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Lessons from the Life of Nephi IV: The Return for Ishmael

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Abstract: A narrative of Nephi's life and lessons that may be learned from the life of Nephi. At times it is better to suffer wrongs than to demand one's rights, and the purposes of God will not be thwarted.

seen on every hand, must have aroused peculiar feelings and had the effect to dissipate any prejudices that might have existed concerning the condition of affairs in this city and Territory.

Everything was done that could be done to show the President that respect which is due to him as the chief magistrate of our nation. Whatever feelings men may have on political or religious subjects, they should not appear on an occasion like that of the visit of the President to the Territory. Benjamin Harrison was constitutionally elected, and as the chief executive of a nation numbering nearly sixty-five millions of people he is a very important personage, and should be honored by every citizen. President Harrison has never shown anything but proper feeling, so far as I know, towards the people of Utah. During his administration thus far prosecutions under the law have not been of so severe a character as they were a few years ago. Since he occupied the executive chair there has been a marked change in the character of the prosecutions for the violation of the Edmunds-Tucker law, and a great many have been pardoned by his action. In this reception, therefore, it was due to him that the people everywhere should exhibit the greatest respect to him. After leaving the city, we understand that his reception at Lehi, American Fork, Provo and Springville was equally cordial with that which he received here, and he seemed to appreciate the warmth of good feeling that was shown to him at those places. It is but reasonable to expect that his visit here will have a good effect upon him and the members of his party.

IN No. 8, under the head of "Topics of the Times," the Editor had occasion to answer a question—"Did the Prophet Joseph Smith hold the Melchisedec Priesthood at the time the Church was organized [April 6, 1830], or did he only hold the Aaronic Priesthood?" The occasion for asking the question was a quotation from a discourse of President Young's, which, in writing upon

this in No. 8, the Editor of the JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR assumes that it was incorrectly reported, and that it was inadvertently allowed to pass into print. One of our friends has called to our attention some further remarks upon this from President Young's discourses. In a sermon he delivered at the General Conference, April 7, 1852, he says:

"Joseph Smith was a Prophet, Seer and Revelator, before he had power to build up the kingdom of God, or take the first step towards it. When did he obtain that power? Not until the angel had ordained him to be an Apostle?"

In another discourse, delivered April 6, 1853, President Young says:

"Joseph was ordained an Apostle—that you can read and understand. After he was ordained to this office, then he had the right to organize and build up the kingdom of God, for he had committed unto him the keys of the Priesthood, which is after the order of Melchisedec—the High Priesthood, which is after the order of the Son of God. And this, remember, by being ordained an Apostle. Could he have built up the kingdom of God, without first being an Apostle? No, he never could."

From the above quotations it is clear that the report of his discourse to which our correspondent in No. 8 calls attention, was incorrect.

The Editor.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

IV.—The Return for Ishmael.

The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (*James 5: 16.*)

SOON after the occurrence of the incidents related in our last lesson, Lehi received another command from the Lord. It was that his sons should again return to Jerusalem. It does not transpire that they murmured this time, for the journey appeared in their eyes to promise much more pleasurable results than did the last one when they went for the records in the possession of Laban.

It seems that at that time there lived in Jerusalem a faithful man of the tribe of Ephraim, whose name was Ishmael. He had a large family, among whom were at least five

maiden daughters. Now, Lehi had four sons, and there was Zoram also, all of whom were unmarried. There were no young women in the company who would do for their wives,

to Ishmael and request him to come with his family and join Lehi's party in the wilderness.

The young men went; and they found favor



THE PEACEMAKERS.

so wives had to be provided for them, or the colony would have soon died out, and the purposes of God in taking them to the promised land would have been utterly frustrated. Therefore the Lord told Lehi to send his sons

in the eyes of Ishmael, for the Lord inclined his heart to accept this command. It is quite probable that the young ladies helped him to come to this conclusion, as they would not be insensible to the force of such a message,

presented by four so desirable young men as Lehi's sons then appeared.

The preparations were soon made, and Ishmael and his family started in company with the four young men. But on the journey trouble arose. Some of the sons of Ishmael, who, we are of the opinion, were married and probably had families, seem to have regretted the step that their father had taken. Possibly, like Laman and Lemuel, they had no faith in the prophecies of the servants of God, who declared that yet a little while and Jerusalem should be destroyed; and Laman and Lemuel soon impregnated them with that spirit of malice and discontent that they themselves had already so prominently shown. Two of the daughters of Ishmael also manifested this spirit. As usual, the way in which they showed their feelings was by abusing and ill-treating Nephi. He was the special object of their dislike by reason of his faithfulness to the commandments of God and because the Lord had shown to him that he should be their ruler. The position that they occupied very closely resembled that of the sons of Jacob when their brother Joseph, who was Lehi's ancestor, told them of the dreams that he had had, that the sun and moon and the eleven stars bowed down before him. The manifestations that Nephi had were very similar, and pointed in exactly the same direction.

When the spirit of rebellion first manifested itself as they journeyed in the wilderness, Nephi rebuked the malcontents in somewhat severe terms. He inquired of his elder brothers, Laman and Lemuel, how it was that they were so hard in their hearts? how it was that they had not listened to the word of the Lord? had they forgotten that they had seen an angel? had they also forgotten how the Lord had delivered them out of the hands of Laban? had given them assurances that if they were faithful to Him He would lead them to a glorious land of promise? Nephi further told them that if they returned to Jerusalem, they would assuredly perish, for the Lord had so manifested it to him.

Angry with his words of reproof and entreaty, the rebellious portion of the camp took Nephi and bound him with cords, their intention being to leave him in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts. But Nephi in mighty faith prayed to the Lord to deliver him, and that the cords that bound him might be burst. His petitions were answered. No sooner had he offered this prayer than the bands were loosed that bound him, and he stood a free man before his brethren.

Again, in the love of his heart, he pled with his tormentors. But they were still filled with the spirit of malice and murder, and once more sought to lay violent hands upon him. However, the wife of Ishmael and one of her daughters and also one son begged so earnestly for them to desist that at last their hearts were softened, and in sorrow and humility they sought Nephi's forgiveness. This he freely granted without a moment's hesitation; he was but too glad to have them turn from their cruel and wicked course. Still, as they had offended God, as well as injured their brother, Nephi exhorted them to pray unto the Lord for forgiveness; which they did. Peace being restored, the company continued its journey toward the tents of Lehi.

There is one thing quite noticeable in this outbreak, it is the influence that the sons of Lehi had already commenced to wield over the daughters of Ishmael. Ishmael and his wife were faithful to their agreement, but when troubles arose two of their daughters sided with Laman and Lemuel, while three remained passive. In the second attempt to bind Nephi one of Ishmael's daughters stood forth boldly in his defense. No doubt when she saw him in danger she began to sense the feelings she held towards him, while he, if he had not before loved her, must have done so when she risked her life so bravely in his behalf.

Is it inconsistent to suppose that in the marriages that took place soon after the party reached the valley of Lemuel that Nephi took to wife the brave girl who had defended him,

that Laman and Lemuel married the two maidens who had sympathized with them, and that Sam and Zoram espoused the other two—the one whom Zoram married being the eldest daughter of the family?

When the little party reached Lehi's encampment there was great rejoicing among all, and to manifest their gratitude, burnt offerings and sacrifices were offered unto the Lord. This rite attended to, the company busied themselves in gathering seeds of fruit and grain of every kind to carry with them on their journey, that they might have food for their support when they reached the new land of promise.

Our lesson teaches us the power and efficacy of fervent, heartfelt prayer. Nephi knew that no one could deliver him but God, and he sought that deliverance in fervent supplication. God heard that prayer, the answer came at once; the loosened cords fell from his body, slipped from his hands, and he confronted his brethren free and unshackled, delivered by a power that was more than human, for neither man nor woman had touched the cords that bound him. Again, the repentant prayer of his assailants brought forgiveness from heaven. Happy would it have been for them and their posterity had this repentance been lasting, but unfortunately it was transitory—it affected them but a short time, and very soon we read of them again acting as cruelly and murderously as on this occasion.

George Reynolds.

CHURCH SCHOOL PAPERS. NO. 6.

Life and Theory.—Address before the Utah County Institute by K. G. Maeser.

INTRODUCTION:

A SCIENTIST studying the laws of nature, as they manifest themselves in her unorganic and organic formations, finds himself confronted with such a variety and multiplicity of phenomena that one lifetime would prove too short to unravel all the

variously interwoven meshes, and the observations and experiences of generations of careful workers have to be called into requisition as starting points for further progress. Enthusiasm, imagination, and sometimes a little conceit in one's own smartness hold out strong temptations to start from the safe anchorage of established facts and sound reasonings into hypothetical speculations, which course has the tendency of confusing instead of enlightening the mind, of obscuring instead of establishing truth. The philosophies of antiquity in all their various ramifications are more or less open to their criticism, until the spirit of the Aristotelian School was gradually overcome by the giant mind of Bacon, creating the issue of "observation versus speculation." These observations illustrate the conditions which the cause of education has had to deal with from the beginning until our day.

While the astronomer may dive into the illimitable spheres of the universe to decipher in some measure the hieroglyphics of the heavens; the geologist endeavors to read the history of the creation from God's handwritings on the mountain sides and in the depths of the earth; the microscopist discovers new worlds hidden away in their almost unapproachable minuteness; the chemist follows the operations of elements in their intricate combinations; and all the rest of these faithful workers in the labyrinth of nature contribute incessantly to the treasure of truth by which mankind is steadily being lifted up to a higher standard. The teacher is engaged in a similar labor. His calling has emerged, like that of all other laborers in humanity's cause, from the period of speculative philosophy into the life-giving condition of practical observation.

The material which the teacher has to deal with is the child's head, heart and hand, these terms signifying merely the spheres of cultivation to which the teacher's labors must be directed. The extreme delicacy of this material enjoins upon the teacher the cultivation of a sense of responsibility, which no other calling requires to such a degree. This