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## Chapter XXIII

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**Abstract:** The Days of the Judges—Their Names and Reigns—The Heresy of Nehor—He Slays Gideon and is Executed—Amlici's Rebellion—The Battle of Amnihu—The Conflict at the Crossing of the Sidon—A Third Battle

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their vengeance on their unoffending brethren, and again commenced to massacre them, which murders, we suggest, took place during the thirteenth year of the reign of the Judges (B. C. 79), as in the year following the whole of the believing Lamanites migrated to the land of Jershon, as before narrated (B. C. 78). These dates are simply suggestive as far as the history of the mission is concerned, but those that relate to the Nephites are distinctly stated in the annals of that people.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES—THEIR NAMES AND REIGNS—  
THE HERESY OF NEHOR—HE SLAYS GIDEON AND IS  
EXECUTED—AMLICI'S REBELLION—THE BATTLE OF  
AMNIHU—THE CONFLICT AT THE CROSSING OF THE  
SIDON—A THIRD BATTLE.

FOR A period of about one hundred and twenty years succeeding the death of king Mosiah, the Nephite commonwealth was governed by judges. These were chosen by the united voice of the people, as provided in the constitution framed under Divine inspiration by the last king, and acknowledged as the supreme law of the nation, through its unanimous acceptance as such, by the entire people. At the end of this period the republic was overthrown through the great wickedness of all classes of the community, and the people divided themselves into numerous independent tribes.

It is not actually certain that the Book of Mormon

gives us the names of all the Nephite chief judges. In the earlier portion of the annals of these times the order of succession is plainly stated, but in the record of later years the name of the judge is sometimes only mentioned incidentally in the historic narrative. It is therefore beyond our power to determine if there were, or were not, others whose names have been omitted by the sacred historians. The judges mentioned by name or description are twelve in number. Of these, five, Pahoran II., Cezoram, Cezoram's son (whose name is not given), Seezoram and Lachoneus II., were assassinated; one, Pacumeni, was slain in battle with the Lamanites; two, Alma and Nephi, were translated or taken by the Lord; three, Nephihah, Pahoran I., and Helaman, died a natural death, whilst of the manner of the decease of one, Lachoneus I., we have no record. They judged the Nephites in the following order: 1 Alma (the younger), from B. C. 91 to B. C. 83; 2 Nephihah, from B. C. 83 to B. C. 68; 3 Pahoran I., from B. C. 68 to B. C. 53; 4 Pahoran II., from B. C. 52 to B. C. 52; 5 Pacumeni, from B. C. 52 to B. C. 51; 6 Helaman (the younger), from B. C. 50 to B. C. 39; 7 Nephi, from B. C. 39 to B. C. 30; 8 Cezoram, from B. C. 30 to B. C. 26; 9 Cezoram's son, from B. C. 26 to B. C. 26; 10 Seezoram, B. C.—to B. C. 23; 11 Lachoneus I., from—to—; 12 Lachoneus II., from—to A. C. 30.

It is possible that some unnamed judge may have ruled the Nephites for a short time after the murder of Cezoram's son, and before Seezoram was chosen, and still more probable that one or more rulers presided over the destinies of the nation between the death of Seezoram and the election of Lachoneus I., as there was a space of fifty-three years between the mur-

der of Seezoram and that of Lachoneus II., who succeeded his father. Alma, the son of Alma, was the first chief judge of the Nephite republic, having been called to that high position before the death of king Mosiah.

It was the first year of Alma's reign. Could our readers have taken a glimpse at the fair capital of the Nephites at that time (B. C. 91), already rich in the awards of human industry, combined with the lavish productions of nature in that much favored land, they might have noticed in the principal street a portly, handsome man, manifesting in his carriage the evidences of great bodily strength, combined with vanity, self-sufficiency and subtlety. They might have observed that his raiment was made of the finest fabrics that the looms of Zarahemla could produce, lavishly embroidered and ornamented with the labors of the cunning workman in silk, in feathers and the precious metals, whilst at his side hung a richly decorated sword. This man was no king, no governor, no general of the armies of Israel; he was simply Nehor, the successful religious charlatan of the hour, to whom the unstable listened and the weakminded flocked.

Nehor's teachings had at any rate the interest of novelty to the Nephites, yet some of his theories were older than Idumea. They had been rejected in the counsels of heaven before Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, fell. He would save all men in their sins and with their sins; he abolished hell, established a paid order of priests, and taught doctrines so liberal that every man could be a member of his church and yet continue to gratify every vice his nature inclined to. For this liberality of doctrine, Nehor expected in return liber-

ality of support for himself and assistants, in which anticipation he was not disappointed. Many adopted his heresies; his success fired his zeal, and developed his vanity. He was so used to the sycophancy of his converts that he was restive under contradiction, and when Gideon, the aged patriot, and teacher in the true church, one day met him in the streets of Zarahemla and upbraided him for his wicked course, neither respecting his great age nor his many virtues, Nehor drew his sword and smote him till he died. For this wilful and unprovoked crime, the murderer was tried, convicted, and afterwards executed. His execution took place on the hill Manti, and, from the way in which his death is spoken of, we imagine that he was hanged.

Though Nehor's shameful life was thus ended, unfortunately his doctrine did not die with him. It was too pleasant to those who desired to gain heaven by a life of sin. Consequently it spread widely through the teachings of his followers. In later years the traitorous Amlicites, the apostate Amalekites, the blood-thirsty Amulonites and Ammonihahites, were all believers in his soul-destroying doctrines. The blood shed, the misery produced, the treasure expended through the wickedness and folly of these base creatures, cannot be computed.

The increase of these false teachers among the Nephites rapidly developed class distinctions and social divisions; their adherents being generally gathered from amongst those who loved the vain things of the world. Naturally they became proud and overbearing, and bitter in their feelings towards the members of the true Church of Christ. Many of the latter received

severe persecution at the hands of the dissenters, and bore it without retaliation, while others returned insult for insult, and gave blow for blow.

The example of these self-appointed teachers produced a like spirit throughout their churches, and their members became idle and full of devices to enable them to live without honest toil. They gave way to sorcery and idolatry, to robbery and murder, and to all manner of wickedness, for which offenses they were duly punished according to the law, whenever conviction could be obtained, and when the intent of the law was not thwarted by their unholy combinations. This development of priestcraft also gave rise to another evil. Many belonging to the apostate churches, though not willing to openly plunder or murder for gain, were anxious for a monarchy to be established, that thereby they might be appointed office holders, etc., and fatten at the public crib. Their hope and intention was to destroy the Church of God, and, undoubtedly, to despoil its members.

In the fifth year of the Judges, a willing instrument arose to effect their purpose. His name was Amlici; a follower of Nehor, corrupt and ambitious, but cunning in the wisdom of the world. He was chosen by the enemies of the commonwealth to be the king of the Nephites. The whole question was brought before the people at a general election, as provided by the code of Mosiah. The monarchists were outvoted; the republic and the church were saved.

This should have ended the matter, but it did not; the turbulent minority, incited by Amlici, would not accept this constitutional decision. They assembled and crowned their favorite as king of the Nephites,

and he at once began to prepare for war, that he might force the rest of the people to accept his government. Nor was Alma idle; he also made ready for the impending contest. He gathered his people and armed them with all the weapons known to Nephite warfare. The two armies of those who so short a time before were brethren, met near a hill called Annihii, on the east bank of the river Sidon. There a bloody battle followed, in which Amlici's forces were disastrously defeated with a loss of 12,532 men, whilst the victors had to mourn the loss of 6,562 warriors slain.

After pursuing the defeated monarchists as far as he was able, Alma rested his troops in the valley of Gideon (named after the martyr slain by Nehor). He there took the precaution to send out four officers with their companies to watch the movements and learn the intentions of the retreating foe. These officers were named Zeram, Ammor, Manti and Limher. On the morrow these scouts returned in great haste, and reported that the Amlicites had joined a vast host of Lamanites in the land Minon, where unitedly they were slaying the Nephite population and ravaging their possessions; at the same time they were pushing rapidly towards the Nephite capital with the intent of capturing it before Alma's army could return. Alma at once headed his troops for Zarahemla, and with all haste marched towards it. He reached the crossing of the Sidon without meeting the enemy, but while attempting to pass to the western bank he was confronted by the allied armies.

A terrible battle ensued; the Nephites were taken somewhat at a disadvantage, but being men of faith, they fervently sought heaven's aid, and in the increased

fervor this faith inspired, they advanced to the combat. With Alma at their head, the advanced guard forded the river and broke upon the enemy who stood awaiting them. By the fury of their charge they drove in the ranks of the enemy, and as they pushed onward they cleared the ground by throwing the bodies of their fallen foes into the Sidon, thus making an opening for the main body to obtain a foothold. In this charge Alma met Amlici face to face, and they fought desperately. In the midst of this hand to hand combat, Alma lifted his heart on high, and prayed for renewed strength that he might not be overpowered, but live to do more good to his people. His prayers were answered, and thereby he gained new vigor to battle with and eventually slay Amlici. Amlici slain, Alma led the attack to where the king of the Lamanites fought. But that monarch retired before the impetuous valor of the high priest, and commanded his guards to close in upon his assailant. The order was promptly obeyed, but it did not succeed. Alma and his guards bore down upon them with such fury that the few of the monarch's warriors who escaped made a hasty retreat. Pushing steadily on, Alma kept driving the allies before him, until his whole army had crossed the Sidon. There the enemy, no longer able to meet his well ordered advance, broke in all directions, and retreated into the wilderness that lay to the north and west. They were hotly pursued by the Nephites as long as the latter's strength permitted, and were met on all quarters by patriots rallying to the call of the commonwealth, who slew them by thousands. A remnant eventually reached that part of the wilderness known as Hermounts. There many died and were devoured





WILDERNESS OF HERMOUNTS.

by the wild beasts and vultures with which that region abounded.

A few days after this decisive battle, another invading Lamanite army appeared. This one advanced along the east bank of the Sidon. Alma, having been wounded, sent one of his officers, who met the hosts of the Lamanites, and drove them back to their own lands.