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## Lehi's River Laman

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**Abstract:** Deals with Lehi's migration from Jerusalem and discusses the river Laman (1 Nephi 2:6). Quoting from the W. M. Flinders Petrie journal that recalls an expedition in Sinai, Crowley presents possible locations for the river Laman and the valley of Lemuel. A map of the region is included.

# Lehi's RIVER LAMAN

By Ariel L. Crowley, L.L.B.

THE close of the seventh century before Christ brought to a close also the glory that had been the kingdom of Judah. The throne of David had passed into the hands of Babylon, and upon it, Mattaniah, called Zedekiah by his Babylonian overlord, sat in weak vassalage. Vice and apostasy ran rampant; the idols and high places of heathen worship abounded.

Under pressure of Jews already in captivity in Babylon, and urged on by faithless Egyptian promises of military alliance, Zedekiah conspired against Babylon, and brought upon himself and Judah the destruction which extinguished the kingdom.

In the midst of the corruption of his people, the Lord strove mightily to institute reforms. He brought out the hidden book of the law from its secret place in the temple.<sup>1</sup> Its effects were instantaneous but temporary. He sent his prophets crying out against iniquity, and saw them derided and mocked for their pains.<sup>2</sup> And in final exasperation with the crimes and disobedience of the nation, he shouted by Jeremiah: "I will fling you out of my sight as I flung out your kinsmen, the whole race of Ephraim."<sup>3</sup>

With a new Babylonian invasion almost at the gates, and the temple in imminent peril of the destruction predicted for it,<sup>4</sup> the Lord charged his prophet Lehi to seize the ancient records, and flee out of Jerusalem and into the wilderness.<sup>5</sup>

## EDITOR'S NOTE

INVESTIGATION and speculation concerning the unanswered problems of Book of Mormon geography will continue inevitably to cause research and discussion until the last question is answered. The author of this article, a tireless seeker and finder, adds here an interesting point of view to the already numerous speculations and findings of those who have chosen to make a study and a hobby of various phases of the Book of Mormon account.

Lehi fled with his family as directed, and presently emerged upon a height overlooking a well-defined valley in which a great river ran steadfastly into the fountain of the Red Sea.<sup>6</sup>

There are no rivers which run into the Red Sea.<sup>7</sup> Identification of the stream upon which Lehi pitched his tent becomes, therefore, a problem of the first magnitude, which may, dependent upon its solution, constitute a strong evidence for or against the truth of the Book of Mormon account.

The problem so presented has been unnecessarily complicated by the notion that Lehi traveled but three days from

<sup>1</sup>1 Nephi 2:9.  
<sup>2</sup>University Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, p. 500.

Map showing the Wilderness Way (traveled by Lehi), the Way of Egypt, the River Laman, the Borders near the Red Sea, and the Borders nearer the Red Sea—a geography carefully worded in the Book of Mormon and not without reason, as the accompanying article points out.

Jerusalem to the Red Sea. That notion, which has arisen from an uncritical reading of 1 Nephi 2:6, is without justification in the text. In point of feasibility, it being more than one hundred seventy-five miles by air line, passage through the wilderness of 600 B.C. from Jerusalem to the Red Sea in three days appears improbable. Even the explanation of possible use of racing camels<sup>8</sup> is strained and not required by Nephi's language.

The whole exodus passage is so precisely worded that it bears the stamp of deliberate, careful phrasing, with intent to pack into the engraved words the very greatest possible detail in the shortest space.<sup>9</sup>

When Nephi wrote in verse 6: "when he [Lehi] had traveled three days in the wilderness he pitched his tent," the wilderness he should be understood as referring to was that wilderness which he had just finished describing in the preceding verse, i.e., "the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea." That this wilderness nearer the sea is a separate wilderness is easily shown.

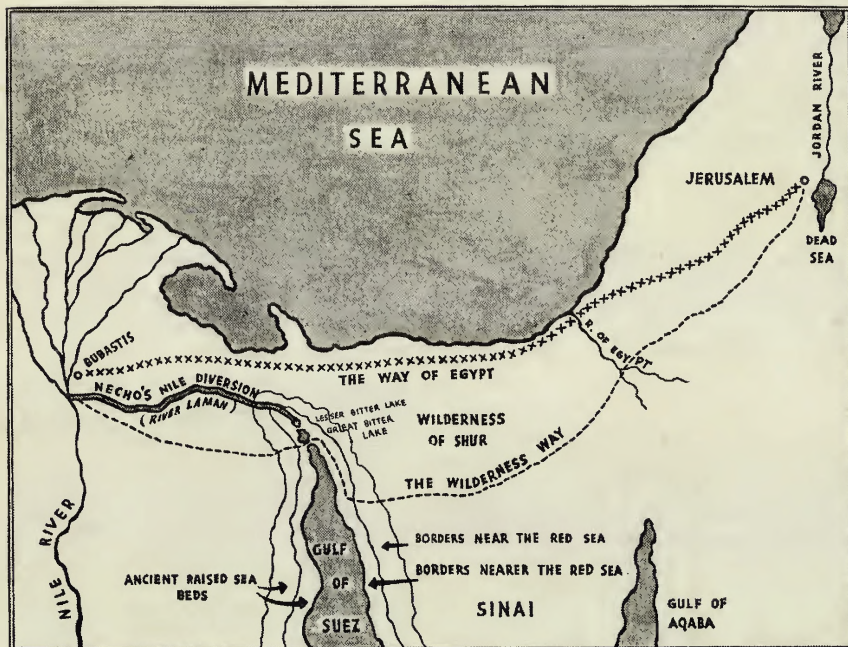
Lehi "came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea," and he traveled in the wilderness "in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea." A "border" which is also a wilderness and lies next to "borders nearer the Red Sea," also a wilderness, clearly infers some distinct difference between borders. Otherwise the comparative word "nearer" loses its sense. Nephi's notation accordingly means that the period of three days represents the time traveled in the wilderness in the borders

<sup>8</sup>Washburn, *Book of Mormon Geography* (American Fork, 1939), p. 86.

<sup>9</sup>For convenience in reference, the passages of the text (1 Nephi 2:4-10) forming the basis of this study are set forth here:

4. And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness.
5. And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.
6. And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.
7. \* \* \*
8. And it came to pass that he called the name of the river, Laman, and it emptied into the Red Sea; and the valley was in the borders near the mouth thereof.
9. And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!
10. And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!

<sup>1</sup>1 Chron. 34:14; 2 Kings 22:8.  
<sup>2</sup>1 Chron. 36:16; Jer. 5:12-13; 26:8-11; 1 Nephi 1:19.  
<sup>3</sup>Jer. 7:15. (Moffatt).  
<sup>4</sup>Jer. 7:11-14.  
<sup>5</sup>1 Nephi 2:2; 3:4.



nearer the Red Sea prior to encampment.

A border, in geography, can only be a contiguous area or tract adjacent to some boundary or natural object.

A flood of light was thrown on the quoted language, all unwittingly, by Dr. W. M. Flinders Petrie, in his account of the Serabit Expedition of 1905 embodied in his *Researches in Sinai*. As the expedition proceeded toward Sinai from the region of the Great Bitter Lakes (the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez), careful observation of the country was made, and from the final report, this picture is drawn:

In the valley was a straggling stream too brackish to drink; but it maintained some seventy palms, besides tamarisks, tall rushes, and other plants, which formed a tangle of undergrowth. After a mile or two, however, the stream sank into the floor of the valley, and was no more seen down the rest of the barren track. In the lower part of the valley the whole of the limestone strata dip seawards at about thirty degrees, and I traced about six hundred feet of vertical fall.

Next a level part appears; and after that a renewed fall seawards, amounting to about six hundred feet more, until it tilts into the Red Sea. Thus, what has been the plateau, four hundred feet above the sea, must dip down to about eight hundred feet below the sea within a couple of miles.

At the mouth of the Wady Tabiyeh, we came out upon the shore of the Red Sea, along which we walked for eight miles before turning inland again. First we passed the ruined tomb of Abu Zenymeh, from which the headland is named; this stands out in a low, bare shore, close to the sea. Beyond that the road cannot pass below the cliffs, as they come down into the water; and a passage is found over a low cliff of about sixty feet high, while above it towers a glaring white face of limestone up for about six hundred feet.

We next crossed the plain of El Markha diagonally, about five miles, to the Seih Baba. This raised sea bed is almost a level stretch, about three to four miles wide and ten miles long.<sup>10</sup>

In another place, Dr. Petrie says:

The track lies along the nearly level plain of raised sea bed which stretches from the present shore back over more than ten miles to the foot of the great limestone plateau of the Tih.<sup>11</sup>

With a very strange similarity to the words of Nephi, he adds (p. 10):

At ten we reached the fork of the roads—one track going *nearer the coast*, and at last passing close below the cliffs of Gebel Hammam; the other track passing inland behind the sea cliffs. Our men took the inland road through the midst of the wide plain of the old sea bed. The plain has only been elevated from the sea in very recent geological times, since the pluvial period, and the valleys are not yet pronounced. Large discharges of water pour over it from the storms which pass up to the edge of the great Tih Plateau, which bounds it on the east. Yet the plain of twenty miles wide has scarcely anything on it that can be called a valley across it.

It thus appears that there are three well-defined levels, the immediate shore

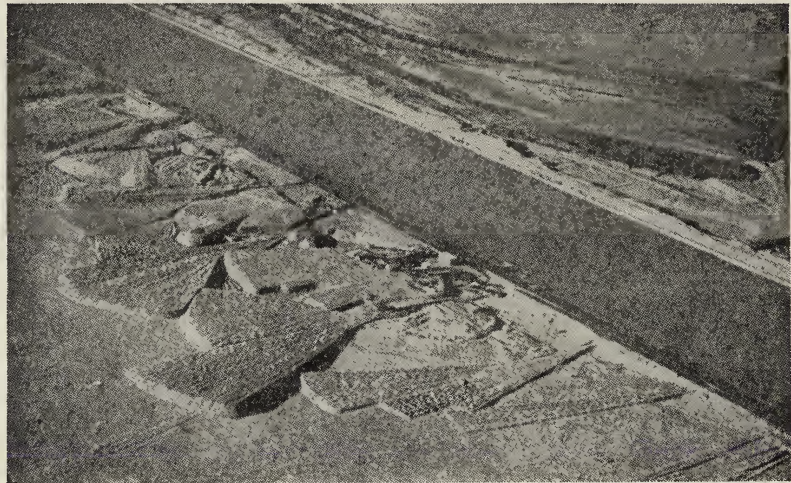
of the sea, the borders which lie immediately above the shore and stretch back to the second line of cliffs, and the great level of the ancient sea bed which has been lifted out of the sea in geologic rise and constitutes a distinct "border" near the Red Sea and adjoining the lower plain or "border nearer the Red Sea."

If the unimpeachable evidence of Dr. Petrie, accompanied as it is with excellent photographs of the plains, the cliffs which distinguish the levels, and the raised beaches, plus the wilderness, were not sufficient, there is no paucity of other authority. As put in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "It has long been known that the whole Red Sea area is undergoing gradual elevation, and much

ly marked valley, "firm, steadfast, and immovable."<sup>14</sup>

If the Book of Mormon is true, then it is true that Lehi camped on the bank of a river which emptied into the "fountain" of the Red Sea. Rivers leave their mark as they pass. No river answering the description of Nephi could have escaped historical notice in profane works, since the tip of the Gulf of Suez lies at the ancient crossroads of continents, perhaps as well known as any place on earth in 600 B.C.

It remains, then, to determine where Lehi went, and identification of the river becomes simply a matter of historical inquiry. Despite the absence of rivers now, if the Book of Mormon is



THE SUEZ CANAL

Constantly fighting the desert, this modern waterway persists where ancient attempts were made to maintain open passage. Fanlike dumps are canal dredgings.

—R.A.F. official photo, Crown copyright

has been done in recent years in investigating the levels of the *raised beaches* found in different localities.<sup>12</sup>

The unconscious exactitude of the language of I Nephi 2:5, distinguishing between the several levels, the borders *near* and the borders *nearer* the sea is stamped with the certitude of truth. It is not such a thing as an unlearned farmer of 1830 would know or design.

NOT less precise and extraordinary is the language of Nephi describing the encampment upon the banks of the mighty stream flowing into the "fountain" of the Red Sea.

When a river runs directly into a sea, who would think of saying it runs into the "fountain" of the sea? Yet the record shows:

And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the *fountain* of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!<sup>13</sup>

The river so referred to lay in a strongly marked valley "in the borders near the mouth thereof."

It is idle to ignore the recitation of Nephi that camp was made upon the bank of a well-defined river in a strong-

true, there was such a river in 600 B.C., and there were differing "borders," a deep valley, and something which could be called the "fountain" of the Red Sea, all in close conjunction.

Initial aid is found in the words describing Lehi's departure. The word "wilderness" stands out. In every passage describing the Lehiite trip the word "wilderness" is reiterated. And in the first instance it is written, "He departed into the wilderness."

In ancient times there were two routes to Egypt, one known as "The Way of the Land of the Philistines," and the other was the "Wilderness Way." Dr. H. Guthe has described them as follows:

The "way of the land of the Philistines" is the old caravan route, which passes by the southeast corner of the Mediterranean. The "way of the wilderness of the Red Sea" led through the Wadi Tumilat past Pithom to the region of the Bitter Lakes and the wilderness of Shur, which according to Gen. 25:18 was "before Egypt," i.e., on its eastern border.<sup>15</sup>

(Continued on page 56)

<sup>10</sup>Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, E. P. Dutton & Co. (N. Y., 1906), p. 17.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

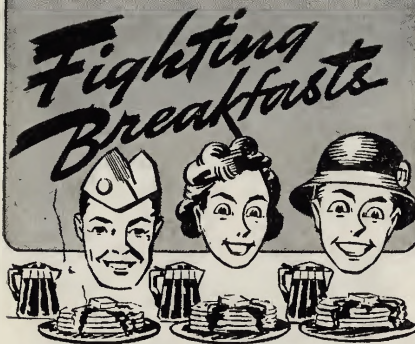
<sup>12</sup>Vol. 22, 11th Ed., p. 970.

<sup>13</sup>I Nephi 2:9.

<sup>14</sup>I Nephi 2:10.

<sup>15</sup>Schaff-Herzog *Religious Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 412.

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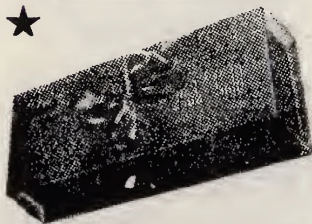
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LEHI'S RIVER LAMAN

(Continued from page 15)

Lehi's departure "into the wilderness" may, then, for the sake of the hypothesis, be taken as a statement that he left by the Wilderness Way, and came down by the Red Sea in the neighborhood of the Wadi Tumilat, in the region of the Great Bitter Lake. The problem is then to determine whether or not there is any evidence that there was in fact a fresh-water stream at the tip of the Gulf of Suez in the time of Pharaoh-necho (Necho), c. 600 B.C.<sup>16</sup>

Herodotus, the celebrated historian, was born a Dorian, in the town of Halicarnassus, in Asia Minor, in or about the year 484 B.C. The history written by him is everywhere recognized and acclaimed as one of the monuments of antiquity. Out of its pages the following quotation is copied (as translated):

Psammetichus left a son called Necos, who succeeded him upon the throne. This prince was the first to attempt the construction of the canal to the Red Sea—a work completed afterward by Darius the Persian—the length of which is four days' journey, and width such as to admit of two triremes being rowed along it abreast. The water is derived from the Nile, which the canal leaves a little above the city of Bubastis, near Patumis, the Arabian town, being carried thence until it joins the Red Sea. At first it is carried along the Arabian side of the Egyptian plain, as far as the chain of hills opposite Memphis, whereby the plain is bounded, and in which lie the great stone quarries; here it skirts the base of the hills running in a direction from west to east; after which it turns, and enters a narrow pass, trending southward from this point, until it enters the Arabian Gulf. From the northern sea to that which is called the southern, or Erythraean, the shortest and quickest passage, which is from Mount Cassius, the boundary between Egypt and Syria, to the Gulf of Arabia, is a distance of exactly one thousand furlongs. But the way by the canal is very much longer, on account of the crookedness of its course. A hundred and twenty thousand of the Egyptians, employed upon the work in the reign of Necos, lost their lives in making the excavation. He at length desisted from his undertaking, in consequence of an oracle which warned him that he was laboring for the barbarian. The Egyptians call by the name of barbarian all such as speak a language different from their own.

Necos, when he gave up the construction of the canal, turned all his thoughts to war, and set to work to build a fleet of triremes, some intended for service in the northern sea, and some for the navigation of the Erythraean.<sup>17</sup>

That Herodotus erred in assuming that Necho was the first to excavate the Nile diversion canal, and thus create a waterway across the Isthmus of Suez, is now settled by archeological evidence. Dr. Hugo Gressmann noted the original construction of the diversion works long prior to the time of

<sup>16</sup>II Kings 23:29; II Chron. 35:20. The difficulties of transliteration of Egyptian names into Hebrew and English have produced a variety of spelling in the works quoted. Thus *Nechos* is variably spelled *Necos*, *Neco*, *Necho*, and *Sety* is rendered *Sethos*, *Seti*, and *Wady* may appear as *Wadi*.  
<sup>17</sup>Herodotus, Book II, Ch. 158, Geo. Rawlinson, Trans. (London, 1910).

Necho, placing it in the reign of Sethos I (Sety or Seti, or Sesostris) and between 1313 and 1292 B.C. In support of his view is the incontrovertible evidence of the vast sculpture cut into the wall of the great hypostyle hall at Karnak.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Gressmann has photographically reproduced the engraving.

Dr. Petrie has noted this Karnak festival scene in his *History of Egypt*, and says:

On the north wall of the great hypostyle hall of Karnak is a grand series of scenes covering over 200 feet of wall, along the outside. . . . At the end of the coast line comes a long canal, full of crocodiles, *Ta denat*, "the cutting" which separates Egypt from the desert, a canal which must have run from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean on the line of the present Suez Canal. This position is shown by Zalu, probably the Greek site, the modern Tell Abu Sefe, which lies to the east of the canal in Sety's march. The canal is crossed by a fortified bridge where there is another reservoir of water, *Hu pa . . . a*; the repetition of this name suggests that *Hu* here is an adjective of the water in the reservoir as being drinkable. On the west of the canal a large body of Egyptians await the king with bouquets of flowers and rejoicing.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Petrie has had occasion to describe the canal elsewhere in his works also:

The Nile canal to the Red Sea has an uncertain history. Whether the ships of Hatshepsut could have come through from Punt up to Thebes has not been settled. The vessels "going to Thebes" does not prove more than their departure, and the water on which they sail is represented as having the same Red Sea fishes as in the scene of arrival at Punt. That there was a Nile canal far to the east is certain, as Sety I is shown crossing a canal swarming with crocodiles, over which there was a bridge, guarded by fortified gates, on the road to Syria. If a canal reached Heropolis, west of the present Lake Timsah, at Tell Maskhuta, there was no need of a ship canal farther, as the Gulf of Suez in Roman times reached up to that point. Strabo says that Sesostris (Ramessu II) first cut the canal, but Darius nearly completed it, yet desisted from fear of the Red Sea being higher than Egypt, a fable which also hindered Napoleon, owing to bad leveling by his engineers. Herodotus says (ii, 158) Necho began the canal—or rather carried it forward—and Darius completed it, so that two triremes could pass in it, from the Nile at Bubastis to the Red Sea. The canal was also continued northward to Pelusium according to Diodorus, so that "from the Pelusiac mouth (i.e., the easternly arm of the Nile) to the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea is a canal cut"; after Necho and Darius, "the last attempt was made by Ptolemy the Second, who cut a sluice across the isthmus in a more convenient place, which he opened when he had a mind to sail down that way, and then presently shut up again . . . the river is called Ptolemy . . . where it falls into the sea, there is a city built called Arsinoe," that is north of Suez.

The monuments of Darius are known on the south of the canal line, near Tell Maskhuta, at the terminus Arsinoe, and at two intermediate points. *The evidence seems to*

<sup>18</sup>Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum Alten Testamente*, (Tubingen, 1909), p. 128.  
<sup>19</sup>Petrie, *History of Egypt*, vol. 3, p. 13.

## LEHI'S RIVER LAMAN

be that there was some kind of waterway to the Red Sea from the time of the XIXth Dynasty, probably by a Nile canal to the head of the water at Maskhuta-hero, and thence by natural shallows enough for light boats. (Italics added.) Necho attempted to dredge or cut a canal sufficient for ships, but failing that, he built them in the Mediterranean and Red Sea.

Darius certainly carried out a great canal, as his series of fine granite monuments shows, and it is impossible to suppose that when the water in it came near the Red Sea, any difference of level could be imagined. The evidence of Herodotus, that Darius completed it, shows that the story of Diodorus and Strabo is only transferred from Necho. Only Diodorus states that a canal was cut by Ptolemy Philadelphos from the Pelusiac mouth, i. e., a canal from the Mediterranean; and that seems to be due to some confusion, as there is no other evidence for it. The highest ground traversed by the direct modern canal is 52 feet high; but an ancient canal might have followed the present fresh-water Abbasiyeh canal to El Qantara without any great difficulty, so the ground levels do not prohibit our accepting the statement of Diodorus.<sup>20</sup>

It will be seen that Dr. Petrie reached the conclusion that the navigable canal extended only from the Nile to some point in the strongly marked valley known as the Hero-opolite Gulf, in the area of the Great Bitter Lakes (anciently the northernmost part of the Arabian Gulf, i. e., the Gulf of Suez); it will be noted also that Dr. Petrie finds that the projects of Necho and Darius were not original, but consisted of the excavation of the existing watercourse, to make a ship canal large enough to pass two triremes rowed abreast, in lieu of the "natural shallows, enough for light boats" and for passage of fish, which already existed. The same conclusion has been reached by others among the great scholars, as in the case of Dr. George Rawlinson, who says:

The Great Canal, perhaps like the wall commenced by Seti, is proved by the ruins upon its banks to have been in the main the work of Rameses. It was no doubt provided with locks and sluices as was the canal which led the Nile waters into the Fayoum; and in this way the difficulties connected with the tidal changes at Suez and the variations in the level of the Nile at Bubastis were met and overcome. Dredging perhaps kept the western end of the canal open and prevented it from being silted up by the Nile mud; but when troubles came this practice was neglected and the channel soon became non-navigable. Communication with the Bitter Lakes had from time to time to be reopened, and Neco, Darius Hystaspis, Ptolemy I, Trajan and the Caliph Omar are especially mentioned as having applied themselves to the work of reestablishing the waterway. Various points of departure from the course of the Nile were taken at different periods, the latest being at Belbays, which is about eleven miles south of Bubastis (now Tel-Basta).<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Rawlinson adds<sup>22</sup> that Necho's accession to the Egyptian throne is placed by the best authorities at be-

tween 612 and 610 B.C., and notes that Necho spent the first several years of his reign in the canal enterprise.

Reference has been made above to the record of Strabo, and it is as well to record here the words of that Greek historian. He was born in the year 63 B.C., and has left as his outstanding monument, a great *Geography*, in which he has incorporated the following description of the artificial river channel by which the Nile was diverted partially into the Red Sea, adverted to by Dr. Petrie, above:

There is another canal which empties into the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf near the City of Arsinoe, a city which some call Cleopatra. It flows also through the Bitter Lakes, as they are called, which were indeed bitter in earlier times, but when the above-mentioned canal was cut they underwent a change because of the mixing of the water with the river, and are now supplied with fish and full of aquatic birds. \* \* \* The canal which empties into the Red Sea begins at Phacussa to which the village of Philo is contiguous; the canal has a breadth of one hundred cubits and a depth sufficient for very large merchant vessels and these places are near the vertex of the delta.<sup>23</sup>

IN a recent work, *Suez and Panama*, Andre Siegfried has reviewed the history of the Nile Diversion. His account is sufficiently panoramic in scope to justify an extensive quotation here:

The ancient Egyptians were remarkably well equipped to carry out great public works, and as they were especially expert at building canals, it was only natural that they should have concerned themselves with the linking up of the Nile with the Red Sea. Nature herself seemed to suggest it, and after all, it only meant building one more canal. From inscriptions and the accounts of contemporary travelers, we know that this task was achieved, and we can still see traces of the old earthworks.

Several facts stand out as probable from the mass of conjecture. According to a Greek legend the canal must have been begun as early as the middle empire, most likely under the 12th Dynasty, between 2000 and 1800 B.C. It was undoubtedly in existence at the time of the 19th Dynasty, between 1350 and 1200 B.C. Its course began on the Nile at Bubastis (near the modern Zagazig) and ended at the Great Bitter Lake, which at that period was still part of the Gulf of Suez. When the Great Bitter Lake was more or less cut off from the sea by a ridge of sand that had piled up, Necho, the Pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty (609-593 B.C.) tried to clear the canal as far as the Red Sea, but 120,000 laborers died at the work without finishing it.

Darius the Persian (521-486 B.C.) took up the task and this time it was completed. Nevertheless, it was Ptolemy Philadelphos (285-246 B.C.) who really gave it its final form. It ran from the Nile to Arsinoe, the site of the present town of Suez, where a lock, or "diaphragma" held the waters in check.

The last of the Ptolemies neglected the canal, but the emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117) reestablished it. From then on it was known as *Trajan's River*, just as it had previously been called *Ptolemy's River*. Once more it was neglected, but under Con-

(Continued on page 59)

<sup>20</sup>Strabo, Book 17, Ch. 1, paragraphs 24-25.

<sup>20</sup>Petrie, *Social Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 185.

<sup>21</sup>G. Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* (N. Y., 1882), vol. 2, p. 326.

<sup>22</sup>Op. cit., pp. 326 and 490.

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## LEHI'S RIVER LAMAN

(Continued from page 57)

stantine and Justinian there was a last period of activity before it finally fell into disuse at the end of the Byzantine period in the reign of Heraclius.

It was not deserted, however, for during the Arabian regime, Amr, who was governing Egypt in the name of the Caliph Omar, reconditioned it with very little trouble. He even wished to open up direct communication between the two seas, but the Caliph objected, fearing to provide a route for the invaders. In the end the canal was actually broken up by the Abbacide Caliph Aben-Jafar-al-Mansour, in order to cut off Mecca and Medina, which were then in revolt. Perhaps he also hoped to injure the isthmus route and so favor the overland road which led north to the Gulf of Persia.

However, the section from the Nile to the Bitter Lakes was in use for a long time, until sand eventually drifted over the entire structure. So the canal died, after having been living a thousand years or more. It was destined to wait out one thousand and one hundred years to be reopened by Ferdinand de Lesseps.

Many contemporary travelers have described it as it existed under the Ptolemies and the Romans. Herodotus, who visited Egypt about 480 B.C., some half century after Darius had completed the work, says that the canal was wide enough to allow two triremes to pass abreast and that it took four days to make the journey. It was filled with water that came from the Nile, entering the canal above Bubastis, a town on the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile. This town was the capital of Egypt under the 22nd Dynasty.

Diodorus, who traveled about 60 B.C. at the time of Ptolemy Philadelphos, left the following description: "A man-made canal stretches from the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile as far as the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea. Necho, the son of Psameticus, was the first to undertake it; Darius the Persian continued the work but did not complete it, for he was told that if he cut through the isthmus he would inundate Egypt. It was proved to him that the Red Sea was at a higher elevation than the ground level of the delta." This fable seems to die hard. "Ptolemy was the last to try his hand at it, and at the most favorable point he had a very artistic and practical lock gate constructed. It could be opened when one wished to sail through and closed again immediately afterward."

About A.D. 40 Strabo said "the canal was 100 cubits wide and deep enough to admit the largest boats."

Pliny the Elder, who was to meet his death in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, tells us that the canal as excavated by Ptolemy was 100 feet wide, 40 feet deep, and 37,500 paces in length as far as the Bitter Lakes. He adds that the Egyptian rulers had not continued the work farther for fear of floods, and it had been discovered that the level of the Red Sea was three cubits above the ground level of Egypt. Others, however, did not attribute the interruption of the work to this, but rather to the fear of the sea water ruining the Nile, which was their only source of drinking water.

Lucian, who lived in Egypt in the second half of the 2nd century, tells of a young man who, having embarked at Alexandria, sailed up the Nile and on as far as Clysma (Arsinoe) on the Red Sea. . . .

The canal was 100 miles long, over 70 feet wide, ten feet to fifteen feet deep, which was sufficient for boats of that period. It originally left the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile at Bubastis, and later started at Babylon, no doubt to obtain greater height. It then made use of the depression of the

Wadi Tumilat, along the course taken by the fresh water canal of the present day. It ended at the northern extremity of the Great Bitter Lake. *In the time of the Pharaohs there were several channels, some no doubt natural ones, leading towards the Red Sea [italics added],* which in those days penetrated much farther into the isthmus than it does today.

As for Ptolemy's canal, it went from the Lesser Bitter Lake and terminated at the Clysman Lock. Bonaparte himself rode over the traces of the canal, which are still remarkably well preserved. At this historic spot what seems to be the withered arm of a river stretches away for several miles. The outline is particularly clear cut, and it looks as if it could easily be flooded again, even though it is filled with the accumulation of sand dunes.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Siegfried, *Suez and Panama* (Harcourt, Brace & Co., N. Y.), p. 38.

In his *History of Egypt*, Maspero has recounted the times of Necho and his military activities. He regarded the proposed enlargement of the canal as a purely military enterprise, and speaks of it thus:

At the same time, in order to transport the squadron from one sea to another when occasion demanded, he endeavored to reopen the ancient canal of Seti I, which had been silted up ever since the last years of the XXth Dynasty. He improved its course and widened it so as to permit of two triremes passing abreast or easily clearing each other in passing. The canal started from the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile, not far from Patumos, and skirted the foot of the Arabian Hills from west to east; it then plunged into the Wadi Tumilat, and finally entered the head of the bay which now forms the Lake

(Continued on page 60)



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## A Suggestion

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Last Sunday I visited the Soldiers' Service Club in downtown Denver. I was well pleased to notice that one of the L.D.S. families had donated each month's "Improvement Era" to the reading room of the club.

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## LEHI'S RIVER LAMAN

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(Continued from page 59)

of Ismailia. The narrow channel by which this sheet of water was anciently connected with the Gulf of Suez was probably obstructed in places, and required clearing out at several points, if not along its entire extent. A later tradition states that after having lost 100,000 men in attempting this task the king abandoned the project on the advice of an oracle, a god having been supposed to have predicted to him that he was working for the barbarians.<sup>25</sup>

It is above noted that some modern writers have been inclined to doubt that Darius ever completed the opening of the course. The fact of the completion is noted by Petrie<sup>26</sup> by quotation from a French work as follows:

Darius completed the canal and erected five monuments, each bearing inscriptions in Persian, Median and Assyrian on one side and Egyptian on the other.<sup>27</sup>

The actual inscription is supplied by Jules Opert as follows:

Says Darius the King: I am a Persian; with Persia I conquered Egypt (Mudraya). I ordered this canal to be dug from the river called Pirava (the Nile) which flows in Egypt to the sea which comes out of Persia. This canal was afterward dug there, as I had commanded, and I said: Go and destroy half of the canal from Bira to the coast. For such was my will.<sup>28</sup>

Heinrich Brugsch-Bey, giant among Egyptologists, many times refers in his works to the Necho diversion of the Nile. At one place he says:

The ancient fresh water canal left the Pelusiac Arm of the Nile a little above Bubastis, and went by a circuitous course first eastward to Lake Timsah, whence it turned south, almost parallel to the modern canal along the west side of the Great Bitter Lake to the head of the Gulf of Suez.<sup>29</sup>

Just as an interesting diversion for the instant, it may be mentioned that this "Bubastis" was not only the ancient capital of Egypt, but was the city where, in the reign of Boethos (Dynasty II) a vast chasm in the earth opened, destroying much of the population. Recent deep borings in the sand at Bubastis have failed to reach rock in any instance.<sup>30</sup>

Mention is made above of Diodorus Siculus. It was he who wrote that at the most advantageous place on the canal a cleverly contrived lock was constructed to control its flux.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Henry Rawlinson has written:

Closely connected with these naval projects (of Nechos) and aspirations, was beyond all doubt, another enterprise in which the active-minded monarch engaged at the same period. The great kings of the 19th Dynasty had, as we have seen, established water communication between the two

<sup>25</sup>Maspero, *History of Egypt* (London, 1906).

<sup>26</sup>*History of Egypt* (London), vol. 3, p. 336.

<sup>27</sup>*Recueil des Travaux*, vol. 9, p. 133.

<sup>28</sup>Opert, *Memoire sur les Rapports de l'Egypte*, p. 125.

<sup>29</sup>Brugsch-Bey, *Egypt Under the Pharaohs* (London, 1881).

<sup>30</sup>Manetho (from Syncellus, according to Africanus), Waddell Ed. (Cambridge, 1940), p. 35.

<sup>31</sup>Henry Rawlinson, *Book 1, Ch. 33, p. 9.*

Egyptian seas by means of a canal carried across from the Nile near Bubastis to the Bitter Lakes, and thence to the head of the Gulf of Suez. But this work had been intended for commercial and not military purposes, and had been constructed on a moderate scale, the width of the cutting being probably not much greater than the canals of our own country. Neco's design was of a far grander character. He wished to construct a ship canal, along which his triremes might pass, and designed it on a scale which would have allowed of two vessels of this class being rowed along it abreast and therefore meeting and crossing each other without shipping their oars. . . .

In a climate like that of Egypt, and still more of the deserts which border it, hard labor under the scorching sun is itself dangerous; the concentration of many laborers on one spot increases the peril. Insufficient provision of supplies and shelter multiplies it. So small a work as the Alexandrian Canal cost Mehmet Ali 10,000 men; how many were sacrificed in the construction of the great cutting of M. de Lesseps will probably never be known.<sup>32</sup>

The celebrated American Egyptologist, Dr. James Henry Breasted of the University of Chicago, has thrown light upon the Nile diversion of 600 B.C. He describes an expedition of Queen Hatshepsut which actually sailed to Punt via the canal:

With propitiatory offerings to the divinities of the air to ensure a fair wind, the five vessels of the fleet set sail early in the 9th year of the queen's reign. The route was perhaps down the Nile and through a canal leading from the eastern delta through the Wadi Tumulat and connecting the Nile with the Red Sea. This canal was attributed by the Greeks to Sesostris and hence may have existed in the middle kingdom. In any case, the same vessels are shown in the queen's reliefs both upon the Nile and the Red Sea. No shift of cargo is mentioned, and all this suggests the use of such a canal. They arrived at Punt in safety.<sup>33</sup>

In the same work it is written:

The news of Seti's successes had preceded him and the nobles of the administrative government hastened to the frontier to receive him. At Tharu, outside the gate of the frontier fortress beside the bridge over the fresh water canal, which as the reader will recall, may already have connected the Nile with the Bitter Lakes of the isthmus of Suez, they gathered in a rejoicing group.<sup>34</sup>

This quotation is a reference to the vast engravings on the temple wall at Karnak.

OUT of profane history, archeology, geology and geography, tools with which the youthful prophet translator had little familiarity, there emerges, in place of previous uncertainty and doubt, the comparative certainty that when Lehi left Jerusalem he did so upon a route known in antiquity, the ancient Wilderness Way toward Egypt. Following this way across the Wilderness of Shur, he descended to the raised sea bed, elevated from the ancient bottom

<sup>32</sup>*Op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 487-488.

<sup>33</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago, 1905), vol. 2, pp. 252, 253, 292.

<sup>34</sup>*Op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 98-108.

## LEHI'S RIVER LAMAN

of the Red Sea. Thence he descended to a yet lower level of raised beach referred to by Nephi as the "borders nearer the Red Sea." After proceeding for three days along the coast in these nearer borders, he came at last to the fresh water expanse of the Great Bitter Lake, truly a fountain of the Red Sea, into which the waters of Necho's mighty diversion of the Nile flowed through the deep valley of the Heropolite Gulf, and whence, by natural channels and shallows (see footnote 20), they found their way into the sea.

The stream was unknown to Lehi. Otherwise it is improbable that he would have given it a new name. In this very fact lies confirmation of the recent creation of the stream.

The minute knowledge of topography and historical fact, and the characteris-

tics of the area about the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez evidenced in the Nephite account are just such knowledge as a visitor making repeated trips through the region, as did Nephi, would acquire. In similar degree, that knowledge must have been foreign to the lad of immature years, in pioneer America, by whom Nephi's record came to its translated form. The account is casual, but precise, filled with detail utterly inconsistent with fraud, and marked with the complete candor of one who knows his statements to be demonstrably true.

The Valley of Lemuel, deep and immovable, stands at the head of the Gulf of Suez to this day. In it lay a river, in the pinpoint of time when Lehi fled from Jerusalem. That river ran into the fountain of the Red Sea, and was called *The River Laman*.

## THE WORD OF WISDOM

(Concluded from page 7)

ter food and more of it? One needs only to travel near the poor sections to see that the story depicted in *Tobacco Road* is a true one and properly named.

We now have a farm manpower shortage as well as other shortages. Would it not be wise to use the farmers who are now growing tobacco for growing food?

The gospel of Jesus Christ seems to have many answers that we do not find without it. The Lord through his servants the prophets has told us how we can have an abundant life. The Word of Wisdom would bring life in abundance to many who now are starving because they do not know these truths.

Most people do not think of Connecticut as a tobacco-growing state. In fact, Connecticut is not noted for its agriculture at all but for its big industry and insurance companies. There are, however, 17,400 acres of land in Connecticut devoted to the growing of tobacco to be used for cigar wrappers. If food shipments should be cut off from that state for just a few days, the production of some of our largest factories would be cut down because there would not be enough food to feed the workers. If those 17,400 acres were put into food production, the workers of Connecticut could have more food, fresher food, and probably cheaper food. The tobacco there is grown with great care and at great expense, much of which could be eliminated if the farmer should grow food. Of course the farmer would still have many problems. What farmer hasn't? In the long run both Connecticut and the whole United States would find that the Lord was right when he said that tobacco was not good for man and the land which is now producing poison—much of the most productive

land in that state—would be producing good wholesome food.

The writer does not hope to see, at the present time, any great change because the men who could do the job have not heard of the Word of Wisdom and do not believe in its divine application. The cigaret is considered a "morale builder" and every effort is made to get it to the armed forces even at the expense of food and equipment. The men must have their smoke.

The slogan today is "Food will win the war and write the peace." If we would use our lands as the Lord intended, we would have the food with which to win. We would be a stronger and healthier nation, which would certainly not hurt our chances for victory.

Another part of the Word of Wisdom might also be mentioned here. The Lord told us to use meat sparingly. If the United States would use less meat and instead eat the cereals, in their natural form, which we now feed to cattle to fatten them we could again increase our source of food by thousands of acres.

And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; . . . And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. (D. & C. 89:18-21.)

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By Thelma Ireland

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