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The Lands of the Nephites: Land of Zarahemla

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Abstract: A series of essays on Book of Mormon geography. To the earlier Nephites “the whole of North America was known as the land of Mulek, and South America as the land of Lehi.” From the period of Mosiah until Christ South America was “divided into two grand divisions”: Zarahemla and the land of Nephi.

THE LANDS OF THE NEPHITES.

LAND OF ZARAHEMLA.

BY G. R.

(Continued.)

AS there were two lands of Nephi, the greater and the lesser, so for exactly the same reason, there were two lands of Zarahemla; the one occupying the whole of South America, from the great wilderness, which formed its southern border, northward to the land Bountiful; the other, the district immediately surrounding the capital city.

That there was a Zarahemla within Zarahemla is shown by various passages in which persons are spoken of as journeying to the land of Zarahemla, when they were already within the borders of the greater land of that name. For instance, MINON, on the River Sidon, is said to have been situated above the land of Zarahemla (*Alma ii. 24*); again, Alma took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla from Sidon (*Alma xv. 18*). While in many other places, notably where the boundaries of the possessions of the Nephites are given, the name Zarahemla is applied to the whole of the lands of that people, even sometimes including Bountiful, which is generally spoken of separately.

In the days of the first Mosiah and his son, King Benjamin, the greater portion of the Nephites appear to have been located in and immediately around the city of Zarahemla. King Benjamin, when about to resign the royal authority into the hands of his son, Mosiah, commanded him to gather his people together, "For," he adds, "on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth, that thou art a king and a ruler over this people" (*Mosiah i. 10*). The proclamation was sent forth and the people were gathered in an unnumbered host, a thing that could not have been done in so short a time had their habitations been widely scattered over an extended territory.

In the reign of the younger Mosiah, the people stretched out in all directions, and colonies were planted in distant regions. This vigorous policy was continued, only on a much larger scale, during the days of the judges.

After carefully perusing the Book of Mormon, we suggest that the lands or cities (which in Nephite geography appear to be frequently used interchangeably, or one for the other), included within the borders of the Nephites, in the days of the judges, were:

In the extreme north, the land of Bountiful, which extended southward from the Isthmus of Panama. On its southern frontier lay the land of Jershon.

On the River Sidon: Zarahemla, Minon, Gideon and Manti.

In the interior, eastward of the Sidon: Antionum, Siron, and probably Nephiah.

On the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea: Mulek, Morcanton, L'hi, Omner, Gil, Aaron and Moroni.

In the interior, west of the Sidon: Melek, Noah, Ammonihah and Sidon.

Between the upper waters of the Sidon and the Pacific Ocean, or in the extreme south-west: Cumeni, Antiparah, Judea and Zeezrom.

Besides the above, the following cities are mentioned, but only in connection with their destruction at the time of the

terrible convulsions that marked the sacrifice at Jerusalem, of the world's Redeemer (497):*

The great city of Moronihah, covered with earth.

Laman, Gad, Josh and Kishkuwen, burned with fire.

Gilgal, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Jacob and Gimjimno sunk in the depths of the earth, and

Onihah and Moeam, in whose place waters came up.

We imagine from the names, that some of the above were built by the Lamanites or Gadianton robbers. But this is simply a conjecture, as the sacred record is entirely silent on the point.

We will now very briefly examine, one by one, some of the more important divisions of the country.

JERSHON.—This is the name given to the region set apart by the Nephites (B. C. 78), as the home of the Ammonites or Christian Lamanites. It is situated far to the north, and was evidently chosen for that reason, so that the strength of the Nephite nation would lie between the fugitives and their former countrymen, the Lamanites, who then thirsted for their blood. It was bounded by the Caribbean Sea and the land Bountiful on the north and east, and by the land of Antionum on the south. Its western boundary is not defined, but we are inclined to believe, from the context, that it was the river Sidon. Its geographical situation is partly described in *Alma xxvii. 22*, thus: "We" (the Nephites) "will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful, which is on the south of the land Bountiful." With regard to its southern boundary, *Alma xxxi. 3* (which we shall hereafter quote), states that Antionum lay to the south of it.

ANTIONUM, the land where the Zoramite apostates gathered (B. C. 75), was an extensive and thinly-settled region, extending from the land of Jershon to the great southern wilderness. Its boundaries are thus defined (*Alma xxxi. 3*): "Antionum, which was east of the land of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the sea shore, which was south of the land of Jershon, which also bordered upon the wilderness south." By this we understand that it stretched north from the great wilderness, which passed by the head of the Sidon, almost to the Atlantic Ocean; that its western boundary was the land of Zarahemla, and Jershon its northern limit. Nothing is said of its eastern borders for the simple reason that at the time this passage was originally written, the country east of it was yet uninhabited, except possibly by a few wandering Lamanites. At its extreme southern or southeastern corner, "among the borders of the Lamanites" of the wilderness, was the outlying land of Siron. This place is mentioned but once in the Book of Mormon (*Alma xxxi. 3*).

MANTI.—During the days of the republic, Manti was a district of great importance to the Nephites. It was situated contiguous to the wilderness at the head waters of the Sidon (*Alma xvi. 6*), and lay on the line of march generally taken by the armies of the Lamanites when they invaded Zarahemla. Its exact boundaries are not defined; indeed, it is altogether probable that they varied considerably at different periods of Nephite history. However, it is evident that it was the most southerly of all the lands inhabited by the Nephites, in the western half of the South American continent, after they had moved from the land of Nephi.

GIDEON.—In a valley on the east of the Sidon was built, during the early days of the republic, an important city, which was named after the martyr, Gideon. The valley itself

* The figures refer to pages in the Book of Mormon, new edition.

was also known by the same name, and is frequently called the land of Gideon, for we find no evidence to lead to the conclusion that the land extended beyond the valley. Nearly all that we know of this region is contained in a single passage (*Alma vi. 7*), which states that Alma left Zarahemla and "went over upon the east of the river Sidon, into the valley of Gideon, there having been a city built which was called the city of Gideon, which was in the valley that was called Gideon, being called after the man who was slain by the hand of Nehor with the sword."

From the references in the historical narrative we incline to the opinion that this valley lay either directly east, or somewhat to the south of the city of Zarahemla. Travelers coming from the north are never mentioned as passing through it on their way to Zarahemla, without they had a purpose in so doing, as in the case where Moroni marched from the north-east to the relief of Chief Judge Paboran (*Alma lvi*).

(To be Continued.)

LETTER TO THE BOYS.

SALT LAKE CITY,

January 13th, 1880.

A. W. REYNOLDS' letter I merely acknowledged in the last issue, as it came too late for an answer. I feel great interest in him because he tells me he has lost his mother by death. Dear boy, you have my deep sympathy. Friends may supply the places of some relatives but never that of a mother. Yet, do not mourn; she still lives, and I must believe that the spirit of your mother will never cease to watch over the children she left behind her in this mundane sphere.

Press on, and determine that you will add to her happiness even in the spirit world, where she now resides, by being just as good as you know how to be.

You say, "since that time my father has sent me to school."

Kind and wise father! Be good and dutiful to him, and return his kindness by your love and obedience.

Study hard and you will yet stand among the ranks of the chosen ones.

WILLIAM WALLACE RUBEY'S letter I think I received after the others had gone to press. It is very interesting and instructive; I have read it with delight and edification. I am naturally fond of exploring great and grand old ruins. Such have ever been to me "sermons in stones," and they do, indeed, speak volumes to a mind prepared to receive their impressions. Whatever our age, the child that still lingers in our nature rises up and asserts its simplicity and its humility; and for the time being we are renewed in the spirits of our minds; and the earthly dross that clings about us is thrown off, and we feel it has been good for us to have been there.

Continue your comments, for such are beneficial to all who read them.

I have received letters from BYRON H. ALLRED, JR., and HUGH LAVELLE RUBEY. The spirit of these letters is excellent, and does credit to the youths who penned them. I wish you to remember that when persons write for the press, they should write only on one side of the sheet. Bear this in mind, because it is essential.

I think B. H. A. has begun early to walk in the right path, being, as he says, not yet eleven years of age. I would say, go on dear boy, and continue in well-doing and you will find you will increase in knowledge, wisdom and understanding in a way that will be marvelous, even to yourself, and will be a testimony to you that the Spirit of God is inspiring you day by day.

I will say to you both, read the histories of nations, and the biographies of great men and women, those who have been benefactors to the human family in many ways. Such reading will strengthen your minds and expand your hearts, and destroy all contracted views of nations, and peoples of all classes and sects. Latter-day Saints should ever be liberal and generous.

In reading, keep some paper and a pencil beside you, and when you meet with a passage that is good and impresses you, record it on your paper. This mode will strengthen your memory and assist you in modelling your own character after a good pattern.

HUGH LAVELLE RUBEY'S letter came to me in a sad, greasy condition. It seemed that the oil from the lamp had been spilled on it. This spoiled the look of the letter, and that was not all. If it was in that condition when he mailed it, it was impolite to send it. No gentleman should send a letter in such a state to a lady, nor, indeed, to anyone.

I feel you have had good parents, by what you say; and pray attend to their good advice and obey it.

Ever your friend,

HANNAH T. KING.

Letters From The Boys.

SPRINGVILLE, UTAH,

December 21, 1880.

Mrs. Hannah T. King,

DEAR SISTER:—I make my first attempt to write a short piece for the JUVENILE. I have just been reading my brother's letter, which encourages me to write one. I hope you will excuse me if I make any blunders, this being my first attempt.

I have thought many times of writing a letter to you, and now do my best.

I felt truly happy when I read the letters from others, and feel it my duty to do something to keep up the correspondence.

I have been born and reared in the midst of Israel, and have parents who have taught me to be honest and upright, and to honor and obey the priesthood that is placed over us.

We, as children of the Latter-day Saints, do not realize the privileges that we enjoy; we should feel truly thankful for all the blessings of the present day.

I feel that we, as young men, should begin to do something towards rolling on this work. This is the kingdom of God set up in the last days never more to be thrown down. This is the dispensation of the fullness of times, and an age of progression; therefore, I feel like doing my part towards advancing the truth.

I will earnestly await your letters, and subscribe myself,

Your brother in the gospel,

HUGH LAVELLE RUBEY.

GARDEN CITY, RICH CO., UTAH,

January 6, 1881.

Mrs. Hannah T. King.

DEAR SISTER:—As I am one of the boys, I thought I would pen you a few lines in reply to yours of December 10, 1880.

You wanted to know what books we like to read best. I like to read the Book of Mormon, the INSTRUCTOR and all the Church works, with which I am well supplied by my kind and thoughtful parents.

I am not yet eleven years of age. I belong to the Primary Association, and I love to attend our meetings. I want to keep the commandments of the Lord, that I may become a useful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I hope you will continue to write to us, that we may hear often from you. I love to read your letters, therefore I anxiously wait for the next issue of the INSTRUCTOR.

I remain your brother in the gospel,

BYRON H. ALLRED, JR.