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**Title** The Hunt for the Valley of Lemuel

**Author(s)** S. Kent Brown

**Reference** *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16/1 (2007): 64-73, 86-88.

**ISSN** 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

**Abstract** A canyon in northwestern Arabia, Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, appears to be a strong candidate for the Valley of Lemuel in the Book of Mormon. Although its rare year-round stream seems to confirm this site as the valley, other locations must be considered. Brown gives arguments both in favor of and against three other propositions, all of which are within a few dozen miles of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. The aspects of the river and the Red Sea, the drainage areas of wadis, and the character of the valley are all evaluated. Despite his one serious objection to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism—the difficulty Lehi’s family would have experienced in reaching the site from the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba—Brown argues that it is the most viable candidate for the Valley of Lemuel.



THE  
Hunt FOR THE  
Valley  
OF Lemuel



## THE POSSIBLE LOCATION

of the Valley of Lemuel has captured the attention of students of the Book of Mormon, particularly following the publication of an attractive site in northwestern Arabia whose characteristics include canyon walls that rise more than 2,000 feet above the valley floor and a stream that runs year around. The canyon, called Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, appears to fit snugly with Nephi's description of a "valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable" featuring a "river, continually running" (1 Nephi 2:9–10).<sup>1</sup> This find is set into profile all the more because surveys have concluded that "the Red Sea . . . is left without a single flowing river. In this respect the Red Sea is unique."<sup>2</sup> Only on the coast of Yemen does one find year-round streams such as Wadi Hagr that drain to the south, but not into the Red Sea: "Wadi Hagr . . . which, at the point where it reaches the sea, is that great rarity of Arabia, a perennial stream."<sup>3</sup> The rare water source in Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, therefore, had seemingly settled the question about the location of the Valley of Lemuel. But other competing views demand to be taken seriously. The question is whether these alternative suggestions carry the merits of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. Let us examine three other proposed sites, all in northwest Arabia and within a few dozen miles of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism.

The first and northern-most candidate is Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>ʿ</sup>, a streambed which lies a mere twelve or so miles south of Aqaba, close to the 1961 border between the modern states of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The streambed reaches the Red Sea within Jordanian territory, two miles north of the Saudi border town al-Durrah.<sup>4</sup> According to one report, Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>ʿ</sup> is a canyon wherein one can find a running stream in its "lower portion."<sup>5</sup> If this information is correct, the stream, apparently freshened by springs, is not seasonal, that is, it does not depend on winter or monsoonal rains.

The second candidate is one of the two wadis in the neighborhood of Biʿr Marshah, either Wadi al-Ḥulayb whose mouth lies two miles away or Wadi al-Ḥashā whose mouth is five miles distant.<sup>6</sup> Biʿr Marshah, an Arabic name, means "well of Marshah." The general region lies some forty-five miles south of the modern Jordanian city Aqaba, along

the shoreline, just before one encounters the mountain massif that pushes itself to the water's edge of the Gulf of Aqaba and blocks any foot traffic moving southward.<sup>7</sup> Here, near the coast, a dug well is in place. The wadis near Biʿr Marshah are dry. During the winter, however, as is the case with other dry streambeds in the area, they will spring to life as a result of winter rains. The persistent question is, How long might a seasonal stream in this area flow? The answer is, It depends on the amount and consistency of the rains.

The third candidate was proposed as early as 1976 and lies some eighty plus miles south and east of Aqaba along an established trade route.<sup>8</sup> Its name is al-Bad<sup>ʿ</sup>, an oasis that sits in a wide valley called Wadi Ifal, and shows similar characteristics to Biʿr Marshah in that any stream through the area depends on abundant rain. Though the valley is very wide where al-Bad<sup>ʿ</sup> sits, the distant mountains offer a possible match to Nephi's description of a "valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable" (1 Nephi 2:10).<sup>9</sup> The main challenge for holding this site to be the area of Lehi's camp is its distance from Aqaba. It has been judged to be too far for persons to travel in three days' journey (see 1 Nephi 2:6), a feature that has diminished the appeal of al-Bad<sup>ʿ</sup>.<sup>10</sup> But clear evidence of habitation exists at this site during the era when Lehi and Sariah were on the move, the late Iron Age, as seen in the pottery and the remains of structures.<sup>11</sup>

S. KENT BROWN



## Water and Distance

Let me now turn to issues that impact all of the proposed sites, beginning with Lehi's description of a "continually running" stream, because this feature constitutes the most vivid and inviting detail from the record, despite a hypothesis that "continually running" refers not to the water in the stream, though it was plainly visible at Lehi's camp, but rather to the dry streambed itself (see 1 Nephi 2:6, 9).<sup>12</sup> I begin by observing that, outside of Nephi's report, no recorded year-around streams empty into the Red Sea along its east coast.<sup>13</sup> This observation applies to the reported spring in Wadi Nuwaybi'.<sup>14</sup> The entire west coast of Arabia is dry, except for seasonal streams. No visitors or surveyors have reported such a flow of water. Water brings people, even if only passersby, and such people leave behind remnants of their stay. Moreover, map work is not as precise as a person might think because maps are generally composed of "Miscellaneous Geologic [or Geographic] Investigations" from a variety of sources.<sup>15</sup> Further, the trade route that ran from ancient Ezion Gaber,<sup>16</sup> near where Aqaba now sits, to Wadi Ifal, where al-Bad' is located, crosses the mouth of Wadi Nuwaybi'. If a stream were running out of that canyon, this spot would have been frequented by ancient travelers, even though they would have been less than a typical day's journey south of the last main town, Ezion Gaber, and those travelers would have left behind traces of their stays. An archaeological survey is needed, much

like the one conducted in Jordan's mountainous region southeast of the Dead Sea,<sup>17</sup> or the survey in northwest Saudi Arabia.<sup>18</sup> Until someone undertakes such a survey and establishes the presence of human remains in that area, as well as evidence of a perennial stream, we must bracket the site of Wadi Nuwaybi' as a serious candidate. There is more.

Even if we cannot know "the precise point from which these three days travel begin,"<sup>19</sup> the fact that a person can reach Wadi Nuwaybi' within a day's walk from the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba, rather than three days' journey, diminishes the likelihood of this spot even more. Another observation may stand against Wadi Nuwaybi'. The archaeological survey conducted in northwest Arabia reports no irrigation system established in this region in ancient times. The presence of an ancient irrigation system, even in areas that are now completely dry, indicates a regular flow of water that people wanted to control. Such water-works appear in other places, including near al-Bad' (less than a hundred miles away from Wadi Nuwaybi'), that enjoyed the presence of springs two or three thousand years ago.<sup>20</sup>

The mountain valleys near Bi'r Marshah carry some attraction because they are within a comfortable three days' journey of the tip of the Red Sea. If one reckons that the family was traveling about twenty miles per day, or perhaps fewer, then the distance of fifty or so miles fits nicely.<sup>21</sup> The challenge for those who want to champion this place lies in the seasonal character of any stream. To be sure, a dug well exists in this place. But it is unknown whether the well was sunk in ancient times. Even



Left: The Wadi al-Sharmah runs southward to the narrow Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. Right: The pass (right) allows access from the Red Sea up through Wadi al-Hulayb and into Wadi al-Sharmah. All photos in this article by George D. Potter, unless otherwise noted.



so, Lehi did not describe a spot with a well but with a “continually running” stream. And that is the rub.

If a person holds that the family of Lehi and Sariah resided at their first camp only during the winter months, that person is making two untested and untestable assumptions: first, one is assuming that the stream in the wadi bed was flowing more or less throughout the entire winter and, second, in the winter season—and only in the winter season—the family camped at this spot.<sup>22</sup> If one assumption is weak, the other weakens.

To address the first assumption, I note that the average rainfall in northwestern Arabia totals 100 millimeters or less per year, which is far from the amount needed for cultivation.<sup>23</sup> This total might support life for a short period of time along the edge of a seasonal stream, assuming that the stream is constant and potable. But the supposition that a constant stream was flowing during winter constitutes a major leap. In my experience, winter waters that run in the region’s desert canyons normally come with a rush, following a rainstorm, and are infrequent and dirty, much like the water that Lehi and Nephi saw in their visions: “the water which my father [Lehi] saw was filthiness” (1 Nephi 15:27). As an example, during two winter excavating seasons at Masada, the ancient fortress that overlooks the Dead Sea and lies some 125 miles north of Aqaba and thus fits into the same basic weather pattern, archaeologists saw mainly sudden rain storms that filled the streambeds in the nearby wadis which drained toward the fortress; the water came with such force that it created spurting jets of water. But then the streams subsided, leaving only temporary pools of standing water.<sup>24</sup>

The other underlying issue has to do with the drainage area of the wadis that run to the Red Sea shore near Biʿr Marshah. None are large. The nearby canyons and their tributary valleys are rather lim-



The mountain massif south of Biʿr Marshah prevents foot traffic from continuing along the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba.

ited in their geographical extent, reaching only five to eight miles inland.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the amount of land surface that can collect rain water and funnel it into a stream is moderate at best and thus raises questions about the idea of a sustained stream in the base of one of these canyons, even in a wet winter.

The second assumption, that the family camped in the Valley of Lemuel only during the winter months, raises questions of circular reasoning. That is, first, if the family camped near a seasonal stream, the stream was running during the winter when the weather is wetter. Second, if the seasonal stream runs only during the winter, that was the season the family was camping. In effect, one piece of reasoning supports the other. But if, as I have indicated above, serious observations work against the assumption of a “continually running” winter stream in a canyon near Biʿr Marshah, then the case for a winter camp diminishes significantly. In sum, the strength of the view that the family made its camp near Biʿr Marshah rests almost solely on the reasonable accessibility of this area after three days’ travel. The other elements of this view need to be labeled as very uncertain.



The upper valley of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism as it slopes toward the narrow, deep canyon.

The other two candidates, Wadi Tayyib al-Ism and the oasis of al-Badʿ, suffer from the fact that they lie 75 or more miles south of the point where the family would have reached the northern rim of the Red Sea. The distance alone seems daunting and thus may disqualify them. But one observation, almost by itself, may overcome this obstacle—the ages of the family members. The travelers included Lehi, of course, whom we can estimate to be in his early forties, assuming that he married in his late teens. Sariah, typically, would have been two or three years his junior, possibly as old as forty. The other four persons were their sons. If we estimate the youngest, Nephi, to be in his mid-teens when the family departed Jerusalem, and presume that there were about two years or so between the older siblings, then the brothers ranged in age from, say, sixteen to twenty-two or twenty-three. If this sketch is reasonably accurate, then we are looking at a group of travelers who are young and vigorous enough to endure the rigors of travel, even in the demanding climate and terrain of the Ancient Near East. There is no reason to cut Sariah much slack in this view because, as we know, she gave birth to two sons after beginning the arduous trek from Jerusalem to their Bountiful. Obviously, she was a person of vigor and strength.<sup>26</sup>

On this view, is seventy-five miles too far for this group of six to travel in three days? Most likely not. They surely had loaded their baggage onto animals because the tents alone, if we can appeal to Bedouin tents as a proper model, weigh several hundred pounds.<sup>27</sup> And loaded camels, if camels were indeed the beasts of burden, cover “slightly less than 2 ½ miles an hour” in one experienced person’s view, and “three m.p.h. (the proper pace)” in another person’s experience.<sup>28</sup> If the family’s baggage animals could keep up and if Sariah caught an occasional ride on a camel, I judge that the vitality and youth of the four sons would have pushed the group. To

average twenty-five miles per day, therefore, is not unreasonable, even when traveling into the hills and mountains. Groom writes that a loaded camel “rarely exceed[s] 25 miles” per day, but can go that distance. As an example of youthful exuberance, Charles Doughty observed some young Arab men covering 130 miles on camel back in three days, although without baggage.<sup>29</sup> If the family of Lehi and Sariah followed the main trade route from Aqaba to the al-Badʿ oasis, the path would have been worn, although relatively steep.<sup>30</sup> However, the path toward Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, partly through mountainous country, would likely pose sharper challenges to the travelers because, I assume, it was little traveled, although a person cannot know for certain. But I am willing to accept the word of those who have explored the route to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, through the mountains from the Red Sea coast, that the way is passable for pack animals.<sup>31</sup> In sum, I find no definitive reason to doubt that the family of Lehi and Sariah could have reached a campsite some seventy-five miles from the northern tip of the Red Sea.

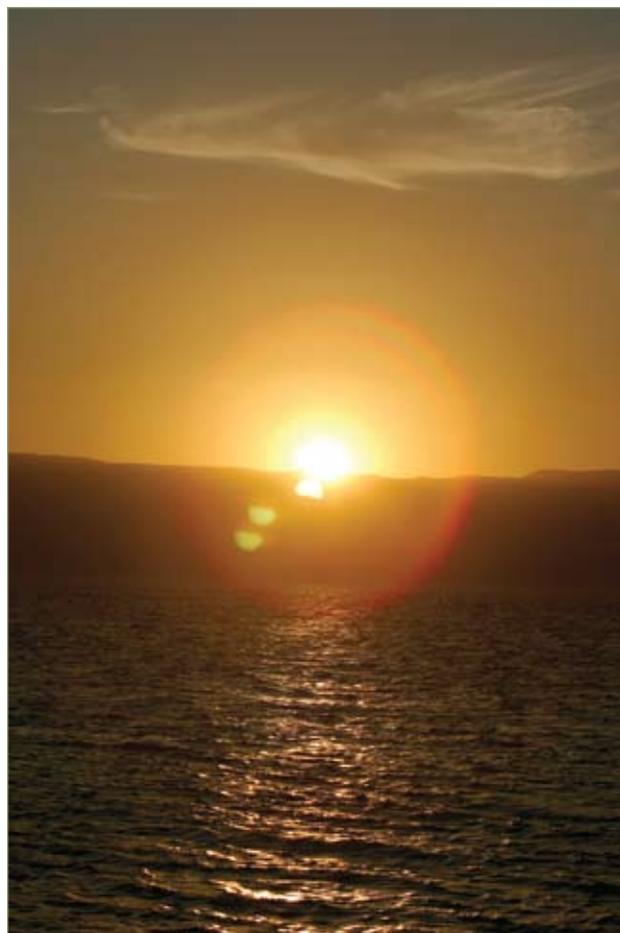
When I approach the question of a “continually running” source of water, the two distant sites, al-Badʿ oasis and Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, differ mark-



edly from one another. The oasis at al-Bad<sup>c</sup> is graced by wells which have supported life for millennia, going back at least to the bronze age, as the regional archaeological survey has affirmed with the discovery of Midianite pottery.<sup>32</sup> But no running stream exists there. The Hiltons wrote of “springs of water” at al-Bad<sup>c</sup>, and, according to Lynn Hilton, they waded in a stream after a rainstorm.<sup>33</sup> But for local needs, people currently depend on wells. Notably, “evidence of ancient irrigation in the Al-Bad<sup>c</sup> area . . . suggests that agricultural methods similar to those at Qurayya [south of al-Bad<sup>c</sup>] may have been used at this time [Iron Age].”<sup>34</sup> Hence, in antiquity, people tried not to let any streams in the area run free. But Lehi “saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea” rather than being captured for agricultural purposes (1 Nephi 2:9). Moreover, to learn that the stream ran to the sea would have required him to travel distantly from a camp in al-Bad<sup>c</sup>. Rather, as I noted, the ancient irrigation system at al-Bad<sup>c</sup> was to keep runoff waters at the oasis as much as possible, not to guide them to the Red Sea. And any running water at al-Bad<sup>c</sup> results from winter rains; they are not regular at the oasis and are limited largely to two months of the year, January and February. Such streams consist of desert *sayls* or uncontrolled rushing water rather than a constant flow.<sup>35</sup> That is why inhabitants of the oasis in the era of Lehi and Sariah built an irrigation system so that they could control the intermittent, seasonal waters.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Wadi Tayyib al-Ism holds the only observed “continually running” source of water in the entire region. This feature alone recommends this canyon as the Valley of Lemuel. But other features join this one to point strongly to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism as the Valley of Lemuel, as I hope to show. And, in my view, there are no serious competitors. To prefer an unexamined site in place of one that has been examined flirts with unreliability. As I have tried to show, for a group of teenagers and twenty-year-olds, the site is certainly reachable within three days’ travel from the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba.

A major strength of the case for Wadi Tayyib al-Ism stands on the fact that the stream has been observed to run year around.<sup>37</sup> And, in the experience of those who have visited this valley and its environs, no other nearby wadi features such a phenomenon. This set of observations is so strong that



The sun gleams on the waters of the Gulf of Aqaba as it sets in the Sinai hills. Photo by David Lisonbee.

it almost makes the case by itself. There is no need to postulate, for example, that the family must have arrived at the beginning of a winter rainy season and that its members left the camp as the rains dissipated. There is no need to postulate that the family depended on a seasonal stream of any sort. Wadi Tayyib al-Ism offers a “continually running” source of water that lies within the three days of travel that Nephi notes in his narrative (see 1 Nephi 2:6, 9). I ask, Why look anywhere else? Let me continue.

## The River and the Red Sea

Several issues lie before us when we examine the physical connection between the “river, continually running,” and the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:9). I turn first to a key passage that affirms a connection

between the two water sources. Nephi writes, “when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea . . .” (1 Nephi 2:9). In the order of Nephi’s narrative, this evident discovery by his father followed the pitching of his tent next to the stream and the building of an altar (see 1 Nephi 2:7–8). It will not do to urge that Lehi had learned that his “river” ran into the Red Sea before these other activities of making a camp. The order of Nephi’s narrative remains plain. And virtually all commentators agree that only later did Lehi come upon the connection between the stream and the Red Sea rather than seeing it immediately.<sup>38</sup> Of course, I do not want to over-read the text in the matter of Lehi discovering that the stream ran into the Red Sea. But neither do I want to under-read Nephi’s words and reach a wrong conclusion. It is evident to me from Nephi’s record that this connection between the stream and sea was manifestly not a feature that Lehi knew about before he pitched his tent. Now I must ask, What does this observation mean?

To hold that Lehi and Sariah made camp in a wadi such as Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>c</sup> or in one of the canyons that stretch eastward near Bīr Marshah, a person would have to negate the plain sense of Nephi’s words about his father seeing the connection between stream and sea only after settling into his camp. Why? Because the approach



The major landforms and settlements in northwest Arabia. Map by Bjorn Pendleton.



The dry river bed carries water from seasonal rains down Wadi Ifal toward al-Badk. Photo courtesy Richard Wellington.

into any of these open wadis would have been from the shoreline, or near it, where family members would have easily seen the stream flowing to the sea. The connection would have been obvious from the beginning. Of course, one could theorize that the family came upon the streambed a mile or so from the shore and only later discovered that the running water actually reached the sea, especially in the case of one of the valleys near Bîr Marshah because the mountains from which Wadi Nuwaybi drains stand close to the beach and a person can enter the streambed only near the shore. But such a view of the Bîr Marshah wadis would constitute special pleading because the shoreline is rather flat and, if a stream indeed was already flowing to the sea, family members, as observant natives from a desert area, would have seen the vegetation growing along its banks and naturally concluded that the stream was still running in the streambed far from the spot where they first encountered the streambed and its running water. Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, in contrast, presents a narrow, winding gorge whose mouth cannot be seen until a person is standing almost at its end. In sum, Nephi's notice of his father's evident discovery of the stream running into the sea significantly diminishes the possibility that the family camped in one of the wadis whose

waters run in the open across a slightly sloped shoreline before emptying into the Red Sea.

To return to this connection between the stream and the sea, this joining presents a potential problem in the case of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism.<sup>39</sup> In a word, the stream that runs through this canyon does not reach the Red Sea but dives beneath a gravel bed 600 or so yards from the shoreline.<sup>40</sup> Technically and scientifically, the fresh water from the canyon reaches the gulf water so that a geologist such as retired Professor Wes Gardner, who has visited the area, does not flinch at this description. However, the text says that the stream reached

the Red Sea, and this notation seems problematic for this site. But Nephi's report may not present a problem.

Gardner reports that the shoreline of the Red Sea in this area has been rising.<sup>41</sup> The geology of the region confirms this observation, and is very graphic. The archaeologists who surveyed this general area report that "at elevations of six, ten, twenty and thirty meters above sea level, ancient coral reef terraces occur which are cut through by wadis. The alluvial terraces are probably former beaches which have been similarly uplifted and eroded."<sup>42</sup> Hence, clear geological evidence exists that the northwest coastline of Arabia has been rising. To be sure, "the history and nature of sea level fluctuations as well as crustal movements in this area is complex and as yet poorly understood."<sup>43</sup> In fact, the archaeological survey concluded that the shoreline between Aqaba and Bîr Marshah has been gradually sinking.<sup>44</sup> Even so, all geological indicators point to the current mouth of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism lying under the waters of the Red Sea in antiquity. Thus, no firm reason exists to doubt the connection in Lehi's day between the stream and the sea. In this light, one of the main objections to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism falls to the side.



## Drainage Areas of Wadis

As I noted above, the surface area that drains Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>c</sup> and the wadis east of Bi'r Marshah are relatively small. In contrast, Wadi Ifal, wherein the oasis al-Bad<sup>c</sup> sits, “drains the largest area in the region.”<sup>45</sup> The catch basin above al-Bad<sup>c</sup> is huge, opening the real possibility of strong seasonal run-offs. The problem is that the area forms a triangle of sorts, with narrow canyons at the north end and, on the south, a broadening valley that descends



The granite walls of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism tower above the vehicle shown in the lower right corner of the photograph. The height of the walls is double what is shown in the picture.

gradually almost two dozen miles to the sea. With this configuration, streams can wander in the broad valley, and are rarely concentrated into a single streambed.

For its part, Wadi Tayyib al-Ism is fed by a large system of valleys, though not as extensive as those that run into Wadi Ifal. The three main canyons are Wadi al-Sharmah and Wadi al-Jumah, which run from north to south and parallel one another, and Wadi H̄iqal, which runs more or less east to west.<sup>46</sup> Not incidentally, as the initial proponent of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism has reported, a person who travels up one of the wadis to the east of Bi'r Marshah will eventually hit either Wadi al-Sharmah or Wadi al-Jumah and then be led downhill to the stunning rock entry of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism.<sup>47</sup> In the matter of water, as Gardner has explained, the water from the rains that fall onto this system of valleys generally sinks into the earth. The total drainage area for Wadi Tayyib al-Ism is about 105 square miles.<sup>48</sup> The accumulated water, when it sinks down to the underlying rock, seeps downward through the soil in the bottoms of the valleys, finally hitting a natural underground dam near the opening of the granite-walled Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. The collected water, when it seeps over the subterranean dam, flows into the wadi and emerges from the earth as a large spring because the underlying bedrock forces the water to the surface.<sup>49</sup>

## Character of the Valley

Another possible characteristic of the Valley of Lemuel emerges from Lehi's poetic description: “this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable” (1 Nephi 2:10). Such words have enticed investigators to look for a valley in northwest Arabia that, in its qualities, matches what Lehi must have been looking at when he spoke these words. The earliest attempt centered on the mountains that line



Wadi Ifal near al-Bad<sup>c</sup>. There, as we read, the mountains formed a sturdy, impressive setting that would give travelers a sense of permanence and durability.<sup>50</sup> Even though archaeologists who visited the region called the mountains “landforms . . . low in relief,” we can rest assured that they frame an impressive setting for a first-time visitor.<sup>51</sup>

When we turn to the sites just south of Aqaba, Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>c</sup> and the area around Biʿr Marshah, the eastern mountains rise to substantial heights. Jebel el-Shariʿa stands east of Wadi Nuwaybi<sup>c</sup> and reaches 4,260 feet. Jebel Buwarah rises east of Biʿr Marshah and reaches 6,150 feet.<sup>52</sup> Though I have not visited the canyons that run toward these peaks, the mountains in the area are impressive to view from the Sinai Peninsula side of the gulf waters, towering in their stark majesty. The personality of the valleys over which these mountains loom would be thereby enhanced so that we could hear Lehi say, “this valley, firm and steadfast and immovable” (1 Nephi 2:10).

To this point, each of the valleys named above, lying in mountainous terrain, possesses inviting traits that would allow a person to imagine Lehi and his family sensing the permanence and solidity that such a region represents. But all pale in comparison with Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. Although the archaeological survey south of the wadi noted that “Between Manqna [*sic*] and Tayyib al-Ism most of the major wadis reach the gulf of Aqaba through narrow gorges such as the ‘siq’ at Tayyib al-Ism,” the team found no human remains in any of these relatively short, dry valleys that empty into the sea because they are almost inaccessible.<sup>53</sup> Only Wadi Tayyib al-Ism brought on the following description that hints at amazement: “Here [at the mouth], a sheer granite cliff rises from a c. 200 m. wide beach. The Tayyib al-Ism gorge extends c. 4–5 km. and has vertical sides 400–800 m. high; the gorge itself is less than 50 m. wide.”<sup>54</sup> In my view, this narrow “gorge,” with its sheer rock walls of 2,000 feet, brings us closer to Lehi’s words, “firm and steadfast, and immovable,” than any other canyon in the region.



Spurs of the incense trail ran through Wadi Rum more than 100 kilometers east of Aqaba. Photo by David Lisonbee.

## Conclusion

To date, the al-Bad<sup>c</sup> oasis and Wadi Tayyib al-Ism are the only candidates for the Valley of Lemuel that Latter-day Saints have explored. The others are unexamined. And for the reasons outlined above, the oasis at al-Bad<sup>c</sup> does not match the attractiveness of Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. In my view, suggesting unexplored candidates carries crippling liability. Something palpable and real comes from a person walking across a site and examining it. According to my review, the only serious objection to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism is the apparent difficulty of reaching this site from the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba. Because we do not know how the family learned of the place of their first camp, or how they may have reached Wadi Tayyib al-Ism, if indeed they camped there, we have to hold onto this point as a negative stroke against this site. But all other features that we can tease from the text point to this canyon: its “continually running” stream, its evident connection to the waters of the Red Sea and the need to discover that connection, and its impressive gorge. When we factor in the ages of family members, even a seventy-five mile trek from the north rim of the Gulf of Aqaba does not seem out of the question. Hence, although I cannot solve all of the issues, this site remains in my mind the most secure candidate for the Valley of Lemuel. 🗺

dictatorships, being more likely to win or lose decisively than other regimes. A thorough development of the perceived relationship between democracy and war in Joseph Smith's day would require a much more expansive treatment than I provide. My concluding discussion is intended only to be suggestive. See Alexis de Tocqueville in Harvey Mansfield and Debra Winthrop, trans., *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), especially chs. 22–26, pp. 617–35.

36. I would like to thank S. Kent Brown for his valuable comments and three anonymous reviewers for their uncommonly thorough and insightful suggestions. Errors remain my own.

**Three Days and Three Nights: Reassessing Jesus's Entombment**  
David B. Cummings

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15. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 4th rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 498–99.
16. Bart J. Kowallis, "In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist's View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi," *BYU Studies* 7/3 (1997–98): 136–90.
17. George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, amplified and arranged by Philip C. Reynolds and David Sjodahl King (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 4:285.
18. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 6, 12–14, 18–20, 26, 336.
19. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 119.

**The Hunt for the Valley of Lemuel**

S. Kent Brown

1. See George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 54–63; also consult Michael Lloyd Ingraham, Theodore D. Johnson, Baseem Rihani, and Ibrahim Shatla, "Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province (With a Note on a Brief Survey of the Northern Province)," *ATLAL: The Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology* 5 (AH 1401, AD 1981): 59–84, especially 64: "The Tayyib al-Isim gorge extends c. 4–5 km. and has vertical sides 400–800 m. high; the gorge itself is less than 50 m. wide."
2. Rushdi Said, *The River Nile: Geology, Hydrology and Utilization* (New York: Pergamon, 1993), 7; George Rentz also writes that "Arabia contains no large perennial rivers" ("Al-ʿArab, D̲jaz̲irat," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* [Leiden: Brill, 1960–], 1:537).
3. Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the*

*Arabian Incense Trade* (London: Longman Group, 1981), 87–88.

4. For the coastline south of Aqaba, Jordan, consult the "Geographic Map of the Ḥaql Quadrangle, Sheet 29A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Geoscience Map GM–80B, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Deputy Ministry for Mineral Resources (Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, AH 1404, AD 1984); this map repeats the name of this wadi; also "Wadi as Sirḥan" map, Series K462, Edition 1-AMS, Stock no. K462XNH37W, Prepared by the Army Map Service (AM), Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C. Copied from Miscellaneous Geologic Investigations (1963); also "Geologic Map of the Ḥaql Quadrangle, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Mineral Investigation Map MI–12, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (1966); finally "Arabian Peninsula," Series 5211, Edition 2–GSGS, Director of Military Survey, Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom (1980).
5. Wadi Nuwaybiʿ is the choice of Paul Hedengren; see his *Land of Lehi: Further Evidence for the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Tepran, 1999), 19–23.
6. "Geologic Map of the al-Badʿ Quadrangle, Sheet 28A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (AH 1407, AD 1987).
7. A wadi near Biʿr Marshah is favored by Jeffrey R. Chadwick; see his "The Wrong Place for Lehi's Trail and the Valley of Lemuel," *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 214–15; "An Archaeologist's View," *JBMS* 15/2 (2006): 72–73. The distance was measured by Potter in his vehicle; see his "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," 59. See also Daniel C. Peterson's brief response to Chadwick's first study in "Not So Easily Dismissed: Some Facts for Which Counterexplanations of the Book of Mormon Will Need To Account," *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): xxv–xxvi, xlvi.
8. In private correspondence, George Potter writes that his odometer measured 104 miles from Aqaba to al-Badʿ (dated June 9, 2007).
9. Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 63–64; Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *Discovering Lehi* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 1996), 49–55.
10. Hedengren, *Land of Lehi*, 19; Chadwick, "Wrong Place for Lehi's Trail and the Valley of Lemuel," 210. In recent private correspondence, dated June 8, 2007, Lynn Hilton has kept to his earlier position of favoring al-Badʿ.
11. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, "Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province," 71–75.
12. Chadwick, "Wrong Place for Lehi's Trail and the Valley of Lemuel," 211; Chadwick, "An Archaeologist's View," 72; Nibley points out that the expression "river of water" (1 Nephi 2:6) means that the streambed contained flowing water (*Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988], 80).
13. Said, *The River Nile*, 7; Rentz, "Al-ʿArab, D̲jaz̲irat," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1:537.
14. Maps that I have consulted show no such stream in Wadi Nuwaybiʿ nor have my two brief visits to the area of the Jordan-Saudi Arabia border. See the "Geographic Map of the Ḥaql Quadrangle, Sheet 29A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Geoscience Map GM–80B (1984); "Wadi as Sirḥan" Map, Army Map Service (AM), Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C. Series K462, Edition 1-AMS, First Printing, Sheet NH 37–W, Stock no. K462XNH37W (1963), based on USGS, Map 1–200B, edition 1962; and "Geologic Map of the Ḥaql Quadrangle, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Mineral Investigation Map MI–12, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (1966).
15. "Wadi as Sirḥan" Map, Army Map Service (AM), Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C. Series K462, Edition 1-AMS, First Printing, Sheet NH 37–W, Stock no. K462XNH37W (1963), based on USGS, Map 1–200B, edi-

- tion 1962.
16. This settlement is noted in Numbers 33:35–36; Deuteronomy 2:8; 1 Kings 9:26; etc.
  17. Burton MacDonlad, “The Late Bronze and Iron Age Sites of the Wadi El Hasa Survey 1979,” in *Midian, Moab and Edom: The History and Archaeology of Late Bronze and Iron Age Jordan and North-West Arabia*, ed. John F. A. Sawyer and David J. A. Clines, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 24 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 18–28.
  18. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 59–84.
  19. Hedengren, *Land of Lehi*, 19.
  20. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 72–76.
  21. For an estimate of fifty miles, see Chadwick, “The Wrong Place for Lehi’s Trail and the Valley of Lemuel,” 214; “An Archaeologist’s View,” 72. Potter measured the distance to be forty-four miles from Aqaba (see “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 59, and note 7 above).
  22. Chadwick, “The Wrong Place for Lehi’s Trail and the Valley of Lemuel,” 211, 214; “An Archaeologist’s View,” 72.
  23. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 62.
  24. Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots’ Last Stand* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 29–33.
  25. For a clear view of the limited drainage for Wadi Nuwaybi’, see “Geologic Map of the Haql Quadrangle, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Mineral Investigation Map MI–12, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (1966). For the wadis near B’r Marshah, see “Geologic Map of the Al Bad’ Quadrangle, Sheet 28A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (AH 1407, AD 1987).
  26. The best study on the family of Lehi and Sariah remains that of John L. Sorenson. He and I see the ages about the same, though I see them a year or two younger because of the evident young age of Ishmael when his mother sought a bride for him (see Gen. 21:14–21) and the plain youthfulness of Dinah when she was sought as a bride (see Gen. 34:4). See Sorenson, “The Composition of Lehi’s Family,” in *By Study and Also By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, 2 vols., ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:174–96. For a discussion of the typical marriage age for men, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 1:29–30; for marriage ages in the ancient Near East, see Victor P. Hamilton, “Marriage,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:562.
  27. The following conclude that Lehi left Jerusalem with camels: Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, 54–56; Hilton and Hilton, *Discovering Lehi*, 36–37; George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New, Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon Is a True History* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 22–24; S. Kent Brown, “New Light from Arabia on Lehi’s Trail,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 99, n. 4; 100, n. 10; S. Kent Brown, *Voices from the Dust: Book of Mormon Insights* (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 2004), 3, 30–31. Hedengren argues that the family took no pack animals (*The Land of Lehi*, 16, 19). Almost no tent fabric has survived from antiquity. But representations appear in carved monuments. See the royal tent of Sennacherib, whose fabric is unknown, and the reed hut of the mother goddess in *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, James B. Prichard, ed., 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), plates 374, 503.
  28. Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh*, 173; Wendell Phillips, *Unknown Oman* (New York: David McKay, 1966), 222.
  29. Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh*, 173; Charles Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 2 vols. in one (New York: Random House, 1936), 1:169.
  30. The Hiltons make a point about the ease of this route in *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 67.
  31. Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 60; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 27–28.
  32. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 71–79.
  33. *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 64; personal correspondence, dated June 8, 2007.
  34. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 75.
  35. Hilton and Hilton, *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 64–65. Nibley also believed that the stream was seasonal, though he did not attempt to identify which wadi carried it (*Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, 76, 78–81).
  36. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 75.
  37. Potter, “A New Candidate for the ‘Valley of Lemuel,’” 61–63; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 37–38.
  38. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, 85; Hilton and Hilton, *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 67–68; Hedengren, *Land of Lehi*, 19; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 32; Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 6.
  39. Chadwick, “Wrong Place for Lehi’s Trail and the Valley of Lemuel,” 209, 212–14; “An Archaeologist’s View,” 72.
  40. Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 58, 61, 62; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 34, 39; compare “a c. 200 m. wide beach” in Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64.
  41. In Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 62; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 39.
  42. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 63.
  43. “Survey of the Northwestern Province.”
  44. “Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64.
  45. “Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64.
  46. Consult “Geologic Map of the al-Bad’ Quadrangle, Sheet 28A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Geosciences Map GM–81C, Sheet 28A (AH 1407, AD 1987).
  47. Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 60; cautioning against easy access to Wadi Tayyib al-Isim, see Chadwick, “Wrong Place for Lehi’s Trail and the Valley of Lemuel,” 209, 210.
  48. “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 61.
  49. “A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel,” 61.
  50. Hilton and Hilton, *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 67–68; Hilton and Hilton, *Discovering Lehi*, 55.
  51. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64.
  52. The elevation for Jebel al-Shari’fa comes from “Google Earth”; that for Jebel Buwarah appears on the “Geologic Map of the al-Bad’ Quadrangle, Sheet 28A, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (AH 1407, AD 1987).
  53. Ingraham, Johnson, Rihani, and Shatla, “Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: C. Preliminary

Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64; John A. Tvednes has pointed to rivers in the general region that are noted by classical historians such as Strabo and Agatharchides who evidently never saw any of these streams (“More on the River Laman,” FARMS Update No. 176 in *Insights*, vol. 25 [2005]: 2–3).

54. “Survey of the Northwestern Province,” 64.

[Out of the Dust]  
**Ancient Semitic in Egyptian  
Pyramids?**

Paul Y. Hoskisson and  
Michael D. Rhodes

1. These dates are taken from Ian Shaw, *Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and are generally accepted by most Egyptologists, although there is an uncertainty of as much as  $\pm 100$  years for dates at the beginning of the Old Kingdom (2613 BC according to Shaw). The chronology of the rest of the Ancient Near East is also uncertain with at least four competing versions, High, Middle, Low, and Ultra-low with a difference of 152 years between the highest and the lowest. For example, Hammurabi’s reign in these 4 systems is: 1848–1806, 1792–1750, 1728–1686, and 1696–1654 BC.

[With Real Intent]  
**An Unexpected Gift**  
Larry EchoHawk

1. Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream” (speech, Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC, August 28, 1963).
2. Personal reminiscence of author. For a more detailed description of the 1946 dream, see Dell Van Orden, “Emotional Farewell in Mexico,” *Church News*, February 19, 1977, 3.