



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Book of Mormon Land - The Egyptian Language

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 23, No. 19 (1 October 1888), p. 290

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

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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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increase in real estate values and in commercial prestige is purchased at too high a price, when the citizens have to pay ruinous rates of taxation to support bad men in office, and when every child is exposed as he grows into manhood to the worst influences attendant upon our magnificent civilization. It is not very long since Chicago had a mayor who was charged with being in open league with the gamblers and other disreputable people of the city.

The city has had such rapid growth that many of the evils were but natural, though regrettable. It may be that the evolution of community life, which is very rapid in that city, may within a few years—a generation at most—do much to purify and exalt public service and private association. But as to this, the future itself must tell.

No man who has boys or girls to bring up and desires to rear them in purity and good ambitions would care to live in Chicago even with all the promised wealth to be had there.

## THE BOOK OF MORMON LAND.

### The Egyptian Language.

BY HAGOTH.

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. (*Book of Mormon, i, 2.*)

The above statement of Nephi has been used by the enemies of the Book of Mormon as an evidence against its authenticity, on the grounds that it is unreasonable to believe that the Jews in Nephi's time were familiar with the Egyptian, and that Moroni's statement concerning the Reformed Egyptian is a hoax and the Book of Mormon a fraud.

Believing Nephi's words, I have tried to familiarize myself with the true condition of things at Jerusalem in his time.

To begin with I have tried to learn just when the Hebrew language came into existence. It could not have had its origin with Abraham, for he was raised in Ur of the Chaldees; nor with Jacob, for he in youth was sent to Padan-aram, or Haran, which was near Ur, the place of Abraham's birth. We are told Jacob resided in Haran twenty years, married his wives, and had his sons born to him there. Now the language of that country was Chaldaic, and as Jacob conversed freely with the people when he arrived there, we conclude he was familiar with their language. Probably it was his native tongue as it had been that used by his forefathers. This being the case it would appear that his family carried the Chaldaic language with them into Egypt. Jacob's family numbered seventy souls when they came into Egypt. They lived there two hundred and fifteen years. Egypt at this time was at the height of its glory and power. The great pyramid had just been built. Thebes had reached the pinnacle of its splendor and magnificence. We are not told whether or not the Israelites lost their original tongue in Egypt, but judging from similar events in history we conclude that they did. Knight, the English historian, says, "The long residence (seventy years) of the Jews in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem, caused the extinction of the Hebrew, as a spoken language, at least among the common people, for after their return to Judea it appears from a passage in Nehemiah that the common people did not understand the scriptures when read to them in the Hebrew language."

If a nation would forget its language in seventy years, it is not probable that persons would preserve theirs two hundred and fifteen years.

Moses was brought up and educated in Pharaoh's house. It is scarcely probable they taught him the language of their Hebrew slaves. I am therefore forced to the conclusion that when the Hebrews left Egypt they knew no language but the Egyptian. If this was the case a long period of time would elapse before they would cease to use it altogether. Naturally enough words and phrases would be grafted in from dialects of surrounding tribes, and thus a difference would grow up which would in time develop into a distinct language. This, in my opinion, is how the Hebrew came into existence. It had its beginning after the exodus and for generations passed through its period of growth and development. Surrounding tribes and nations—Arabia, Babylon, Tyre and Sidon—all had an influence upon it.

It might be claimed that there is no resemblance between the Hebrew characters of to-day and the Egyptian, which we would naturally expect if derived from that source; but let it be remembered that the Hebrew of to-day is not the Hebrew of the time of Solomon or Nephi. On the return of the Jews from Babylon they adopted the Chaldaic form of letters. This will readily be seen by comparing the characters of the old Pentateuch with the Hebrew. It is claimed by scholars that the Phonician and Samaritan alphabets are the old Hebrew. I might go on and compare them with the Coptic to show their Egyptian origin, but space will not allow; the reader may do so for his own satisfaction.

It is a known fact that a language is often preserved for a long space of time as a written after it has ceased to exist as a spoken language. The present Hebrew and Latin show an illustration of this. In this way I believe the Egyptian to have been preserved by the Israelites for generations, and was so preserved in Nephi's time, and considered an essential part of the education of their children. Hence Nephi's statement that he was educated in the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.

Furthermore, it is but natural to suppose that Egypt would have its influence upon the architecture of Israel. In Egypt at that time existed in all their splendor those great architectural monuments that were the wonder of the world. It is but natural that the Jews would imitate them. We are informed that the two columns at the front of Solomon's temple were modeled after the Egyptian,—though executed by Heriam of Tyre,—and that the lily work was borrowed from the same source. Nephi was familiar with this building and with the prevailing architecture at Jerusalem at this time, and would naturally imitate it in his new home. Further on we shall have more to say on this subject.

REGRETS OF DEATH.—That which has died within us is often the saddest portion of what death has taken away—and to all, and above measure, to those in whom no higher life has been awakened. The heavy thought is the thought of what we were, of what we hoped and proposed to have been, of what we ought to have been, of what but for ourselves we might have been—set by the side of what we are, as though we were haunted by the side of our own youth. This is a thought the crushing weight of which nothing but a strength above our own can lighten.