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Chapter VIII

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Abstract: Travel in Desert—Kill Game by the Way—Uncooked Meat their Food—Nephi Breaks his Bow—Fails to Obtain Food—Laman and Others Complain Bitterly—Lehi, also, Murmurs—Nephi Keeps his Patience and Courage—Remonstrates with his Brothers—Makes a Wooden Bow—Lehi very Sorrowful—Sees Writing on the Brass Ball—Nephi Goes for Game in Direction Indicated—Company Filled with Joy through his Obtaining Food—Resume Travel—Ishmael's Death—His Character—Outbreak and Rebellion of Part of his Children against Lehi and Nephi—Laman proposes to Kill the Two Latter—Attachment to Birthplace

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAVEL IN DESERT—KILL GAME BY THE WAY—UNCOOKED MEAT THEIR FOOD—NEPHI BREAKS HIS BOW—FAILS TO OBTAIN FOOD—LAMAN AND OTHERS COMPLAIN BITTERLY—LEHI, ALSO, MURMURS—NEPHI KEEPS HIS PATIENCE AND COURAGE—REMONSTRATES WITH HIS BROTHERS—MAKES A WOODEN BOW—LEHI VERY SORROWFUL—SEES WRITING ON THE BRASS BALL—NEPHI GOES FOR GAME IN DIRECTION INDICATED—COMPANY FILLED WITH JOY THROUGH HIS OBTAINING FOOD—RESUME TRAVEL—ISHMAEL'S DEATH—HIS CHARACTER—OUTBREAK AND REBELLION OF PART OF HIS CHILDREN AGAINST LEHI AND NEPHI—LAMAN PROPOSES TO KILL THE TWO LATTER—ATTACHMENT TO BIRTHPLACE.

IN looking through the description of a journey in this country by a traveler of the name of Wallin (*Jour. of Geog. Soc.*, 1854, page 161) we were struck with the remarkable coincidence between the direction in which he traveled and that traveled by Lehi and company, upwards of twenty-four centuries before. He says:

“The direction was in general during the whole of our route S.S.E., according to the rule which the people of that land give a traveler about to traverse this desert, ‘so to direct his course that he always has the polar star on his left shoulder-blade.’”

As they traveled they killed game by the way; occasionally camping to rest and obtain more food. We are not told what the wild animals were which they used for food; but in modern times the gazelle, antelope and mountain goat are numerous in that region, and are hunted by the Arabs; the flesh of the goat, especially, is excellent. The ostrich also is common, partridges and quails and pigeons of various kinds are plentiful, as also wild ducks, along the coast of the Red Sea. Some of the mountains in these days are said to abound in game. The ass

runs wild in many parts and is hunted by the Arabs, but only for the sake of his skin. Doubtless Lehi and his company found the game very abundant in places. These places would be selected for their camps while they rested and obtained new supplies; for meat was their principal if not sole diet while in the wilderness, and this uncooked, or raw. The Lord did not suffer them to make much fire, for He had said to them: "I will make thy food become sweet. that ye cook it not." It is probable that when they secured a quantity of game they dried the meat so that it would be lighter to carry and keep better; this they could do in that climate without the aid of fires.

At one of their camping places, where they had stopped for the purposes of resting and obtaining food, Nephi, while out hunting, had the misfortune to break his bow, which was made of fine steel. It seems from the effect this accident had upon his brothers, that Nephi was the best and most skillful hunter of the party and their chief dependence to procure them food. They were angry with him because he had broken his bow; "for," as the record says, "we did obtain no food." They had to return to their families without any, and as they were all much fatigued with traveling, they suffered considerably for the want of something to eat. This, added to their other privations and afflictions, was more than Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael would patiently bear. They complained bitterly of their sufferings; but bad feelings were not confined to them upon this sorrowful and trying occasion, even Lehi himself, "began to murmur against the Lord, his God." Though Nephi was afflicted with the rest, he did not lose his patience or self-control. He remonstrated with his brothers for their complaints against the Lord; and as their bows had lost their spring and appeared to be of no value as weapons of the chase, he found himself under the necessity of making a wooden bow and arrow. Having done this, and being provided with a sling and with stones, he asked his father in what direction he should go to obtain food. It seems that his energetic words and remonstrances had had the effect to cause them to humble themselves. It will be noticed that it was to his brothers his remonstrances were addressed. He had been

told that he should be their ruler and their teacher. It was quite proper, therefore, that he should correct them. But not so with his father. He was still his leader, and he looked up to and honored him. Yet Lehi must have heard what he said to his brethren, and his remarks must have had their effect upon him.

Lehi saw his sin in murmuring against the Lord, and he was chastened and brought down into the depths of sorrow. The voice of the Lord said to him, in reply to his inquiry: "Look upon the ball and behold the things which are written." We are not told what was there written; but the effect of reading it was to cause Lehi and his sons and Ishmael's sons and the women to fear and tremble exceedingly. Nephi was directed by the ball to go to the top of the mountain, where he succeeded in killing several wild animals, which he carried back to camp. Supplied once more with food, the people were filled with joy, and they humbled themselves before the Lord, and gave Him thanks.

For some time after leaving this camping place they traveled S.S.E., and stopped at a suitable spot. Here Ishmael died, and was buried at a place which was called Nahom. From all that is said of Ishmael we should infer that he was a patient, humble and faithful man. In all the outbreaks of his sons and two daughters and sons-in-law, Laman and Lemuel, he is not mentioned as giving them any support or countenance. On the contrary, at the time the family was on the way from Jerusalem to the valley of Lemuel, and Laman and Lemuel and his sons and two daughters expressed the determination to go back to Jerusalem. it was against Ishmael and wife, and three daughters and Sam and himself, as Nephi informs us, they rebelled. It is clear that he did not desire to go back. He had set his face to serve the Lord and was determined, apparently, to obey Him.

His death was a severe blow to his family. It was seized by some of them as an occasion for another outbreak. His daughters mourned exceedingly at his departure. This appeared to them to be the climax of all their troubles. They had been wandering for a long time in the wilderness; they had suffered from hunger, thirst and fatigue; they had been afflicted with

the heat and doubtless with the poisonous siroccos of the desert; and now, to crown all, their father had died, and staring them in the face, there was the probability that they themselves would perish in the wilderness from hunger. Their murmuring and discontent found vent against Lehi. He was the author, they thought, of all their misery. He had led them away from their pleasant home at Jerusalem. He had launched them upon this new and distasteful life, and in this he had been aided by Nephi, whom they looked upon as being as bad as he. They wanted to return to Jerusalem. Two of these daughters of Ishmael were the wives of Laman and Lemuel. Nephi, Sam and Zoram had each a wife of the same family. It is not probable that these last indulged in these unreasonable and wicked feelings and talk. But without doubt the two former did, as well as their brother's wives. Laman was aroused by their grief and their complaints. They gave voice to the thoughts which he himself entertained. He therefore proposed to Lemuel and to his brothers-in-law, the sons of Ishmael, that they should kill his father, Lehi, and his brother, Nephi. He accused Nephi of taking it upon him to be their ruler and their teacher. They were his older brothers, and what right had he to do this? "Now," said he, "Nephi says the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But, behold, we know he lies unto us. He tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away unto some strange wilderness; and after he has lead us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure." He and his father, he said, were alike. It was upon their ideas the company was acting and by which it was led.

This was Laman's method of arousing hatred against his father and brother. His plan was to kill them; then what would hinder him and those who thought as he did from getting control and leading the company back to Jerusalem? Their old home appeared to be ever in the thoughts of Laman and Lemuel. They seemed to entertain no doubts about its safety and prosperity, notwithstanding all that their father and

their brother Nephi had said to them upon the subject. It was with great reluctance that they left their native city, Jerusalem. They were never satisfied with their father for leading them away from there. While indulging in their frequent fits of murmuring they accused him of being visionary and of being misled by his foolish imaginations.



CHAPTER IX.

POPULAR AT JERUSALEM TO REJECT PROPHETS—LAMAN AND LEMUEL DID NOT BELIEVE PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THAT CITY—CONFIDENCE OF JEWS IN JERUSALEM—GLORY OF THE CITY—THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE—CAPTURE OF THE CITY—THE CONSPIRATORS CHASTENED—LEHI AND NEPHI SAVED.

LAMAN and Lemuel were evidently full of the ideas which were popular in Jerusalem at the time they lived there. It was the popular thing at that time to reject the predictions and warnings of Jeremiah and the other prophets concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the killing of many of its inhabitants, and the carrying away captive of many unto Babylon. We are warranted in believing that these young men had but little faith in these predictions. They had a good inheritance at Jerusalem. Their father, Lehi, was a man of wealth there, having an abundance of gold and silver and other precious things. They could see no sense in the movement which he had made, in leaving his comfortable and pleasant surroundings and taking his journey into the wilderness. At no time during their wanderings do they appear to have had any faith in what their father said should be the fate of Jerusalem.

The confidence of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem and its high destiny was something very extraordinary. Their great men and prophets had rejoiced in the walls and bulwarks of its glorious temple. They had uttered many promises and predictions concerning the city and its great destiny. These