

# EXPLORING THE LANDS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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The native Mesoamericans traded with cocoa beans, quetzal feathers, and copper figures, and they used a weight-and-measure system that is still utilized today.

On one of our trips in 1989, we were traveling along the Guatemala border toward Guatemala City. Dean Williams, an attorney and a member of the tour group, was reading about the conversion of the lawyer Zeezrom in the Book of Mormon. He was reading in Alma 11 and asked, "Joe, have they ever found any coins in Mesoamerica?"

I answered, "Not really. They've found a few copper items, but not coins with which we are familiar."

Dean said, "Listen to this," as he read about the money system during Alma's time:

Now these are the names of the different pieces of their gold, and of their silver, according to their value. And the names are given by the Nephites, for they did not reckon after the manner of the Jews who were at Jerusalem; neither did they measure after the manner of the Jews; but they altered their reckoning and their measure, according to the minds and the circumstances of the people, in every generation, until the reign of the judges, they having been established by king Mosiah. (Alma 11:4)

Then he said, "That's not talking about coins; it's talking about weights and measures."

I said, "You're right. I know now what that's talking about."

When we get to Lake Atitlan in a few days, we'll buy a couple of things they use for weighing purposes."

When we arrived at Lake Atitlan, some of the group bought sets of the weights that the natives still use today to weigh their produce on a balance scale. These weights consist of four small cups and a small, solid weight, each weighing various amounts, as shown in Figure 15-6. The cups nestle inside one another much like the measuring cups we use in our American kitchens. The small, solid cap fits inside the smallest cup.



FIGURE 15-6

The "weights and measures" that are used by the native people of Guatemala and El Salvador follow the same pattern as outlined in the Book of Mormon.

The following discussion represents an interesting analysis of the "weights and measures" that are still used today are compared to the description of the "weights and measures" in the Book of Mormon.

Concerning the Nephites' system of money, the Book of Mormon outlines the following. This discussion is not presented as conclusive evidence but rather as an exercise to compare the two systems.



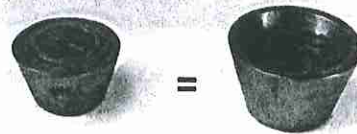
(A) Now the reckoning is thus—a senine of gold, a seon of gold, a shum of gold, and a limnah of gold. (Alma 11:5)

The measurements of the "weights and measures" follow the same pattern as described in the Book of Mormon:

(B) Now the amount of a seon of gold was twice the value of a senine. (Alma 11:8)

(C) And a shum of gold was twice the value of a seon. (Alma 11:9)

(D) And a limnah of gold was the value of them all. (Alma 11:10)



The above is just a preliminary statement on the type of monetary system used by the Nephites. Nevertheless, Mesoamerica does have a system of weights and measures that appears to predate the Spanish Conquest and that is still used today. And the calibrations are the same. The natives do not today, however, use the "weights and measures" to measure. They use them only to weigh their produce.

We can observe with great interest the manner in which the Book of Mormon describes the monetary system among the Nephites and then observe the manner in which the same calibrations are used by the natives of Guatemala and El Salvador today.

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The serpent motif is very strong in both the Book of Mormon and in Mesoamerica. Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, is a representation of Christ. An overabundance of serpent motifs is found in Mesoamerica, such as the one shown in Figure 15-7. (See Chapter 14, "The White God Quetzalcoatl.")