nebuchadrezzar’s punitive expedition against Egypt, which resulted in better long-term relations. 183 Eclipse 4 July 568 B.C., 37th year of Nebuchadrezzar = 180th year of Nabonassar Era. 184

562 B.C. Accession of Amel-Marduk/Evil-Merodach of Babylon (October 562–August 560 B.C.). 185 The new king releases Jehoiachin of Judah from prison in the 37th year of his exile (2 Kings 25:27; Jeremiah 52:31). 186 This confirms that the first year of his exile was based on the capture of Jerusalem on 2 Adar 597. 187

179 Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, 596; Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 188, 191.
180 Bright, History of Israel, 352.
181 Miletus was the place from whence there was a “sudden explosion of Greek thought” during this axial era, Albright, “Neglected Factors,” 227; cf. 239–40; Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, 233, citing Otto Eissfeldt, “Das Datum der Belagerung von Tyrus durch Nebuchadnezzar,” Forschungen und Fortschritte 9 (1933): 421–22; reprinted in Kleine Schriften (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 2:1–3.
182 Malamat, “Josiah’s Bid for Armageddon,” 274.
183 Bright, History of Israel, 352.
184 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 229.
185 Parker and Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 45, 12.
187 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 186–90.
Accession of Nergal-shar-usur/Neriglissar of Babylon (August 560–April/May 556).\textsuperscript{188}

Two-month rule of Labashi-Marduk of Babylon (May–June 556).\textsuperscript{189} He was succeeded by the last king of Neo-Babylonia, Nabûna'id/Nabonidus (May–July 556 to August–October 539 B.C.), who moved his capital to Taimā'/Tēmā' on the Arabian caravan route south of Maṣša to which the only biblical Lemuel (Lemu'el) is localized (Proverbs 31:1 MT; cf. Genesis 25:14; 1 Chronicles 1:30); he remained there for 8–10 years, because of the anger of the citizenry of Babylon over his impiety.\textsuperscript{190} Cf. Daniel 5 and 9 on Belshazzar/Bel-shar-usur, son of Nabonidus, who remained in charge of affairs in Babylon (e.g., handwriting on wall interpreted 12 October 539 B.C.). Nabonidus extended his control into Arabia as far south as Yathrib/Medina.\textsuperscript{191}

King Ḥiram III of Tyre (553–533 B.C.), mentioned in the Pyrgi Inscription (550) and in the Paraiba Inscription (ca. 536 B.C.). The latter, also known as the Pedra Lavrada Inscription, is considered a forgery by William F. Albright, Frank Moore Cross,\textsuperscript{192} and Mark Lidzbarski.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{188} Parker and Dubberstein, \textit{Babylonian Chronology} 626 B.C.–A.D. 45, 12; Jeremiah 39:3, 13.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{193} Mark Lidzbarski, \textit{Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik nebst ausgewählten Inschriften} (1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962); see Cyrus H. Gordon in next note for complete sources.
However, other experts have considered it authentic: C. H. Gordon and Konstantin Schlottman (in 1874). 194

**ca. 551 B.C.**
Destruction of the Jaredites, and the finding of Coriantumr by the Mulekites (Ether 1:5; Omni 1:21).

**541 B.C.**
Nephi began to be old and gave up record to Jacob (Jacob 1:1, 9, 12), at ca. 72 years of age.

**539 B.C.**
Cyrus II the Great, Achaemenid Persian ruler of Babylonia (October/November 539, January 538 to June/August 530 B.C.). 195 He had already taken over Media in 550 B.C., and had been ruler of Anshan before that. 196 Darius the Mede (539–525; Daniel 5:31; 6:1–3), otherwise unknown to history, may have been Gubaru, governor of Gutium under Nabonidus, but commander of Cyrus' armies in conquering Babylon and administering the empire. 197 However, since Daniel 5 and 6 follow 7 and 8 chronologically, it is also possible that the reference is to Darius I Hystaspes (whatever the case, the book of Daniel is held by most scholars to be an apocalyptic pseudepigraphon).

**538 B.C.**

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195 Parker and Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 45, 14.

196 Bright, History of Israel, 354, 360.


198 Bright, History of Israel, 361.

199 Ibid., 362, 366.
530 B.C. Cambyses II, ruler of Babylonia (August/September 530 to March/April 522); coregent with Cyrus II from March 530.200

525 B.C. Cambyses conquers Egypt (using Greek mercenaries, while Amasis was allied with the Tyrant of Samos), and has himself crowned Pharaoh; Amasis has meanwhile died and been replaced by his son Psammetichus III. The Jewish colony at Elephantine/Yeb is first mentioned;201 it may have been established by a pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty, such as Apries, or Amasis II,202 although Isaiah appears to refer to a Jewish colony there in the eighth century B.C. (Isaiah 49:12 = 1 Nephi 21:12, Sinim, “Syene/Aswan). Possibly during the reign of Manasseh, the paganizing king of Judah (664–610 B.C.), priests fled for refuge to Elephantine and built the temple there which was found later by Cambyses.203 This was a real five-gated temple (despite Deuteronomy 12:13–14), and the fifth-century Elephantine papyri are surprising in that they lack any reference to the Law, Moses, Exodus, Patriarchs, Sabbath, Levites, etc., and the only festival mentioned is Unleavened Bread.204 Their temple was destroyed possibly three times: (1) in 410 B.C. by the priests of Khnûm—the Persian military commander, Vidranga, looking the other way; it was rebuilt before 402 B.C.; (2) the second destruction came ca. 399 with the accession of Pharaoh Nepherites I, founder of the 29th Dynasty;205 (3) however, the last papyrus from there is dated between 375–350 B.C.,206 implying a possible later destruction of a Jewish temple rebuilt there for the third

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200 Parker and Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 45, 14.
202 Bright, History of Israel, 346–47, 364–65; Jacob M. Myers, Ezra, Nehemiah (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), XXII–XXIII.
204 Bell, Cults and Creeds, 28; cf. Bright, History of Israel, 376; in accord with Jeremiah 2:8 and Hosea 2:16–17, Baâl is mentioned only once, and is absent from the Book of Mormon.
time.207 Jews later built temples at Leontopolis (Tell el-Yehudiyyeh, Egypt), Araq el-Emir (in Transjordan), Sardis (in Lydia), etc.208

| 523 B.C. | Eclipse 16 July 523 B.C., seventh year of Cambyses = 225th year of Nabonassar Era.209 |
| 522 B.C. | Pseudo-Bardiya/Smerdis/Gaumata rules for several months, following the suicide of Cambyses (March/July to September 522).210 Nebuchadrezzar III Nidintua-Bel rules for a month (October–November/December 522 B.C.).211 Darius I Hystaspes then took the throne in December 522/January–February 521 until a revolt in August/September 521, during which he was displaced by Nebuchadrezzar IV Araka, until October/November 521. Darius then retook the throne in December 521/January 520 and ruled until September/November 486 B.C.212 |
| ca. 520 B.C. | Decree of Darius I confirming the Decree of Cyrus II in 538 B.C. for restoration of Jewish temple and polity; building of the temple begins in 2nd year of Darius, under governor Zerubbabel, royal nephew of Sheshbazzar (ca. 570–500; Ezra 4:5, 24; 5:5–7; 6:1–12; Haggai 1:1–2:1, 10, 18). Haggai and Zechariah prophets of this period (ca. 520); Joshua ben-Jehozadak the high priest.213 |
| 515 B.C. | Jewish temple dedicated in Jerusalem in the sixth regnal year of Darius I, 23 Adar (March |

207 See the general study by Boulos A. Ayad, Jewish-Aramaean Communities in Ancient Egypt (Cairo: Institute of Coptic Studies, 1975).
209 Thiele, Mysterious Numbers, 229.
210 Parker and Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 45, 14–15.
211 Ibid., 15.
212 Ibid., 16–17; Bright, History of Israel, 369 (on the Stele of Darius I, see at 720 B.C., above).
213 Bright, History of Israel, 366.
12) 515, about 70 years after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in 586 B.C. The seven-day celebration leads to 1 Nisan and the New Year Festival (Ezra 6:13–18).214

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>502 B.C.</td>
<td>Eclipse 19 November 502 B.C., 20th year of Darius I = 246th year of Nabonassar Era.215</td>
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<tr>
<td>491 B.C.</td>
<td>Eclipse 25 April 491 B.C., 31st year of Darius I = 257th year of Nabonassar Era.216</td>
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<tr>
<td>486 B.C.</td>
<td>Accession of Xerxes I the Great (December 486/January 485 to March–August 465 B.C.); origin of Book of Esther is to be placed in this reign or in that of his successor, Artaxerxes I, or even of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358 B.C.), i.e., perhaps contemporary with the Chronicler, with the final editor of Esther in the Hellenistic period.217 “Script” and “language” are carefully distinguished in Esther 8:9 (cf. Nehemiah 13:24; Isaiah 19:18).218</td>
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<tr>
<td>445 B.C.</td>
<td>Decree of Artaxerxes I, 14 March (1 Nisan) 445 B.C., at the request of Nehemiah, to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem with royal supplies (= 20th year of Artaxerxes); Nehemiah was made governor of Judah (Nehemiah 2:1–8, 5:14, 10:1).219</td>
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216 Ibid.
219 Bright, *History of Israel*, 380–81; Sir Robert Anderson, in *The Coming Prince* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881), and *Daniel in the Critics’ Den* (London: Nisbet, 1902), etc., believes that this means that Palm Sunday was thus A.D. 6 April 32 (69 x 7 x 360 = 173,880 days = 476.1 solar years; Daniel 9:25; Luke 19:36–38), and that Passover was Thursday, 10 April (14 Nisan); “in this claim, Anderson appears to be in error, as pointed out pri-
Excursus
The Arabian Nexus

Not only did Jews flee to Moab, Edom, Ammon, and Egypt in the wake of Nebuchadrezzar’s invasion and conquest of Judah (Jeremiah 40:11; 42-44; Deuteronomy 28:64-68), but Hebrews other than Lehi may well have taken up residence in Arabia proper during the Exile—possibly as mercenary troops for King Nabonidus, who was in residence in Arabia from about 550 to 540 B.C. He held court at Teimā/Taymā (= Qaṣr Zallum, with its seven-mile circuit of wall), while extending military control southward along the main caravan trail as far as Yathrib/Medina (= Madinat al-Nabi, the refuge of the Prophet Muhammad). It is quite possible that, as was the case then at Aswan, Egypt, an Israelite community existed in Arabia already by the eighth century B.C., formed of fugitives from the fall of Samaria and the Northern

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220 Bright, History of Israel, 347.
Kingdom of Israel. It is unknown whether Lehi’s ancestors had gone down to Egypt at that time.

Since Solomonic times, and long before Lehi, other Israelites were undoubtedly involved in the extensive incense trade along the South Arabian caravan routes, as well as in sailing from ‘Ezion-Geber to India during the summer monsoon, and returning with their spices and other trade goods during the winter monsoon, presumably making stops at ports along the way. More recently, a British lieutenant contemporary with Joseph Smith provided us with a description of his exploration of that same Arabian coast on behalf of the British East India Company.

A number of areas along the South Arabian coast might fit the “bountiful” description of the place at which the Lehites stopped to prepare for their voyage across the bounding main. Dhufar and the Eastern Hadramaut (biblical Ḥāzarmaveth, possibly called Sa’kal in Lehi’s time) is the site of choice for most students of the Book of Mormon, and a late contemporary of Joseph Smith, H. J. Carter, described it as being “like a garden with a dreary arid

waste on either side." However, the mountains are higher and more verdant in either 'Oman proper [Muscat], or in the Yemen. Certainly the rainfall is greater in the Yemen. The Yemen itself receives the most monsoon rain of any country in Arabia—primarily during the spring and early summer. Warren and Michaela Aston of Queensland, Australia, have reported on their visit to the Yemen, which demonstrated to them the likelihood that Lehi’s course may have taken him to a Bountiful in the Hadramaut or other part of the 500-mile coast along which frankincense trees grew anciently.

What was South Arabia like in the middle of the first millennium B.C.? Through what sort of world did the Lehites move? Who lived there? What was so felicitous about Arabia Felix? If we are told so little of this South Arabian world by the Book of Mormon, is it because the book is not a travelogue? In 1 Nephi, as in the Bible, there is only a peripheral interest in the sights and sounds of the ancient world. As John Bright put it, the

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226 Saudi Arabia averages 4 inches of rain annually, although the average is 20 inches in the montane Asir Province of Southwest Saudi, adjacent to the Yemen, Robert Azzi, “Saudi Arabia: The Kingdom and Its Power,” *National Geographic* 158/3 (September 1980): 317.

227 The mountains vary from 5,000 to 10,000 feet, Van Beek, “The Land of Sheba,” 42; Van Beek, “Arabia Felix,” 36.

Genesis narrative is painted in blacks and whites on a simple canvas with no perspective in depth. It depicts certain individuals and their families who move through their world almost as if they were alone in it.

The climate was less arid than at present, with much more abundant animal life and vegetation throughout the region. Under such conditions, precipitation caused less erosion, and the desert regions had not yet encroached on arable lands to the extent that they have in our own time. Climatic variability is shown in the greatly increased rainfall throughout the Mediterranean and Arabo-Persian Gulf areas during the medieval “Little Ice Age.” Throughout Syro-Palestine, the current vegetation is mostly of the well-adapted interpluvial type, except for the trees—most of which are pluvial in nature, and which tell the true story of a much less arid climatic past. In Saudi Arabia, the most recent sinter formation (siliceous/calcareous) is dated by C-14 to ca.

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229 Bright, A History of Israel, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 74; all other citations herein are to the 3rd ed.
231 Van Beek, “The Land of Sheba,” 43, mentions Ramlat Sabatein in the Yemen as an example; the dessication has been very noticeable even during the last 2,000 years, according to Groom, Frankincense and Myrrh, 225–27, at close.
233 Aharon Horowitz, The Quaternary in Israel (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 20–22, 344–48; rain in Israel is primarily from October through March, with rare rain in April–May; Galilee gets the most (23 inches), the Negeb and Araba the least; cf. Henri Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus (1962; reprint, Ann Arbor: Servant, 1981), chapter I.
3080 B.C., in the As-Salb Plateau, northwest of Al-Jirthamiyah. The region has grown more arid since then.234 Not only climate, however, but the depredations of man have led to a deteriorating watershed, i.e., flora as well as fauna have been intensively over-utilized. Only in Israel have massive programs of reforestation and soil conservation been successfully undertaken in recent times. Arabia has only recently begun similar efforts. Whatever the case, certainly some perennial streams ("rivers") exist in Arabia today, as in Wadi Sayq in Oman.

South Arabia had been occupied by man since the Old Stone Age, but even by the middle of the second millennium B.C., only nomads could be found in South Arabia. Although nomadism among the Arabs has continued from that time to the present, a developed sedentary culture then suddenly appeared. Linguistic evidence suggests an earlier date, but Semites certainly settled Saba' (biblical Sheba), central Yemen, by ca. 1300-1200 B.C.235 At Hajar bin Humeid, in Wādi Beihan, for example, the earliest level of occupation (stratum S) is to be dated to ca. twelfth century B.C.236 W. F. Albright insisted that the South Arabian kingdoms began in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries B.C.237

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236 MASCA recalibration of the eleventh-century date in Gus W. Van Beek, Hajar Bin Humeid: Investigations at a Pre-Islamic Site in South Arabia (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1969), 365, fig. 133; C-14 dates from stratum Q can be recalibrated at 1100-840 B.C., and iron bands (H 2892) were found in stratum R = ca. eleventh century B.C.: iron rivets, knife blades, spear points, etc., from the same period were found there; Van Beek, "Arabia Felix," 43.

The unnamed Queen of Sheba (Saba') appeared in tenth-century B.C. Jerusalem, in the midst of King Solomon's reign, as the ruler of a very important and rich kingdom which wanted to secure good trade relations with other nations—particularly when there was such direct competition with Phoenician traders who were bypassing the caravan route and working on behalf of Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chronicles 9:1-12, 14). This Sabaeans' queen came with a camel caravan loaded with gold, precious stones, and spices; frankincense and myrrh were the real reasons for the great wealth of South Arabia then and for over a millennium thereafter. She came over 1400 miles, probably via the inland Marib-Yathrib-Dedan route through Wadi al-Qura, in no more than 2 1/2 months.238 With the vigorous overland trade which went on with Arabia, it is no surprise that J. Kelso has found a ninth-century B.C. South Arabian stamp seal at Bethel,239 that Y. Shiloh's Jerusalem excavations have recovered pottery with South Arabian script from the seventh to sixth century B.C. City of David,240 nor that eighth and ninth century B.C. Assyrian kings mention making war upon and receiving tribute from the northern colonies of Saba',241 Pliny the Elder and Diodorus Siculus later thought the Sabaeans to be the richest people in the world.242


238 Pliny the Elder claimed that it took 65 stages from Tamna to Gaza: Van Beek, "Arabia Felix," 41; Van Beek, "Frankincense and Myrrh," 2:124-26; Lehi hewed to the less-traveled lowland coastal route along the Tihama.


240 Yigal Shiloh lecture, "The Uncovering of the City of David," University of Missouri-Kansas City, 23 March 1981.


As we have seen, there may have been some perennial rivers in Arabia ca. 600 B.C., but we cannot be certain of the precise climatic conditions there at the time when Lehi left Jerusalem. Thus, aside from some constant streams fed by springs, conventional wisdom has it that there were no perennial rivers in South Arabia then—only wadis (river-beds) with occasional seils (flash-floods a few weeks of the year). So early South Arabian irrigation sought mostly a quick and broad distribution of the seils. The best example of this is the 600-meter Marib diversionary dam at the mouth of Wādi Dhana, 8 km west of Marib. It was not designed to hold a reservoir, but diverted water into a canal system via stone sluices, with secondary and tertiary sluices built of rubble. 1,620 hectares (4,000 acres) were irrigated in this manner. Crops grown then included grapes, cumin, flax, sesame, barley, millet, oats, and teff (teff may have been the primary source of flour in ancient South Arabia and is still used to make bread in Ethiopia); the dam was destroyed in the sixth century A.D. Across Wādi Dhana, 3 km from Marib, is the strongly fortified, oval-walled Temple of Marib, Mahram Bilqis, with a large bronze basin in the floor at the doorway, and a sixth century B.C. Phoenician-style statue of Baʿal Melqart in a lion skin in the peristyle hall.

At 1 x .5 km, Marib itself was comparable in area to other great cities of the ancient Near East. The Sabæan tell of Marib now has only a small village with about 15 families, but might have had a peak population of 22,500 people in its approximately 50 hectares if we follow the ratio of 500 people per hectare (10,000 m²) estimated for various ancient and modern Near Eastern cities by Braidwood, Reed, Weulersse, Shiloh, and Kasten. Or, at 5 persons per house, and 60 houses per hectare, the population of Marib might have been 13,500. According to other known ratios, these two population figures might well be halved, i.e., 6,750

243 Van Beek, “The Land of Sheba,” 43–44.
244 Van Beek, “Arabia Felix,” 39.
245 Van Beek, “The Land of Sheba,” 49.
246 Ibid.
to 11,250; all figures here are in accord with an estimate that 10% of the buildings were governmental.

Other than the Sabaean state, with its final capital at Marib, there also arose in southernmost South Arabia a number of later Iron Age contemporaries: In North Yemen there was Ma'in, with its capital at Qarnaw; in West Aden, centering on Wadi Beihan, and bordering on Saba', there was Qataban, with its capital at Tamna' (which was four times the size of Israelite Megiddo! [Tamna' was destroyed in A.D. 15, and never reoccupied]); in the Hadramaut, including Dhofar, the Qara' Mountains, etc., there was Sa'kal, with its capital at Shabwa; between Qataban and Aden was Ausan, with an unknown capital. These early states were first ruled by mukkaribs (MKRB), "priest-kings," who were later replaced by ordinary maliks (muluk) "kings." Although precise dating of the establishment of these states is still a matter of study and controversy, all were apparently in existence before the time of Lehi.

The Sabaeans and Minaeans established colonies along the inland caravan route to the north, at such sites as Yathrib (Medina), Didan/Dedan (al-Khuraybah, near al-'Ula), and Mada'in Salih (al-Hijr/Hijra), around which later coalesced tribal groups that formed the less well developed states of Thamud, Lihiyan, and Safa. These latter states were formed too late to have been known to Lehi, though the tribes themselves may have existed much earlier. Indeed, as suggested by Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, the Semitic root for the names Lehi and Lihiyan are one and the same. Winnett and Reed note that "the kingdom of

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Lihyan . . . dates to the Persian and Hellenistic periods," after Dedan, which was a Minaean colony,251 showing that Lihyan lasted from ca. 400 B.C. to ca. A.D. 500.

The AFSM (American Foundation for the Study of Man) continued its South Arabian excavations after a thirty-year hiatus. During the 1982–83 seasons, 101 mostly pre-Islamic sites were found in Wādi Al-Jubah, North Yemen. Dated by C-14 to the first millennium B.C., these "sites were part of a massive agricultural system which was located in a protected wadi system, and which lay on the trading routes between Qataban, Sheba, and finally either the Syro-Palestinian coast, Egypt, or the Persian Gulf."252

Adjacent to the border of North Yemen, during 1983, a team of Saudis and Americans found ancient smelters and tons of mining slag at ten separate sites, along with available sources of gold, copper, and iron.253 Archaeological leavings are sufficiently rich now that the Saudi government has established six site museums—at Taima', Najran, Jizan, Hofuf, al-Jauf, and al-'Ula.254 Indeed, the U.S. Geological Survey has suggested that the Mahd Dhahab, "Cradle of Gold," in the neighborhood of Taima on the Haj route in Saudi Arabia was truly the site of the fabulous Solomon’s Mines, from whence Solomon and Hiram brought nearly 31 metric tons of gold (1086 talents) = half the known gold supply of the ancient world.255

Beginning in 1882, hundreds of Yemenite Jews began traveling by foot along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula to Palestine or Aden for transportation via the Red Sea. As late as 1950, one clan of these Yemenite Jews came to the newly formed state of Israel from Ḥabbān, a town in central Hadramaut (the tribe of Ḥimyar had anciently been just to the South). When their

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Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1971), 512–13.
251 Winnett and Reed, Ancient Records from North Arabia, 39, 116–17.
254 Ibid., 49.
ancestors had arrived in Hadramaut is unknown, but they had no Levites or kohanim (priests), and they dressed very strangely. They settled at Moshav Bareket and Kefar Shalem in Israel in 1950, and in 1970 their clan numbered around 180 families.\textsuperscript{256} In Najran and to the South, in pre-Islamic Yemen (Yamanat), Jews lived in Kinda, Aden, Zabid, Zafar, and San‘a. Jews also lived throughout the Hijāz during the early Roman period and are mentioned in Liḥyanite inscriptions. Indeed, there is good reason to hold that the Jews were then actively preaching their religion and successfully converting pre-Islamic Arabs. With the rise of Muhammad (whose new religion was a form of Judaism), the males of the larger Hijāzi Jewish communities were expelled or put to the sword, and many of their women and children absorbed into Arab society as slaves. Except for those Jews further to the South, Judaism in this area ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{257}

The details of Lehi’s trek down the Tiḥāma of Arabia may never be entirely clear to us, but the real nature of what he and his clan did and encountered en route can be guessed at and understood as nothing out of the ordinary for Jews in that area during the Iron Age or later. In Lehi’s day, Mecca (= Classical Makorba, “temple”)\textsuperscript{258} was the site of just another pagan shrine, the Ka‘ba, although it venerated a meteoric stone, al-Hajar al-Aswad, “The Black Stone,” which later came to be connected to Abrahamic legend, and which was one of the few such pagan objects to be retained by iconoclastic Islam (there was also a Ka‘ba at Nejran on

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the Saudi-Yemen border, and one at San'a). Lehi and Nephi may have avoided such centers and stayed in marginal caravan and nomad areas. Such a small clan would have presented little threat to already extant tribes, and, as E. Marx recently pointed out,

tribesmen do not necessarily reserve pastures for their own use. In South Sinai, for instance, each tribe grants the others the use of pastures in its territory, but reserves for its members the right to build houses, plant orchards, and use smuggling trails.

The rules of the pastoral nomads themselves would have made it possible for Lehi to move down the Peninsula unobtrusively. It seems unlikely that his small clan would even have been charged a caravan levy.

Although we are not told, Lehi’s clan undoubtedly moved through the wilderness by camel—for illustrations of camels and Israelite dress of the period, see the Jehu panel on Shalmaneser III’s Black Obelisk, and the palace bas reliefs of Sennacherib’s conquest of Lachish. The physical type of these people—Jews and Arabs—was uniformly Mediterranean. Moreover, their languages were very similar. Nibley cites Albright and others

259 Guillaume, Islam, 10n.
to the effect that there was no real distinction in language or culture among the desert peoples of the Patriarchal and later Classical Israelite periods.\textsuperscript{265} It is a major mistake, however, to extend this similarity to the particulars of recent Bedouin (Arab) dress and culture.

Indeed, the name \textit{Lehi} is a common personal and clan name in Safaitic, Liyanite, Thamudic, Minaean, Qatabanian, and Sabaeann (including theophoric forms);\textsuperscript{266} Laman can likewise be found among Safaitic names as L'mn, “Mender.”\textsuperscript{267} Even Nephi shows up among Safaitic and Minaean personal names as Nfy (= Arab. \textit{nafaiy}, “exile”),\textsuperscript{268} although an Egyptian etymology appears more likely for Laman and Nephi (as suggested at 681 B.C., above). Finally, the name \textit{Lemu'el} may also have a very strong Arabic context due to its appearance in association with the place-name Massa\textsuperscript{2} in Proverbs 31:1.\textsuperscript{269} The place-name first appears in a ca. 735 B.C. inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III and seems to have been located just to the north of Taim\textsuperscript{2}. Massa\textsuperscript{2} was later mentioned in Taymanite and Thamudic script.\textsuperscript{270}

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\item[266] Cf. Harding, \textit{An Index and Concordance}, 512–13.
\item[267] \textit{Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum}, 946, 3443, possibly = Arab. \textit{laman}, “scoundrel” (cf. South Arabic \textit{lmn} “intervention”; Akkadian \textit{lmn}, “evil”), or Arab. \textit{laymun}, “limes.”
\item[269] In the Hebrew text, but misunderstood by the KJV translators; cf. Genesis 25:14, 1 Chronicles 1:30.
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