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Chapter VI

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Abstract: Return into Wilderness—Joy of Lehi and Sariah—Lehi a Visionary Man—Sariah's Grief and Murmuring—Her Subsequent Testimony—Sacrifice and Burnt Offerings—The Brass Plates—Their Contents—Lehi a Descendant of Joseph—Value of These Records to his Descendants—Another Colony of Jews—Lost Knowledge of Hebrew Language and of God—Nephi a Great Benefactor—He and Brothers Again Required to Visit Jerusalem—Ishmael and Family—Laman and Lemuel Stir up Mutiny—Want to Return to Jerusalem—Bind Nephi—Intend to Leave him to Perish—Nephi's Prayer—His Bands Burst—The Others Plead for him—Revulsion of Feeling on Part of his Brothers—Beg his Forgiveness—Rejoin Lehi and Sariah—Thanksgiving and Sacrifices and Burnt Offerings

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN INTO WILDERNESS—JOY OF LEHI AND SARIAH—LEHI A VISIONARY MAN—SARIAH'S GRIEF AND MURMURING—HER SUBSEQUENT TESTIMONY—SACRIFICE AND BURNT OFFERINGS—THE BRASS PLATES—THEIR CONTENTS—LEHI A DESCENDANT OF JOSEPH—VALUE OF THESE RECORDS TO HIS DESCENDANTS—ANOTHER COLONY OF JEWS—LOST KNOWLEDGE OF HEBREW LANGUAGE AND OF GOD—NEPHI A GREAT BENEFACTOR—HE AND BROTHERS AGAIN REQUIRED TO VISIT JERUSALEM—ISHMAEL AND FAMILY—LAMAN AND LEMUEL STIR UP MUTINY—WANT TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM—BIND NEPHI—INTEND TO LEAVE HIM TO PERISH—NEPHI'S PRAYER—HIS BANDS BURST—THE OTHERS PLEAD FOR HIM—REVULSION OF FEELING ON PART OF HIS BROTHERS—BEG HIS FORGIVENESS—REJOIN LEHI AND SARIAH—THANKSGIVING AND SACRIFICES AND BURNT OFFERINGS.

THE return of the young men to the tent of Lehi in the wilderness, was a cause of great joy to their parents, and especially to their mother, Sariah. She had mourned with all a mother's anxiety for them, supposing that they had perished in the wilderness. Possessed of this idea, and thinking doubtless of the comforts they had left at Jerusalem, she had, while they were gone, complained against Lehi and called him a visionary man, accused him of bringing them from their home, and now her sons were dead, and they themselves would perish in the wilderness. This style of talk must have been very unpleasant for Lehi. It was bad enough to endure the taunts and persecutions of the Jews, and the unbelief and stubbornness of his eldest sons; but how very painful to witness the tears and deep grief of his wife, and to hear her make such accusations as these! He did what he could to comfort

her; for, like others who yield to such a spirit—she felt as badly over the imaginary loss of her sons and over her own and husband's death, as if she would never see her sons alive again, and as if she and Lehi were about to perish. He told her he knew he was a visionary man; for if he had not seen the things of God in a vision, he would not have known the goodness of God, but had remained in Jerusalem and perished. Now he rejoiced in having obtained a land of promise. As for their sons, he knew that the Lord would deliver them from Laban, and bring them safely back to them in the wilderness.

The return of her sons comforted Sariah; she saw that her reproaches and fears had been without cause, and she bore testimony that she knew the Lord had commanded her husband to come into the wilderness, and that He had also protected her sons and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power to accomplish that which He had commanded them. No doubt all were happy—Lehi and Sariah in having their children restored to them alive and well, and their sons at their escape and safe return with the brass plates for which they had been sent, and Zoram that he was a free man. Sacrifice and burnt offerings were offered unto the Lord by them and they gave thanks unto Him. An examination by Lehi of the records upon the plates disclosed their great value. They contained the five books of Moses, including an account of the creation of the world, and of Adam and Eve, our first parents; also a record of the Jews from the beginning to the commencement of King Zedekiah's reign; also the prophecies of the holy prophets during the same period, and also many prophecies which had been spoken by Jeremiah. He also found upon them a genealogy of his fathers. He was, as this proved, a descendant of Joseph, who was sold by his brethren and carried as a bondman into Egypt. Laban also was of the same descent. He and his father had kept the records, and probably because they were an older branch of the family. While looking at these things the spirit of prophecy rested upon Lehi concerning his seed, and he predicted many things in relation to them; among others, that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and

people who were of his seed; therefore they should never perish, nor be dimmed any more by time.

These records proved invaluable to that portion of Lehi's family who strove to keep the commandments of the Lord; for by their means they were kept from falling into many errors, and a knowledge of the things of God was kept before them. Another colony of Jews left Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi, and they were also led to this continent; but they had no records with them. Their language became so corrupted that when they were found by the descendants of Nephi, sometime near the close of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, after Lehi left Jerusalem, they could not understand their language. Not only had they lost the knowledge of the Hebrew language; but they had lost the knowledge of God and denied His being. We find several allusions throughout the Book of Mormon, by prominent men among the Nephites, to the great value of these plates and to the benefits the records they contained had been to the nation. Thus it is that the faith and energy of one man has frequently been of immense importance to future generations and peoples. To Laman and Lemuel the possession of these plates was not worth struggling or taking any risks for; so far as they were concerned posterity could go without them. But not so with Nephi. His willingness to do as the Lord commanded, and his determination not to be baffled, even though he incurred the risk of losing his life, opened his eyes to see the importance of these records. He was a great benefactor in this respect to his posterity, and the descendants also of his brothers reaped many advantages from them, and in days to come they will still prove a great blessing to them. It is frequently the case that, by apparently small and insignificant means, the Lord brings to pass great and important results. The obtaining of these plates was of incalculable benefit in maintaining and spreading the true civilization of the Nephite nation.

Shortly after the return of Nephi and his brothers to their parents, the Lord again spoke to Lehi, and gave him a commandment that they should proceed once more to Jerusalem and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness. The reason for this was that it was not proper that

Lehi should take his family into the wilderness alone: but that his sons should have wives, so that they could have children in the land of promise. Their mission was successful. They spoke the words of the Lord unto Ishmael, and the Lord gave them favor in his sight and softened the hearts of himself and household, and they returned with them to Lehi's camp. We are not informed exactly what the number of Ishmael's family was; but we are led to suppose that it consisted of himself and wife, two sons who also had families, and five unmarried daughters. There may have been more than these; but if so they are not mentioned. It is believed by many, upon the authority of a remark which the Prophet Joseph is said to have made, that Ishmael was a descendant of Joseph. We did not hear the Prophet make this statement, but we feel assured it is so from the testimony of Elder Franklin D. Richards, who heard him say that such was the case. The blood of Ephraim was thus brought to this continent.

While they were traveling from Jerusalem to where Lehi was encamped, Laman and Lemuel had another outbreak. Who was the cause of it we are not told: but they and two of the daughters and two of the sons of Ishmael and the families of the latter, combined against Nephi, Sam, Ishmael and his wife, and their three daughters. They wanted to return to Jerusalem. Nephi, in speaking of this disturbance, calls their conduct, "rebellion." Whether Laman and Lemuel were restive and angry because of his superiority, as they often were subsequently, or not, we are not informed. But Nephi spoke to his brothers as though they were the leaders in this attempt to split the company and return to Jerusalem. He said that as his elder brothers they should not put him, the younger, under the necessity of speaking to them as he did and setting them an example. He appealed strongly to them, and warned them as to what their fate would be if they should return to Jerusalem. But his words only aroused their anger. It got to such a pitch that they seized and tied him fast with cords, with the design to leave him in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts.

There is no spirit so cruel and inhuman as that which prompts men to fight against the truth. Under its influence

they go to the most extreme lengths. They will tell the most abominable lies, resort to every kind of violence, and shed the blood of innocence, even of those who are their nearest and best friends, and all this apparently, as though they were doing praiseworthy acts. It was this spirit which stirred up men in days of old to kill the prophets and to crucify the Son of God, and it is the same spirit which has prompted men in these days to persecute and kill the Prophets and Saints of God. What an awful act of cruelty this was which they proposed, to leave their youngest brother, a mere boy, tied hand and foot to be devoured by wild beasts! But their design was not to be accomplished. The Lord was near Nephi. He cried unto Him for deliverance and asked for strength to burst the bands with which he was fastened. He had no sooner offered his prayer than it was granted. The bands were loosed from his hands and feet, and he stood before them and spoke to them again. Their anger was not appeased even at this. They tried to get hold of him again. Then several of the company interposed. One of the girls and her mother and also one of the sons of Ishmael plead with them on his behalf. They succeeded in turning them from their purpose. A revulsion of feeling followed. They became sorrowful for what they had done, and bowed down before Nephi and begged him to forgive them; but he told them to pray to the Lord for forgiveness. They did so, and the journey was resumed. We may be sure that Lehi and Sariah felt very happy to see once more their sons with their old neighbors, Ishmael, and wife and their family and to have such an addition to their company. Thanks were offered unto the Lord, as well as sacrifice and burnt offering.