

War

in the Book of Mormon

Wars in the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture Alma 43–62

Explanation There are several major wars or periods of warfare documented in the Book of Mormon. The approximate dates and locations of these wars, along with accompanying scriptural references, are listed in this chart. Having names and dates for these wars can help readers keep all of this confusing action straight. Although the Book of Mormon is a complex record, it is still very clear and purposeful.

Source John W. Welch, “Why Study Wars in the Book of Mormon?” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 6–15.

Wars in the Book of Mormon

Date	War	Location	Reference
500–100 B.C.	Early tribal wars	Land of Nephi	Jacob 1:10, 14; Enos–Omni
160–150 B.C.	Wars of King Laman's sons	City of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla	Omni 1:24; W of M 1:13–14; Mosiah 9–10
87 B.C.	War of Amlici	Zarahemla, hill Amnihu, and river Sidon	Alma 2–3
81 B.C.	Destruction of Ammonihah	Ammonihah, west of Zarahemla	Alma 16:1–11; 24:1–25:14
77 B.C.	War of the Ammonite secession	Zarahemla, the land of Jershon	Alma 28
74 B.C.	Zoramite war	Between Antionum and Jershon	Alma 43–44
72 B.C.	First Amalickiahite war	Ammonihah, Noah, the east coast near narrow neck of land	Alma 46:1–50:11
67–61 B.C.	Second Amalickiahite war (seven years' war)	Throughout land of Zarahemla	Alma 51–62
52 B.C.	Rebellion of Paanchi	City of Zarahemla	Hel. 1:1–13
51 B.C.	War of Tubaloth	Cities of Zarahemla and Bountiful	Hel. 1:14–34
38, 35–30 B.C.	War of Moronihah	Land of Zarahemla	Hel. 4
26–19 B.C.	War of Gadianton and Kishkumen	The entire land, but centered in the land of Zarahemla	Hel. 6:15–11:20
A.D. 13–22	War of Giddianhi and Zemnarihah	From Zarahemla to Bountiful	3 Ne. 2:11–4:28
A.D. 30	Rebellion of Jacob	Land of Zarahemla	3 Ne. 6:14–7:14
A.D. 322, 327–28	Final Nephite wars, phase I	Land of Zarahemla and northward	Morm. 1:6–2:9
A.D. 346–350	Final Nephite wars, phase II	Lands of Zarahemla, Jashon, and Shem	Morm. 2:16–3:1
A.D. 361–85	Final Nephite wars, phase III	The narrow neck of land and all the land northward	Morm. 3:4–6:15

Data on Wars Involving the Nephites

Key Scripture Alma 43–62

Explanation This three-page chart is a more detailed representation of the fifteen Nephite wars listed in chart 136. It tracks each major war's approximate dates and locations, as well as its causes and results. Though the wars are very different from each other, they share some interesting patterns. For example, several of the wars were caused when one group of people tried to separate from the main group. Apparently, the Nephites were restricted in their travel, and defection from the land was considered an act of treason and a cause for armed intervention. Another pattern is that opponents to the government chose to strike right after a new leader had taken office or when the government or the church was weakened by dissension. Amalickiah's wars, for instance, were initiated when dissenters banded together and desired a king, shortly after Alma left and Helaman was newly in office (see Alma 45:23–46:7). Studying the amazingly consistent complexity and sensible realism of these war accounts brings to light the real-life issues and dynamics behind the Nephite history told in the Book of Mormon.

Source John W. Welch, "Why Study Wars in the Book of Mormon?" in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 6–15.

Data on Wars Involving the Nephites

War	Dates	Location	Causes	References	Results
1. Early tribal wars	6th–2nd century B.C.	Land of Nephi	A popular and fraternal hatred; resentment; desire to destroy the Nephites	Jacob 1:10, 14; Enos–Omni	Nephites did not thrive and later left land of Nephi
2. Wars of King Laman’s sons	160–150 B.C.	City of Nephi, land of Zarahemla	Lamanite fear of growing Nephite strength; Lamanite belief that Nephi had wronged his elder brothers	Mosiah 9–10; Omni 1:24; W of M 1:13–14	Established land of Zarahemla as Nephite territory and land of Nephi as Lamanite territory
3. War of Amlici	87 B.C./ 5th year of reign of judges (R.J.)	Zarahemla, hill Amnihu, river Sidon	Political unrest caused by changing the government from a kingship to a judgeship	Alma 2–3	Uneasy peace in Zarahemla with Alma as chief judge
4. Destruction of Ammonihah	81 B.C./ 11 R.J.	Ammonihah	Lamanites seeking revenge on the Nehorites for causing a civil war	Alma 16:1–11; 24:1–25:14	Virtual elimination of Nehorites as a political force
5. War of the Ammonite secession	77 B.C./ 15 R.J.	Zarahemla, land of Jershon	Lamanites attack in retaliation for the Ammonite secession	Alma 28	Ammonites established in land of Jershon
6. Zoramite war	74 B.C./ 18 R.J.	Between Antionum and Jershon	Lamanites attack in retaliation for the Zoramite secession	Alma 43–44	Important use of innovative armor; a Zoramite oath never to attack again

War	Dates	Location	Causes	References	Results
7. First Amalickiah-ite war	72 B.C./ 20 R.J.	Ammonihah, Noah, east seacoast near the narrow neck of land	Political unrest caused by Amalickiah, who dissented from Nephites with political ambitions	Alma 46:1–50:11	Amalickiah defeated, but he swore to return and to kill Captain Moroni
8. Second Amalickiah-ite war (seven years' war)	67–61 B.C./ 25–31 R.J.	Throughout land of Zarahemla	Return of Amalickiah, coinciding with the armed revolt of the king-men and his brother Ammoron's assumption of the Lamanite kingship	Alma 51–62	A very costly Nephite victory
9. Rebellion of Paanchi	52 B.C./ 40 R.J.	City of Zarahemla	Dispute over Pahoran, son of Pahoran, becoming chief judge	Hel. 1:1–13	Paanchi executed; Pahoran assassinated
10. War of Tubaloth	51 B.C./ 41 R.J.	Cities of Zarahemla and Bountiful	After the turmoil of Paanchi's rebellion, Coriantumr tried to capture the throne of Zarahemla	Hel. 1:14–34	The rise of Gadianton robbers
11. War of Moronihah	38, 35–30 B.C./54, 57–62 R.J.	Land of Zarahemla	Continuing dissension in the church	Hel. 4	Half of Nephite lands occupied by dissenters; Nephi resigns judgment seat

War	Dates	Location	Causes	References	Results
12. War of Gadianton and Kishkumen	26–19 B.C./ 66–73 R.J.	Entire land, but centered in the land of Zarahemla	Assassinations of chief judges Cezoram and his son; Gadi- anton robbers attain power	Hel. 6:15– 11:20	The famine declared by Nephi ended the war as Gadianton's band dissolved
13. War of Giddianhi and Zemnarihah	A.D. 13–22	From Zarahemla to Bountiful	Gadianton robbers come out of the hills to obtain food and to regain control of the government	3 Ne. 2:11– 4:28	Unification of the victorious Lamanites and Nephites against the threat of the robbers
14. Rebellion of Jacob	A.D. 30	Land of Zarahemla	Lachoneus tried to expose corrupt judges, who in retaliation tried to make Jacob king	3 Ne. 6:14– 7:14	Collapse of reign of judges; degeneration into tribal society
15. Final Nephite wars, phase I	A.D. 322, 327–28	Land of Zarahemla and northward	Overpopulation; infestation of robbers	Morm. 1:6– 2:9	Nephites driven back to the narrow neck of land
Final Nephite wars, phase II	A.D. 346– 350	Lands of Zarahemla, Jashon, and Shem	Continual Lamanite aggressions	Morm. 2:16– 3:1	Nephites enter ten-year peace with Lamanites
Final Nephite wars, phase III	A.D. 361– 385	Narrow neck of land and all the land northward	Lamanite greed; gross wickedness on both sides	Morm. 3:4– 6:15	Eventual annihilation of Nephite people

The Two Final Battles

Key Scriptures Mormon 6; Ether 15

Explanation This chart compares the final battles of both the Jaredite and Nephite civilizations, which took place near the same hill (see Ether 15:11). Moroni, the only known Nephite survivor of the battle at Cumorah, was the narrator of the account in the book of Ether that involves the final Jaredite battle at Ramah. He must have been deeply impressed by the parallels between the two wars of annihilation. In both cases, nations of great promise were wiped away. Because of their wickedness, the Spirit of God “ceased to strive” with both peoples (Mormon 5:16; Ether 15:19). In this chart the dates, places, numbers of soldiers, outcomes, and other statistics of these battles are contrasted. Despite the consequent collapse of these civilizations, a remnant of Lehi’s seed was preserved, fulfilling the promises made by the Lord to Lehi, Nephi, Enos, and other righteous Nephites.

The Two Final Battles

Jaredites

Nephites

when	ca. 300 B.C.	385 A.D.
where	hill Ramah	hill Cumorah (hill Ramah)
who	Coriantumr and Shiz	Nephites and Lamanites
how many	2 million or more	around 230,000 Nephites
who gathered	men, wives, children	men, wives, children
outcome	both sides destroyed	Nephites destroyed
Spirit	ceased to strive with	ceased to strive with
prophet	Ether	Mormon
account	Ether 13–15	Mormon 6–7
record	24 gold plates	plates of Mormon
survivor	Coriantumr	Moroni

Ancient Steel Weapons

Key Scripture 1 Nephi 4:9

Explanation This chart compares a dagger of Hittite origin found in King Tutankhamen's tomb with Nephi's description of Laban's sword. The high-quality Middle Eastern sword found in the tomb compares with the description in 1 Nephi surprisingly well. Although not related to each other, these two swords both come from the ancient Near East before Lehi's departure from Jerusalem. Laban's sword, which lasted for thousands of years while the Nephite record keepers safeguarded it and used it ceremonially and in wars from generation to generation (see Words of Mormon 1:13), was reproduced "many" times by the Nephites as they prepared to defend themselves from the Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5:14).

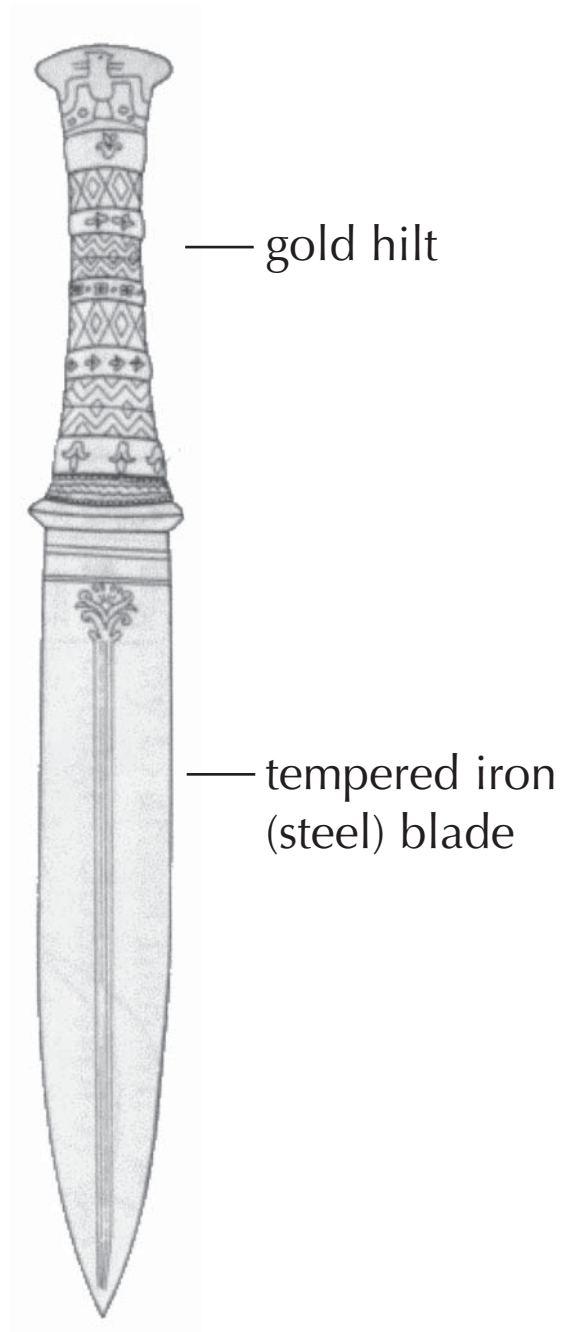
Source William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, "Swords in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 334–35.

Ancient Steel Weapons

Nephi's Description of the Sword of Laban

“And I beheld his sword, and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof; and the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel.”
—1 Nephi 4:9

Dagger from King Tutankhamen's Tomb



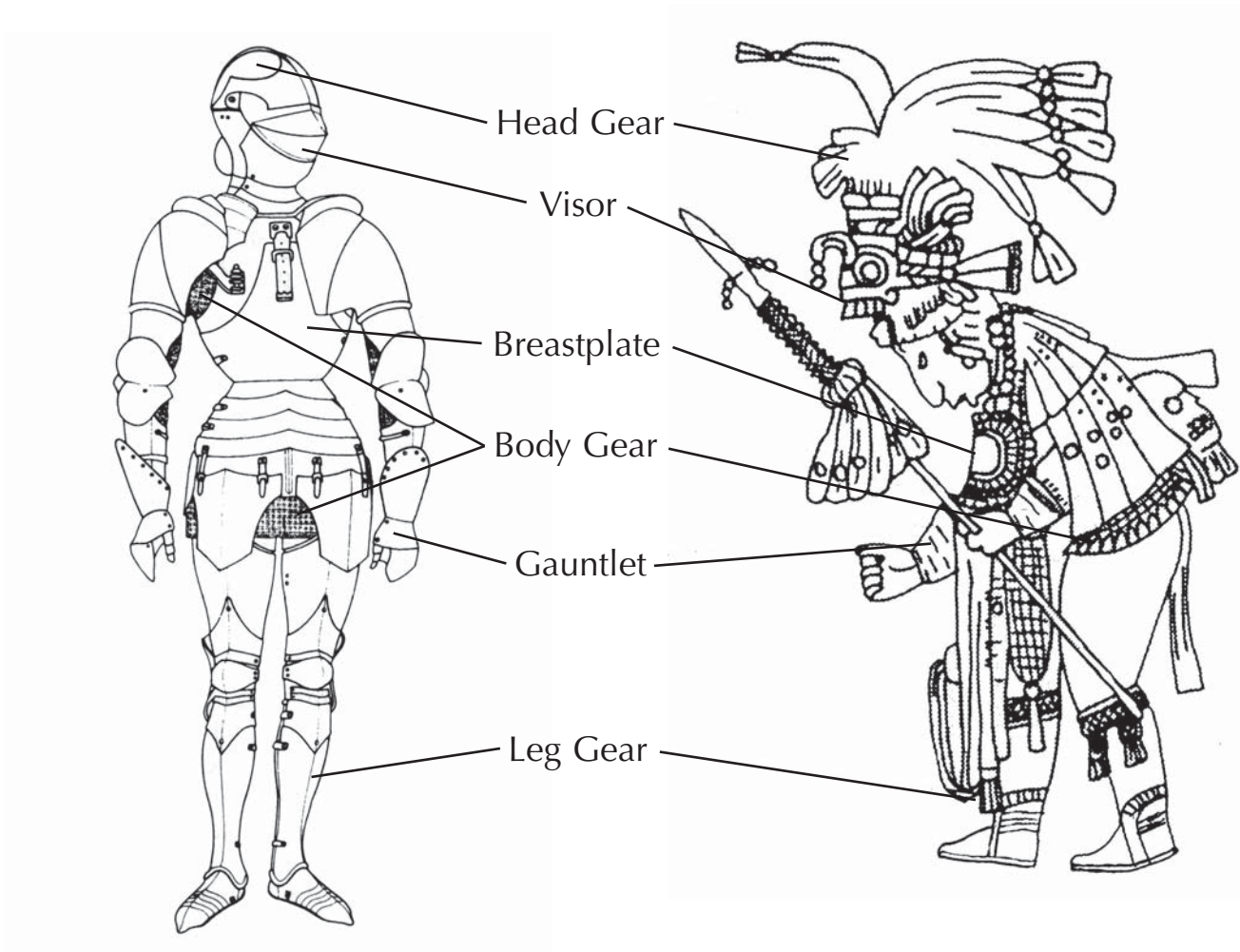
Comparison of European and Mayan Armor

Key Scripture Alma 43

Explanation European and Mayan warriors used similarly named pieces of armor, such as head gear, breastplates, body gear, and gauntlets, but the styles and materials they used were very different. The Book of Mormon mentions breastplates, shields, armor, head-plates, arm-shields, animal skins, thick clothing, and bucklers as types of armor. What were they like? Mayan soldiers used thick protective jackets made of double-thick quilted cotton that were often worn under animal skins. Nephite breastplates were probably also similar to Mayan breastplates, which were made of materials such as wood, bone, shells, jade, stones, and pieces of metal. The term *head-plates* in the Book of Mormon is unusual, but Mayan records may again help to clarify: Mayan head-plates, or carved jade plaques, were worn attached to leather or cloth headbands. Hats that were protected with plates of stone, wood, or metal could also be considered head-plates. Mayan shields were usually made of reeds, cloth, or wood. Armor terminology in the Book of Mormon interestingly reflects differences between Old World and New World armor. The Book of Mormon uses biblical terms when ancient Near Eastern and Mesoamerican armors are similar but different terminology when Mesoamerican armor (e.g., *head-plate*) differs significantly from Old World armor (e.g., *helmet*), thus indicating the precision of the Book of Mormon accounts.

Source William J. Hamblin, "Armor in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 401, 413.

Comparison of European and Mayan Armor



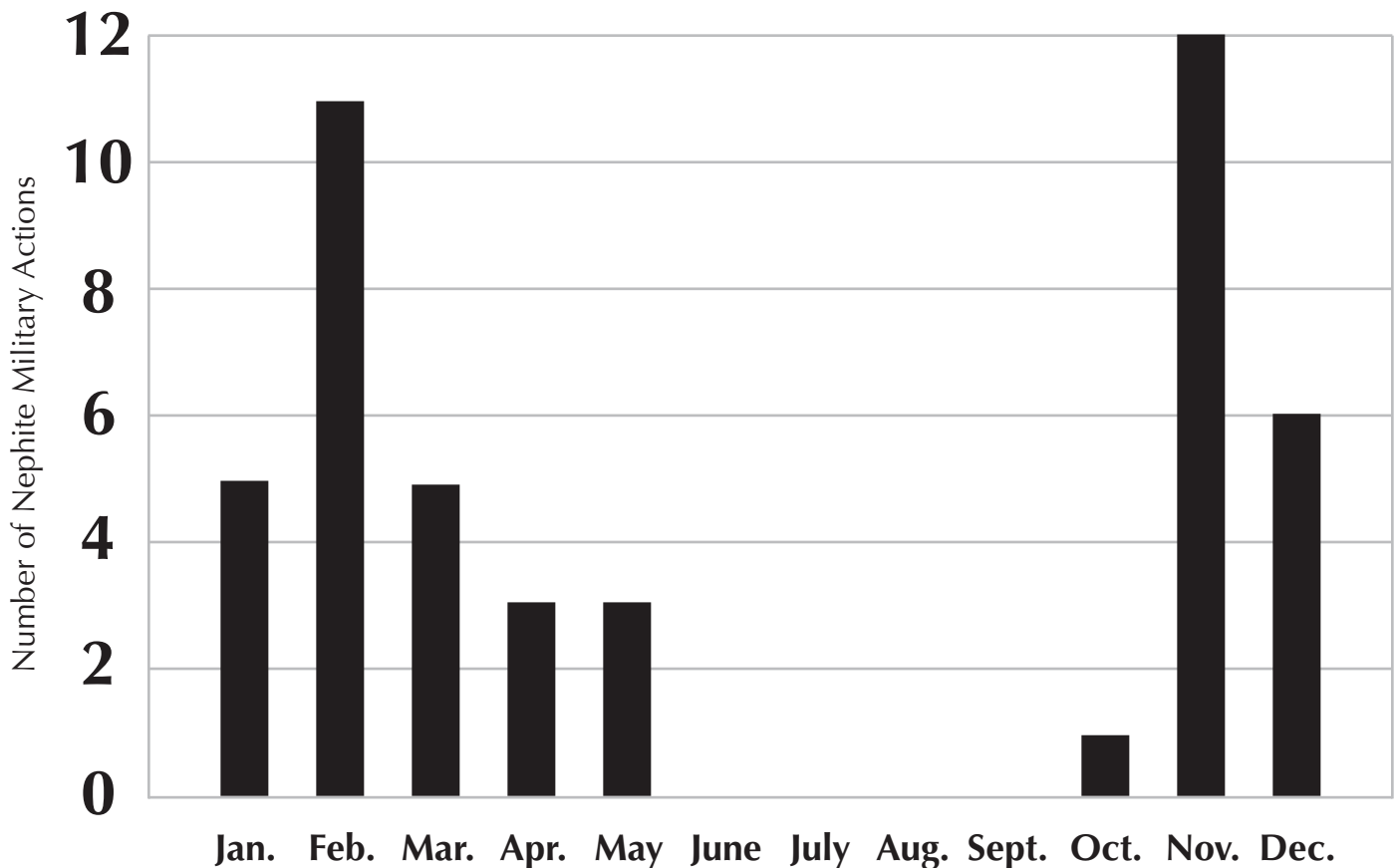
Number of Months Involving Nephite Military Actions

Key Scripture Alma 43–62

Explanation John L. Sorenson, an archaeologist who has devoted his life to the study of ancient Mesoamerica and how it corresponds to the history of the Nephite, Lamanite, and Jaredite peoples in the Book of Mormon, concludes that “Nephite wars were typically carried out early in the dry season as permitted by the agricultural maintenance pattern and when weather conditions were most suited for military campaigns. . . . The Nephite seasonality pattern for warfare agrees remarkably well with what we know from Mesoamerica about seasons for fighting and for cultivation and harvest.” As this chart illustrates, November and February were the months in which the most warfare was conducted. Other months were reserved for cultivation and harvesting of crops, taxing, celebrating according to the law of Moses, and so forth.

Source John L. Sorenson, “Seasonality of Warfare in the Book of Mormon and in Mesoamerica,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 455–57.

Number of Months Involving Nephite Military Actions



Nephite Calendar

First Month
 Second Month
 Third Month
 Fourth Month
 Fifth Month
 Sixth Month
 Seventh Month
 Eighth Month
 Ninth Month
 Tenth Month
 Eleventh Month
 Twelfth Month

Probable Julian Equivalent

25 February–26 March
 27 March–25 April
 26 April–25 May
 26 May–24 June
 25 June–24 July
 25 July–23 August
 24 August–22 September
 23 September–22 October
 23 October–21 November
 22 November–21 December
 27 December–25 January
 26 January–24 February

Five extra days would then complete the year

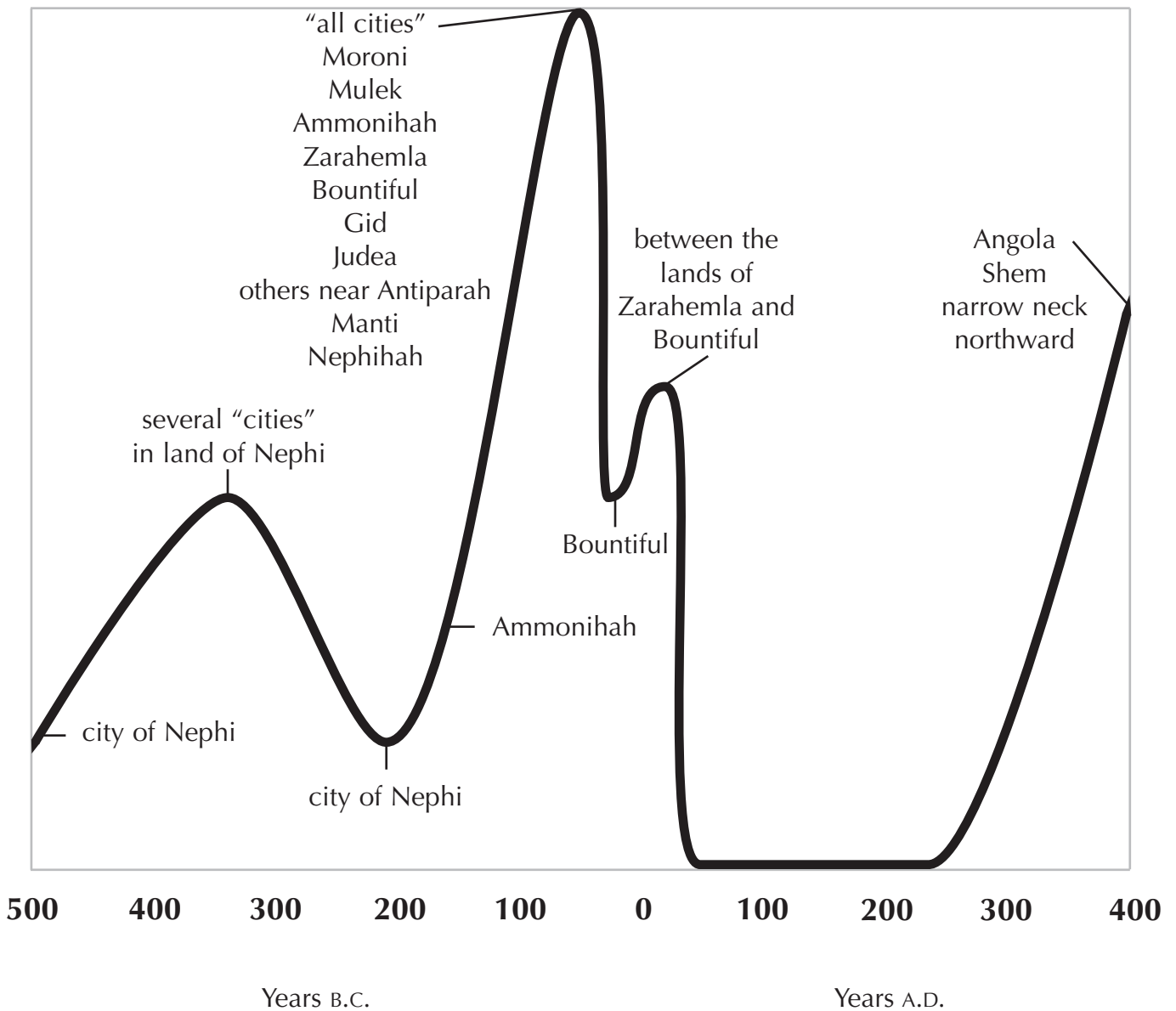
References to Nephite Fortifications Recorded in the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture 2 Nephi 26:2

Explanation As is shown by this graph, the Book of Mormon records that more known fortifications were built between 75 B.C. and A.D. 15 than at any other time in Nephite history. The building of these fortifications can be divided into four Nephite periods and one Lamanite period: (1) the Nephites in the land of Nephi from the sixth century B.C. to the third century B.C., (2) Zeniff's rebuilding of the wall of Nephi in the second century B.C., (3) extensive work by Captain Moroni and his successors from approximately 75 B.C. until at least A.D. 15, (4) the Lamanites' effort in the first century B.C., and (5) the Nephites in the final wars before their destruction (late fourth century A.D.). In the first period, the Nephites "began to fortify [the] cities" that they claimed as an "inheritance" (Jarom 1:7), in addition to the city of Nephi (see Jacob 7:25). In the second period, the walls of the city of Nephi must have been prominent, for they are mentioned four times (see Mosiah 7:10; 9:8; 21:19; 22:6). The innovative construction of fortifications at several sites is described in considerable detail during the third period (see Alma 49:2–22; 50:1–11; 53:3–7). More than ten fortified cities are mentioned specifically in this major period, and at least five sites in the final period.

Source John L. Sorenson, "Fortifications in the Book of Mormon Account Compared with Mesoamerican Fortifications," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 438–43.

References to Nephite Fortifications Recorded in the Book of Mormon



Mesoamerican Fortified and Defensive Sites by Period

Explanation Archaeologists have now identified numerous fortified sites in Mesoamerica. In the early periods, these fortifications consisted of earthen barriers, stone walls with gates, wooden palisades, isolated guard posts, elevated defensive sites, and moats or ditches. The peoples in that land were once thought to be strictly peaceful, but that idea has been proven wrong. Although the numbers in this chart are tentative (dependent as they are on the accidents of archaeological discovery), it is interesting to note that the number of known fortified sites sharply increases in the period when the Nephites also experienced their years of greatest military conflict.

Source John L. Sorenson, "Fortifications in the Book of Mormon Account Compared with Mesoamerican Fortifications," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 429, 437.

Mesoamerican Fortified and Defensive Sites by Period

Period	Definite	Possible
Early Pre-Classic (pre-1000 B.C.)	0	1
Early Middle Pre-Classic (1000–600 B.C.)	0	2
Late Middle Pre-Classic (600–400 B.C.)	5	1
Late Pre-Classic (400–50 B.C.)	30	2
Proto-Classic (50 B.C.–A.D. 200)	26	8
Early Classic (A.D. 200–400)	14	8
Middle Classic (A.D. 400–650)	11	13
Late Classic (A.D. 650–850)	27	11
Epi-Classic (A.D. 850–1000)	12	10
Post-Classic (A.D. 1000–Conquest)	177	16