



In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful

Michaela Knoth Aston, Warren P. Aston

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Early in the Book of Mormon, Nephi wrote, 'We did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness. And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish.' (1 Nephi 17:4?5.)

Now, nearly 2,600 years later, we wonder: Where was Nephi's Bountiful? Where was Nahom, the place Lehi and his party stopped to mourn and bury Ishmael? What was the route over which they traveled?

For more than a decade, a young Australian couple, Warren and Michaela Aston, have explored the remote deserts and valleys of the Arabian peninsula, traveling in many areas previously unvisited by outsiders. What began as a simple desire to see Lehi's trail for themselves grew into a serious research project that has yielded remarkable results. Not content to rely on what others have done, the Astons have brought their combined love of the scriptures, archaeology, history, and the Middle East to a focus on the two most important locations mentioned in Nephi's account of Lehi's Arabian odyssey--Nahom and Bountiful. They demonstrate convincingly that both these places can now be identified on the modern map.

Juggling their research with the demands of employment and a young family, the Astons have frequently traveled in dangerous regions with little more than determination and Nephi's writings as their guide. As a result, over several years they have completed a ground survey of the entire east coast of the Arabian peninsula--a survey that has identified the first location matching the description of Bountiful.

The Astons' thorough and persistent scholarship So impressive are their findings that in 1993 Brigham Young University and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) co-sponsored an expedition team to the Bountiful site in Oman; further work is planned in the near future.

Aware that many others may never be able to see these places for themselves, the Astons have given special attention to capturing, as far as possible, the atmosphere as well as the form of locations essentially unchanged since the time of the Lehiites. From among the thousands of photographs taken over a nine-year period by Warren, a former freelance photographer, the stunning pictures selected for this book illustrate Lehi's journey as never before.

Warren and Michaela Aston presently reside in Brisbane, Australia, and are the parents of six children.

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