



Type: Magazine Article

The Nephites under the Judges, IV

Author(s): George Reynolds

Source: *The Contributor*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (May 1881)

Published by: The Contributor Company

Page(s): 235–238

Abstract: Reynolds discusses how the Nephites and Lamanites were able to outlast and overcome the armies of the Gadianton Robbers. Although peace reigned for a time, the government eventually collapsed under the actions of traitors and apostates who sought power, and the people reverted to tribal orders for protection. Among these, one Jacob – who styled himself a king and founded the city of Jacobugath – receives prominent mention. With this collapse, as detailed by Reynolds, the reign of the judges ended.

which was launched miniature men-of-war. In the year 248 the Emperor Philip celebrated the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of Rome within its walls, with magnificent games, among them the wild and barbarous gladiatorial contests. These were generally between slaves, prisoners or convicts, and were a very frequent source of entertainment and amusement to the Roman people. The games commenced with a prelude, in which the gladiators fought with wooden weapons, until a given signal, when they took up their swords and began in earnest to fight in couples. When the vanquished was not killed in the contest his fate was decided by the specta-

tors, who, if they thought he had fought well and deserved to live, signified the same by pressing down their thumbs, but if they wished him to be dispatched, by turning them up. The victors were honored; being crowned with palm and rewarded with money. They sometimes purchased their liberty by fighting well, and received as a badge of freedom the wooden glave or sword. These games were abolished in the beginning of the fifth century by Honorius, who considered them too brutal for Christian spectators. *De Vallibus.*

What fates impose, that men must needs abide.—*Shakspeare.*

THE NEPHITES UNDER THE JUDGES.

IV.

THUS, year by year rolled on, the greater portion of the people remaining in pride and wickedness and gradually growing more hardened, and the lesser portion, walking more circumspectly before God, subject as usual, to the persecutions of those who worked iniquity.

Six hundred years had now passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem. Lachoneus was the Chief Judge and Governor of the land. The time had fully come for the promised signs to appear that should herald the birth of the Messiah, indeed the ungodly made a great uproar and claimed that the time had passed, the signs had not appeared, the prophecies had failed, the prophets were imposters and the Christians dupes. In their fiendish exultation they set a day to slay those who believed; but before that day came, the all important sign shone in the heavens and illumined the earth. At the going down of the sun there was no darkness, all the night long it was as light as midday, and a new and glorious star appeared in the heavens. Thus was the faith of the saints vindicated and great was their joy, whilst they who had been plotting murder against God's anointed ones were filled with dread and disappointment. Many

were now added to the Church, but the reformation was not sufficiently strong to stem the torrent of deep-seated depravity; too many served God from the cowardly instinct of fear of his wrath and not from the heartfelt love of truth and righteousness. The Gadianton robbers still infested the land, making the mountains their strongholds, where the people could not overpower them (A. C. 2); in fact they were constantly strengthened by Nephite dissenters and outlaws who fled to them, as well as by numbers of wayward youths, who were led into iniquity by their flattering solicitations.

And so the story runs until the year A. C. 13, when the inspired historian relates that "there began to be wars and contentions throughout all the land; for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them; therefore all the Lamanites who had become converted unto the Lord, did unite with their brethren, the Nephites, and were compelled, for the safety of their lives, and their women and their children, to take

up arms against those Gadianton robbers, yea, and also to maintain their rights, and the privileges of their Church, and of their worship, and their freedom and their liberty." In the fourteenth year the wars continued slightly to the disadvantage of the robbers, but in the fifteenth the Gadiantons gained many advantages, from which time they continued to grow in boldness and confidence as well as in numbers. At last the Nephite leaders (Lachoneus the Governor, and Gidgiddoni the Commander-in-Chief), determined upon the bold expedient of gathering in the people from all quarters of the continent, with their movable possessions, grain, provisions, beasts of burden, flocks, herds, &c., into one region, and by a Fabian policy of inaction, wear out the robbers, who were too lazy to work, but depended upon the game caught in the chase, and the spoils of their forays for their subsistence. No words can tell the terrible state of misery, fearful apprehension and unrest that must have existed in all parts of these vast continents, before such a gigantic experiment, for weal or woe, would have been thought of, much more, put into execution. No exodus of ancient or modern times equals it in vastness, or approaches it in the wide extent of its workings. It was not a tribe, or even "a nation on wheels," it was two continents converging, massing their offspring in the humiliation of defeat and the agony of a forlorn hope, either to starve out their enemies or in one vast sepulchre fall a prey to their savagery.

The Governor's proclamation was issued; the people in their extremity obeyed. Every thing that could afford help or sustenance to the robber bands was carried off or destroyed. The conjoint Nephites and Lamanites left behind them a desert and a desolation. By thousands and tens of thousands, aye, probably by millions, they gathered, the north gave up and the south held not back. From the frozen shores of the Northern Oceans, to the rocky promontory, that ends the southern continent they deserted homes and lands and all, and by slow, tedious, encumbered, and

ever watchful marches they assembled at the appointed gathering place—the lands of Zarahemla and Bountiful. Here they fortified themselves and prepared for the onslaught of their barbarous, inhuman foes. Here also they humbled themselves before the Lord and in the misery of their humiliation sought His forgiveness and blessing.

Year by year they kept up their fearful watch, ever on the alert to repulse the exultant foe that had swept down upon their tenantless homes, and revelled in their deserted cities, and that were now hemming them in, and again and again pressing them to the combat. More than one desperate battle was fought with bloody loss on both sides. But the Nephites had supplies for seven years for themselves and their animals, whilst the robbers had none. Gradually the game in the wilderness was consumed and hunger began its direful work amongst their hosts. However, before this (A. C. 19) a great and terrible battle was fought, the most sanguinary that had ever occurred to the children of Lehi since the day he left Jerusalem. In this fierce fight the Nephites were the victors, but it did not bring them freedom, it was not until hunger had done its work and enervated the robbers that the triumph of their arms was complete and the Gadianton robbers were annihilated (A. C. 21.) Then the people rejoiced with exceeding great joy and universally praised the name of the Lord of Hosts; all were brought to a knowledge of His holy laws, and all believed, nothing doubting, the inspired words of His prophets. Even the captured robbers were preached to and labored with, of whom all, who repented of their sins and entered into covenant to murder no more, were set at liberty, those who refused to make this covenant were punished according to their crimes.

The people did not return to their former habitations until the twenty-sixth year, when the decrease in their supplies of provisions warned them of the necessity of recommencing their agricultural labors. Each man then, with his family, his flocks, herds and other possessions, his

gold, his precious things, &c., returned to his home, whether in the north or the south, and once more the laws were framed in equity and justice and administered without favor. For a few years their prosperity was great, many cities were built anew and many old cities repaired, many highways were cast up, "and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place. And thus passed away the twenty-eighth year, and people had continual peace." This was the last year of peace under the Judges.

And now the old, old story has to be told for the last time. The wide spread and abundant prosperity brought great riches, the riches gave birth to all the old forms of folly and iniquity, and the Gadianon robbers or some nearly allied combinations controlled the nation. But the Nephites did not ignorantly fall into error and transgression, many prophets were sent by the Lord to admonish and warn them. Their voice was rejected and they were oftentimes persecuted unto death. It was one of the laws of the Republic that when any one had been adjudged worthy of death by the local authorities, that the sentence could not be carried out until the matter had been laid before the Chief Governor of all the land at Zarahemla, and he had signed the death warrant. But regardless of this wise provision the corrupt judges, the apostate high priests, the crime stained lawyers put the servants of God to death on their own responsibility. When complaint was made at the central seat of government with regard to these infamous usurpations of power, they openly rebelled and set the laws and the government at defiance. Gathering their relatives, friends and sympathizers around them, who as a rule were found amongst the richer and more influential classes, they determined to overthrow the Republic and establish a monarchy. In this they were only partly successful: the republic was overthrown but the monarchy was not established. The righteous Lachoneus was dead, his son, Lachoneus, the younger, had succeeded him and to better bring about their pur-

pose the traitors murdered him (A. C 30). This crime brought anarchy, the people would not have a king, they preferred no government at all to a monarchy, they were too used to the sweets of an elective government by the citizens. The confusion was unbounded, the chaos universal. By and bye the people gathered in tribes, somewhat patriarchal in their formation, each petty leader or head of a powerful family gathering around him his descendants, and their associates and dependents, each tribe being governed by its own laws and regulations, whilst for mutual protection they entered into a species of confederation to prevent one tribe trespassing upon the rights of another, which happily prevented the outbreak of actual war

In the mean time, one audacious leader, named Jacob, a violent persecutor of the servants of God, gathered a strong party from the classes most responsible for the breaking up of the commonwealth. His adherents endeavored to make him king over the whole land, but the confederate tribes would not listen to his dictation. Jacob and his numerous followers therefore determined to establish his power in another region, and they made a sudden migration into the northernmost portions of the land, with the intention of there developing their strength, until they flattered themselves, by the aid of dissenters, they could crush out all opposition and make the sway of Jacob universal. So unexpected and speedy was their departure, that the other tribes could not prevent its accomplishment. On their arrival at their destination they built a magnificent city, which they named Jacobugath after their king, but which was destroyed a few years after in the terrible convulsions that marked the crucifixion of the King of Kings.

Regarding this city the voice of the Lord from heaven declared, "And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of King Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire, because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combina-

tions; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land: therefore I did cause them to be burned, to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them."

Thus ended the rule of the Judges; an epoch in the history of God's favored people Israel, both glorious and shameful. Glorious in the devotion of so many noble lives to God and the truth,

glorious in the willing sacrifice so many made of life and all earthly things for righteousness' sake; shameful in the frequent abuse of God's goodness, in the ever recurring violation of his laws, shameful in the triumph of iniquity over virtue, and at last in its violent end in murder, anarchy and national chaos.

George Reynolds.

ERRATA.—On page 172, first column, in the thirty-sixth and fifty-third lines, the word "Lamanites" should read "Zoramites."

CHRONICLES OF UTAH.

IV.

ON the fourth of July, 1850, the General Assembly met in the Bowery at 2 p. m., when the Nauvoo Legion was marched in under the command of their respective officers. An escort then waited upon Governor Brigham Young, to request his attendance. Previous to his arrival three cheers were proposed by General D. H. Wells, for the Governor, Lieut. Governor and State of Deseret, all of which were most heartily given. The Governor gave a very energetic speech, when the people were blessed and dismissed by the Lieut. Governor; after which the Senate and House went into joint session, transacting general business; heavy taxes were imposed on spirituous liquors, amounting to fifty per cent. upon the selling price, while iron, steel and useful wares were "exempted from all and any assessment and tax whatever;" including tea, coffee, sugar, and all other groceries, medicines, &c., &c. Such were the wise regulations, that thousands of emigrants passing through the city expressed the utmost satisfaction, in writing to their friends and through the medium of the public press.

An analysis of the water of the Warm Springs near this city, according to a letter from Dr. John Bernhisel, dated 21st March, 1850, to Governor Young, gives the following:

"Three fluid ounces of the water, on evaporation to dryness in a platina capsule, gave 8.25 grains of solid, dry, saline

matter; carbonate of lime and magnesia, 0.240; peroxide of iron, 0.040; lime, 0.545; chlorine, 3.454; soda, 2.877; magnesia, 0.370; 0.703; total, 8.229.

"It is slightly charged with sulphuric acid gas and with carbonic acid gas, and is a pleasant, saline, mineral water, having valuable properties belonging to saline sulphur springs."

This analysis was by Dr. Charles T. Jackson, Chemist, Boston, Mass.

In the *Deseret News* of July 6, this year, Captain Howard Stansbury published a letter denying the truth of certain rumors on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains, respecting his treatment in Great Salt Lake City by the authorities. He says, among other things: "We were received by the President, Brigham Young, and public authorities with the greatest courtesy, both officially and personally, and will remember with gratitude the many tokens of kindness and regard we have received from them and the citizens of the place. Every facility has been studiously afforded us for the prosecution of our duties; instruments of science frankly and gratuitously loaned, and the able and faithful assistance obtained, from their commencement here, of a gentleman well known as a fearless advocate of your doctrine, and a prominent and influential member of your community." (This alludes to the Hon. Albert Carrington, who was an assistant of the U. S. Geological Survey.) "I have deemed it not improper to say this