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Chapter VII

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Abstract: Lehi's Dream, or Vision—Rejoices Because of Nephi and Sam—Fears Concerning Laman and Lemuel—His Entreaties to Them—Gathered Seeds and Grain—Five Marriages—Lehi had Faithfully kept Commandments of the Lord—Nephi's Development—Experience in Wilderness Necessary to Prepare Colony for the Future—Lehi Commanded to Travel—Miraculous Brass Ball, called Liahona—How it Operated—Travel in S. S. E. Direction—Hunt for Game—Led Through most Fertile parts of the Desert

CHAPTER VII.

LEHI'S DREAM, OR VISION—REJOICES BECAUSE OF NEPHI AND SAM—FEARS CONCERNING LAMAN AND LEMUEL—HIS ENTREATIES TO THEM—GATHERED SEEDS AND GRAIN—FIVE MARRIAGES—LEHI HAD FAITHFULLY KEPT COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD—NEPHI'S DEVELOPMENT—EXPERIENCE IN WILDERNESS NECESSARY TO PREPARE COLONY FOR THE FUTURE—LEHI COMMANDED TO TRAVEL—MIRACULOUS BRASS BALL, CALLED LIAHONA—HOW IT OPERATED—TRAVEL IN S. S. E. DIRECTION—HUNT FOR GAME—LED THROUGH MOST FERTILE PARTS OF THE DESERT.

WHILE they were still encamped in the valley of Lemuel, Lehi had a very important dream, or vision, which caused him to rejoice because of Nephi and Sam; for he had reason to suppose that they and many of their posterity would be saved. He told Laman and Lemuel that he feared exceedingly because of them. He related what he had seen to his family, and he exhorted Laman and Lemuel, with all the feeling of a father who loved his children and was anxious for their salvation, to hearken to his words. He preached and prophesied unto them, and bade them keep the commandments of the Lord, that they might not be cast off from His presence. He also continued his conversation to his family upon other subjects connected with the Jews and their future. Nephi also about this time had remarkable manifestations given by the Lord to him.

It is evident they remained in this valley of Lemuel for some time. Whether they cultivated the ground and raised crops we are not informed; but we are informed by Nephi in his record, directly after he and his brothers had returned accompanied by Ishmael and his family, to his father's camp in the valley of Lemuel, that they "had gathered together all manner of seeds of various kinds, both of grain of every kind,

and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind." While they were yet in this valley of Lemuel five marriages were arranged and consummated. Nephi and his three brothers took each a daughter of Ishmael to wife, and Zoram married the eldest daughter. We may well suppose that Nephi married the girl who plead so earnestly in his behalf on the journey from Jerusalem, when his brothers were so enraged as to desire to take his life. Such love and devotion as she then exhibited would be likely to awaken feelings of admiration in him for her, even if no more tender feeling had been in his breast before.

Thus far Lehi had faithfully fulfilled all the commandments of the Lord which he had received. He had forsaken his home, had launched into the wilderness with his family, had obtained the necessary records to preserve the knowledge of God and all the prophecies of the holy prophets, had his company strengthened by the addition of Ishmael and his family, and now had the gratification of seeing his sons united to wives. The Lord had been with him and blessed him, and he was now in a better condition to cut loose from the rest of the world and to fulfill the destiny the Lord had in store for him and his people than when he first escaped from Jerusalem. His stay in the valley of Lemuel had, therefore, been necessary to effect these preparations. Nephi also during this period had emerged from boyhood to manhood. Under the influence of the Spirit and revelations of the Lord, his character had rapidly developed. Though young in years he was now an experienced man, full of that confidence, self-reliance and fearlessness which the consciousness of being a servant of the Lord, of being acknowledged and sustained as such by Him, always brings. However weak he might be himself, he knew that in the strength of the Lord he could accomplish whatever might be required of him. His energy, robust faith and willing obedience must have been a great comfort and help to his father in those days. Nephi had this advantage: he was young and vigorous, and could the more readily adapt himself to the new methods of life which they had to adopt in the wilderness; while Lehi, more advanced in years, would find traveling in this wild and desert country, and enduring the hardships they

had to encounter, a very great change from the mode of life to which he had been accustomed in Jerusalem. Though they were now in these favorable circumstances for the prosecution of the enterprise required of them by the Lord, they had yet to gain an experience, hard and trying to their feelings and faith, without which they would not be fully prepared for that which they had to do. Their forefathers, after escaping from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, were not permitted to enter into and possess the land at once. They had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. It was not necessary that so much time should be consumed by the children of Israel in going from Egypt to Canaan; but it was necessary that, before entering into that land and changing from a condition of slavery, such as they occupied in Egypt, under the iron rule of Pharaoh, to that of a free people—rulers in fact—with full power to enact and execute laws to govern themselves, their land and the surrounding peoples, they should have experience. Stubborn and rebellious as they were, it required forty years to give them the necessary schooling, during which period all who, at the time they left Egypt, were over twenty years of age—with two notable exceptions, Caleb and Joshua—passed off and a new generation took their places. So in the case of Lehi and family and company, they needed training, though not for so long a period as their forefathers. While they were inexperienced, trifles annoyed and worried them; they had not learned to patiently endure and submit to privations and hardships. Their previous lives had been passed, doubtless, in circumstances of ease and plenty: want had been unknown to them; but they now had to lead a new life; the comforts to which they had been accustomed they had to dispense with and not complain at their loss. In the beginning of their experience in the wilderness many things were viewed as afflictions and dreadful to bear which, after a few years of such life, they scarcely noticed; so easy is it for people, especially if sustained by the Spirit of the Lord and the knowledge that they are obeying His requirements, to accommodate themselves to new circumstances and conditions of life.

After all these preparations had been made in the valley of Lemuel, the voice of the Lord came to Lehi, in the night, and

commanded 'him to take his journey into the wilderness the next day. When he arose in the morning and went to the door of his tent, to his great astonishment he saw, lying upon the ground, a fine brass ball of curious workmanship. Within the ball were two spindles; one of these pointed the way they should go in the wilderness. This ball, or director, was called Liahona, the interpretation of which is, a compass. But it differed in several respects from what are known as compasses.*

We are told by Alma the prophet that "there cannot any man work after the manner of so curious a workmanship." It was prepared by the Lord to show unto Lehi and his company the course which they should travel in the wilderness. And it worked for them according to their faith in the Lord—the pointers moving according to the faith, and diligence and heed which they gave unto them. There was another peculiarity about this curious instrument: there was written upon these pointers a writing plain to be read, which gave them understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and this was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which they gave unto it. Had they always paid strict attention to this writing, and not been slothful and careless, they would have traveled a direct course, and made greater progress in the wilderness, and would not have been so much

*—In this connection it may be of interest to say a few words about what is known as the mariner's compass. It is claimed that the Chinese used the compass at a very early period; and it is thought probably that Marco Polo, the traveler, introduced it to Europe from China, about 1290 A. D., twelve years before Gioja, of Amalfi, its supposed inventor.

"Some people contend that the compass is no new invention; but that the ancients were acquainted with it. They say that it was impossible for Solomon to have sent ships to Ophir, Tarshish and Parvaim, without this useful instrument. They insist that it was impossible for the ancients to be acquainted with the attractive virtue of the magnet, and to be ignorant of its polarity; nay, they affirm that this property of the magnet is plainly mentioned in the book of Job, where the loadstone is mentioned by the name of *topaz*, or *the stone that turns itself*." Ency. Brit.

afflicted by hunger and thirst; but Laman and Lemuel and their brothers-in-law, the sons of Ishmael, were frequently in transgression. The children of Israel were led through the wilderness in the days of Moses "by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night." We are told that "God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way." In like manner the Lord designed that Lehi and his company should be led by the compass which had been so wonderfully given them.

After receiving the compass they gathered up all that they could carry with them, and the remainder of the provisions which the Lord had given them, and seed of every kind, and their tents, and crossing the river Laman, they traveled for four days, in nearly a south by south-east direction until they came to a place which they called Shazer. Here they camped until they could hunt for game to sustain their families. We suppose that in the wilderness in this neighborhood wild animals were numerous, and they, therefore selected it as a temporary stopping place. Their method of hunting was with bows and arrows, stones and slings. After collecting what they had killed they returned to their families at Shazer. From this place³ they traveled in the same course—S. S. E.—following the direction of the compass, which led in the most fertile parts of the desert, and which were near the Red Sea.