Why Look to "the Stick of Joseph" as a Standard

Chapter 5: Choice Above All Other Lands

Ezekiel 37:15-20 – *…Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.*

Prepared by
Elder Dwight Burford
hisworkmanship.net
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Chapter 5
Choice Above All Other Lands

The Book of Mormon provides us with an abundance of details[101] about Manasseh's small remnant which God led out of the land of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to an inheritance in the land blessed for them by Jacob and Moses.[102] With these unique details come fresh insights into the fulfillment of the prophetic blessings given to Joseph and his posterity.

Some of these insights are highlighted in this and the next few chapters of this study. First, we will consider how God typified or prefigured Joseph's land (described in Deuteronomy 33:13-17) by the expansive double portion of land his firstborn son Manasseh received for an inheritance in Abraham's covenant land.

Recall how Manasseh's inheritance in Abraham's land was divided by the Jordan River, as depicted in Chapter 3 of this study. This division in Manasseh's initial land of inheritance prefigured an essential element included in Moses' blessing of Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:17. There we read of how Moses said Joseph's posterity (via Ephraim and Manasseh) would be pushed to *the ends of the earth*. Of necessity then, Joseph's land would extend over the oceans dividing the land masses of the earth.[103] One part of Manasseh's inheritance would be located in Abraham's covenant land with the other portion located at the ends of the earth. The ocean between them was typified by the Jordan River.

Recall also how Joshua was the one chosen by the Lord God of Israel to lead the children of Israel into their inheritances in the land promised to Abraham.[104] The allotment of land he oversaw going to Manasseh's posterity showed that Joshua honored Manasseh's birthright as Joseph's firstborn.[105] This is important because, as noted previously, Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and Jacob had set Ephraim ahead of Manasseh in his house.

The relationship between the precious land granted to Joseph and to his posterity by way of Joshua are shown here by comparing the map to the right with the map presented previously in Chapter 3.[106] Drawing a comparison between these two maps is meant to illustrate that Joseph's land extended to the Americas where the Book of Mormon was unearthed and interpreted by the gift and power of God.[107]

Another type of Joseph's land is revealed by recalling how Joseph lived most of his life in Egypt, a land divided by the river of Egypt, called the Nile River today. This special river is the first of the two boundaries of the land promised to Abraham and his posterity.[108] In keeping with this pattern established

[101] e.g. I Nephi 1:53,54 & I Nephi 5:79-83 with Alma 21:54-60
[102] Deuteronomy 33:13-17 & Genesis 48:1-20
[103] I Chronicles 5:1,2 with Genesis 48:5, Joshua 17:1 & Jeremiah 30:6-(9)10; cf. Jacob 3:133,134 with III Nephi 7:16; since Manasseh holds the birthright of the house of Israel with Ephraim, this land is part of Israel's overall lands of inheritance.
[104] Numbers 27:18-23 with Deuteronomy 31:1-8; see also Numbers 13:8 with Numbers 13:16 & Numbers 14:6
[105] cf. Joshua 17:1 with I Chronicles 5:1,2; but also note how Ephraim would be called the Lord's firstborn in Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the establishment of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 8:7-13).
[106] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean
[107] Title Page of BoM with D&C 2:6a-e, D&C 3:10c-15e, D&C 17:2c-g, etc.
[108] cf. Genesis 15:18 with Psalm 105:17-24 & I Nephi 1:164-166

by Joseph living in a land divided by a river of water, Joseph's posterity would then be given an inheritance on both sides of this border (wall) of Abraham's covenant land. Again, we see that one portion was divided from the other by water, with one part of Manasseh's land on a shore distant from Abraham's land—a land at the ends of the earth to which they would be driven by Joseph's *horns*.[109]

Yet another way the Book of Mormon reveals the prophetic nature of Manasseh's double portion of land is found in the words of its first author, Nephi. He recorded how the Lord promised to direct him and the rest of his father's family across a large body of water to a *land of promise* that was distinct and distant from the land of Jerusalem.[110] Nephi was told it would be *a land which is choice above all other lands*. This included Abraham's covenant land, which was the land of his initial inheritance and the one whose *wall* or border (marked by the river of Egypt) he had to cross to come to his promised land.[111]

> I Nephi 1:53,54 – *And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying, Blessed art thou Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.*
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> I Nephi 5:79-83 – *Wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall be led toward the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led. Yea, and the Lord said also, that after ye have arrived to the promised land, ye shall know that I, the Lord, am God; and that I, the Lord, did deliver you from destruction; yea, that I did bring you out of the land of Jerusalem. Wherefore, I, Nephi, did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to faithfulness and diligence.*

Nephi's description of this *choice land* agrees well with Moses' declaration over Joseph that his posterity would be pushed to a *land* having many *precious* things, as described in Deuteronomy 33:13-17.[112] Lehi also agreed with Moses' description of this land by referring to it as *a most precious land* when consecrating it to Joseph, his youngest son.

> II Nephi 2:3-7 – *And may the Lord consecrate also unto thee this land, which is* ***a most precious land****, for thine inheritance and the inheritance of thy seed with thy brethren, for thy security forever, if it so be that ye shall keep the commandments of the Holy One of Israel. And now Joseph, my last born whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, May the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed; for behold, thou art the fruit of my loins and I am a descendant of Joseph which was carried captive into Egypt; and great were the covenants of the Lord which He made unto Joseph. Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day; and he obtained a promise of the Lord that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel…*

Given the written testimonies of Lehi and Nephi and the prophetic blessings of Jacob and Moses, we can anticipate that such revelations provided in the Book of Mormon will not remain lost forever to a remnant of Manasseh's posterity; neither will they continue to be lost to all Israel or to the world at large.[113] For just as the knowledge of Joseph was lost to Israel (Jacob) for a season and then he was returned to Israel's household in prominence, so will this remnant of Joseph be brought to the knowledge of all Israel in prominence, although they have been separated for many generations.

In summary, the Book of Mormon reveals how a remnant of Manasseh had been pushed over the *wall* or border of Abraham's covenant land to a *choice* land having many *precious* things at the ends of the earth. Based on the foregoing considerations, it should not be surprising then to learn of a remnant of Joseph's posterity by records unearthed in this land and made known to the world in 1830, beginning in Joseph's land.

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[109] Genesis 49:22 with Deuteronomy 33:13-17
[110] Ether 1:29-43 & Ether 6:2 with I Nephi 1:53,54 & I Nephi 5:70-82
[111] Genesis 49:22 with John 15:1-3
[112] cf. II Nephi 2:3 with Deuteronomy 33:13-17; see also I Nephi 5:129 with Jacob 2:14, Jarom 1:19 & Helaman 2:128-130
[113] cf. I Nephi 7:22-25, III Nephi 7:36-45 & III Nephi 9:48-80 with Deuteronomy 33:13-17 & Genesis 48:1-20