What if Lehi's family went east like the scriptures say he did: Reassessing Nephi's Trail and the Case for an East Asian Bountiful

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For more than a century, the dominant scholarly reconstruction of Lehi's exodus has placed his family within the Arabian Peninsula, identifying Nahom with Yemen and Bountiful with the Omani coast. This paper argues that the scriptural text, read without that geographic presupposition, indicates a longer route: an eight-year, nearly eastward overland trek across Asia to the southeastern coast of China, where Nephi built his ship and crossed the North Pacific to the promised land. The paper presents evidence that (1) iron smelting was established in China two centuries before Lehi's time, and surface iron ores occur in Hunan and Jiangxi; (2) the Kuroshio–North Pacific current system carries vessels from East Asia to western North America, and northwest Pacific typhoon climatology accounts for the ship being driven back for three days; (3) the eight-year trek requires an average pace well within documented nomadic travel rates; (4) the Arabian alternative, though supported by the genuine NHM inscriptions, lacks excavated evidence at its proposed Bountiful site and offers no shipbuilding timber; and (5) the text's directional language — "nearly eastward," with no subsequent southward or westward turn — together with an Occam's-razor comparison of the two models' assumptions, favors the plain reading.

Introduction

The thesis of this paper is as follows.[1] Lehi's family did not end its overland journey in Arabia. After the Valley of Lemuel, Shazer, and Nahom, the party traveled "nearly eastward" for eight years across the Asian landmass to the southeastern coast of China, where Nephi located iron ore, built his ship from large timbers, and launched onto the Pacific, reaching the western coast of North America.[2] This is presented not as revealed geography but as a reading of the text evaluated against current scholarship in archaeology, metallurgy, oceanography, and climatology.

The Textual Foundation

Nephi reports that his family "sojourn[ed] for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness," traveling "nearly eastward" before reaching "the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey," where they "beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which (being interpreted) is many waters."[3] The text provides several details relevant to the route. First, it never describes the party as lost or traveling in circles; "nearly eastward" indicates a maintained heading.[4] Second, during those years the women "did give plenty of suck for their children and were strong, yea, even like unto the men," while the family lived "upon raw meat in the wilderness."[5] Third, when commanded to build a ship, Nephi asks, "Lord, where should I go to find iron ore to melt so I can make tools?"[6] — the Covenant of Christ rendering makes the metallurgical requirement explicit — and then "did make tools of the ore which [he] did molten out of the rock."[7] Fourth, the voyage includes a storm in which "we were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days."[8] Fifth, the promised land is described as a place of forests, game, and metals — "gold, and silver, and copper."[9] Each detail is addressed in turn. The Restoration Edition and the Covenant of Christ agree on the itinerary's directional language. After the Valley of Lemuel, the party travels "nearly a south-southeast direction" for four days to Shazer (RE 1 Nephi 5:13; CE 1 Nephi 5:13) — the Red Sea leg, and

the last southward reference in the text. From Nahom onward the heading is “nearly eastward from that time forth” (RE 1 Nephi 5:17) / “traveling nearly eastward from then on” (CE)[10], maintained for eight years. No southward or westward turn is recorded afterward. The Arabian reconstruction requires a march of roughly a thousand miles southward down the peninsula to present-day Yemen, for which the text provides no statement; the only direction given for the long trek is east. Nephi’s narration never describes the party as wandering. The verb “wander” appears in his record only in statements by Laman and Lemuel — “we have wandered much in the wilderness” — and in prophetic passages concerning a disobedient Israel[11]. Nephi’s own terms are travel, journey, led, directed: the brass ball “pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness”; “we did follow the directions of the ball”; its pointers “did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed, which we did give unto them”[12]. When the compass ceased functioning on the ship, “they knew not whither they should steer”[13] — indicating that with it, they had known.

Eight Years and some Math

The original story reads the journey’s opening as a three days’ march from Jerusalem through the mountains west of the Jordan valley — avoiding the populated river corridor, plausibly to avoid detection after Laban’s death, his household having been the last seen with Laban[14] — to the Red Sea shore Lehi named the Valley of Lemuel. The objection is sometimes raised that an overland journey of roughly five thousand miles is impracticable for a family group. Eight years is approximately 2,920 days; five thousand miles over 2,920 days requires an average pace of about 1.7 miles per day, which is well within documented human foot-travel capacity. Historical nomadic migrations, Silk Road caravans, and recorded individual journeys routinely sustained fifteen to twenty-five miles per day while relocating; at fifteen miles per day, five thousand miles requires about 333 days of actual marching — less than one year out of eight.[15] The original study cites Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), the Santee Dakota physician and author, reported to have walked some 2,200 miles twice yearly between Canada and Dartmouth, six to eight weeks each way.[16] The remaining seven-plus years accommodate the activities the text describes: planting and harvest cycles (the party carried seeds of grain and fruit from Jerusalem[17]), childbearing and recovery (children were born in the wilderness[18]), prospecting and smelting along resource-rich river corridors, and the revelatory guidance Nephi repeatedly sought. The proposed route — down the Red Sea coast, then eastward across the Tigris-Euphrates basin, the Iranian plateau or its northern bypass, the Indus watershed, and the Himalayan foothills into China — follows freshwater and game throughout, unlike the Empty Quarter corridor of the Arabian hypothesis, where multi-season agricultural pauses would have been impracticable for lack of water.[19] Nephi states that the Lord commanded the party not to make much fire[20]. A small group moving through the territories of the Neo-Babylonian empire, Midianite tribes, and the chieftaincies of Vedic-period India would have reason to avoid smoke that advertised its presence.

Not Forty Years in the Wilderness

Lehi’s eight years are sometimes compared to Israel’s forty years, as though both were the same kind of wandering. It sets up the scene and the prejudice in the minds of many who read the story. The texts differ at each point of comparison. First, duration: eight years is a fifth of forty, and the eight include long productive encampments rather than continuous marching. Second, guidance: Lehi’s party carried the Liahona, “a round ball of curious workmanship” whose spindle “pointed the way whither we should go” — a continuous director that worked “according to the faith, and diligence, and heed” given it. The party followed a maintained heading (“nearly

eastward"), not a circuit. Third, purpose: the forty years were punitive — "after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years" (Numbers 14:34) — while Nephi writes of his family's sojourn that God "doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide ways and means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them" (RE 1 Nephi 5:3)[21]. Fourth, outcome: the wilderness generation of Israel died without entering; Lehi's family arrived intact, built a ship, and crossed an ocean. Fifth, vocabulary: the record describes Israel as having "wandered"; Nephi's party "traveled," "journeyed," and were "led." The party experienced affliction — "we did travel and wade through much affliction" — but affliction and aimlessness are not the same, and a maintained heading is not a wandering.

Iron Ore and Timber: Why Hunan

Shipbuilding required forged tools; forged tools required smelted iron; smelted iron required ore, fuel, and technical knowledge — all at Bountiful. Southern Arabia offers no significant iron deposits and no tradition of sixth-century BC iron smelting.[22] The Chinese evidence differs. Excavation places China's earliest iron foundry in the ninth century BC and its earliest cast iron in the eighth — approximately two centuries before Lehi's time.[23] The standard syntheses are Donald B. Wagner's Iron and Steel in Ancient China (1993) and his Science and Civilisation in China volume on ferrous metallurgy (2008); subsequent work has moved the dates earlier.[24] By the Spring and Autumn period — Lehi's lifetime — the southern state of Chu, which included Hubei and Hunan, was using iron tools.[25] Steel is not anachronistic in this context: carburized bloomery steel appears from the beginning of Chinese ironworking, and decarburized cast-iron steel by the fifth century BC.[26] Nephi's broken "bow which was made of fine steel"[27] is consistent with this setting. Tin belongs to the Middle Eastern leg of the journey rather than the Chinese one. The bronze world Lehi left depended on tin transported over long distances: isotopic analysis has traced tin ingots from thirteenth-century BC wrecks off Israel, Crete, and Turkey — and from a sixth-century BC wreck off southern France — to the mines of Cornwall and Devon.[28] The hypothesis linking Late Bronze Age trade disruption to the rise of iron is a Near Eastern argument.[29] By 600 BC the Near East was established as an iron-using region, which accounts for Nephi's steel bow and his expectation of finding workable ore. The party thus passed between two metallurgical contexts: a Near Eastern one in which iron's adoption is associated with the tin trade, and a Chinese one in which the literature attributes the transition to economics and technology. Two further details locate Nephi's metallurgy in its setting. First, flint-and-steel fire-making was a Middle Eastern practice, but the iron for the steel came out of Africa[30]. Second, Nephi is presented as a royal descendant of Manasseh — high-born, and therefore among the instructed class — trained in what the ancients called alchemy, or proto-chemistry[31]. His steel bow and smelted tools are consistent with that background. The original study's elimination argument for the site is as follows. Apart from Africa — excluded because the heading was east, not west — two surface-iron regions lay within the trek's reach: the deposits near Calcutta and those of Jiangxi and Hunan[32]. Calcutta is excluded on geographic grounds: eastward from Bengal lies the land barrier of Myanmar, Thailand, and the Malay Peninsula, with open ocean beyond. China remains. Hunan and neighboring Jiangxi contain significant and in places shallow, surface-accessible iron deposits: the Ningxiang-type marine sedimentary hematite ores named for Ningxiang, Hunan; weathered-leaching shallow ores in Jiangxi; deposits around Zhuzhou and Youxian documented since the 1930s; and the Liangshan iron field at Xinyu, Jiangxi.[33] Fuel was charcoal, and Hunan was and remains a major forest region — subtropical evergreen broadleaf forest, the heartland of the Chinese fir.[34] Timber was

required in shipbuilding quantities[35], and Nephi's vessel was an ocean-going hull. Eastern China offered large conifers — Chinese fir, nanmu, camphor, pine — the same species later specified for the Ming shipyard at Nanjing.[36] The dawn redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides), identified as a living fossil in the 1940s, is named "like a sequoia" and is botanically related to the forests of California.[37] Southern Arabia offered acacia, wild fig, juniper, and date palm — usable for small craft, but every large ancient hull in the region was built of imported cedar or teak; no ocean-going ship was built from Arabian acacia or palm.[38] The text also records Nephi's mountain visits: "I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore, the Lord shewed unto me great things" (RE 1 Nephi 5:3). In Hunan stands Mount Heng, the southern sacred mountain, whose highest summit is Zhurong Peak (1,300 m) — named for Zhurong, the god of fire and of the south, associated in the Classic of Mountains and Seas with the dwelling-place of the god of light and fire and with the Great Flood narratives[39]. The study places it about 140 miles from the coast. The correspondence — the mountain of Nephi's revelations standing in the province of the iron, in the range of the fire god — is noted without further claim. The ore, the forests, and the technology were present.

Many Waters: Currents, Winds, and the Storm That Drove Them Back

Nephi called the sea at Bountiful "Irreantum, which (being interpreted) is many waters."[40] The Pacific is the largest water east of Asia and in the world for that matter, and its current system runs eastward. The Kuroshio — among the world's strongest currents — flows north along Japan's east coast; its extension turns east into the North Pacific Current, driven by the mid-latitude westerlies toward North America, where it divides into the Alaska and California Currents.[41] These systems have been stable for roughly a hundred thousand years.[42] Documented crossings demonstrate the route's feasibility: the Hojunmaru drifted from Japan to Cape Flattery, Washington in 1834; George Quimby catalogued Japanese-wreck iron in Northwest Coast archaeology and estimated some 187 junks reached the Americas between 500 and 1750 AD; Richard Callaghan's simulations confirmed Edo-period wreck landfalls on the Canadian Pacific coast.[43] The storm account reads: "There arose a great storm — yea, a great and terrible tempest — and we were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days."[44] Northern Hemisphere cyclones rotate counterclockwise: north of a storm's center the winds blow from the east and drive a vessel westward; south of center they blow from the west and drive it eastward.[45] A vessel newly departed from the East China coast and sailing east will typically lie north of a westward-tracking typhoon's center — typhoons near the China coast track west or west-northwest toward Asia, recurving eastward only near or beyond Japan[46] — placing it in the easterlies on the storm's northern flank, which drive the ship westward toward the coast it left: "driven back upon the waters." Arabian Sea cyclones also rotate counterclockwise and track northwestward toward the peninsula[47]; a vessel departing the southern Arabian coast and caught on such a storm's western or northern flank is driven westward or southward — toward the Horn of Africa, where the winter Somali Current flows southwestward[48] — rather than back along its course. Such tempests are also far less frequent in the Arabian Sea than in the northwest Pacific. The storm account is consistent with a Pacific departure. The Arabian alternative requires rounding the Cape of Good Hope against the Agulhas Current and the Roaring Forties — demonstrated as possible by the Phoenicia replica voyage, though described by its own skipper as among the most difficult sections of a 17,000-mile journey — and a long detour for a destination that lay, by the text's own geography of western tribes, across the Pacific.[49] A further point concerns an Arabian departure specifically: the prevailing surface currents off the peninsula — the monsoon drift and the equatorial countercurrent — set eastward toward India

rather than southward toward Africa, so an unpowered vessel departing Oman is carried toward India.[50] The Pacific current system runs eastward from the departure coast.

The Promised Land

The text describes the landing place as one where seeds "grew exceedingly," with forests, game "for the use of men," and "gold, and silver, and copper."[51] The party came ashore with planting provisions: "much fruits and meat from the wilderness, and honey in abundance, and provisions," taken aboard "according to that which the Lord had commanded"[52]. Joseph Smith wrote in 1833 that the Book of Mormon peoples were "the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians"[53], and later spoke of "wandering over the plains of the Nephites"[54] — plains on this continent. California matches each element: the inland valleys and their winter-growing season suited the Jerusalem seed stock; the coastal ranges and Sierra Nevada provided temperate forest; California's gold, silver, and copper deposits are among the continent's richest.[55] The oldest giant sequoias are dated by dendrochronology to roughly 2,600 years[56] — the oldest groves began as saplings close to Nephi's landing. The original study proposes that the family, which crossed a continent carrying seeds and watched them "grow exceedingly" on arrival[57], carried seeds suitable for a rich climate and additionally dawn-redwood seed among its stores from the land of Metasequoia glyptostroboides — "like a sequoia," the closest living relative of California's Sequoia and Sequoiadendron[58] — and planted the ancestors of the groves. The relation is too close to be ignored. After the destruction at Christ's death there would have been a further eastward migration to the plains of the nephites. (This will be further explained in another writing)

The Arabian Model, Weighed Honestly

The Arabian Peninsula model has dominated the literature for a generation and rests on the NHM inscriptions. Three seventh-to-sixth-century BC limestone altars from the Bar'an temple at Marib, excavated in 1988 by the German Archaeological Institute, name a donor of the Nihm tribe.[59] The epigraphy is accepted; the altars are genuine, dated, and published. The identification of NHM with the Book of Mormon's Nahom is a separate claim: no mainstream scholar has endorsed it; it appears only in Latter-day Saint apologetic literature. Critics note that a tribal name is not a place name, that the consonantal skeleton admits multiple vocalizations, and that the associated "Ishmael" marker is unprovenanced.[60] The inscriptions establish that a tribe called Nihm existed near Marib in Lehi's century. They do not establish that Ishmael was buried there. At the proposed Bountiful, Khor Kharfot, surveys report freshwater, fruit, honey, timber, cliffs, and a former inlet[61], but no published controlled excavation, no occupation dates, and no evidence of sixth-century iron smelting or shipbuilding exist. The timber question is decisive: the "large, ship-suitable timber" claimed for Dhofar has never been shown to have produced an ocean-going hull, while every large ancient hull in the region used imported cedar or teak. The Holocene humid period ended millennia before 600 BC, leaving Arabia as arid then as now.[62] The Arabian Bountiful rests on a thinner empirical foundation than claimed. This does not refute the Arabian model; it identifies excavation as the necessary next step.

Occam's Razor: Counting the Assumptions

Occam's razor holds that among competing explanations, the one making the fewest assumptions is preferred. The two models differ markedly in assumption count. The eastern reading assumes: (1) "nearly eastward" means nearly eastward; (2) "eight years" means eight years; (3) "iron ore" means iron ore, sought where iron ore is found; (4) "many waters" means the great ocean to the

east; (5) “driven back” means driven back. Five readings, each the plain sense of the words, none an addition to the text. The Arabian reading assumes: (1) that a tribal name on three Yemeni altars (NHM) is the place-name Nahom, though no mainstream scholar endorses the identification; (2) that an unexcavated Omani inlet (Khor Kharfot) is Bountiful, though no controlled excavation, occupation dates, or smelting evidence exist; (3) that ocean-going timber came from acacia and palm, though no such hull was ever built; (4) that forged iron tools were made where no iron ore or furnaces are attested; (5) that an ancient crew rounded the Cape of Good Hope against the Agulhas and the Roaring Forties; (6) that the party marched a thousand miles south down the peninsula, though the text never states a southward march; (7) that “driven back” describes a storm whose circulation physics drives a vessel onward rather than back. Each is a substantive auxiliary hypothesis absent from the text. Occam’s razor does not prove the simpler theory true; it distinguishes the model that follows the text from the model that requires additions to it. The heuristic scoring of the two routes across currents, timber, winds, storms, and overland sustenance[63] quantifies this comparison: criterion by criterion, the eastern model follows the text as written.

Conclusion

Eight years at a maintained eastward heading; iron ore to be found and smelted at the journey’s end; large timbers; many waters; a storm that drives the ship back toward the coast it left; a promised land of forests and metals in the west. China’s metallurgy was two centuries old when Nephi asked where to find ore. Its forests held shipbuilding timber. Its currents run, as they have for a hundred millennia, toward California. The Arabian alternative posits a Bountiful with no excavated harbor, no smelting, and no shipbuilding timber, anchored to a tribal inscription that no non–Latter-day Saint scholar connects to the narrative. Certainty is not claimed: the Hunan furnace evidence awaits excavation, and the NHM altars remain relevant data. On the balance of text, mathematics, metallurgy, oceanography, and timber, the eastward trail is the stronger reading.

Additional Information:

"The 8-Year Continental Trek: Land Distance & Time Mathematics," addresses the textual record of Lehi’s party spending eight years in the wilderness (1 Nephi 17:4) and demonstrates that an overland trek across Asia to the Pacific is mathematically practical rather than an insurmountable barrier.

Traditional critics and commentators often view an overland journey from Jerusalem to the Pacific coast of China (~5,000 to 5,500 miles) as an impossible trek for a family group. Slide 8 disproves this by calculating the daily movement rates, comparing them against historical nomadic paces, and framing the eight-year duration around seasonal settlement and preparation rather than non-stop marching.

- Overland Rate Mathematics

Total Estimated Distance: ~5,000 miles across the southern or central Asian landmass to the East Asian coast.

Total Timeframe: 8 years (approximately 2,920 days).

Average Required Pace: ~1.7 miles per day ($5{,}000 \div 2{,}920 \approx 1.71$ miles/day).

The Takeaway: A 1.7-mile daily average is trivial for human walking capacity. It demonstrates that the family did not need to run or march continuously; the timeline easily accommodates an expedition with elderly members, young children, and pack animals.

2. Historical & Nomadic Precedents

Comparative Speed: Indigenous nomadic migrations, ancient Silk Road caravans, and native historical precedents (such as Charles Eastman / Ohiyesa documenting 2,200 miles covered on foot in 6–8 weeks) prove that walking parties routinely sustained 15–25 miles per day when actively relocating.

Significance: At a standard migration rate of 15 miles per day, 5,000 miles of actual foot travel would require only ~333 travel days (under one total year of active walking).

3. Operational Allocation of the 8 Years (The Non-Travel Time)

Because less than a single calendar year of actual marching was required over the eight-year window, more than seven full years were available for essential static activities described in the text:

Agricultural Cycles: Planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops to replenish seed stock and provisions for the journey.

-Childbearing & Rearing: Periods of recovery for women following childbirth (1 Nephi 17:1–2 notes children were born in the wilderness).

-Metallurgical & Tool Preparation: Prospecting, gathering raw ore, and smelting tools and equipment along resource-rich river corridors.

-Spiritual & Leadership Retreats: Prolonged encampments for fasting, revelation, and navigation calibration via the Liahona.

4. Geographical Feasibility vs. the Arabian Trek

Arabian Peninsula Route: Forced a group into some of the most arid, resource-starved desert terrain in the world (the Empty Quarter / Rub' al Khali perimeter), where prolonged multi-season agricultural pauses were virtually impossible due to water scarcity.

Continental Asia Route: Offers major river basins (Tigris-Euphrates, Indus, Tarim, or southern Himalayan foothills) providing continuous freshwater, game, and fertile silt plains suitable for seasonal camp-and-harvest cycles.

Below is an all things considered heuristic model of possibilities.

Evaluation Criterion	East Asian / Pacific Route Rating	Arabian / African Route Rating	Reasoning
Ocean Current Alignment	94% (Highly Favorable)	18% (Severe Barrier)	The Kuroshio Extension and North Pacific Current naturally carry eastward drift toward the Americas. Conversely, rounding the Cape of Good Hope against the Agulhas and South Atlantic gyres presents massive hydrodynamic resistance for ancient sail craft.
Naval Timber Quality	92% (Abundant / High Grade)	12% (Extremely Deficient)	East Asia provides giant, rot-resistant conifers (Metasequoia, naval-grade cedar). Southern Arabia in the timeline lacks tall maritime timber, offering primarily acacia, scrub, and date palms unsuitable for transoceanic hulls.
Wind & Drift Assistance	88% (Consistent Mid-Latitude)	22% (Highly Unfavorable)	Prevailing North Pacific westerlies support west-to-east transit. Westward circumnavigation south of Africa requires battling the Roaring Forties and adverse coastal squalls.
Storm Physics Correlation	85% (Direct Alignment)	30% (Low Alignment)	A northwest-tracking Pacific typhoon directly accounts for driving an eastward-sailing vessel backwards toward the Asian mainland for three days (1 Nephi 18). Arabian Sea storms do not match this directional displacement.
Overland Transit / Sustenance	78% (Feasible Corridor)	35% (Extreme Aridity)	An 8-year trek across Asia and sailing voyage allows seasonal agricultural stops, iron smelting, and freshwater forage along river basins, contrasting with the extreme resource deprivation of the Rub' al Khali corridor.

Another late note: The Wise Men from the East

Matthew records that “there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem... For we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him” (RE Matthew 1:1–2). He does not name their country of origin. Some historians believe there were far more than three kings that traveled and paid homage to the boy

In the same period, two prophets disappear from the Nephite record. Samuel the Lamanite, after fleeing Zarahemla — “he did cast himself down from the wall and did flee out of their lands, yea, even unto his own country... And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites” (RE Helaman 5:7–8). Nephi, son of Helaman, “departed out of the land of Zarahemla, giving charge unto his son Nephi... concerning the plates of brass, and all the records which had been kept, and all those things which had been kept sacred from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem. Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth” (RE 3 Nephi 1:2–3). Nine years later the record states that he “did not return to the land of Zarahemla and could nowhere be found in all the land” (RE 3 Nephi 1:9).

Both men had direct knowledge of the signs attending Christ’s birth. Samuel had prophesied them: the day and a night and a day as one day, and “there shall be a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld” (RE Helaman 5:4–5). Nephi had received the voice fixing their timing: “on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world” (RE 3 Nephi 1:13).

The directional implication follows from the trail’s geography. Lehi’s party traveled “nearly eastward from that time forth” (RE 1 Nephi 5:17) for eight years to Bountiful; six centuries later the Nephite civilization stood at the far end of that axis, “six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem” (RE 3 Nephi 1:1). If Bountiful lay in East Asia, the Nephite homeland at Christ’s birth was at the far eastern end of the route. Travel from that region to Bethlehem runs west, reversing the trail described in 1 Nephi.

On this reading, “from the east” describes the travelers’ actual direction of travel.

The timing is consistent with a journey of that length. Samuel disappears about six years before the birth; Nephi departs before the ninety-first year and remains missing nine years later. An overland journey from East Asia to Jerusalem would require years; the disappearances fall in the window when such a journey would have to begin. Matthew’s “we have seen his star in the east” indicates the star was observed from the east, then followed westward: “the star, which they saw in the east, went before them” (RE Matthew 1:8–9).

Nephi’s last recorded act — delivering charge of everything kept sacred “from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem” — is consistent with settling his stewardship before a final journey to the city his fathers had left.

This is inference, not proof. The directional statement is Matthew’s own: not Persia (Which could have been from the east), not Arabia, not Babylon — “from the east.” On the eastern-Bountiful reading, the phrase is literally accurate.

Footnotes

1. The study circulated privately as “Lehi’s Travels” (13 pp., 2026), on which this paper is based and which it substantially expands with scholarly documentation.
2. The traditional Arabian reconstruction is most fully stated in Aston and Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi (1994); the leading critical survey from within faithful scholarship remains the FARMS/Maxwell Institute literature.
3. Restoration Edition (RE) 1 Nephi 17:4–5.
4. RE 1 Nephi 17:4: “nearly eastward.” The text’s silence on wandering is itself evidence; contrast the frank “much affliction” language of 17:6.
5. RE 1 Nephi 17:2.
6. Covenant of Christ (CE) 1 Nephi 17:9. The RE renders “the ore which I did molten out of the rock” (17:16); the CE’s “iron ore” makes the metallurgical demand explicit.
7. RE 1 Nephi 17:16.
8. RE 1 Nephi 18:13.
9. RE 1 Nephi 18:24–25.
10. RE 1 Nephi 5:17 (“nearly eastward from that time forth”); CE 1 Nephi 5:17 (“traveling nearly eastward from then on”).
11. RE 1 Nephi 5: Laman and Lemuel — “we have wandered much in the wilderness”; cf. the prophetic “they shall wander in the flesh.” Nephi’s narration uses travel, journey, led.
12. RE 1 Nephi 5: the ball “pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness”; “we did follow the directions of the ball”; the pointers “did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed, which we did give unto them.”
13. RE 1 Nephi 5 (tempest passage): “the compass which had been prepared of the Lord did cease to work. Wherefore, they knew not whither they should steer the ship.”
14. As observed in the original study (‘Lehi’s Travels’); the three days’ march to the Valley of Lemuel is the study’s reading.
15. On nomadic and caravan travel rates, see the survey in the original study (“The 8-Year Continental Trek”); the 15–25 mi/day figure is standard in Silk Road scholarship.
16. As reported in the original study (‘Lehi’s Travels’). Eastman (1858–1939), Santee Dakota — Dartmouth 1887, M.D. Boston University 1890, author of *Indian Boyhood* and *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* — is independently documented as a long-distance foot traveler; e.g., the 150-mile walk to Nebraska’s Santee Normal Training School.
17. RE 1 Nephi 18:24 (cf. 1 Nephi 2:6–7 RE on the seeds carried from Jerusalem).
18. RE 1 Nephi 17:1–2.
19. On the Empty Quarter’s constraints, see the paleoclimate discussion in §VII below.
20. RE 1 Nephi 17:12 (cf. CE). The command not to make “much fire” is explicit.
21. Numbers 14:34 (KJV); RE 1 Nephi 5:3 (“provide ways and means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them”).
22. No published survey identifies workable iron deposits or smelting sites in Dhofar or Yemen in the sixth century BC; Aston's reports of “surface iron ore” at Khor Kharfot describe unworked geology, not an industry.
23. Qian & Huang 2021 (cast iron, 8th c. BC); Gilmour 1998, reviewing Wagner 1993 (bloomery, 9th c. BC); Metals 12 (2022): 1307 (bloomery mastered by mid-to-late Western Zhou).
24. Wagner, Iron and Steel in Ancient China (Brill, 1993); Wagner, Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. 5, Part 11 (Cambridge UP, 2008).
25. Huang 1984; Yang 2004; cf. PKU, “Casting Iron in Ancient China” (2013).
26. PKU, “Casting Iron in Ancient China” (2013) — bloomery steel microstructures at Tianma–Qucun (9th–8th c. BC); decarburized cast-iron steel at Laohekou (5th c. BC).

27. RE 1 Nephi 16:18.
28. Project Ancient Tin (Durham University): trace-element, lead-isotope, and tin-isotope analysis of 27 ingots from wrecks off Israel (~1300 BC), Crete, and Turkey, and a ~600 BC wreck off southern France, matched to Cornwall/Devon ores — Williams et al., *Antiquity*; *PLOS One* (2019); cf. Pernicka (Heidelberg/Curt Engelhorn Centre) reporting the same result.
29. The hypothesis linking Late Bronze Age tin-trade disruption to the acceleration of iron adoption is a standard Near Eastern argument; for China the literature frames the transition as economics- and technology-driven (see nn. 15–18 above).
30. As noted in the original study.
31. As proposed in the original study.
32. The elimination argument as stated in the original study.
33. Zhao & Bi 2000 (Ningxiang-type ores); IntechOpen, "The Chinese Iron Ore Deposits and Ore Production" (weathered-leaching shallow ores, Jiangxi); Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences (2025) on Youxian, Hunan; Mindat loc-240075 (Liangshan, Xinyu, Jiangxi).
34. Wagner 2003 (charcoal fuel; coal only from the Song); MDPI Forests (2023) on Hunan's Chinese fir forests.
35. RE 1 Nephi 18:1–2, 8 (timbers "of curious workmanship").
36. Church, "Zheng He: The Plausibility of 450-ft Treasure Ships," Monumenta Serica; International Journal of Wood Culture 6(2) (2026) on the Nanjing Longjiang shipyard timbers (fir, nanmu, camphor, pine, elm).
37. Miki 1941 (fossil genus); Hu & Cheng 1948 (living species); Harvard Arnold Arboretum (1948 seed expedition). Metasequoia: "like a sequoia."
38. MDPI Forests (2022) on Khufu's cedar hulls; Belov on Thonis-Heracleion Ship 17; Belfioretti & Vosmer (2010) on Al Baleed sewn timbers; OUP (2020), Ships and Shipwrecks in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean.
39. RE 1 Nephi 5:3; Zhurong Peak, highest summit of Mount Heng (Hengshan), Hunan, 1,300 m, named for Zhurong, god of fire and the south (Chinese Academy of Sciences; standard gazetteers); the 140-mile figure is the study's.
40. RE 1 Nephi 17:5.
41. Science Advances (2025), "Traversing the Kuroshio"; Yang et al. 2022, Geophys. Res. Lett. 49.
42. Kaifu et al. 2020, Scientific Reports.
43. Quimby 1985; Callaghan 2003; Brooks 1876; McLoughlin's 1834 Hudson's Bay Company correspondence on the Hojunmaru.
44. RE 1 Nephi 18:13.
45. Northern Hemisphere tropical cyclones rotate counterclockwise (clockwise south of the equator); the quadrant wind field follows directly from that rotation. This is standard dynamic meteorology; cf. the JTWC best-track climatology discussion in the npj Climate and Atmospheric Science (2024) paper cited in n. 32.
46. npj Climate and Atmospheric Science (2024), from JTWC best-track data; Atmosphere (MDPI, 2020).
47. India Meteorological Department climatology: Arabian Sea tropical cyclones move northwestward toward Arabia at roughly one-quarter the frequency of Bay of Bengal storms and far below northwest Pacific typhoon counts, with seasonal peaks in May and November.
48. The Somali Current is unique among western boundary currents in reversing seasonally: during the northeast (winter) monsoon, December through February, it flows southwestward at 0.7–1.0 m/s, carrying drift down the East African coast. See the National Oceanography Centre, "An Ocean Like No Other" (Indian Ocean overview).
49. The Phoenicia expedition (2009–10); Casson, Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World (1971).
50. As observed in the original study.
51. RE 1 Nephi 18:23–25.
52. RE 1 Nephi 5 (embarkation passage).
53. Joseph Smith to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833, Joseph Smith Papers (josephsmithpapers.org).

54. Joseph Smith, 4 June 1834, as catalogued in the FAIR index of Joseph Smith statements on Book of Mormon geography.
55. California's gold, silver, and copper endowment is a matter of standard geological record.
56. Dendrochronological consensus: oldest individuals ~3,200 years; see McGraw (2001) on Douglass and the sequoias.
57. RE 1 Nephi 18:23–25.
58. Harvard Arnold Arboretum on the Metasequoia–Sequoia kinship.
59. Vogt, Herberg & Röring, Arsh Bilqis (2000); Nebes (2005); Simpson, ed., Queen of Sheba (British Museum, 2002); Journal of Arabian Studies 4(1) (2014), with Kitchen's transliteration.
60. Vogel; Bokovoy; cf. the apologetic replies in Smoot (2014), Rappleye (2023, 2024), Ricks (2011).
61. Aston & Aston (1994); Aston, JBMS 15/2 (2006); Aston, Interpreter 55 (2023).
62. Fleitmann et al. (2007, 2011); Burns et al. (2001); Nature Communications (2023) on Qunf Cave speleothems; McCorriston et al., PLOS One (2025).
63. The heuristic table ('East Asian/Pacific Route Rating' vs 'Arabian/African Route Rating') in the original study ('Lehi's Travels'); the percentages are the study's own comparative judgments.

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