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Chapter XXVIII

Author(s): George Reynolds

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Abstract: Another War—Moroni the Leader of the Nephites—The Tactics of the Lamanites—Zerahemnah—The Battle at Riplah—Defeat of the Lamanites



CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANOTHER WAR—MORONI, THE LEADER OF THE NEPHITES—
THE TACTICS OF THE LAMANITES—ZERAHEMNAH—THE
BATTLE AT RIPLAH—DEFEAT OF THE LAMANITES.

THE CAUSE which led the Nephite armies to occupy Jershon was that the Zoramites, finding that their haughty and unjust demands would not be complied with, had excited the Lamanites to invade the territory of the Nephites. The Lamanite forces, which were commanded almost entirely by Nephite apostates, on account of their fierce hatred to their former associates, marched first into the land of Antionum, where they were joined by the Zoramites. Then the whole of the invading hosts, under the command of a dissenter named Zerahemnah, advanced northward towards the land of Jershon.

This was a day of peril for the Nephites. Their enemies were much more numerous than they, and were filled with a savage thirst for blood, which was especially felt against those who were of their own race and kindred who had bowed in obedience to heaven's commands. At this juncture the Lord raised up one of the greatest heroes ever born on American soil. He was not only a military leader, but a priest and prophet, and by his inspiration and devoted courage the Nephites were for many years led to uninterrupted victory. Such was Moroni, who now, though but twenty-five

years old, took the chief command of the armies of his nation.

Though the forces of the Lamanites were much more numerous, all other advantages were on the side of their foes. The discipline of the Nephites was better by far; the bodies of their soldiers were protected by armor, breastplates, helmets, shields, etc., and they were fighting for the sacred cause of their religion and their country, their altars and their firesides, their wives and their little ones. Inspired by the justness of their cause and the extremity of their circumstances, they fought with a courage and a desperation never exceeded in their annals.

The Lamanites, on the other hand, had no such holy impulses to nerve their arms for the combat. They were the aggressors, and were hasting to shed the blood of their brethren. Insane and infernal hatred alone inspired them for the warfare. Besides, they were ill prepared to meet the Nephites, who had such a tactician as Moroni for their commander-in-chief. The descendants of Laman were simply armed with swords and cimeters, bows and arrows, slings and stones. Their bodies were naked with the exception of a skin wrapped about their loins. The Zoramites and other dissenters from the Nephites were better clothed; in dress they followed the fashion of the people from whom they sprang.

The Lamanites, finding that Moroni was too well prepared for their attack on the land of Jershon, retired through Antionum into the wilderness, where they changed direction and marched towards the headwaters of the river Sidon, with the intention of taking possession of the land of Manti. But Moroni was too

vigilant to allow his enemies to slip away without knowing what had become of them. He had his spies watch the movements of Zerahemnah's forces, and in the meanwhile sent to Alma to inquire the mind and will of the Lord with regard to his future course. The word of the Lord was given to Alma, and he informed Moroni's messengers of the movements of the Lamanites. The young general, with becoming prudence, then divided his army. One corps he left to protect Jershon, and with the remainder he advanced by rapid marches towards Manti, by the most direct route. On his arrival he at once mustered all the men who could bear arms into his forces, to help in the defense of their rights and their liberties against the advancing foe. So rapid had been his movements and so prompt had been the response to his calls that when the Lamanites reached the neighborhood of the Sidon he was prepared for their coming.

The battle that was fought when the opposing armies met was one of the most stubborn and bloody in Nephite history. Never from the beginning had the Lamanites been known to fight with such exceeding great strength and courage. Time after time their hosts rushed upon the well ordered ranks of the Nephites, and notwithstanding the latter's armor they clove in their heads and cut off their arms. But the cost of these charges to their own numbers was terrible. The battle began at a hill called Riplah, and afterwards extended to both banks of the Sidon. At one time a lull took place in the carnage, and Moroni, who had no pleasure in the shedding of blood, made an offer of such terms of surrender as he considered the circumstances warranted. But Zerahemnah and other cap-

tains of the Lamanite hosts rejected the offer and urged their troops to renewed resistance. So the battle recommenced with unabated ferocity. At last the faith and valor of the Nephites prevailed; many of the Lamanites surrendered and agreed to a covenant of peace. Even Zerahemnah himself, wounded and scalped by one of Moroni's body guard, to prevent the total annihilation of his armies, at last consented to the proposed terms and entered into the required covenant of peace. So great were the losses on both sides, especially of the Lamanites, that the dead were not numbered.

Thus ended the war, but not the Zoranite heresy, for we read, in the history of later wars between the two nations, of certain Lamanite captains being of the Zoramites. Foiled in their attempts to destroy their former brethren and to overthrow the Church of God, they still adhered to their false faith, and on every possible occasion made manifest their undying hatred to those whose only offense was that they would not join them in their crimes nor consent to the destruction of the liberties of the people.

