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## The Book of Mormon Land - III. Nephi's Flight into the Wilderness

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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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overheard your companions trying to persuade you to do wrong, and knew they had failed, I felt thankful to God, who had heard our prayers and given you power to resist. Your companions did not get off, for they had been watched, and are now safely at home. A few weeks ago I should have had serious doubts as to whether a country boy, brought up simply as you have been, would be fit to encounter the temptations of a year of city life; but I have no misgivings now that you have proved yourself strong, and I have confidence to believe that you have too much love for your parents to disgrace them; and better than this, you know where to look for strength should your own fail."—*Selected.*

THE BOOK OF MORMON LAND.

III.

Nephi's Flight into the Wilderness.

BY HAGOTH.

THE Prophet Joseph located the landing of Lehi's company at the 30° south latitude, on the coast of Chili. Examining the map of that country we find a point of land extending out to sea, there, just north of which is a bay known as Coquimbo. As this is the only sheltered spot for some distance up or down the coast, we conclude that this was the place of landing.

To the north-east of the bay a little valley opens, through which a shallow river finds its way to the sea. To the east the great Andean range, with its numerous snow-capped peaks fills the whole horizon from north to south. To the south-east a ridge of hills of considerable elevation breaks off from the mountains, and running westward terminates in a rocky promontory just south of the bay, and shutting out the country in that direction. Northward the country may be considered as the western slope of the Andes. Near the base of the high range the country is 6,000 or 8,000 feet above the sea and lowers gradually to the west, terminating near the sea in an extensive plain, about twenty miles wide. The country between this plain and the mountains is very uneven, exhibiting numerous ridges of low hills.

For the most part the surface of the country is covered with bare rocks or wastes of sand almost without vegetation. A few stunted shrubs grow in the narrow ravines. Several small rivers rising in the Andes run in deep beds through the country, but most of them have water only in the spring, when the snow is melting in the mountains above, and they are dry during nine months of the year. But few spots in the valleys are fit for cultivation, owing to the existence of alkali in the soil. In some parts, however, corn, potatoes, wheat, and quantities of fruit are produced. Of the minerals gold, silver, copper, lead and iron abound.

The climate cannot be said to be hot or cold, the thermometer rarely attains more than 70°. In winter the morning dews are sometimes changed to frost. It never rains, but sometimes a pretty strong dew falls in the morning which freshens the plants.

This description will apply to the whole section of country from the 30° south latitude along the coast northward into Peru. On the east the Andes present one unbroken chain with but very few accessible passes, and these are from fourteen to fifteen thousand feet in elevation and can only be

utilized in the summer season. North of 20° south latitude the western slope is much higher, while the mountain range becomes much wider, breaking up into numerous peaks. The elevated slope on the west makes it much easier to pass this range here than further south.

Such in brief is the description of the country where Nephi landed. Not long after the landing, being warned of the Lord, he fled from Laman and Lemuel and those who sought his life. It would be but natural that in their flight they would choose the direction which appeared most favorable, which would not be towards the mountain barrier of the east, nor towards the south for that appeared rugged and uninviting. To the north only was the way free from obstacles. This belief is confirmed by the fact that later we find them located northward.

When the Spanish came into the country they found a paved road traversing the shores of Lake Titicaca crossing the Andes at about the 18° south latitude and running along the base of the mountains down into Chili. The Incas are said to have constructed this road after their conquest of Chili. The distance from Nephi's landing to Lake Titicaca by this road is about 1,200 miles, and I am of the opinion that it is about the route he took in his flight. It certainly would require many days to make the journey.

Tradition points to the shores of Lake Titicaca as the place where the Indian civilization originated. From that place Manco Capac and his sister started on their mission to gather the natives into communities and teach them the arts of civilized life. They bore with them a golden wedge and were directed to take up their residence at the spot where the sacred emblem should, without effort, sink into the ground. The valley of Cuzco is said to be the spot where the wedge sank into the earth and disappeared, and there they built their city.

Very little reliance can be placed in those old traditions, though Manco Capac may represent some person of note way back in the dim vista of the past, perhaps Nephi himself, and the story of the golden wedge may have been traditionary mumblings concerning that sacred ball or compass which the Nephites carried with them and which directed their journeyings. At any rate there existed a civilization on the shores of this lake long before the time of the Incas, and that they descended from it, or were familiar at one time with its history would appear from their traditions.

PARTING.—There is one warning lesson in life which few of us have not received, and no book that I can call to memory has noted down with an adequate emphasis. It is this, "Beware of parting." The true sadness is not in the pain of the parting—it is in the when and the how you are to meet again with the face about to vanish from your view; from the passionate farewell to the woman who has your heart in her keeping, to the cordial good-bye exchanged with pleasant companions at a watering-place, a country house, or the close of a festive day's blithe and careless excursion—a chord, stronger or weaker, is snapped asunder in every parting, and time's busy fingers are not practised in re-splicing broken ties. Meet again you may: will it be in the same way? with the same sympathies? with the same sentiments? Will the souls, hurrying on in diverse paths, unite once more, as if the interval had been a dream? Rarely, rarely.