



Type: Book Chapter

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## Chapter XX

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Source: *The Life of Nephi, the Son of Lehi*

Published: Salt Lake City; Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883

Pages: 103-105

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**Abstract:** Nephi's Commandment to Jacob Concerning Small Plates—Nephi Anoints a Man to be King—His Successors in Kingly Dignity Called by his Name—Patriarchal Government—Jacob Presided Over the Church—King Mosiah's Mode of Life—Seers as Well as Kings—Was There a Change of Dynasty?—Kingly and Priestly Authority United in Mosiah

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## CHAPTER XX.

NEPHI'S COMMANDMENT TO JACOB CONCERNING SMALL PLATES—NEPHI ANOINTS A MAN TO BE KING—HIS SUCCESSORS IN KINGLY DIGNITY CALLED BY HIS NAME—PATRIARCHAL GOVERNMENT—JACOB PRESIDED OVER THE CHURCH—KING MOSIAH'S MODE OF LIFE—SEERS AS WELL AS KINGS—WAS THERE A CHANGE OF DYNASTY?—KINGLY AND PRIESTLY AUTHORITY UNITED IN MOSIAH.

FIFTY-FIVE years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, Nephi gave a commandment to his brother Jacob concerning the small plates upon which he had engraved so many revelations and so much doctrine. He desired his brother to keep them and to hand them down to his children after him; and to be sure and pursue the same course with them that he had—engrave upon them sacred things which were preached and any great revelations or prophecies that might be given. Jacob did this; and they remained in the hands of his lineage until Amaleki, who was a descendant of his, placed them in the custody of King Benjamin. Jacob does not inform us, in his book that we have received, how long this was before the death of Nephi; but, as he says in the same connection, that Nephi began to be old, and saw that he must die, it is probable that it was only a short time.

It was then that Nephi anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people. He was so greatly beloved by them, through his self-sacrificing and continuous labors for them and his courage in defending them; (for he had been compelled to have recourse to the sword of Laban, and to wield it in their defense against the attacks of the Lamanites); that they were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. They, therefore, called his successors Second Nephi, Third Nephi, etc., "let them be of whatever name they would."

The government was, without doubt, more patriarchal than monarchical in its character. Upon one occasion, Nephi's



brother, Jacob, in addressing the people, uses this language: "Having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of His holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother, Nephi, *unto whom ye look as a king or a protector, and on whom ye depend for safety.*" Yet Nephi himself informs us that his people desired that he should be their king; "but," he adds, "I, Nephi was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power." This explains the relationship which he bore to them. He taught them the will of God, administered ordinances unto them, was their leader in all civil and religious matters in repelling the attacks of their enemies and was able to teach them mechanism and the arts of manufacturing. To such a man his people would naturally look, as Jacob says, as a king or protector. Before his death, it appears that he chose his brother, Jacob—who was a man of great faith and a prophet, and who, with Joseph, another brother, had been ordained a priest and teacher by him over the land of the Nephites—to take the lead in all spiritual matters and to have charge of the records upon which the more sacred things were to be kept, and anointed another to be ruler in civil affairs. Whether it was one of his own sons or not, we are not informed, neither is it stated that this office was made hereditary. From what is said subsequently in the record respecting the kings, however, it seems clear that this office did descend from father to son; but the people also had a voice in choosing the king. The brief allusion which is made to these kings by Jarom nearly two centuries after Nephi's death, shows that for that period they had been mighty and faithful men of God. Upwards of four hundred years after Nephi's departure, a glimpse is given us of the mode of life which the king led. Speaking of Mosiah, son of Benjamin, it is said, "And King Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might do according to that which his father had done in all things."

Such a monarchy as is here described, would be an inexpensive form of government, and it is probable that it was chiefly of this character from the beginning. We know that the two kings who preceded Mosiah were like himself—prophets

of God. He, himself, was a seer, also, as was his grandfather of the same name, and most likely his father, Benjamin; and he had in his possession the Urim and Thummim. Such men ruled the people in righteousness and as kind fathers, and kept the expense of government down to the lowest point. Whether or not there was a change of dynasty when the first Mosiah was chosen king, is not certain from what is written by Amaleki in the Book of Omni, though it does not appear improbable. Neither does it appear why the kings, Mosiah, Benjamin and Mosiah, were not called by the dynastic name of Nephi, according to the custom which prevailed during the long lifetime of Jacob, and probably afterwards. If a change of dynasty did occur, this custom may have been changed, though scarcely for that cause alone, as Nephi was still the revealed founder of the nation; it may be that the dynastic name was omitted, and their own names mentioned, for the purpose of better distinguishing them. When the record which was kept by the kings upon the other plates of Nephi shall be brought forth, we shall have knowledge respecting the history of the Nephites, covering this period of upwards of four centuries, that will be of inestimable value. One thing, however, is plain from that which has come to us, that when the first Mosiah became king, in him was again united the kingly and priestly authority.