

# Where are the Descendants of the Book of Mormon People Today?

*A Comprehensive Study Links the Uto-Aztecan Languages of Western North America to Egyptian and Hebrew*

*Lynn and David Rosenvall, June 2014*

The Lord in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833 declared that, “The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians, ... By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them, ...” (*History of the Church* 1:315). Significant numbers of native Americans in western North America are found within what linguists call the Uto-Aztecan extended language family—stretching from the Shoshone of Montana, Wyoming, Oregon and Idaho and the Utes of Utah and Colorado south to the Aztecan (Nahuan) people of Mexico and the Pipil of El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama. In between are numerous Uto-Aztecan language groups such as the Hopi of Arizona, the Comanche of Oklahoma and the Tarahumara of northern Mexico. All these native American groups and subgroups share the same basic language and origin.



Portraits of Uto-Aztecan people.

A study by linguist Brian D. Stubbs has found the Uto-Aztecan language and its various subgroups impressively consist of more than 1,500 Egyptian, Hebrew and other Semitic words (cognates). Linguists trace a source region of these Uto-Aztec people and their language to an area of southern California and northwest Mexico.

Our research has proposed the adjoining peninsula of Baja California as the homeland of the Book of Mormon record keepers. Their descendants, after surviving a devastating civil war, were swept off this peninsula about A.D. 385 by decree of the Lord and multiplied over the centuries as the Uto-Aztec people—first in the area of southern California and



Lehi's descendants are "swept off" the land and occupy numerous locations beyond Baja California.

northwest Mexico and then migrating over time both north and south to their current distant and more scattered locations. According to the Book of Mormon record, these descendants of father Lehi spoke and wrote in a language that had its origins in Hebrew and Egyptian. This is not unexpected when one considers Lehi's family came to the New World from the land of Jerusalem. Thus we suggest the Uto-Aztec people are descendants of Book of Mormon families.

# Linking the Uto-Aztecan Languages of Western North America to Egyptian and Hebrew

Brian D. Stubbs, after three decades of linguistic research, has produced a seminal work that brings to light over 1,500 cognate sets or word similarities within the various Uto-Aztecan language groups of western North America that link to not only Egyptian but to Hebrew and other Semitic languages. Cognates are words having the same linguistic derivation as another, that is, they stem from the same original word or root, for example, English *is*, German *ist*, Latin *est*, from Indo-European *esti*. The term “cognate” derives from the Latin *cognatus* (blood relative). Stubbs has used linguistic techniques of historical and comparative research that focus on consistent patterns of sound correspondences. Stubbs linguistic training and experience includes not only Uto-Aztecan languages but adds the required knowledge of Hebrew and other Semitic languages as well as Egyptian, a rare combination of language skills. The results provide a valid linguistic link between cultural groups in the new and old worlds. Even though often disconcerting and unexpected by some, his groundbreaking findings stand up to scrutiny by other linguistics in this field of research. Stubb’s massive study starts with his foundational work of 2,500 vocabulary entries, and similar but smaller vocabularies by others, and expands from there (Brian D. Stubbs, *Uto-Aztecan: A Comparative Vocabulary*, UACV, 2011). He has published an earlier work on his findings (Brian D. Stubbs, “Looking Over vs. Overlooking: Native American Languages: Let's Void the Void,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies: Volume 5, Issue 1*, Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 1996). Stubbs now has released a prepublication version of his more comprehensive study that lists and analyzes in depth over 1,500 cognate links (Brian D. Stubbs, *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Egyptian and Semitic in Uto-Aztecan*, 2013).

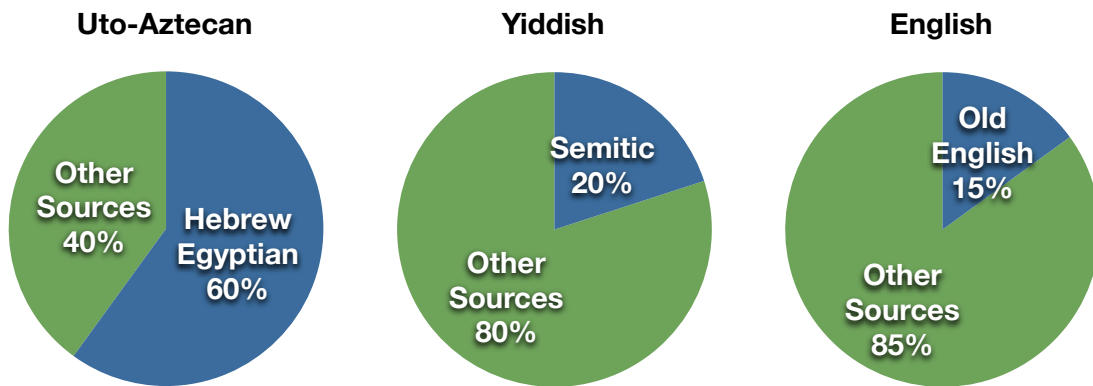


A brief summary can not begin to fairly cover the breadth and scholarly intensity and thoroughness of his pioneering research, thus the reader is encouraged to study his published works. In his research Stubbs traces and categorizes consistent sound shifts that have occurred over time in the Uto-Aztecan languages from the original Egyptian and Hebrew, not unlike the shift of the of “v” and “t” in *vater* (German for father) to the “f” and

“th” in the English word *father*. Here are a few examples of the type of words represented in his 1,500 cognate sets: palm (of hand), shoulder, crocodile, lizard, bird, wolf, man (person), son, boy, girl, cry, weep, seize, take, drunk, land (earth), wood, forest, food (provide food), basket, black, travel and arrow. Links are made to not only Egyptian and Hebrew words but the linkages extend to other Semitic languages such as Aramaic, Arabic and the Northwest Semitic language.

The 1,500 cognate sets in Stubbs’ work are not only a significant but an astonishing number given that most language links are made by linguists with only 100 to 200 cognate sets. Notably, the 1,500 cognates comprise 60 percent of the 2,500 words within Stubbs’ Uto-Aztecan comparative vocabulary. Stubbs observes that, “Yiddish, the language of central European Jews (originally Mediterranean), results from the Aramaic-Hebrew idiom being subject to many centuries of mostly German influence, as well as Slavic and other languages, collecting words from various stopping places along the way” (Stubbs, 2013, p. 356). He then quotes a study that places the percentages of words in Yiddish as 70 percent German, 10 percent Slavic, with only 20 percent Semitic (Hebrew). Stubbs compares these percentages to his findings in the Uto-Aztecan languages.

Returning to percentages, Uto-Aztecan’s percentages of these Near-Eastern components remain to be settled, determined, and tallied. Nevertheless, at first glance, Uto-Aztecan’s percentage of Near-Eastern components may exceed Yiddish’s Near-Eastern percentage. The author’s book, *Uto-Aztecan: A Comparative Vocabulary*, includes more than 2,500 Uto-Aztecan cognate sets. Those with substantial similarity to Hebrew or Egyptian, and according to the proposed sound correspondences, may constitute about one-third of them (perhaps 30+%). But for the more widespread/frequent UA words, about 60% align with Hebrew or Egyptian. (Brian D. Stubbs, *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Egyptian and Semitic in Uto-Aztecan*, 2013, p. 356)



Relative percentage of source words found in three different languages.

Many languages such as English are combinations of several languages. Stubbs notes that modern English kept only 15 percent of Old English with the other 85 percent being replaced with influxes of Latin and French. Referring to modern English, Stubbs notes.

Though most of our common words are from Old English, the percentages of a printed page would contain comparable amounts of French, and an unabridged dictionary would show much more Latin and French in modern English than what survived from Old English into modern English. (Stubbs, 2013. p. 357)

Moreover, it appears that the Uto-Aztecan languages “preserve many vowels and details” from Egyptian at a higher level than does Coptic, a late form of ancient Egyptian (Stubbs, 2013, p. 3). Today Coptic survives as the liturgical language of the Coptic Church, a Christian community in Egypt.

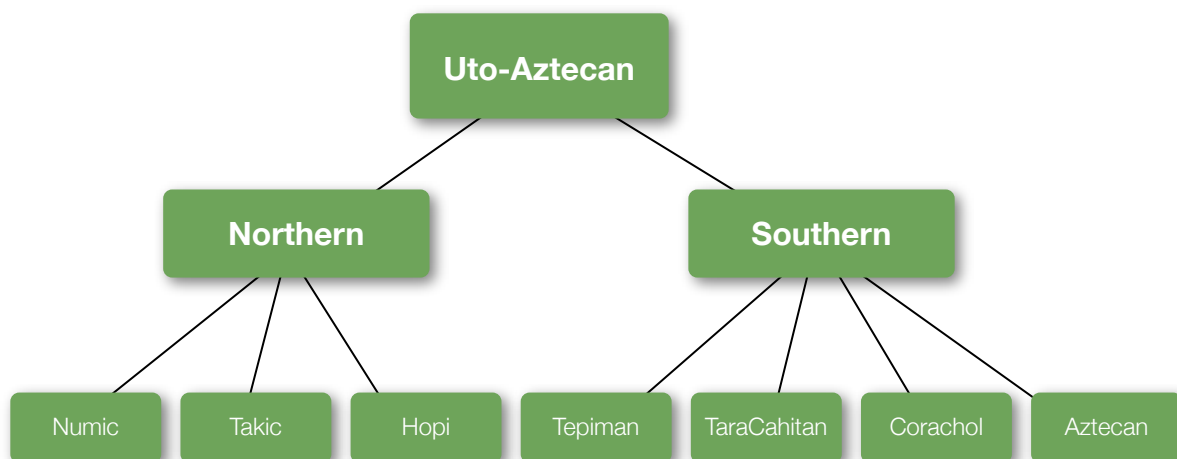
## **The Uto-Aztecan Language Family of Western North America**

The Uto-Aztecan language family consists of some 40 language groups. As has been noted, this language family extends from the Shoshone on the north in Montana to the Aztecs of Mexico and the Pipil in Central America (see *Wikipedia*, Uto-Aztecan Languages; and the website for Uto-Aztecan Studies: [uto-aztecan.org/uanist/](http://uto-aztecan.org/uanist/)). The name Uto-Aztecan is taken from the names of the Utes of Utah and the Aztecs of Mexico. This vast area of western North America is home to some two million Uto-Aztecan speakers, with an estimated 1.7 million Nahuatl speakers in Mexico. Nahuatl (Nahuan) is the major subgroup within the Aztec language and the overwhelming population concentration of the Uto-Aztecan people. The Hopi with only 5,000 speakers is considered the largest Uto-Aztecan speaking group in the United States. Unfortunately, many Uto-Aztecan groups are quickly losing their language, adding to the list of those who have experienced extinction. For example, it is estimated that only one percent of the Comanche people still speak their native Uto-Aztecan language. Lyle Campbell lists over 50 additional Uto-Aztecan languages that are now extinct (see *Wikipedia*, Uto-Aztecan Languages). Nonetheless, these groups with extinct or near-extinct languages are still represented today by many thousands of descendants who share a common language history extending over hundreds of years, even though they now speak another tongue—primarily Spanish or English.



These linguistic connections between the various Uto-Aztecan languages have been studied for some 150 years.

The similarities between the Uto-Aztecan languages were noted as early as 1859 by J.C.E. Buschmann, who however failed to recognize the genetic affiliation between the Aztecan branch and the rest, instead ascribing the similarities between the two groups to diffusion. [Daniel Garrison] Brinton added the Aztecan languages to the family in 1891 and coined the term Uto-Aztecan. . . . [John Wesley] Powell recognized two language families: "Shoshonean" (encompassing Takic, Numic, Hopi, and Tübatulabal) and "Sonoran" (encompassing Pimic, Taracahitan, and Corachol). In the early 1900s Alfred L. Kroeber filled in the picture of the Shoshonean group, while Edward Sapir proved the unity between Aztecan, "Sonoran", and "Shoshonean". (*Wikipedia*, Uto-Aztecan Languages)



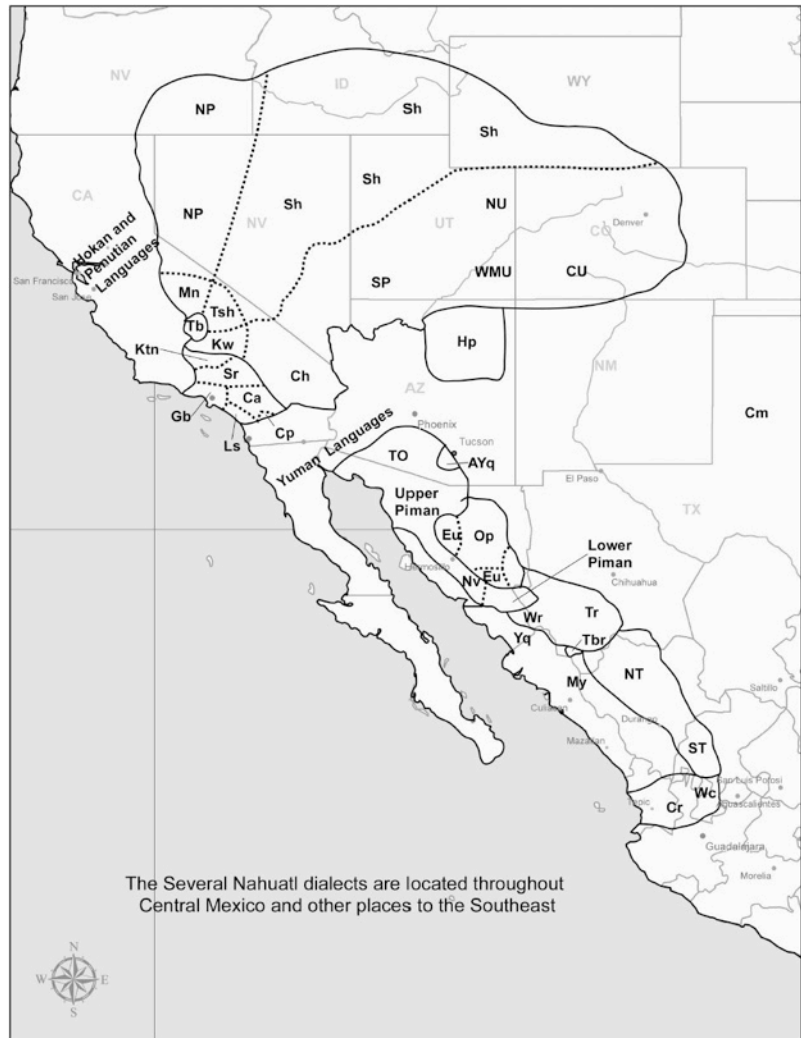
Classification of the Uto-Aztecan extended language family.

Linguists divide the more than 40 current languages into Northern Uto-Aztecan (United States) and Southern Uto-Aztecan (Mexico and areas to the south). The most common classification schemes further divide the two divisions into three northern groups (Numic, Takic, with an ungrouped outlier of Hopi). The southern division is divided into four subgroups (Tepiman, TaraCahitan, Corachol and Aztecan). The more than 40 Uto-Aztecan languages are then placed within these seven divisions. Linguists suspect there are several now extinct, undocumented or little known languages of northern Mexico that would be Uto-Aztecan in origin.

The largest numbers of people with Uto-Aztecan language roots are found within the millions of mestizos in Mexico. In Spanish speaking areas mestizo refers to those of

combined Native American and European descent (see *Wikipedia*, Mestizo; Mestizos in Mexico; and Indigenous Peoples of Mexico). This significant and sizable mestizo population was taught the dominant Spanish language from the time of European contact in the 1500s. As one Mexican mestizo explained their past: “The Spanish conquistadores brought no mothers.” In a generation or two, many of their descendants lost their native tongue and transitioned to Spanish as their only language. Among these millions of mestizos today are significant numbers whose ancestors once spoke an Uto-Aztecan language, possibly most of the mestizos of Mexico.

Mexico has a population of 117 million with some 70 million mestizos. Today many mestizos have no memory, association or possibly even knowledge that some of their ancestors once spoke the Uto-Aztecan tongue. In addition, Mexico has an indigenous population of some 15 million. The largest indigenous group are the Nahuatl (Nahuan) with a population of 2.5 million, and of that number 1.7 million still speak the Nahuan (Uto-Aztecan) language. Numerous indigenous Uto-Aztecan speaking groups in Mexico, such as the Tarahumara (87,000 speakers out of population of 122,000), add to the numbers.



Map of Uto-Aztecan languages centered around the southwest United States and northern Mexico. Languages represented by the abbreviations are indicated on the following chart. (Published in Stubbs, 2013, p. 30)

## Uto-Aztecan Language Family

Northern Uto-Aztecan	Southern Uto-Aztecan
<p><b>Numic</b></p> <p>Mn Mono</p> <p>NP Northern Paiute</p> <p>TSh Tümpisha Shoshoni</p> <p>Sh Shoshoni</p> <p>WSh Western Shoshoni</p> <p>Cm Comanche</p> <p>Kw Kawaiisu</p> <p>Ch Chemehuevi</p> <p>SP Southern Paiute</p> <p>WMU White Mesa Ute</p> <p>NU Northern/Uintah Ute</p> <p>CU Colorado Ute</p> <p><b>Takic</b></p> <p>Ls Luiseño</p> <p>Ca Cahuilla</p> <p>Cp Cupeño</p> <p>Sr Serrano</p> <p>Gb Gabrielino</p> <p>Ktn Kitanemuk</p> <p><b>Hopi*</b></p> <p>Hp Hopi</p> <p>Tb Tübatülabal</p> <p>* Hopi, with a large population, and Tübatülabal, with a very small population, are ungrouped single languages.</p>	<p><b>Tepiman</b> (Pimic)</p> <p>TO Tohono O'odham</p> <p>UP Upper Pima</p> <p>LP Lower Pima</p> <p>Nv Nevome</p> <p>PYp Pima of Yépáchic</p> <p>PYc Pima of Yécora</p> <p>NT Northern Tepehuan</p> <p>ST Southern Tepehuan</p> <p><b>TaraCahitan</b> (Taracahitic)</p> <p>Eu Eudeve</p> <p>Op Opata</p> <p>Tbr Tubar</p> <p>Yq Yaqui</p> <p>AYq Arizona Yaqui</p> <p>My Mayo</p> <p>Wr Guarijio</p> <p>Tr Tarahumara</p> <p>WTr Western Tarahumara</p> <p><b>Corachol</b></p> <p>Cr Cora</p> <p>Wc Huichol</p> <p><b>Aztecan</b></p> <p>CN Classical Nahuatl</p> <p>PI Pipil</p> <p>HN Huastec Nahuatl</p>

Uto-Aztecan language groups and their abbreviations. (Source: based on Stubbs, 2013, p. 28)

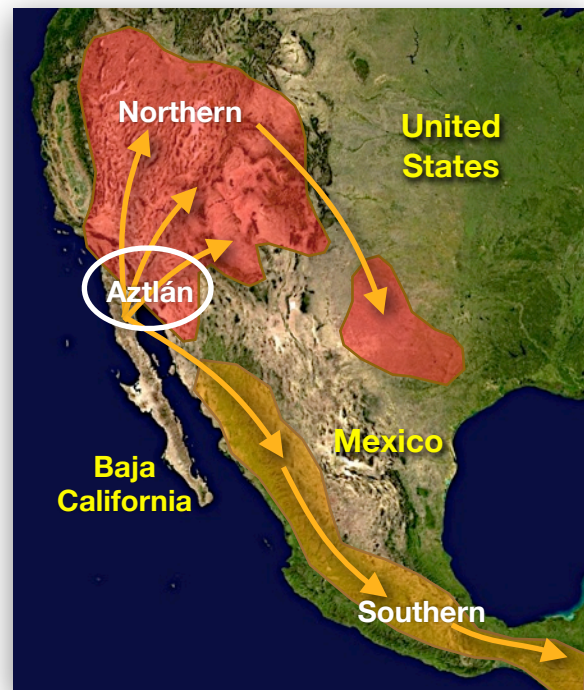


## Where is the Common Source Region for the Uto-Aztec Languages?

The work of Stubbs and other linguists implies the Uto-Aztec people settled some common location before they scattered to their present locations. The question is where. Even though the topic is open to further research, many linguists agree that an earlier homeland or source region for the numerous Uto-Aztec languages was in the general area of southern California, southern Arizona, northwest Mexico and extending into Baja California. This conclusion is often based on spatial analysis of plant and animal names and their associated environments (see, for example, Catherine S. Fowler, "Some Lexical Clues to Uto-Aztec Prehistory," *International Journal of American Linguistics*, vol. 49, no. 3, July 1983, pp. 224-57; Albert Davletshin, "Proto-Uto-Aztecs on their way to the Proto-Aztec homeland: linguistic evidence," *Journal of Language Relationship*, vol. 8, 2012, pp. 75-92). These diverse studies suggest the precursor or Proto-language of Uto-Aztec would at a time in the past been spoken among those living in this smaller geographical area, and then their descendants over many generations spread to distant locations.

The Proto-Uto-Aztec language is the hypothetical common ancestor of the Uto-Aztec languages. Authorities on the history of the language group have usually placed the Proto-Uto-Aztec homeland in the border region between the USA and Mexico, namely the upland regions of Arizona and New Mexico and the adjacent areas of the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua, roughly corresponding to the Sonoran Desert and the western part of the Chihuahuan Desert. ... The homeland of the Numic languages has been placed in Southern California near Death Valley, and the homeland of the proposed Southern Uto-Aztec group has been placed on the coast of Sonora. (*Wikipedia*, Uto-Aztec Languages)

Stubbs in his work describes a similar migration pattern for the Northern Uto-Aztec languages.



Traditional area of Aztlán (white ring) relative to the northern and southern regions of the Uto-Aztec languages.

Lamb (1958) and others have explained the Num languages' spread from the NUA [Northern Uto-Aztecan] homeland in southern California out into the Great Basin. The data show the inner-most language of each branch to be more closely related to the outer-most language of the same branch than to the closer neighboring Num languages of different branches. This pattern shows more diversity in Southern California between languages of differing branches only a few miles away vs. closer ties to tongues of the same branch 1,000 miles away. ... This greater diversity in the geographically limited Numic (and NUA) homeland speaks convincingly for a three-way Numic split in Southern California before spreading north, northeast, and eastward into the Great Basin. (Brian D. Stubbs, *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Egyptian and Semitic in Uto-Aztecan*, 2013, p. 31)

For the Southern Uto-Aztecan languages, however, Stubbs states:

In contrast to earlier leanings toward a UA [Uto-Aztecan] homeland in NUA [Northern Uto-Aztecan] areas, hints of greater diversity in SUA [Southern Uto-Aztecan] areas surface regularly, bringing Manaster Ramer, Jane Hill, and myself to deem SUA areas as more likely prospects for the UA homeland. (Brian D. Stubbs, *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Egyptian and Semitic in Uto-Aztecan*, 2013, p. 32)

We favor the view of many linguists that places the source of the Uto-Aztecan language within the general area of southern California, southern Arizona, northwest Mexico and the adjacent peninsula of Baja California. The legends of the Uto-Aztecan people support this location by adding several elements to the origin narrative. The Hopi, living in the northeast corner of Arizona, claim their ancestors came from a “red city,” located “where the rocks and earth are red,” somewhere “in the far southwest” of their present home (Gary A. David, *The Orion Zone*, pp. 214-17). The Aztecs of central Mexico claim their ancestors came from an area to the northwest of Mexico, near the southwest United States, called Aztlán. Some claim that Aztlán means “place of the white heron [egret or white-faced ibis]” (see, *Wikipedia*, Aztlán). The legends include the notion that their origin was a “place of reeds” and an island to the west that required a voyage by boat.

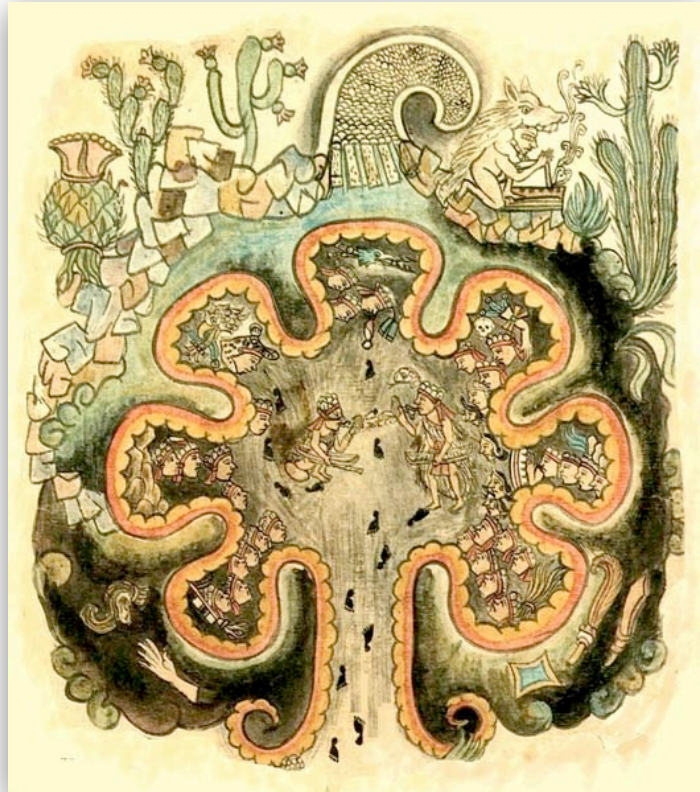


Some claim that Aztlán means “place of the white heron [egret or white-faced ibis]” (see, *Wikipedia*, Aztlán). Baja California is a breeding ground of the white heron.

Aztlán (from Nahuatl: Aztlān, [ˈast͡ɬaːn]) is the legendary ancestral home of the Aztec, one of the main cultural groups who later adopted the identity of Mexica in their journey to find their Tamoanchan, which was Tenochtitlan. Aztec is the Nahuatl word for "people from Aztlan". ... Nahuatl legends relate that seven tribes lived in Chicomoztoc, or "the place of the seven caves". Each cave represented a different

Nahua group: the Xochimilca, Tlahuica, Acolhua, Tlaxcalan, Tepaneca, Chalca, and Mexica. Because of their common linguistic origin, those groups are called collectively "Nahuatlaca" (Nahua people). These tribes subsequently left the caves and settled "near" Aztlán, or Aztatlan. (*Wikipedia, Aztlán*)

There are several proposed locations for the legendary Aztlán, but most center on southern California and the surrounding states, including the states of northern Mexico. (See *Wikipedia, Aztlán*; and the section, Aztlán interviews, on this web site: [insearchofaztlan.com](http://insearchofaztlan.com)) The concept of Aztlán as their ancestral home has become a symbol for members of the Chicano movement and others to propose and claim a new nation in the area of their original homeland—the southwestern region of the United States and extending into northern Mexico.



The seven caves of Chicomoztoc, from *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*. "Nahuatl legends relate that seven tribes lived in Chicomoztoc, or 'the place of the seven caves'. ... These tribes subsequently left the caves and settled 'near' Aztlán, or Aztatlan." (Source: *Wikipedia, Aztlán*)

Others, understandably, have weighed in on this topic. Michael E. Smith's comprehensive work on the Aztlán migrations, based on a historical reconstruction, combines supportive evidence from linguistics, archaeology and Nahuatl histories. He addresses the migration theme of a continuous southward Nahuatl migration from a northern Mexico Aztlán location, eventually arriving around A.D. 1100 into central Mexico. Smith claims that,

This 12th to 13th century arrival of the Aztlan migrants fits well with historical linguistic reconstructions for the arrival of Nahuatl in central Mexico, and suggests that these populations represent the major and perhaps initial penetration of the language south of Tula and into the Basin of Mexico. Finally, archaeological indicators of continuity and change in Postclassic ceramic styles and settlement location in several regions provide further support of the dating and linguistic composition of the Aztlan migrations.



The evidence presented in this article shows that while the Aztalan migration chronicles may superficially appear to be fictional origin myths, they in fact preserve valid historical information on population movements in Postclassic central Mexico. This is hardly surprising, because in contrast with “ethnic history” in other parts of the world (e.g., Vansina 1965; Brown 1973), the Nahuatl histories are notable for their written component, their use of an advanced and accurate calendar, and their general emphasis on chronological history. (Michael E. Smith, “The Aztlan Migrations of the Nahuatl Chronicles: Myth or History?” *Ethnohistory* 31(3): 153-186 (1984), p. 180)

Thus there appears to be plausible evidence that the region of southern California and northern Mexico (Aztlán) could at one time have been a historical source area for the spread of the Uto-Aztecan languages into more distant locations, both to the north into the western United States and on the south into Mexico and Central America.



Departure from Aztlán in the 16th-century *Codex Boturini* (source: *Wikipedia*, Aztlán). Note the island to the west and short voyage by boat. Baja California for several centuries was considered to be an island by Europeans, and so depicted on maps of the time.

## The Uto-Aztecs and the Book of Mormon

What does all this mean? We have a fascinating and credible scenario provided by the comprehensive linguistic work of Brian Stubbs that affirms there are a million or more Native Americans spread throughout the western areas of North America who speak a language that contains an overwhelming number of words that are linked to Egyptian, Hebrew and other Semitic languages. This alone is astonishing, but then the language subgroups of these speakers can be divided into two major divisions and can be further classified into some three language groups in the northern half and four in the southern,

with an apparent common source region that is centered on southern California and northern Mexico. All of this leads to at least three obvious questions.

1. Were the ancestors of these Native Americans living somewhere else before settling in a common source area of southern California and northern Mexico?
2. Was this earlier homeland in a part of the world where their language could be influenced by Egyptian and Semitic languages?
3. What might have set in motion their spatial pattern of spreading within western North America into two major groups and some seven subgroups?

When any evidence links the Egyptian and Hebrew languages to Native Americans, it is to be expected that readers of the Book of Mormon would immediately jump to the observation that maybe the historic narrative of that book would provide plausible answers to these three questions.

### **The language of the Book of Mormon people**

The Book of Mormon record keepers offer several insights concerning the language of their writings and possibly their spoken language or languages. Nephi, the first record keeper, at the time his family left the land of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. for a new homeland halfway around the world, states:

... I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

**Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.**

And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge. (1 Ne. 1:2-3; bolded words added here and in later references)

The “language of the Egyptians” appears to be part of Nephi’s record, but what about the “learning of the Jews”? Does this “learning” include Hebrew and other Semitic languages? Was their language a combination of Egyptian and Semitic languages?

Mormon in his abridgment of the Nephite record, includes the teachings of king Benjamin, the son of Mosiah (the first), to his sons concerning the the significance of record keeping and the importance of the brass plates brought by Nephi and his family from Jerusalem some 470 years earlier.

And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days.

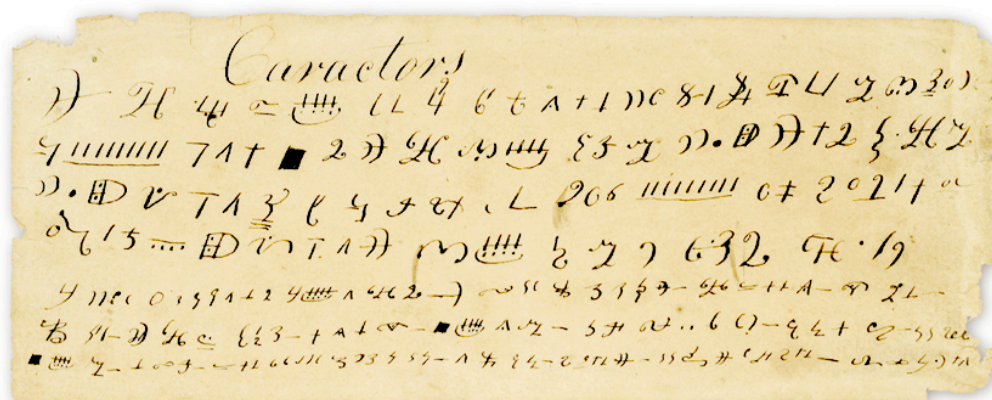
And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. **And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers**, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

**And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass**, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.

**For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.**

**I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries**, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.

O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also **the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now**, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes. (Mosiah 1:1-6)



Sample of Book of Mormon characters taken from the plates given to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni.



Thus the “language of the Egyptians,” as found on the brass plates, is mentioned about 130 B.C. as a language they were taught and taught their children from generation to generation.

At the end of their 1,000 year history on the land, Moroni, the son of Mormon the principal abridger of the Nephite record, adds his own comments about their language (between A.D. 400 and 421).

And now, behold, **we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.**

**And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.**

But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that **none other people knoweth our language**; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof. (Mormon 9:32-34)

Our intent is not to further analyze the meaning of these language statements in the Book of Mormon. Others have pondered over and written about the topic. Some suggest the written characters of the original Book of Mormon plates were a form of the Egyptian script, but that the underlying language of the text may have been a form of Hebrew. Nonetheless, it is rather evident that the Egyptian and Hebrew languages, in some way, were part of the lexicon of Nephi, Benjamin, Mormon, Moroni and their descendants. (See Brian D. Stubbs, “Book of Mormon Language,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:179-81); and John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “Notes and Communications: Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996), 156–63, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University)

### **Three “Lamanite” families and four “Nephite” families**

After Lehi’s family left their home in the land of Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon narrative records the history of two major divisions within their descendants. Book of Mormon readers, of course, know them as the Lamanites and the Nephites. The record keepers, however, are careful to clarify that these two terms—Lamanites and Nephites—include and represent seven families. In 544 B.C., some 56 years after the family left Jerusalem, Jacob,

the younger brother and successor to Nephi, recognizes the two divisions of his father's family but also adds this observation:

And it came to pass that Nephi died.

**Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites.**

But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but **I shall call them Lamanites** that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi **I shall call Nephites**, or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings. (Jacob 1:12-14)

The Nephites, understandably, were named for Nephi, son of Lehi. The Lamanites, Lemuelites, Jacobites and Josephites were named for Nephi's brothers. Nephi's brother Sam appears to have no branch of the family named for him (see the references, however, to Sam's family and his seed: 1 Ne. 2:5; 7:6; 8:3; 2 Ne. 1:28; 4:11; 5:6; Alma 3:6). The Zoramites were named for Zoram, the faithful servant of Laban who came with Nephi and Lehi to their new land, and the Ishmaelites were named for Ishmael, Nephi's father-in-law, whose family also accompanied Lehi and his family.

Mormon in his abridgement of Alma's record adds a similar statement to Jacob's, indicating that these family divisions were still in place in 72 B.C.

And it came to pass that Amalickiah sought the favor of the queen, and took her unto him to wife; and thus by his fraud, and by the assistance of his cunning servants, he obtained the kingdom; yea, he was acknowledged king throughout all the land, among **all the people of the Lamanites, who were composed of the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, and all the dissenters of the Nephites, from the reign of Nephi down to the present time.** (Alma 47:35)

In describing events in A.D. 231, some two centuries after the visit of the Savior Jesus Christ to his people, Mormon records:

And it came to pass that in this year **there arose a people who were called the Nephites, and they were true believers in Christ; and among them there were those who were called by the Lamanites—Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites;**

Therefore the true believers in Christ, and the true worshipers of Christ, (among whom were the three disciples of Jesus who should tarry) were called **Nephites, and Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites.**

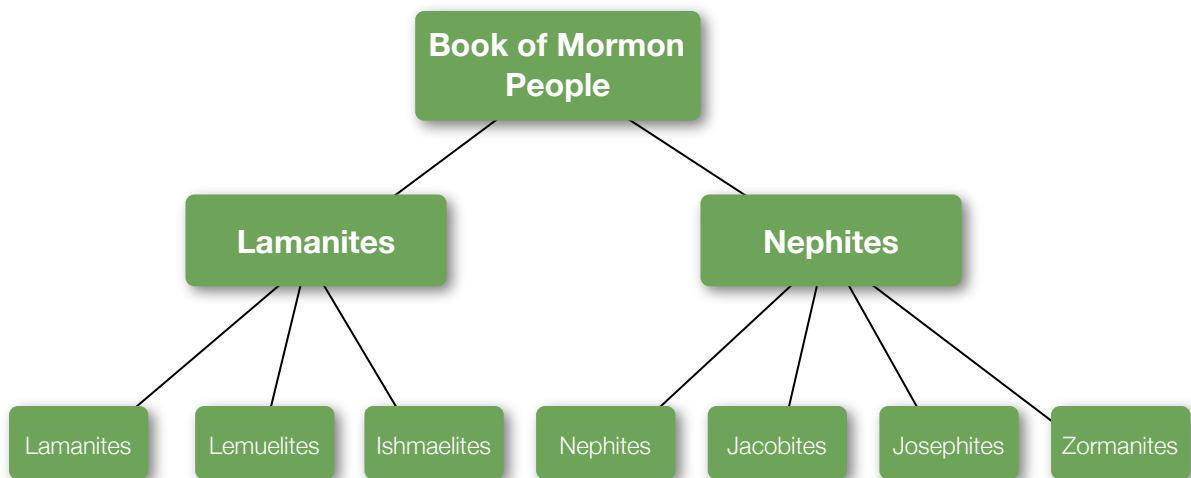
And it came to pass that they who rejected the gospel were called **Lamanites, and Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites;** and they did not dwindle in unbelief, but they did wilfully rebel against the gospel of Christ;

and they did teach their children that they should not believe, even as their fathers, from the beginning, did dwindle. (4 Ne. 1:36-38)

Thus after many years these same names and family divisions began to reappear among the people. And then at the end of Mormon’s record of their 1,000-year history and at the beginning of the final and lengthy 63-year war that led to the downfall of both major branches of the family—Lamanites and Nephites—the same seven family divisions are still present among the people.

And it came to pass in this year [about A.D. 322] **there began to be a war between the Nephites, who consisted of the Nephites and the Jacobites and the Josephites and the Zoramites; and this war was between the Nephites, and the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites.**

**Now the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites were called Lamanites, and the two parties were Nephites and Lamanites.** (Morm. 1:8-9)



Seven family names of Lehi’s descendants maintained throughout their 1,000-year history.

What about the descendants of these same families today—the people who survived the devastating war? The Lord in a revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants (July 1828) explains the situation surrounding the loss of 116 pages from the first part of the Book of Mormon, called the “Book of Lehi,” and declares the role of the Book of Mormon among these families today.

Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews [the Bible], even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people—

**And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites,** through the testimony of their fathers—

And this testimony [the Book of Mormon] shall come to the knowledge of **the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites,** who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations.

And for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—**that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people;**

And that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, **and that they might know the promises of the Lord,** and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved. Amen. (D&C 3:16-20)

In this revelation the Lord makes known that today these two divisions, Lamanites and Nephites, and the same seven family groups would in some way still be among father Lehi's descendants. Thus we suggest that the Uto-Aztecan speaking people today include the descendants of father Lehi and the Book of Mormon people. We can only surmise how the seven families are apportioned upon the land, but this pattern of seven language subgroups may correspond to the some seven subgroups of the Uto-Aztecan language family—three in the north and four in the south.

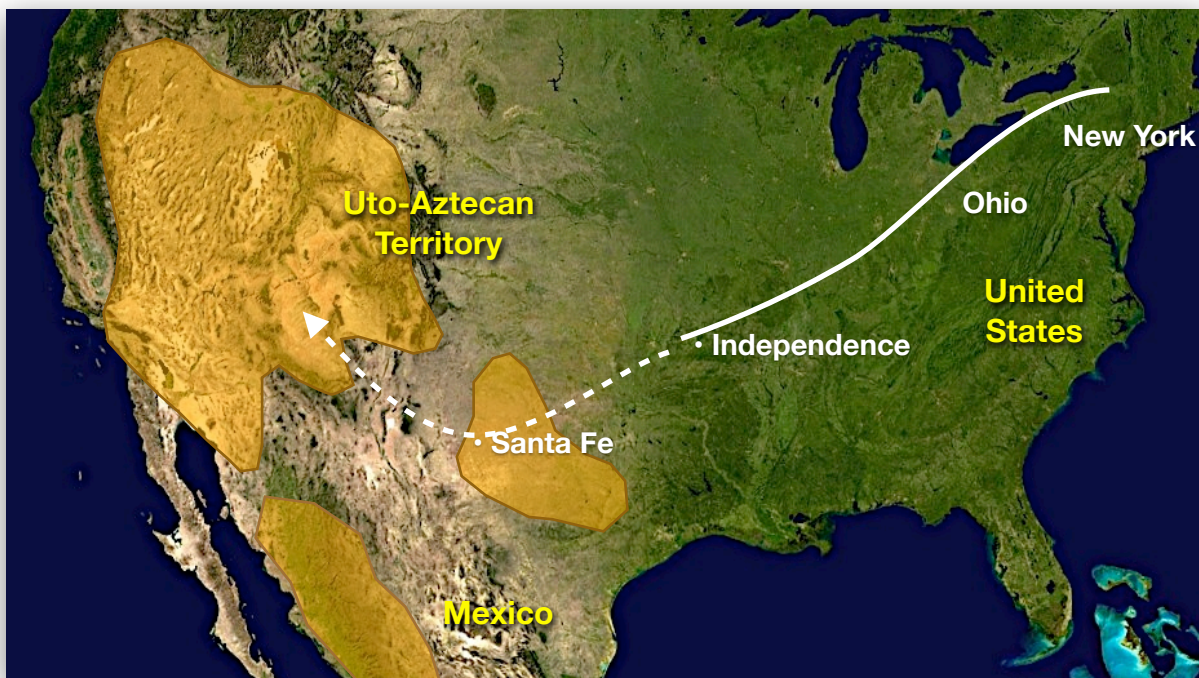
### **“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians”**

Understandably, many who propose a location for father Lehi's descendants provide quotes from church leaders and others to support the area of their research and their beliefs. We have found the authenticity, interpretation, or authoritative origin of some of these statements to be questionable, or they appear to be merely the opinion of the author. There are, however, official statements bearing on the subject. For example, when Moroni first visited Joseph Smith on the night of September 21, 1823, he told the young prophet that “there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of **this continent**, and the source from whence they sprang” (Joseph Smith—History 1:34). Thus father Lehi's descendants were located somewhere on “this continent”—the North American continent of Canada, United States, Mexico, and stretching to Central America and possibly beyond.

In the fall of 1830 the Lord directed through several revelations to Joseph Smith that Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson and Peter Whitmer should leave their homes in New York state and travel to the far west “unto the Lamanites” and cause his “church to be established among them.”

And now, behold, I say unto you that **you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel** unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings **thou shalt cause my church to be established among them**; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment. (D&C 28:8; see also, D&C sections 30 and 32)

Frederick G. Williams, a new convert, joined the four travelers when they reached Kirtland, Ohio, on their arduous western journey. Their goal was to take the gospel and the Book of Mormon to Native American groups farther to the west of the Missouri River, even to Santa Fe, New Mexico—the area near the Comanches—and to the lands of the Navahos and the



Projected route of Oliver Cowdery and four other missionaries to go “unto the Lamanites” before being stopped west of Independence, Missouri.

Utes in the Rocky Mountains, a distance of over 2,000 miles. Unfortunately, the mission they covenanted to fulfill was aborted by orders of a federal Indian agent when they reached the area to the west of Independence, Missouri (see Leland H. Gentry, “Light on the ‘Mission to the Lamanites,’” *BYU Studies* 36:2 (1996-97); 226-232). This early and



earnest concern to preach the gospel to the Lamanites and establish the church among them unmistakably had a orientation towards the western half of North America (D&C 32:2, see also, D&C 19:27; 54:8; 57:4).

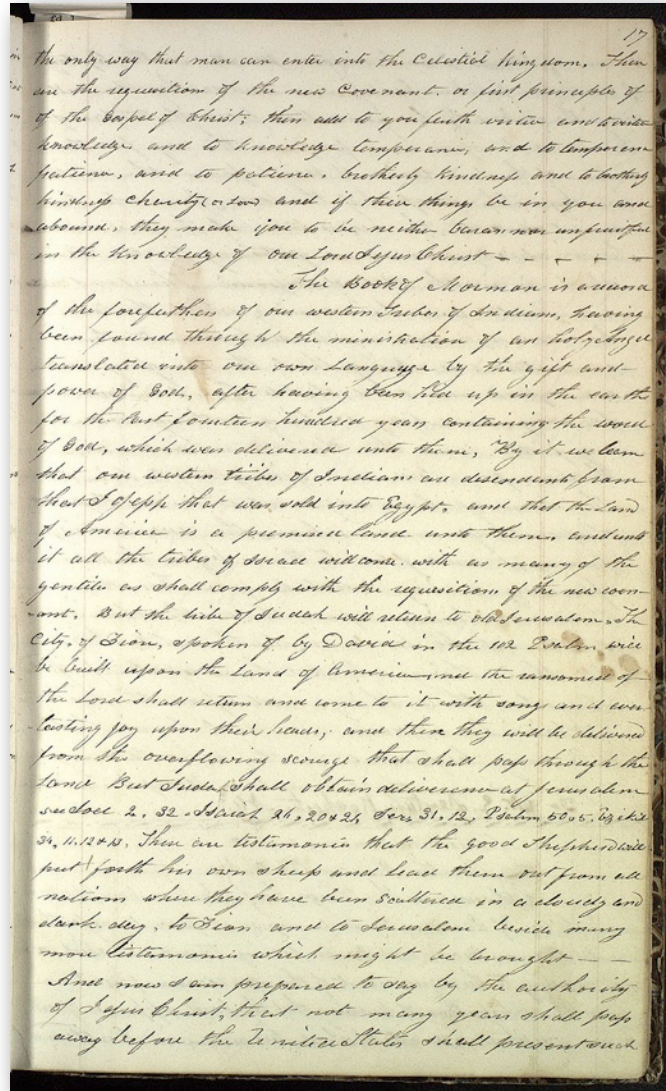
Possibly the most enlightening statement is the one made by Joseph Smith in a letter to N.C. Saxton, editor of the *American Revivalist* and *Rochester Observer*, 4 January 1833.

Saxton had asked Joseph Smith to write about principles of the gospel and the need for the church among the nations of the earth. As a part of his response, which he attributed to a revelation from the Lord, the Prophet wrote:

“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our **western Tribes of Indians**, ... By it we learn that our **western tribes of Indians** are descendants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them, ...” (*History of the Church* 1:315).

### Western North America Location

In summary, these three revelatory accounts, when considered together, provide impressive supporting evidence for a western North America location for father Lehi’s descendants such as the area occupied by the Uto-Aztec people extending from the Shoshone on the north in Montana to the Aztecs of Mexico and the Pipil in Central America.



Joseph Smith's letter to N.C. Saxton, 4 January 1833.



## The Uto-Aztecs and the Coming of the Europeans (Gentiles)

At the time his family left Jerusalem in 600 B.C., Lehi was shown in vision that the Lord would eventually “bring other nations” upon their new homeland, and his descendants would be dispossessed, “scattered and smitten.”

Yea, **[the Lord] will bring other nations** unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be **scattered and smitten** (2 Ne. 1:11; see also, 1 Ne. 13:13, 34; 2 Ne. 26:15, 19).

“Smitten” in older English had a meaning that is helpful in this context: “to visit with death,” including by maladies and infectious diseases. And indeed Lehi’s descendants—and other indigenous people of the New World—were “smitten” with fatal European diseases, especially smallpox, leading to the death of millions and nearly annihilating some tribal groups, far more than from casualties of war.

Lehi’s son Nephi was also shown by an angel the eventual fate of his father’s descendants on the promised land they were preparing to reach. Nephi was told that a “mixture” of his seed and the seed of his brethren would not be utterly destroyed by the Gentiles when they came upon the land.

Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that **the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.**

**Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.** (1 Ne. 13:30-31)

The response of Lehi’s descendants—the Uto-Aztec people—to the coming of Europeans provides an essential backdrop to the conquest and development of western North America. The following are examples of interactions between the two groups and the diverse ways Gentile nations were enabled in settling the land. Without acknowledging these historical encounters, the present-day Uto-Aztec tribal names would be merely labels on a soulless list.

## Did Christopher Columbus make contact with Father Lehi's descendants?

Nephi's vision portrayed a future time when a man among the Gentile nations would go forth upon the many waters "even unto" the "seed of [Nephi's] brethren" (father Lehi's descendants). In older English the now obsolete wording "even unto" meant the same as "even until," or in other words, this journey many centuries later would extend until contact was made with Lehi's descendants. Here is Nephi's account.

And I looked and beheld **a man among the Gentiles**, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, **even unto the seed of my brethren**, who were in the promised land. (1 Ne. 13:12)

Did this happen? Many readers of the Book of Mormon consider Christopher Columbus to be the "man among the Gentiles" who was "wrought upon" by the Spirit of God. We note the Book of Mormon record does not mention Columbus by name, therefore one would



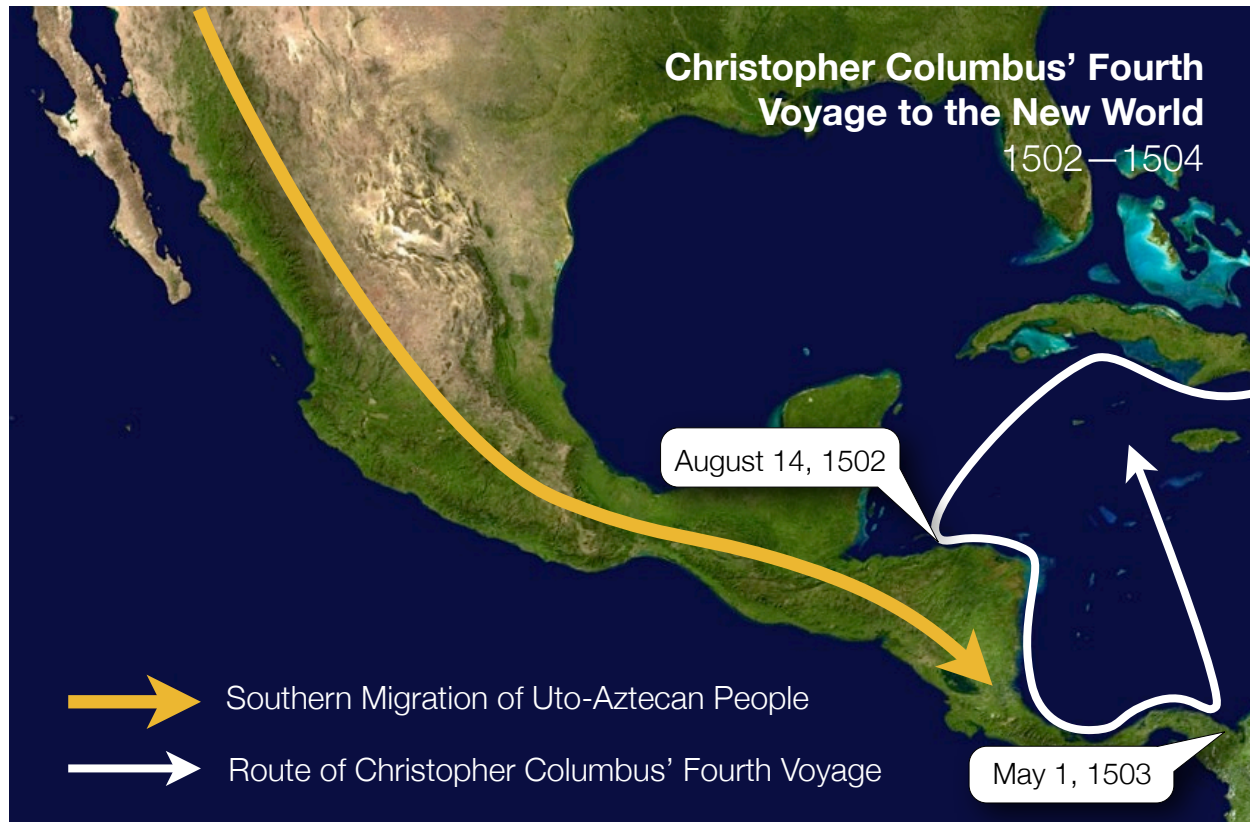
Christopher Columbus leads four voyages to the New World.

need to rely on other sources, logic or speculation to make the link (see, for example, Joseph Smith Foundation, 1970, *Christopher Columbus*, [www.josephsmithacademy.org/wiki/christopher-columbus/](http://www.josephsmithacademy.org/wiki/christopher-columbus/)).

Nonetheless, on his fourth and last voyage Columbus finally reached the eastern shores of Central America on 14 August 1502, the farthest western extent of his several

explorations. He spent some eight months along the coast of what is now Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama—a coastal sailing expedition of over 1,200 miles. Columbus and his 150 men anchored their four ships numerous times and penetrated by canoe several rivers many miles upstream to contact native groups with whom they could trade for gold. Columbus was also attempting to find a navigable water passage between two assumed land masses which would allow him to fulfill his goal of reaching the Indies. His hopes were dashed when he was told by Ngäbe tribesmen they were on an isthmus,

but that several days journey by land to the west was a large body of water and a land beyond that. (*Wikipedia, Voyages of Christopher Columbus; Cristóbal Colón: Fourth Voyage 1502-1504, www.bruceruiz.net/PanamaHistory/cristobal\_colon\_4.htm*)



On his fourth voyage from 1502 to 1504, Columbus spent eight months along the eastern coasts of what are now Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, a coastal expedition of some 1,200 miles.

Columbus described the scores of native groups he encountered on this last voyage as highly varied in appearance, demeanor, culture and language. As noted, this general area of Central America was settled by the Pipils, a Uto-Aztec speaking people, as well as other linguistic groups. Often indigenous people captured slaves from other tribes, especially women who became wives (see the story of Hernán Cortés and Doña Marina below) thereby intermingling their cultures, genes and languages. According to the historic record, the most ubiquitous groups Columbus encountered were the tribes of the Ngäbe or Guaymí people who spoke a Chibchan language. Dennis Holt, a linguist of Central American languages, has identified cognate relationships between this smaller Chibchan

language group and the more widespread Uto-Aztec languages spoken by the Pipil, Aztecs and others, thus linking Chibchan to the extended Uto-Aztec language family (*Wikipedia*, Ngäbe people; *Wikipedia*, Chibchan languages; Dennis G. Holt, *The Development of the Paya Sound System*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Linguistics, University of California at Los Angeles, 1986).



Because of these contacts with Uto-Aztec-speaking groups we suggest that indeed Christopher Columbus would have met Lehi's descendants during his extensive fourth voyage along the coast of Central America.

Along the eastern shores of Central America, Columbus made contact with numerous indigenous groups speaking various languages, including Uto-Aztec, the language of Father Lehi's descendants.

The Spanish explorers upon contact with indigenous people of Central America and Mexico soon learned that those speaking a Uto-Aztec language (Nahuatl, Pipil and others) were knowledgeable about their local areas and also lands beyond. They were the ones who had given names to numerous places and physical features (toponymy) and were aware of other lands and people as far as two thousand miles to the north in what is now Arizona and New Mexico—some of the original lands of their ancestors. This knowledge assisted the Spanish in their rapid conquering of these northern regions. Much of this information came from a class of professional Uto-Aztec merchants called *Pochteca* who traded high value goods and exchanged information over vast distances. Their language became the lingua franca



Itinerant Pochteca merchants depicted in 16th-century *Florentine Codex*.



among the elites and merchants of Central America and Mexico, and during their extensive travels often took on the role of spies for the nobility. (See *Wikipedia*, Pochteca; and Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966, pp. v, 129-130, 139-140, 246, 276.)

### **Doña Marina and the “Conquest of Mexico”**

In about 1515, Doña Marina, a young Aztec girl, was taken into slavery on the Mexican Gulf Coast and later given to Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador. Cortés accepted Marina as his wife and used her language abilities—Nahuatl (the Uto-Aztecan language of the Aztecs) and Mayan—in his “Conquest of Mexico.” She learned Spanish through the medium of the Mayan language. Marina (also known as La Malinche) was able to communicate with emissaries of Moctezuma, the ruler of the Aztecs, in her native Nahuatl tongue. She faithfully assisted Cortés as he schemed, negotiated and forced the downfall of the powerful Aztec empire centered on Mexico City, thereby opening up for his Spanish overlords a vast area stretching from Santa Fe and Upper (Alta) California on the north to Panama on the south.

Some Uto-Aztecan tribes in the north of Mexico such as the Tarahumara resisted Spanish occupation for a time whereas the Uto-Aztecan Pipil population to the south quickly fell to the forces of Pedro de Alvarado; their numerous descendants exist today in the mestizo populations of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama. These countries, along with Mexico, are indeed Book of Mormon lands, not as the homelands of the record keepers such as Nephi, Alma and Mormon, but as eventual destinations of certain groups among Lehi’s descendants who migrated in stages from the north, arriving about A.D. 1000. They settled near the Mayans and others, often mingling elements of their cultures and languages.



Hernán Cortés and Doña Marina (La Malinche) meet Moctezuma in Tenochtitlan in the Valley of Mexico, November 8, 1519.

Numerous Uto-Aztec men freely married women who spoke other languages, often captured women who were deemed prizes of intertribal warfare. As noted, the intermarriage of Lehi's descendants with the European conquistadores and their fellow countrymen—especially from Spanish-speaking nations—was ubiquitous, leading to a dominant mestizo population in many areas, particularly Mexico and Central American countries (see Jacob 5:39-77 on grafting of the natural branches into the mother tree).

### **Sacagawea and the “Corps of Discovery”**

To the far north, another Uto-Aztec woman was as influential and well-known as Doña Marina. Sacagawea, the interpreter and guide of the Lewis and Clark expedition to the West (1804 to 1806), was a Shoshone woman who had been captured by the Hidatsa Indians and taken to North Dakota. She was purchased by Toussaint Charbonneau, a French Québécois trapper, and became his wife. Because of Sacagawea's knowledge of



Sacagawea with Lewis and Clark at Three Forks, Montana.

the Uto-Aztec Shoshone language, they were recruited by William Lewis and Meriwether Clark to assist the expedition in the unexplored area of the Louisiana Purchase, stretching from the Missouri River drainage basin to the Pacific coast. Sacagawea's family lived near present-day Salmon in Lemhi County, Idaho. An unexpected encounter in Montana with her brother, Chief Cameahwi, resulted in the hiring of Shoshone guides and the purchase of horses for crossing the Rocky Mountain divide. This “Corps of Discovery” expedition led to the opening of the West for the United States. An avalanche of settlers followed along the Oregon, California, Bozeman and Mormon trails.



## Explorers and Fur Trappers

In 1776, Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and Francisco Atanasio Dominguez left Santa Fe, New Mexico, to find a route to the Monterey mission on the coast of California. To help guide their travel, these Franciscan missionaries enlisted three Uto-Aztec Utes of the Timpanog tribe. Their Spanish names were Silvestre, Joaquin and Jose Maria. The latter two were about 12 years old. The expedition reached the area of Utah Lake and Mount Timpanogas before returning by another route. Because of unexpected hardships, their objective was never achieved; nonetheless, Escalante and Dominguez were the first Europeans to explore and map the Great Basin of western North America, preparing the way for Mormon settlement.

The Utes in the early 1800s also provided critical survival support within the formidable Rocky Mountains to explorers such as Jedediah Smith and John C. Fremont and to fur trappers and mountain men such as William Ashley and Jim Bridger. All left their names and marks on the land. The cities of Provo and Ogden in Utah are named for the French Québécois fur trappers Étienne Provost and Peter Skene Ogden. Before the coming of explorers and fur trappers, the Utes had established their own trading routes from the Great Basin to Los Angeles and also south to Taos and Santa Fe. They participated at the annual rendezvous and cache sites of the trappers in Cache Valley and Bear Lake and were clients, providers and, understandably, sometimes antagonists of early trading posts such as Fort Robidoux in the Uintah Basin of northeastern Utah and Fort Uncompahgre near the city of Delta, Colorado.

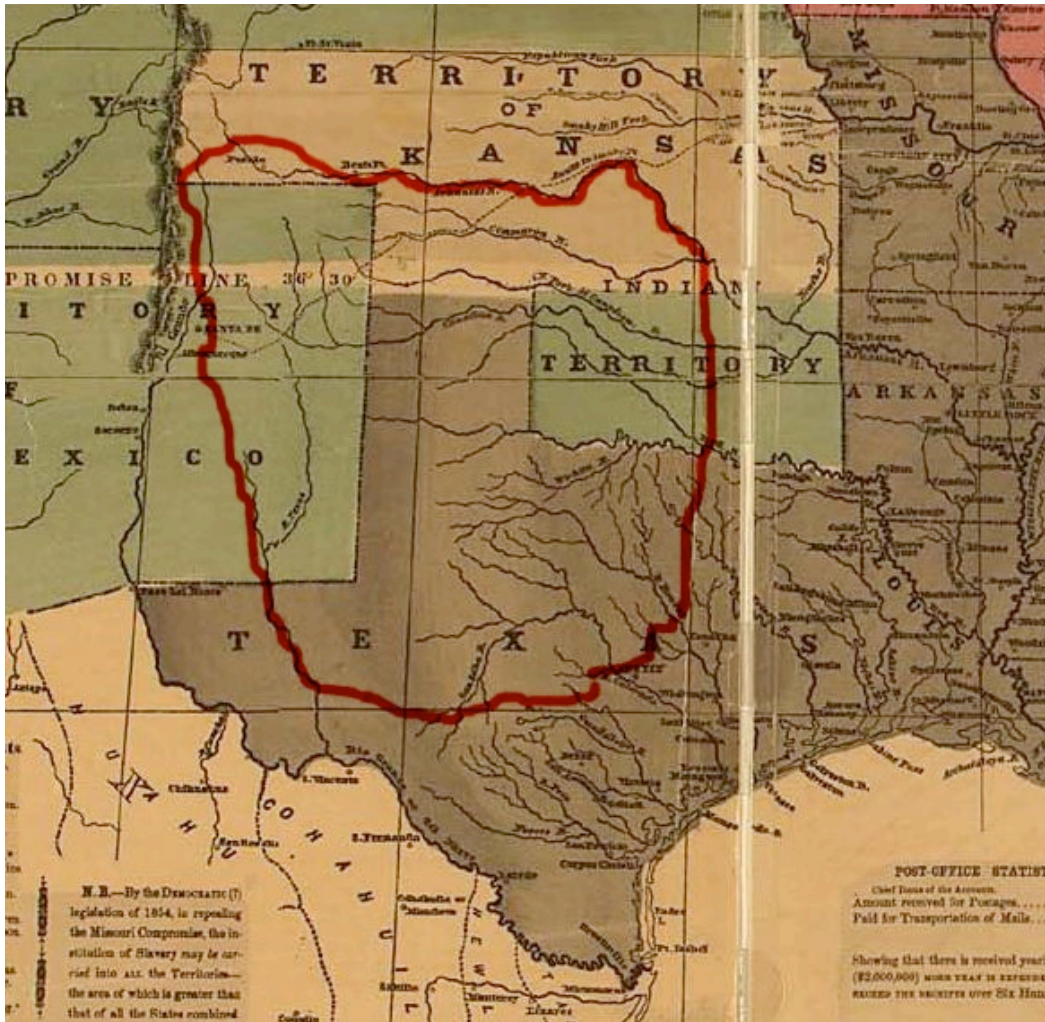


Pedro de Alvarado

## Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Shortly before 1700, the Comanches separated from their Shoshone people, then living along the upper Platte River of Wyoming, and migrated south to the plains areas of Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. Here they rapidly grew in numbers and established a vast empire known as *Comancheria*. Their Uto-Aztec culture and

economy was based on raising and trading horses on the central plains. The Comanches displayed an unusual tenacity in protecting their way of life and holding their lands, and their political influence and highly coordinated raids reached as far south as Mexico City. Disagreements and often violent encounters with Mexican officials in Santa Fe and what is now northern Mexico drained the resources and weakened the resolve of the Mexican government to control the Comanches. These conflicts were a major factor, along with a deteriorating situation over the status of Upper California and Texas, in bringing about the



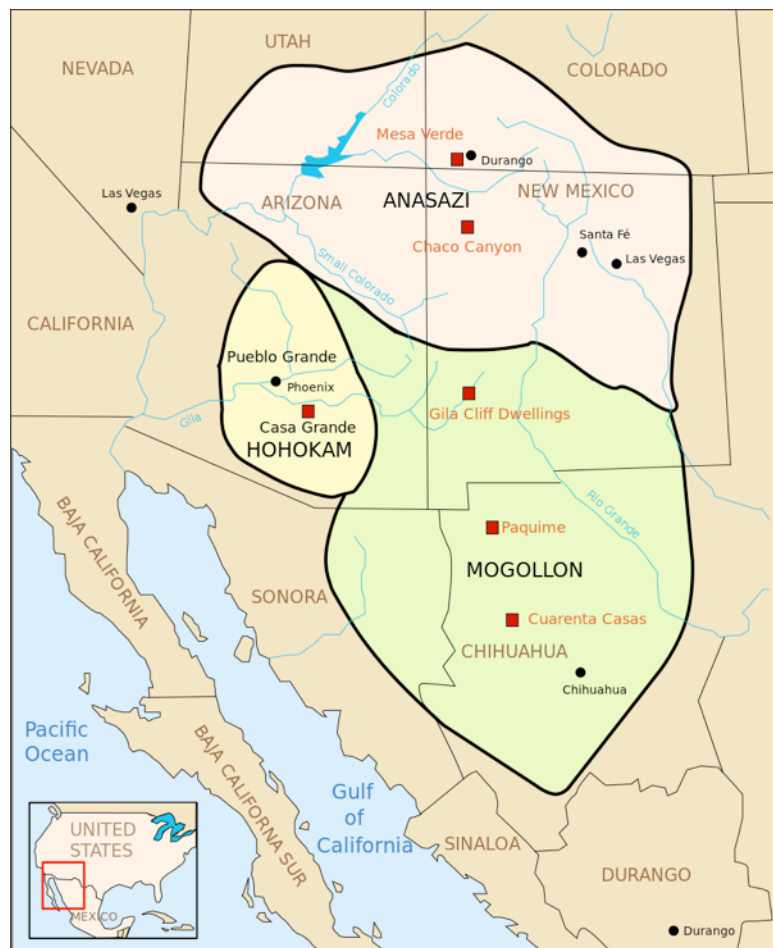
The Comanche Empire, known as *Comancheria*.

Mexican-American war. As a solution to this dilemma, the Mexican government in February, 1848, negotiated the sell of their northern territory of Upper California to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—just seven months after the Mormons arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. In the terms of the treaty, what are now the states of

California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and parts of New Mexico, Wyoming and Colorado were ceded to the United States for the meager sum of 18 million dollars. Baja California was also to have become part of the United States, but for diplomatic reasons the peninsula was struck from the treaty at the last moment. During the Mexican-American war the Mormon Battalion assisted the United States army in securing this extensive western territory by occupation. Their destination was San Diego, and their enlistment extended from July 1846 to July 1847.

### Other Uto-Aztecs

The Hopi, in large measure, managed to keep their Uto-Aztec language and culture protected from outside influences even though they were surrounded by Na-Dené Athabaskan-speaking neighbors —the Navajos and the Apaches. The Anasazi, an ancient Pueblo people, inexplicably abandoned their impressive dwelling places several centuries ago after establishing a complex culture on the Colorado Plateau in such storied places as Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde. Some historians claim the Anasazi were related to the Hopi and spoke an Uto-Aztec language. The Pima, before the coming of the Spanish, created extensive irrigation systems in the Phoenix area of Arizona that are still in use today. The Pima's experience with irrigation was an asset to Mormon agriculturalists who settled the area in the 1870s. Other Uto-Aztec groups—the Luiseño, Cahuilla, Cupeño, Serrano, Gabrielino and Kitanemuk—occupied the Los Angeles region from the Channel Islands off the coast of California



Other Uto-Aztec groups.



(including Santa Catalina) to the area of the Salton Sea on the east. Some of their descendants still live on tribal reservation lands in the greater Los Angeles area.

### **Uto-Aztecs and others on the Land**

Our earlier research on Mormon settlement in the West—from 1847 to 1900—identified over 500 cities and towns within eight western states (Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, California, New Mexico and Arizona) and extending into Canada and Mexico. We find it striking that this extensive settlement pattern overlays and corresponds to the locations of Lehi’s descendants. Today, this core area of western North America has nearly one-half of the world-wide Church membership of 15 million, with about a million members being descendants of Uto-Aztec people, most of whom are in Mexico and the countries of Central America. Over 60 temples dot these lands, including 13 in Mexico.

Where do other indigenous peoples of North America fit into the Book of Mormon story? According to Moroni’s account in the book of Ether, the Jaredites were the descendants of Jared, his brother and their friends —at least 14 families in total. Only Jared’s descendants were annihilated by internecine warfare at the end of Ether’s history. We suggest the other families, from the beginning of their tenure on land, multiplied and spread to distant areas of the continent over four millennia. Descendants of these scattered groups are still on the land within hundreds of indigenous tribes speaking other languages. Today these descendants are being taught the gospel, and many are joining the Church. (see our article, *Jared, his Brother and their Friends: A Geographical Analysis of the Book of Ether*).



Between 1873 and 1877, nearly 1,200 members of the Shoshone Nation (Uto-Aztecs) were baptized into the LDS Church in the Bear River Valley of Utah. In this photo, descendants of those Northwestern Shoshone and others re-enact a baptismal confirmation on the banks of the Bear River in northern Utah for two artists who painted the mural that depicted those events for the Brigham City Temple. Cheryl S. Betenson (See, Trent Toone, “Bear River Massacre’s unexpected aftermath includes forgiveness and hope,” *Deseret News*, January 24, 2013)

The history of the Uto-Aztecs and other indigenous people on this continent has yet to be fully written nor completely understood. Today, thanks to innumerable Internet sources, we are beginning to have better access to historical accounts of indigenous groups in North America and a rapidly growing collection of articles and books. For example, a recent and highly acclaimed historical and geographical study provides new insights into the far-reaching supremacy of the Comanches during the 18th and 19th centuries (Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, Yale University Press, 2008).

## **The Uto-Aztecs and Baja California**

We are currently involved in a comprehensive study of the geography of the Book of Mormon that affirms Lehi's family came from the land of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to the peninsula of Baja California and there established their culture upon the land for some 1,000 years. The family's first settlement was near the southern end of the peninsula, but over the course of their tenure on the land they migrated to the northern areas of the peninsula in several stages before being "swept" off the land after a devastating war. All of our work is published on our website: *achoiceland.com*

How does this extended Book of Mormon settlement history in Baja California connect to a linguistic source area for the Uto-Aztecan people in southern California and northern Mexico? Our extensive article, *Prophesied Cursing and Blessing of Book of Mormon Lands*, provides an essential scriptural-based narrative that links the two locations in space and time; it explains why the descendants of Lehi were swept off a "cursed" land and describes the prophesied status of the people and the land between then and now and the promised "blessings" made by the Lord. All of this is based on scriptural accounts recorded in the Book of Mormon.

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