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Lehi in the Desert, Part IV

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Abstract: This series is a classic reflection on Lehi's world in Arabia: poetry, tree of life, family affairs, politics, imagery, travel, tents, and foods. It comprises one of the first attempts to test the Book of Mormon against known geographical and cultural details in the regions where Lehi probably traveled in the Old World. The fourth part discusses the tents and mode of travel used by Lehi and his family.



An open-air market place, in the Near East where travelers to and from desert places carry on their daily mode of life, in much the same manner as did Lehi and his family of old.



—Photograph by Adelbert Bartlett

PART IV

THE editors of the Book of Mormon have given a whole verse to Nephi's laconic statement, "And my father dwelt in a tent" (1 Nephi 2:15), and rightly so, since Nephi himself finds the fact very significant and refers constantly to his father's tent as the center of his universe.¹³⁵ To an Arab, "my father dwelt in a tent" says everything. "The present inhabitants of Palestine," writes Canaan, "like their forefathers, are of two classes: dwellers in villages and cities, and the Bedouin. As the life and habits of the one class differ from those of the other, so do their houses differ. Houses in villages are built of durable material . . . on the other hand, Bedouin dwellings, tents, are more fitted for nomadic life. . . ."¹³⁶ An ancient Arab poet boasts that his people are "the proud, the chivalrous people of the horse and camel, the dwellers-in-tents, and no miserable ox-drivers."¹³⁷ A Persian king but fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem boasts that all the civilized kings "as well as the Bedouin tent-dwellers brought their costly gifts and kissed my feet,"¹³⁸ thus making the same distinction as the later poet. One of the commonest oaths of the Arabs, Burckhardt reports, is "by the life of this tent and its owners," taken with one hand resting on the middle tent pole.¹³⁹ If a man's estate is to be declared void after his death, "the tent posts

are torn up immediately after the man has expired, and the tent demolished."¹⁴⁰ If a woman wants to divorce her husband, she simply turns over his tent.¹⁴¹ And what applies today, as Doughty notes, applied to the children of Israel in Old Testament times. Indeed, Hebrew *tent* (*ohel*) and Arabic *family* (*ahl*) were originally one and the same word.¹⁴² "The Bedouin has a strong affection for his tent," says Canaan. "He will not exchange it with any stone house."¹⁴³ So Jacob was "an honest man and dwelt in tents," though, let us add, by no means in squalor: "Casual travelers in the Orient, who have seen only the filthy, wretched tents of the tribeless gypsy Bedouins . . . would be surprised, perhaps, at the spaciousness and simple luxury in the tent of a great desert *sheikh*."¹⁴⁴

So with the announcement that his "father dwelt in a tent," Nephi serves notice that he had assumed the desert way of life, as perforce he must for his journey: any easterner would appreciate the significance and importance of the statement, which to us seems almost trivial. If Nephi seems to think of his father's tent as the hub of everything, he is simply expressing the view of any normal Bedouin, to

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whom the tent of the *sheikh* is the sheet anchor of existence.¹⁴⁵

It is not uncommon in the East for rich town and country people to take to the desert for a spell,¹⁴⁶ so Lehi was by no means doing the impossible or unusual thing; only the people who do so are of course those who already have had a good deal of experience in the desert way and have acquired a taste for it.

THE ORDER OF MARCH

THE Book of Mormon tells us a good deal about how Lehi and his people moved through the desert, and this can now be checked against the firsthand reports of life with the Arabs which the last one hundred years, and especially the last forty, have brought forth. All these would agree with Nephi that the keynote of life in Arabia is hardship: "his life is hard, a ceaseless struggle for existence against nature and man."¹⁴⁷ "It is no exaggeration," writes a present-day authority, "to say that the Bedouin is in an almost permanent state of starvation."¹⁴⁸ "Many times between their waterings," Doughty reports, "there is not a single pint of water left in the greatest *sheikh's* tent."¹⁴⁹ A passage from Palgrave is particularly impressive: "Then an insufficient halt for rest or sleep, at most two or three hours, soon interrupted by the oft-repeated admonition, 'If we linger here, we all die of thirst,' sounding in our ears, and then to remount our jaded beasts and push them on through the dark night with the constant probability of attack or plunder from roving marauders . . . at about an hour before sunset we would stagger off our camels as best we might, to prepare an evening feast of precisely the same description as that of the forenoon, or more often, lest the smoke of our fire should give notice of some distant rover, to con-

DESERT

By Hugh Nibley, Ph. D.

tent ourselves with dry dates and half an hour's rest on the sand."¹⁵⁰ This, it is true, is marching under pressure, but the conditions — no fire, raw meat, "wading through much affliction," are exactly duplicated in the Book of Mormon.

Lehi's party is described as moving through the desert for a few days (three or four) and then camping "for the space of a time." This is exactly the way the Arabs move. Caravan speeds run between two and one-quarter and three and nine-tenths miles an hour, thirty miles being, according to Cheesmen, "a good average" for the day, and sixty miles being the absolute maximum.¹⁵¹ "The usual estimate for a

good day's march is reckoned by Arab writers at between twenty-eight and thirty miles: in special or favorable circumstances it may be nearly forty."¹⁵² On the other hand, a day's slow journey "for an ass-nomad, moving much slower than camel-riders, is twenty miles."¹⁵³

Length of camps varies (as in the Book of Mormon) with circumstances. "From ten to twelve days is the average time a Bedouin encampment of ordinary size will remain on the same ground," according to Jennings Bramley, who, however, observes, "I have known them to stay in one spot for as long as five or six months."¹⁵⁴ The usual thing is to camp as long as possible in one place until "it is soiled by the beasts, and the multiplication of fleas becomes intolerable, and the surroundings afford no more pas-

turage, [then] the tents are pulled down and the men decamp."¹⁵⁵

"On the Syrian and Arabic plain the Bedouins encamp in summer . . . near wells, where they remain often for a whole month."¹⁵⁶ Lehi's time schedule thus seems to be a fairly normal one, and the eight years he took to cross Arabia argue neither very fast nor very slow progress—the Beni Hilal took twenty-seven years to go a not much greater distance. After reaching the seashore Lehi's people simply camped there "for the space of many days," until a revelation again put them in motion.

Were Lehi's party ass-nomads or camel-nomads? The latter, there can be no doubt. The times required it, and the Book of Mormon insists on it. But before giving the proof, it would be well to correct the theory, sometimes propounded, that the party went on foot. When the Lord appoints a man to a task, he gives him the means of carrying it out, and to Lehi he had given ample means indeed. The sight of a rich merchant and his family setting out for the desert in a caravan

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GEORGE ALBERT SMITH, *Honorary Doctor of Humanities*



President George Albert Smith receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities from President A. Ray Olpin of the University of Utah.

High honor was accorded President George Albert Smith at the convocation celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the University of Utah on February 28, when he received

an honorary doctor of humanities degree.

Kingsbury Hall was filled to overflowing with an audience, many of whom wore the colorful academic robes of some of the world's greatest academic centers. It was the President's privilege to offer the invocation for that group at the beginning of that meeting.

Later in the program, Dean O. Meredith Wilson of the university college arose and said:

Mr. President:

May I present George Albert Smith, three times President of societies for developing scientific farming, sixteen years President of the Society for the Aid of the Sightless, Founder and President of the Utah Pioneer Trails and Landmarks Association, Director of the Oregon Trails Memorial Association, twenty years executive of the Boy Scouts of America and recipient of the silver beaver and silver buffalo awards, for a generation a leader in and now President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who has traveled over a million miles in the interest of peace. He has helped to build a living economy, devoted years to the handi-

capped, kept alive a devotion to the ideals and achievements of the pioneers, and invested his best efforts in the leadership of tomorrow. A prophet to the members of his Church, a counselor, and friend to all, being a servant of all men, he is, in truth, a man of God. For a lifetime of devoted service to the welfare of all his fellow men, I recommend that he be awarded the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*.

President Smith then received the degree from President A. Ray Olpin of the University of Utah.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., represented his Alma Mater, Columbia University, and as a delegate of the American Academy of Political and Social Science during the founders' day exercises.

Dr. John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve and one of the three living former presidents of the University played an important part in the centennial proceedings. He took part in a symposium, entitled "One Hundred Years of Education in Utah," in which his particular subject was "The Early Years."

LEHI IN THE DESERT

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even of some magnificence would never have excited the slightest comment: Burckhardt describes as a matter of course passing by the caravan of a rich merchant from Maskat in the midst of the desert—"he had ten camels to carry his women, his infant children, his servants, and his baggage."¹⁰⁷ Lehi would have been such a one. But for an elderly and aristocratic Hebrew to load himself, his wife, and his children with tents, weapons,

food, gear, and other supplies would have been as unthinkable then as now. "Without the camel," writes a modern authority, "it would be impossible for the nomads to carry their tents and furniture over the vast sandy spaces where asses can pass only with difficulty and carry only a very small load."¹⁰⁸ What clinches the matter is the fact that Lehi's party took grain with them, "and all manner of seeds of every kind." (1 Nephi 8:1.) The Arabs, as we shall see below, do this when

they migrate in earnest, carrying the seed in big, black, one-hundred-and-fifty-pound sacks, two to a camel.¹⁰⁹ At the very least there has to be enough grain either to make a worth-while crop or to supply substantial food on the way—and who could carry such a load on his back? To pass through the heart of Arabia on the best camel in the world requires exquisite suffering and almost superhuman endurance — no need to make the thing ridiculous by carrying a tent or a bushel of grain on one's back!

Raswan tells us that "camel breeders do not fear the waterless stretches of the desert as the sheep- and goat-raising Arabs do, and for that reason camel owners alone remain independent and free."¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, they are often in danger of starving, and when we read that Lehi's people were continually in such danger and supported themselves by hunting alone, so that a broken bow could mean death by starvation, we may be sure that they were camel-nomads without flocks, as indeed their hasty flight from Palestine requires; among the listing of the stuff they took with them, flocks are never mentioned, as of course they would be—an item of prime importance—had they had such.

But neither are camels mentioned. Why not? For the very reason that they receive no notice in many an Arabic poem which describes travel in the desert, simply because they are taken for granted. In the East to journey in the wilderness means to travel by camel, just as "to drive from Heber to Salt Lake" means to go in a car, though it could apply to travel by zebra or tricycle. Had Lehi's party gone afoot that would indeed have been a nine-days' wonder and something to mention on every page—such a thing was never seen nor heard of before nor since. But where camel is the only means of travel, it is as unnecessary to mention camels in describing a journey as it would be to specify that one sailed the seas "in a ship." There is one episode, however, in which camels play a definite role in the Book of Mormon.

From the base camp in the valley of Lemuel, Lehi's sons made a flying trip back to Jerusalem. It was the

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young men alone who made the trip, which turned out, as they expected (1 Nephi 3:5), to be a dangerous one. Now it is the established procedure among the Arabs for a few young men in a tribe to seek gain and glory by making quick raids on neighboring or distant towns and tribes. On such expeditions they never take tents, for their transportation is limited, and speed is of the essence.¹⁰¹ Nephi wants us to know that this journey to Jerusalem was no such raid, for they were going on legitimate business and took their tents with them (*Ibid.*, 3:9); they went boldly and openly in to Laban and stated their business. Only when he treated them as robbers were they forced to act as such, slinking about like Bedouins outside the gates and entering the city by night. A typical Oriental episode of the story is the wild pursuit out of the city and into the desert (the Bedouins on their raids are everlastingly pursuing or being pursued), where, Nephi reports (*Ibid.*, 3:27), "the servants of Laban did not overtake us." They might have fled a short distance through the town on foot, but fleeing "into the wilderness" is another matter; there they would have been quickly run down by mounted riders, unless they first escaped notice, but Nephi tells us that they hid only after they had outrun their pursuers, who failed not to find them but to overtake them. The powerful and affluent governor certainly had fleet steeds that could run down a camel, but in the sudden getaway of the brethren there would be no time to saddle them—an Arab poet, Imrul Qais, speaks of a phenomenal horse that "passed the night with saddle and bridle on him . . . without being sent to the stable."¹⁰² But Laban's horses could not have been such super-beasts. As to the chance that Lehi's people had horses, it is a remote one, for the horse cannot carry burdens in the desert, and even horse-raising Arabs seldom ride their animals on long journeys but lead them from their camels. The use of camels is implied at every turn of the story of the mission to Laban: the carrying of tents, the trip down-country to bring back "exceeding great property" to Laban's palace (hardly on their backs!), the flight into open country and the pursuit in the desert, the

long return trip. Just as the Saints who had the means of avoiding it never crossed the plains on foot, so we would think Lehi's sons foolish indeed if they did not avail themselves of the common means of transportation that everyone was using.

Not many years ago, Professor Frankfort wrote of the south desert, "The secret of moving through this desolation has at all times been kept by the Bedouin. . . ." ¹⁰³ Intrepid explorers of our own day have discovered the secret, however, and

from them we learn that Lehi knew it, too. Like a brilliant flash of illumination comes the statement that Lehi by divine instruction "led us in the more fertile parts of the wilderness." (*Ibid.*, 16:16.) Woolley and Lawrence describe such "more fertile parts" as "stretching over the flat floor of the plain in long lines like hedges. . . ." They are, of course, the depressions of dried-up watercourses.¹⁰⁴ they furnish, according to Bertram Thomas, "the arteries of life in the steppe,

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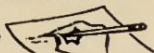
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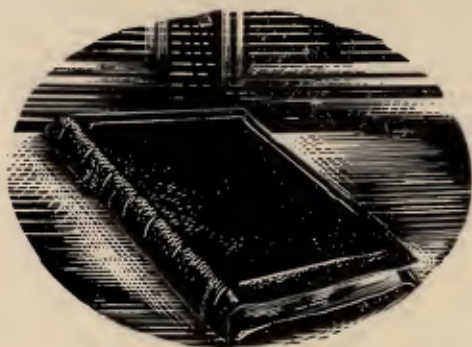
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the path of Bedowin movement, the habitat of animals by reason of the vegetation — scant though it is — which flourishes in their beds alone. . . .¹⁰⁶ In Arabia it is this practice of following "the more fertile parts of the wilderness" that allows both men and animals to survive, and Cheesman designates as "touring" the practice of moving from place to place as areas of fertility shift with the seasons.¹⁰⁷

LEHI'S ALTAR

FIRST of all, after pitching his tent for his first important camp, Lehi "built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks to the Lord. . . ." (1 Nephi 2:7.) It was for all the world as if he had been reading Robertson-Smith: "The ordinary mark of a Semitic sanctuary (i.e. Hebrew as well as Arabic) is the sacrificial pillar, cairn, or rude altar . . . upon which sacrifices are presented to the god [Book of Mormon: "to the God of Israel" *Ibid.*, 5:9]. . . . In Arabia we find no proper altar but in its place a rude pillar or heap of stones beside which the victim is slain."¹⁰⁷ It was at this same "altar of stones" that Lehi with his family offered a sacrifice in gratitude for the safe return of his sons from their dangerous expedition to Jerusalem. This is what the Arabs call *dhabiye-h-l-kasb*, a sacrifice to celebrate the successful return of warriors, hunters, and raiders to the camp. "This sacrifice," writes Jaussen, at the return of an expedition is always in honor of an ancestor,¹⁰⁸ and Nephi twice mentions Israel in his brief account: immediately after the rite, Lehi fell to examining the "spoils." (*Ibid.*, 5:10.)

To this day the Bedouin "lives under the constant impression of a higher force that surrounds him. . . ." and it is for this reason and not to appease any savage gods, that he makes sacrifice on every important occasion.¹⁰⁹ When Raswan reports, "A baby camel was brought up to Misha'il's tent as a sacrificial offering in honor of the safe return of Fuaz,"¹¹⁰ we cannot help thinking of some such scene before the tent of Lehi on the safe


return of his sons. Nilus, in the oldest known account of life among the Arabs of the Tih, says, "they sacrifice on altars of crude stones piled together."¹⁷³ That Lehi's was such an altar would follow not only from the ancient law demanding uncut stones, but also from the Book of Mormon expression "an altar of stones," rather than "a stone altar." Such little heaps of stones are still to be seen surviving from all ages throughout the south desert.

THE Arab as a forager is everlastingly prowling, scouting, tracking, and spying; in fact, some believe that the root meaning of the names *Arab* and *Hebrew* is a combination of sounds meaning "to lie in ambush." "Every Bedawi is a sportsman both from taste and necessity," writes one observer, who explains how in large families some of the young men are detailed to spend all their time hunting.¹⁷⁴ Nephi and his brethren took over the business of full-time hunters, and here again we suspect something of the desert tradition in the family, for Nephi had brought a fine steel bow from home with him. Though we shall deal with steel below, in discussing the sword of Laban, it should be noted here that a steel bow was no more a solid piece of steel than the Canaanites' "chariots of iron" (Josh. 17:16-18; Jud. 1:19, 4:3) were solid metal, or than various implements mentioned in the Old Testament as being "of iron", e.g. carpenter's tools, pens, threshing instruments, were iron and only iron. It was in all probability a steel-ribbed bow, since it broke at about the same time that the wooden bows "lost their springs." All bows in Palestine were composite, that is, of more than one piece, and a steel-backed bow would be called a steel bow, just as an iron-trimmed chariot was called "a chariot of iron."

Hunting in the mountains of Arabia to this day is carried out on foot and without hawks or dogs;¹⁷⁵ in classical time the hunter in this area was equipped with a bow and sling—exactly like Nephi.¹⁷⁶ Nephi's discovery that the best hunting was only at "the top of the mountain" (I Nephi 16:30) agrees with later experience, for the oryx is "a shy animal that

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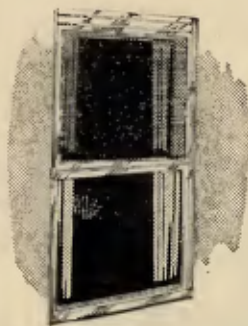
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Lehi in the Desert

(Continued from preceding page)

travels far and fast over steppe and desert in search of food but retires ever to the almost inaccessible sand-mountains for safety. . . .¹⁷¹ In western Arabia the mountains are not sand but rock, and Burckhardt reports that "in these mountains between Medina and the sea, all the way northward, mountain goats are met, and the leopards are not uncommon."¹⁷² Julius Euting has left us vivid descriptions of the danger, excitement, and exhaustion that go with the hunting of the big game that abounds in these mountains, which are very steep and rugged.¹⁷³

Things looked black when Nephi broke his fine steel bow, for the wooden bows of his brothers had "lost their springs" (note the use of the Semitic distributive, (*Ibid.*, 16:21,)¹⁷⁴ and though skilled in the art of hunting, they knew little enough about bow-making, which indeed is a skill reserved to specialists even among primitives. It was out of the question to make a composite bow and was something of a revolution when Nephi "did make out of wood a bow," (*Ibid.*, 16:23), for the hunter, the most conservative of men, would never dream of changing from a composite to a simple bow. Though it sounds simple enough, it was almost as great a feat for Nephi to make a bow as it was for him to build a ship. It is interesting that according to the ancient Arab writers the *only* bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia is nab' wood, to be found "amid the inaccessible and overhanging crags" of Mount Jasum and Mount Azd, which are situated in the very region where, if we follow the Book of Mormon, this crisis is supposed to have occurred.¹⁷⁵ How many factors must be correctly placed and correlated in the apparently simple story of Nephi's broken bow! There must be a high mountain near the Red Sea at a considerable journey down the coast; there must be game on the mountain but only on the peaks; there must be nothing else to eat in the area, hunting being the only economy; hunting must be with the bow and sling (1 Nephi 16:23); and here, if only here in all Arabia, there must be bow-wood growing. What are the chances of reproduc-

ing such a situation by mere guess-work?

Regarding the seed and the grain which Lehi carried, while "ordinary travellers scarcely ever carry grain for food" in the desert,¹⁷⁰ it was not meant for food, and Lehi was not an ordinary traveler but a man in search of a promised land. It is common for migrating Bedouins to carry grain with them in the thought—sometimes very vague indeed—that possibly if the year is a good one, they might find a chance to sow a hasty crop. In Sinai "the Bedouin yearly sow the beds of the wadies, but they do this with little hope of reaping a harvest more than once in every three or four years."¹⁸⁰ In traveling, "the wheat is put in the black homemade goat's hair sacks, *farde(t)*. . . . The *farde*, the Heb. *saq* (Gen. 42:25) holds about 150 to 180 pounds of wheat. Two are put on a camel."¹⁸¹ Thus we see that the custom of carrying grain into the desert still survives, and that from a time far earlier than Lehi's.

(To be continued)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

¹²⁸He makes a point of referring to his father's tent again and again: 2:6, 3:1, 4:38, 7:5, 7:21, 9:1, 10:16, 16:6, 16:10, though of course that was not the only tent, 2:4, 16:32, etc.

¹³⁰T. Canaan, "The Palestinian Arab House," in *Jnl. Pal. Or. Soc.* XII (1932), 225

¹³⁷Cited by Georg Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben* (Berlin, 1897), p. 226

¹³⁸Caiger, *Bible and Spade*, p. 181

¹³⁹Burckhardt, *Notes* I, 127

¹⁴⁰On the other hand, "the erection of a new tent in the desert is an important event celebrated with feast and sacrifice." A. Jaussen, *Rev. Biblique* N. S. 3, p. 93f

¹⁴¹Jacob, *op. cit.*, p. 212

¹⁴²P. J. Baldensperger, "Tent Life," *PEFQ* 1923, p. 179

¹⁴³*Op. cit.*

¹⁴⁴W. B. Seabrook, *Adventures in Arabia*, p. 36, mentioning the tent of an Arab friend which measured thirty feet by ninety. See also Grace M. Crowfoot, "The Tent Beautiful," *PEFQ* 1944-5, pp. 34-46

¹⁴⁵"Those in the neighboring booths watch when the day is light, to see if the *shaykh's* harem yet strike his tent; and, seeing this, it is the *rahla*. . ." thus Doughty, *Arabia Deserta* I, 257. In the same way, when the *sheikh* pitches his tent, all without discussion, follow suit, the chief's tent being as it were the tabernacle that leads them through the wilderness. It will be recalled that the Liahona was found at the door of Lehi's tent. It is notable that even the richest *sheikh* "has never more than one tent," according to Burckhardt, *Notes* I, 42, speaking of the Aneze.

¹⁴⁶Thus a well-to-do *sheikh* "spends the winter in his 'house of stone' and the summer in his 'house of hair.' . . ." Jaussen, *Rev. Biblique*, N.S.3, p. 95

¹⁴⁷Max von Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen* (Leipzig, Harrassowitz, 1939) I, 28

¹⁴⁸Maj. C. S. Jarvis, "The Desert Yesterday and Today," *PEFQ* 1937, p. 122

¹⁴⁹*Arabia Deserta* I, 259

¹⁵⁰William G. Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia* (1862-3) (London, 1866) I

¹⁵¹Maj. R. E. Cheesman, *In Unknown Arabia* (London, Macmillan, 1926.) p. 27, 52

¹⁵²W. J. Phythian-Adams, in *PEFQ* 1930, p. 199

¹⁵³Albright, *Archaeol. & Relig. of Is.*, p. 97

¹⁵⁴W. E. Jennings-Bramley, "The Bedouin of the Sinaitic Peninsula," *PEFQ* 1907, 284

¹⁵⁵Baldensperger, in *PEFQ* 1923, p. 180

¹⁵⁶Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, 227f

¹⁵⁷Burckhardt, *Travels* II, 295

¹⁵⁸*PEFQ* 1922, p. 163

¹⁵⁹Below, note 181

¹⁶⁰K. Raswan, *Drinkers of the Wind*, p. 129

(Continued on following page)

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AT YOUR GROCERS

LEHI IN THE DESERT

(Continued from preceding page)

¹⁶¹The classic description of the small-scale everyday raids by the youth of the camp is in Burckhardt, *Notes*, I, 157f.

¹⁶²Line 71 (in the *Mu'allaqat*)

¹⁶³H. Frankfort, "Egypt and Syria in the First Intermediate Period," *JEA* XII (1926) p. 81

¹⁶⁴*Wilderness of Zin*, p. 32, cf. p. 35

¹⁶⁵B. Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, p. 141

¹⁶⁶Cheesman, *op. cit.*, p. 338f

¹⁶⁷W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (London, 1907) p. 201

¹⁶⁸*Rev. Biblique N.S.* 3, 109

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 110

¹⁷⁰Raswan, *op. cit.*, p. 237

¹⁷¹St. Nilus, in Migne, *Patrol. Graec.* 79, col. 612

¹⁷²W. E. Jennings-Bramley, "Sport among the Bedawin," *PEFQ* 1900, 369f.

¹⁷³Baldensperger, in *PEFQ* 1925, p. 82

¹⁷⁴Philby, *The Empty Quarter*, p. 249

¹⁷⁵Burckhardt, *Travels* II, 297

¹⁷⁶Julius Euting, *Tagbuch einer Reise in Inner-Arabien* (Leiden, 1892) II, 76-80, 92f

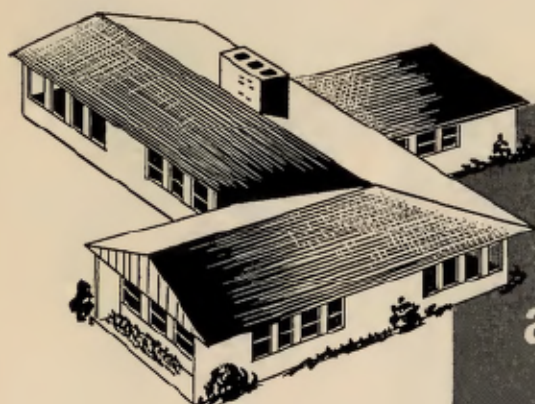
¹⁷⁷Archery experts say that a good bow will keep its spring for about one hundred thousand shots. From this one might calculate that the party had been traveling anything from one to three years when the crisis of the bows occurred. The party would hardly have brought worn-out bows from home with them, but if they were as prodigal of ammunition as Arabs notoriously are with musket balls, they might have worn their bows out quite rapidly. Perhaps they indulged in a great deal of practice-shooting to "get their hand in" at the outset of the journey.

¹⁷⁸Jacob, *Altarab. Beduinenleben*, p. 131f; Mt. Jasum is in the Mecca area, Mt. Azd in Serat mountains further south but also near the coast.

¹⁷⁹Jennings-Bramley, *PEFQ* 1907, 284

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, continued in *PEFQ* 1914, 9f

¹⁸¹Baldensperger, *PEFQ* 1923, 181



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The Call to

By
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RESEARCH EDITOR

CONFERENCES of this Restored Church have been convened in many localities, but always with an outpouring of the promised Spirit.

Although the term has been used loosely, especially in the beginning, conferences have been held in every month except February, March, and July. They have been held in January 1831,¹ April 1832, May 1834, June 1830, August 1835, September 1830, October 1831, November 1837, and December 1847.

The first three conferences of the Church were held at Fayette, Seneca County, New York, the birthplace of the Church. There is a slight controversy on whether the first was held on June 1, or June 9, 1830, but there is no doubt about the spiritual feast that the attenders obtained. Also, concerning the second conference of the Church, there is conflicting evidence in the source material as to whether it was held on the first of September, 1830, or on the twenty-sixth.² Prior to this conference the Prophet had received the revelation now recorded as section twenty-eight of the Doctrine and Covenants, concerning Hiram Page, who, with the aid of a certain stone, had professed to be receiving revelations concerning the upbuilding of Zion. The year 1831 opened with a future looking bright for the infant Church, as a conference of the Church was held at Fayette on January 2. Here the revelation known as Section thirty-eight, stating, among other things, that diligent service is required of every member of the Church, was received.

The following conference was in the Saints' city of Kirtland, Ohio, and the date was June 3, 1831. On October 11, 1831, a conference was

¹Some of these months have had many conferences in them; some only one. Here we listed the first conference of that month only.

²See B. H. Roberts' explanation in the *Documentary History of the Church*, volume 1, pp. 84, 110.