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Chapter XVI

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Abstract: Nephi's Efforts to Save His Brethren—Nephi, Commanded of the Lord, Flees into the Wilderness—His Company—His Sisters—Carries Plates of Brass and other Records—The Liahona and Sword of Laban with Him—Nephi called a Liar and a Robber—Searches the Scriptures—Two Sets of Plates—Character of Records on Each—Plates made for a Special Purpose—Found by Mormon—Wisdom of God Greater than Cunning of Devil—The Prophet Joseph Delivered from a Snare

CHAPTER XVI.

NEPHI'S EFFORTS TO SAVE HIS BRETHREN—NEPHI, COMMANDED OF THE LORD, FLEES INTO THE WILDERNESS—HIS COMPANY—HIS SISTERS—CARRIES PLATES OF BRASS AND OTHER RECORDS—THE LIAHONA AND SWORD OF LABAN WITH HIM—NEPHI CALLED A LIAR AND A ROBBER—SEARCHES THE SCRIPTURES—TWO SETS OF PLATES—CHARACTER OF RECORDS ON EACH—PLATES MADE FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE—FOUND BY MORMON—WISDOM OF GOD GREATER THAN CUNNING OF DEVIL—THE PROPHET JOSEPH DELIVERED FROM A SNARE.

FOR many years Nephi had done all in his power to sustain the influence of his father with his brothers. In company with his father he had labored steadily to induce them to live righteously and to obey the commandments of God. He had exhausted every means to induce them to dwell in union, peace and love. There was nothing more he could do, except to become a victim to their blind and cruel rage. But this, in the providence of the Lord, was not required of him. The Lord had another work for Nephi, so He warned him to flee into the wilderness, and leave his wicked brothers and associates to themselves. Those who accompanied Nephi in this flight were all who believed in the warnings and revelations of God. They accepted the word of the Lord as it came to him concerning this departure. The record informs us that they were his own family, Zoram and his family, Sam and his family, his brothers Jacob and Joseph and his sisters and others. The names of his sisters are not given, and we are not told how many there were, or who the others were who accompanied him. With their tents and everything which it was possible for them to carry, they took their journey into the wilderness. Nephi was careful to have all the records of his people with him. He had the plates of brass which were obtained from Laban, and his father, and his father Lehi's record, and the records he had

kept himself, and also the ball or compass, which was prepared of the Lord for Lehi, and the sword of Laban.

We are not informed what the feelings of Laman and Lemuel were respecting Nephi's keeping possession of the brass plates, the record of Lehi and the ball or compass which the Lord had prepared for Lehi; but it is not too much to suppose that while they kept no records themselves upon plates, and therefore placed no value upon them, they were angry at Nephi for taking these with him. They probably accused him of robbing them; for, about five centuries after this, we find (Alma xx. 13) that the tradition among their descendants was that Nephi was not only a liar, but had robbed their fathers. Nephi, himself, was very particular about keeping records. He taught his people to value the written word. He doubtless devised means of giving them copies of that which had been written, for in the days of his brother Jacob the sudden and awful death of a teacher of false doctrine who had led many astray, caused the people, as we are told (Jacob vii. 23), to search the scriptures. We conclude from this that copies of the writings upon the brass plates must have been accessible to them.

By the command of the Lord, Nephi made two sets of plates, on which to keep the records of his people. The first set of these plates contained in great fullness and detail the history of the people of Nephi. Upon them Nephi engraved the record of his father Lehi, and the genealogy of Lehi, his prophecies and many of his own prophecies and the most part of all their proceedings in the wilderness. Upon them were engraved by him with more detail and particularity the things which transpired before he made the second set of plates. Upon these first plates also an account was given of the wars, contentions and destructions of the people, during Nephi's lifetime, and he commanded his people that they should continue to do this after he was gone, including an account of the reign of the kings, and that the plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until the Lord should command otherwise.

It was from these plates, called the plates of Nephi, that the Prophet Mormon made his abridgment which the Prophet Joseph first translated. It will be remembered that while the

prophet was translating the Book of Mormon he was teased by Martin Harris to let him have some of the manuscript. Joseph did so. The Lord was so displeased with him for letting these writings go out of his hands, that he deprived him of his gift, and the work of translating was suspended for a number of months. While in Martin Harris' possession, the manuscripts were stolen and were not recovered. Those who obtained them had a deep design in view. But the Lord thwarted them. He gave Joseph a commandment not to attempt to translate a second time that which he had lost, but to translate the record which he would find upon the second set of plates, called also the plates of Nephi. The revelation respecting this is to be found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, section x.

Nephi informs us that he had been commanded of the Lord to make these second plates for a special and wise purpose; but he did not know what that purpose was, farther than there should be an account engraved thereon of the ministry of his people and the more plain and precious parts of the prophecies, so that they might be kept for the instruction of his people. These plates were handed down from Nephi to Amaleki, covering a period of about four hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. When Amaleki finished his writing, the plates, which were small, were full; and as he had no children, he gave them to the king, whose name was Benjamin. This king kept them with the other, and larger plates of Nephi, which contained the record of kings, and which had been handed down from generation to generation. They were kept from that time forth with the other records upon plates, which in the lapse of centuries became very numerous, until they came into the hands of the Prophet Mormon. Mormon made his abridgment sometime after the year 384 of the Christian era, which was upwards of five centuries after the death of this King Benjamin. After he had made his abridgment from the large plates of Nephi, down to the days of King Benjamin, he found, in searching among the records, these small plates of Nephi. Their contents pleased him. They were full of revelations, and prophecies concerning the coming of Christ and many other great events. He knew that many events therein predicted had been fulfilled, and also that those predictions

which went beyond his day would most assuredly come to pass; therefore, they were precious to him, and he knew they would be also to posterity. But, in addition to these reasons for selecting them, he was moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord to embody them with his record. The promptings of the Spirit to him were that there was a wise purpose in this, though it does not appear that he fully knew what that purpose was. But the purpose became plain when the Lord gave again to the Prophet Joseph the gift and privilege of translating. He was commanded to translate the record engraved upon these plates, to supply the place of that translation which had been stolen. Thus Joseph was told not to translate over again that which he had translated, and Satan's plan to entrap him was defeated. For the Lord, foreseeing what would take place, had inspired Nephi and Mormon to do as they did; the one to prepare the plates and engrave upon them and to command those who followed him to do so also; and the other to embody them with his record to afterwards come into the hands of the Prophet Joseph; and the results are that we have in the Book of Mormon a body of revelations and prophecies that are exceedingly precious and which throw a flood of light upon the doctrines of Christ and those mighty events which are to take place in the last days.