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## The Book of Mormon Land - II. Journey from Jerusalem to the Promised Land

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**Abstract:** A series of articles containing commentary on important Book of Mormon issues, such as the language of Nephi, Reformed Egyptian, the journey from Jerusalem to the promised land, Lehi's landing on the coast of Chile, and the possible route of Nephi's flight from his brothers. The geographies of Chile, Columbia, and other South American locations are examined in light of the Book of Mormon.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON LAND.

II.

Journey from Jerusalem to the Promised Land.

BY HAGOTH.

THE Book of Mormon does not give us as full an account of the journey from Jerusalem as we would wish, but enough is said to enable us to locate the route pretty correctly. After leaving Jerusalem they "came down by the borders *near* the shore of the Red Sea, and they journeyed in the wilderness in the borders *nearer* the Red Sea." After they had traveled three days in the wilderness, they came to a river flowing into the Red Sea, which they called Laman. In a little valley near the mouth of this river they made an encampment.

Just south of the Dead Sea and extending to the Gulf of Akabah, an arm of the Red Sea, is a long narrow valley, on either side of which are high desert plains. In ancient times this valley was pretty well watered, here and there little fountains existed to gladden the weary Arab traveler who passed this way to go down into Egypt. The stone city of Petra was built on the eastern side of the valley about midway between the two seas. The route from Jerusalem to the Red Sea passed through this valley. At the head of the Gulf of Akabah is a little village called by the same name. It is kept up principally by the caravans that pass through it *en route* from Egypt to Mecca. The caravan route to-day after leaving Akaba, leaves the gulf and passes to the left of a mountain parallel to it for a distance of about one hundred miles, where it again comes *nearer* the sea at a point where the gulf and sea unite. From this point to the ocean the mountains are from ten to forty miles distant from the sea. The intervening space is a barren, sandy plain, with here and there an oasis or fertile spot, caused by the little streams which rise in the mountains but are lost in the sands as soon as they reach the plain. The route follows closely the base of the mountain until it reaches about the 21° north latitude where it branches, one part turning to the east to the table-land to Mecca, and the other continuing on about one hundred and forty miles or more to where a valley opens towards the east through which it passes to the table-land and crosses Arabia just south of the great desert.

It is quite probable that in all their journeyings the Nephites would choose that route which was open and free from natural obstacles. As the route above outlined traverses the most natural road, and answers so closely to the description given in the Book of Mormon we conclude the two roads are identical. Furthermore about one hundred miles south of the point where the road first comes near the Red Sea proper, there is found to-day the bed of an ancient river. It appears that at one time rain fell more abundantly in this region than at present. Many passages in the Bible strengthen this opinion, while many writers claim that that country to-day could not (without abundant rainfall) sustain the population ascribed to it anciently. Be this as it may, a river has existed there, in the same section where Lehi located his river Laman.

The Nephites journeyed in the most fertile parts of the desert, for the reason that it was there they found water and game. We are told that game is still abundant around these Wadis, or fertile spots, where they collect to find food, water and shelter from the burning heat of a tropical sun.

The Prophet Joseph tells us that after reaching the 19°

north latitude Lehi's company turned eastward and crossed Arabia to the Indian Ocean. It would have been almost an impossibility to have crossed north of this point, as the whole of central Arabia presents a barren, uninhabitable desert without water or vegetation. A crossing even at this point named is very difficult, and long marches are to be made without water. Nephi tells us that they suffered much from hunger, thirst and fatigue, which would be a natural outcome of such a journey at the present time.

Nephi describes the country where they reached the sea as a very rich and productive region, a land abounding in fruits, honey and game in abundance, for this reason they named it Bountiful.

This region to-day is rich in almost everything that could gladden the heart of man. Fruits of almost every variety grow profusely. Wild honey is plentiful. Fish are so numerous on the coast that they are caught by cart loads and used to enrich the soil. It is known everywhere as the Frankincense Country, and is truly a bountiful land.

There Nephi, in obedience to divine command, built a ship and set sail for the promised land.

By a glance at the map it will be seen that at certain seasons the sea currents would favor their voyage almost the entire distance, and that the place of landing on the coast of Chili, South America, is at that point where the great Antarctic current first sets in close shore.

The Arabian coast current commences its westward flow in April of each year. Had Nephi set sail at that time and occupied six months in the voyage, he would have arrived in the promised land in the spring of the year in that latitude.

After they had set sail, we are told they were driven forth before the wind towards the promised land. This, no doubt, has reference to the periodical winds which blow at stated times in those regions. These winds have from the earliest times attracted the attention of navigators, for by taking advantage of their regular blowing an easy and speedy voyage may be calculated upon with certainty, while by opposing their force the voyage is rendered difficult, slow and uncertain. In crossing from the north to the south temperate zones adverse winds and calms would be encountered, reference to which has been made by Nephi in his record. (*Book of Mormon, page 46.*)

LEARN ALL YOU CAN.—Never omit an opportunity to learn all you can. Sir Walter Scott said that even in the stage-coach he always found somebody that could tell him something he did not know before. Conversation is frequently more useful than books for purposes of knowledge. It is therefore a mistake to be morose and silent among persons whom we think to be ignorant; for a little sociability on your part will draw them out, and they will be able to teach you some things, no matter how ordinary their employment. Indeed, some of the most sagacious remarks are by persons of this kind, respecting their particular pursuit. Hugh Miller, the geologist, owes not a little of his fame to observations made when he was a journeyman stone mason, and in a quarry. Socrates well said that there was but one good, which is knowledge, and one evil, which is ignorance. Every grain of sand goes to make up the heap. A gold-digger takes the smallest nuggets, and is not fool enough to throw them away because he hopes to find a large lump some time. So in acquiring knowledge, we should never despise an opportunity, however unpromising.