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Chapter II

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CHAPTER II.

THE REJOICING OVER THE RECORDS — NEPHI AND HIS BROTHERS AGAIN RETURN TO JERUSALEM — THEY CONDUCT ISHMAEL AND HIS FAMILY INTO THE WILDERNESS — LEHI'S DREAM — THE TREE OF LIFE — THE ROD OF IRON — THE BOTURINI MANUSCRIPT — NEPHI'S VISION.

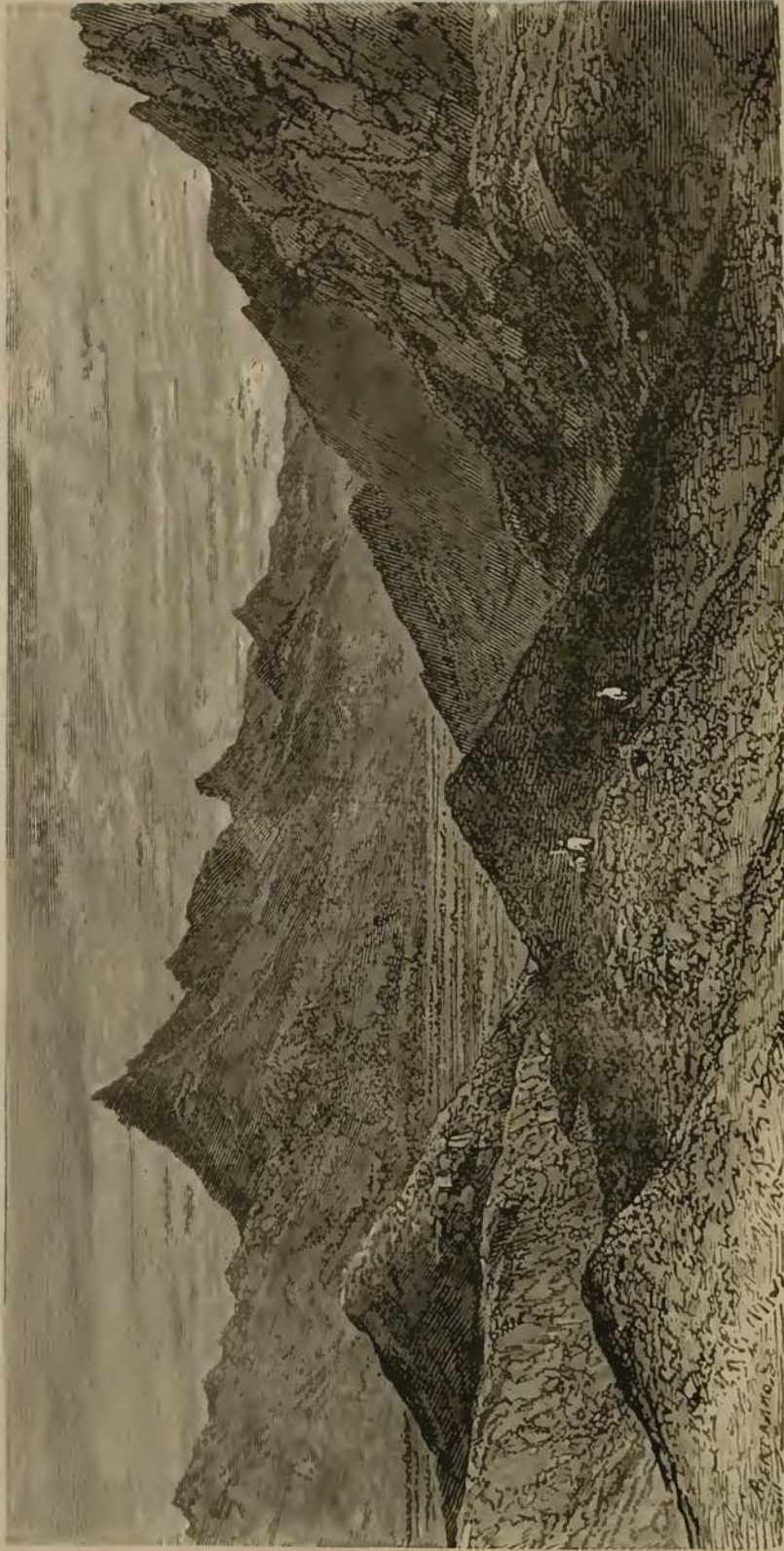
WHEN Nephi and his companions reached their father's tent in the wilderness their parents were exceedingly glad. Sariah had mourned during their absence because she fancied her sons would never return alive; and with those feelings she had upbraided her husband for sending them away. She charged him with being a visionary man, who was always giving heed to dreams in which she had little faith. All this was changed when her boys got back; then she was willing to acknowledge the inspiration of Heaven in her husband's visions.

The first thing Lehi did when his sons arrived was to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, as a token of his gratitude for their safe return. Next he examined the records, and rejoiced much to find that they contained the five books of Moses, and a history of the Jews to the commencement of the reign of King Zedekiah. These plates also contained many of the prophecies of the holy prophets, and a genealogy of Lehi's fathers. We may be well assured how grateful Lehi felt to the Lord for placing these sacred records in his hands, so that his people could have the Law of the Lord and the history of their ancestors always in their possession. It is a great thing to any people to possess the annals of their forefathers. This is particularly true of those who, like Lehi's family, are separated from the rest of the world. It tends to keep them from

sinking into idolatry, and from corrupting the laws of heaven; it preserves the purity of their language, and connects them with those from whom they have sprung, in that they retain a knowledge of their nationality, which is a great stay and help to any race that is building up a new civilization.

But the four young men had to return once again to Jerusalem. God intended to make of Lehi's posterity a great nation. This could scarcely be done unless his sons married. But they had no young maidens with them in the wilderness who would do for wives. So the Lord told Lehi to send his sons to a man named Ishmael, of the tribe of Ephraim, who dwelt in Jerusalem, and desire him and his family to join them on their journey. The reason why God sent them to Ishmael was that he was a good man and had a number of daughters. When Lehi's sons delivered their message the Lord softened Ishmael's heart and he consented to go with them; and soon he and his family were on the way to the valley by the Red Sea where Lehi was encamped.

As they journeyed, however, they had the usual trouble. Laman and Lemuel had another fit of rebelliousness. They induced some of the family of Ishmael to join them, and for a time there was great division in the little company. Nephi, inspired with the Spirit of the Lord, rebuked them for their folly. This so angered them that they bound him with cords, intending in their cruelty to leave him to perish in the wilderness, or to be devoured by wild beasts. But Nephi prayed in great faith to the Lord to give him strength to burst the bands which held him. The Lord answered his prayer and the cords were loosened from



WILDERNESS NEAR THE RED SEA.

his hands and feet. Being now free he again reproved his brethren, which renewed their anger. Once more they sought to take his life, but Ishmael's wife and one of her sons and a daughter so earnestly plead for him that the hearts of the rebels were softened and they ceased their efforts to slay him. By and by, when their anger had cooled down, they felt very sorry for their great wickedness in trying to kill their brother. Then they humbled themselves before him and sought his forgiveness, which he, in the goodness of his heart, at once most gladly granted them.

When the company reached the tents of Lehi, after the usual custom they offered burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord.

While Lehi dwelt in the Valley of Lemuel he had another remarkable dream. It was like unto this: He dreamed that a man stood before him and bade him follow him. This Lehi did. Then they traveled for many hours through a dark and dreary waste. When they had thus journeyed for so long a time Lehi began to pray to the Lord to have mercy on him. After he had prayed he beheld a large and spacious field. In it grew a tree whose fruit was very desirable to make one happy. Lehi partook of this fruit. He found it whiter and sweeter than any fruit he had ever before seen or tasted. When he had eaten his heart was filled with great joy, and he was very anxious that his family should partake of it also. So he looked round in the hope of seeing some of them, and in doing so his eyes fell upon a river. Its waters were filthy, and it ran along near the tree upon which the sweet fruit grew. Not far off was the fountain from whence the river sprang; and near by he saw his wife,

Sariah, and his sons, Sam and Nephi. They stood there hesitating, as if they knew not where to go. Lehi thereupon beckoned, and called them to come to him and taste of the fruit. Then they all three came and partook of it.

Lehi now felt desirous that his two elder sons, Laman and Lemuel, should also partake; but when he called them, they would not come.

Lehi also saw a rod of iron. It extended along the bank of the river and led to the tree by which he stood. And there was a straight and narrow path which ran along by the rod of iron to the tree. This path led into a broad field, so spacious that it might have been a world. He then saw vast numbers of people, many of whom were pressing forward to get to the path which led to the tree. Then it seemed that as soon as these people began to walk in the path there arose a great mist of darkness, that many missed their way, wandered off, and were lost. Others, by taking hold of the rod of iron, and clinging thereto, kept in the narrow path, reached the tree and partook of its precious fruit.

Some of those who tasted the fruit soon appeared to grow ashamed; and Lehi, casting his eyes across the river, beheld on the other side a very large and fine building, which stood as if it were in the air, high above the earth.

This building was filled with men and women of all ages, whose style of dress was very rich and grand. These people were mocking and ridiculing those who ate of the fruit of the tree. Because of this taunting and derision some felt ashamed, and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Lehi also saw other multitudes groping their way towards the spacious

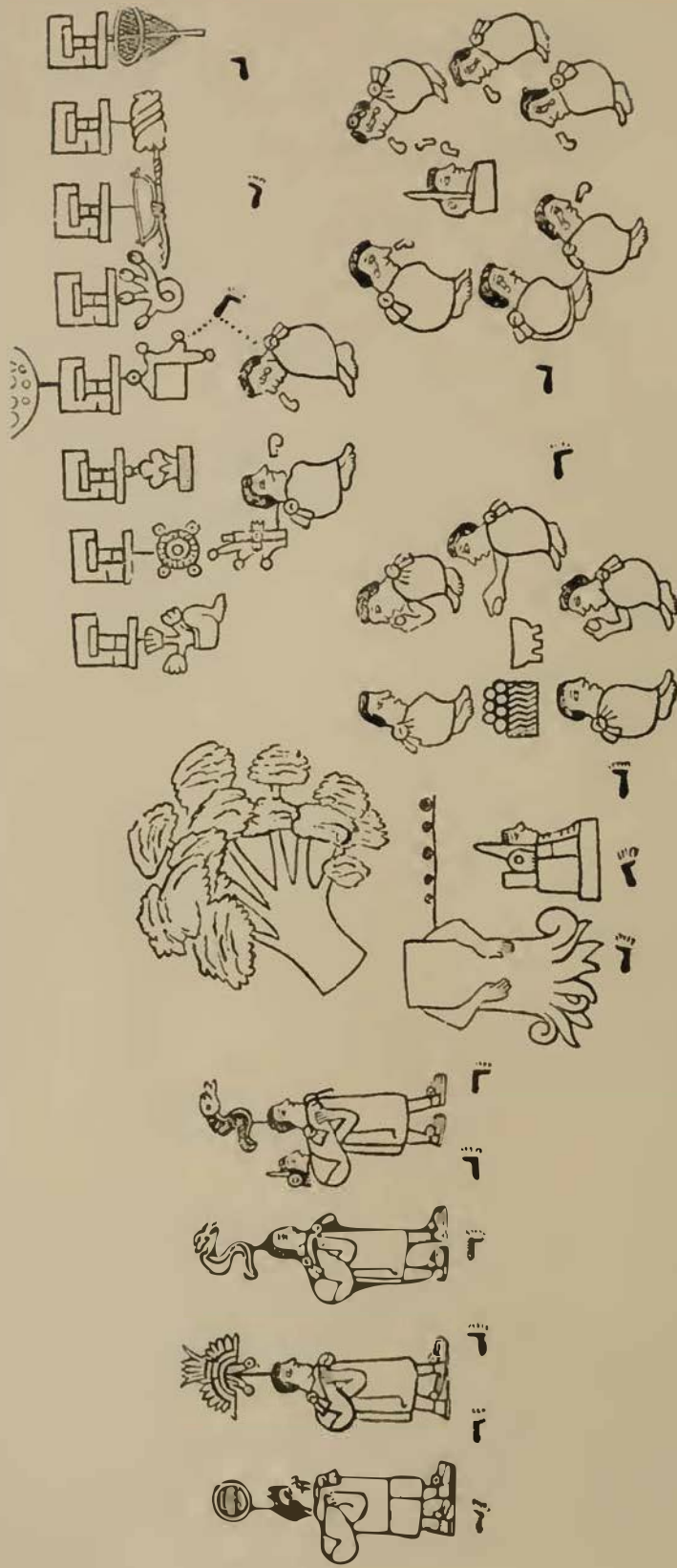
building; and some were drowned in the fountain of filthy water, and others were lost to sight wandering in strange roads.

The interpretation of Lehi's dream is this: The tree which bore the precious fruit, of which Lehi, Sariah, Sam and Nephi ate, was the tree of life. The rod of iron which led thereunto represented the word of God; and whoso will harken unto the word of God, and will cleave unto it, will never perish, but partake of the fruit of the tree of life. The river of filthy water shewed the awful gulf which separates the wicked from the tree of life and from the saints of God. The vast and costly building represented the wicked world, with those who belong thereto.

Lehi further saw that Laman and Lemuel ate not of the fruit of the tree, and it gave him much sorrow.

We present a copy of a portion of an ancient Aztec map or chart, the original of which is about twenty feet in length, found in Mexico more than a hundred years ago by an Italian gentleman named Boturini.* On a previous page we have inserted a copy of the first part of this picture map or panorama, which seems to shew the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem, his crossing some waters, his journey

* Of Boturini, Humboldt observes: "This Milanese traveler had crossed the seas with no other view than to study on the spot the history of the native tribes of America; but in traversing the country to examine its monuments, and make researches into its antiquities, he had the misfortune to fall under the suspicion of the Spanish government. After having been deprived of the fruit of his labors, he was sent in 1736 as a state prisoner to Madrid. The king of Spain declared him innocent, but this did not restore to him his property; and this collection * * lay buried in the archives of the University of Mexico; those valuable relics of the culture of the Aztecs were preserved with so little care that there scarcely exists at present an eighth part of the hieroglyphic records taken from the Italian traveler."



ANCIENT AZTEC CHART, SHOWING LEHI'S TRAVELS. No. 2.

in the desert, and the names of his family. In the second part we consider is yet more clearly shewn Lehi's dream. We can plainly see the tree of life, with Lehi near by, the rod of iron that led thereto, Sariah, Sam and Nephi partaking of the fruit; while Laman and Lemuel are not touching it. Then the journey is continued, and we see them all weeping over one man. This we think represents the death of Ishmael, of which we shall speak hereafter. Above again appear the names of the family.*

* The priests of the Roman Catholic Church who visited Mexico at the time of and soon after the Spanish conquest were struck with the great resemblance of so large a number of the customs of the Mexican people to those of the ancient Israelites. To account for these resemblances they invented the theory that the devil had imitated the Lord when he delivered the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt, by bringing the forefathers of the American races from their original home to this continent with many signs and wonders. Further, that Satan had revealed to these people a spurious or bastard gospel, as near to the true one as was possible, in order to lead their souls to eternal perdition. Based on this theory, — that the devil was the real god of the Indians, Torquemada, in his "Indian Monarchy," and others, give the following as the translation of the opening portions of this chart :

"Although they were all of the same race and lineage, still they did not all compose a single family, but were divided into four tribes. * * The Azticas, therefore, quitted their country under the guidance of Zaccaltzin and Huitzon, in the first of the first circle; for they commenced the computation of their years from that period; and proceeded some stages on their journey, in which they employed the space of a year, at the end of which they arrived at a place called Hueycollmacan, where they remained three years. In this place (they say) the devil appeared to them in the form of an idol, declaring to them that it was he who brought them out of the land of Aztlan, and that he would accompany them, being their God, to favor them in every thing. * * This being the beginning of the devil's proceedings among this people, they marched from one place to another, where there was a large and thick tree where he caused them to stop, at the trunk of which they made a small altar, upon which they placed an idol, for so the devil commanded, and they sat down under its shade to eat, but whilst eating, a loud sound proceeded from the tree, and it rent in the middle. The Azticas, terrified at this sudden accident, considered it a bad omen, and surrendering themselves up to affliction, terminated the repast."

Nephi was very desirous to have the same dreams as his father; and he prayed earnestly to the Lord that this favor might be granted him. God answered his prayers, and shewed him many of the greatest events that would take place in the future history of the world.

For behold while Nephi was pondering these things in his heart he was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, into an exceedingly high mountain, which he had never before seen, and on which he had never before set his foot. And the Spirit, which was in the form of a man, shewed him the things which he desired. When the Spirit left him he was shewn Jerusalem and other cities, and especially Nazareth, and therein a virgin exceedingly white and fair. While gazing upon this scene, he beheld the heavens open, and an angel came down and stood before him, who explained to him the various scenes that were brought before his vision.

The virgin that Nephi saw was named Mary; she was the mother of Jesus. And the angel next shewed him the virgin with the babe in her arms. The angel also shewed him the Savior; how he should be baptized of John in the Jordan; how he went forth among the people preaching the gospel and doing marvelous works, and how that he was taken and crucified, and thus died for the sins of the world. Nephi further saw how the world fought against the disciples of Christ, and how, in the end, all those who contended against Heaven and against God's servants were destroyed.

Furthermore he was shewn the land of America filled with a numerous people, who were the seed of



VISION OF NEPHI.

his father. He also saw the terrible earthquakes and storms that took place on this land at the time of the crucifixion of the Redeemer.

He saw the Savior visit this land, and how he chose twelve disciples here and established his holy church. He saw the reign of profound peace that continued for three generations, and also the time of terrible wickedness that followed this blessed era. And there were shewn to him the final wars in which the Nephite nation was destroyed.

Nor was this all. Like a vast panorama, the kingdoms and nations of the Gentiles were presented to his view. He saw a man inspired by the Spirit of God cross the great waters which separated the Gentiles from the land on which the remnants of his father's seed dwelt, and that he was followed by numerous hosts of others who came out from the nations and occupied the land. He saw how the remnants of the seed of his father, the Indians, were abused, robbed and massacred by the Gentiles. Then the war of the revolution was shewn to him, the triumph of the colonies, and the growth of the people of this land in power and riches.

And again he saw the rise of a great and abominable church which exercised power and dominion over many peoples. It was the great apostate Christian Church which held sway after the true gospel ceased to exist on the earth by reason of the wickedness of mankind. Nephi also saw the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the establishment of the great Latter-day work, the preaching of the gospel to Gentile and Jew, and the final triumph of God's cause. Indeed he saw to the end of the world and thereafter ;

but much that he had revealed to him he was told not to write, as the Apostle John would have the same things shewn to him in a later day, and John would be instructed of the Lord to write the things which he heard and saw.

CHAPTER III.

MARRIAGES IN THE COMPANY—THE LIAHONA—THE JOURNEY CONTINUED—NEPHI BREAKS HIS BOW—DEATH OF ISHMAEL—THEY REACH THE OCEAN—NEPHI BUILDS A SHIP—THEY CROSS THE GREAT WATERS AND REACH THE PROMISED LAND.

WHILE the two families dwelt in the Valley of Lemuel they had a number of marriages. Zoram, Laban's servant, married Ishmael's eldest daughter, and each of Lehi's four sons married one of her sisters. We are not told whether Lehi's daughters were married at this time or not.

Soon after these marriages the voice of the Lord spake unto Lehi by night and commanded him that on the morrow he should resume his journey. When Lehi arose the next morning and went to the door of his tent he saw a strange object lying on the ground before him. It was a brass ball of very fine workmanship. Within this ball were two spindles or needles, one of which pointed the way that the little company should travel in the wilderness.

God had prepared this strange instrument or guide for them. In the days of Moses, when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, a pillar of cloud