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## War and the Art of War among Book of Mormon Peoples

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**Abstract:** Methods of warfare in the Book of Mormon were elementary in the beginning but became more sophisticated with time and under Moroni grew to an art. Still the weapons were crude and the armaments were fairly ineffective and many people were killed, ravaged, and raped.

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# Guide Lessons.

## LESSON I.

### Theology and Testimony.

FIRST WEEK IN NOVEMBER.

#### WAR AND THE ART OF WAR AMONG BOOK OF MOR-MON PEOPLES.

It is disappointing to realize that the sword of Laban, used to obtain the sacred records that a nation might not perish in unbelief, should become the pattern of a sword used by the Nephites to defend themselves from the Lamanites. Yet such is the fact.

The methods of warfare among the Nephites, rather primitive from our standpoint, grew more complex as time went on, until in Moroni we have a past master in the art of organizing and making war.

Living today when all the brain and brawn of man has been brought together to take life, the mode of warfare of the Nephites and Lamanites presents many singular phases; but singular or otherwise, it was most deadly in its effect. They appear to have known nothing of gunpowder or high explosives of any sort, not to mention electricity or gas or other means common today. They used weapons of war made from metals they found in the earth: the sword, the javelin, bows, arrows, stones, slings and cimeters. These are some of the weapons named; there were doubtless others similar to bows, arrows, and slings, but not identical with them. Even in their last battle, Mormon tells us in the 6th chapter and 9th verse, that the sword, bow, arrow and ax were used by the Lamanites in their deadly onslaught.

Both the Nephites and Jaredites, and finally the Lamanites made shields and helmets to protect the vital parts of the body, as did the warriors of Europe during the middle ages. But the equipment seemed to make little difference so far as results are concerned. Rude or otherwise, the Jaredites managed to exterminate themselves. The same fate followed the Nephites and came very nearly being the fortune of the Lamanites. How the words of Mormon reiterate and repeat themselves as he says: "Lamah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Gilgal had fallen with his ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Joneam had fallen with his ten thousand; and Camenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their ten thousands each" (Mormon 6:14).

In the Book of Ether we find the word million in relation to the slain.

These ancient people were not so much noted for making trenches and dugouts for the protection of their armies as they were prone to build forts and breastworks. They built high walls which they picketed on top, taking the soil from the outer side so that a vast ditch or moat was made. This too reminds us of methods of warfare employed in the middle ages in Europe. Any one who has ever been in continental Europe, will recall how familiar is the sight of a wall, now sometimes included within the city, as the city has outgrown its former limits. These walls today are largely in ruin, yet serve to tell the story of a by-gone day.

Book of Mormon people had many men of military distinction. From a comparatively large group we shall mention only Teancum, who always challenges admiration because of his valor; and his strict code of military honor; constantly we see the picture of him rushing ahead of the line of battle, seeking out the leaders of the Lamanites that he might slay them. With his own hands he slew Morianton, Amalickiah and Ammaron, yet in it all, how admirably just he was!

Judging from all standpoints, we should perhaps conclude that Moroni was their greatest military genius. "Mormon," says Elder George Reynolds, in the *Story of the Book of Mormon*, "reorganized their armies, compelled more stringent discipline, introduced new tactics, developed a greatly superior system of fortifications, built towers and citadels, and altogether placed the defensive powers of the commonwealth on a new and stronger footing."

We wish now to turn to some of the descriptions of those battles that resulted in the extermination of both the Jaredites and the Nephites—this ancient history that reminds us of nothing so much as modern days.

"And it came to pass when Coriantumr had recovered from his wounds he began to remember the words which Ether had spoken unto him. He saw that there had been slain by the sword nearly two million of his men and he began to sorrow in his heart; yea, there had been slain two million of mighty men and also their wives and their children (Ether 15:7).

In the Russian-Japanese war we were content to talk of hundreds of thousands among the slain, but now at last we, too, have made the past, the barbarous past, as many were wont to call it, our own, so that now we only speak of millions.

Lincoln L. West, a member of the Red Cross official observation party, sent under military escort to the trenches this spring, returns to tell us that France has lost one and a half million men and has one and a half million men wounded.

Aagin, in Ether 15:15, we are told: "And it came to pass that when we were all gathered together, every one to the army which he would, with their wives and their children; both men, women, and children being armed with weapons of war, having shields, and breastplates, and head-plates, and being clothed after the manner of war, they did march forth one against another, to battle; and they fought all that day, and conquered not."

We have not yet heard of children being armed in the various countries, now at war; we have heard of mere youths forming component parts of the armies, but children have been direct as well as indirect victims of this war in all the countries overrun by the Central Powers.

The Russian women actually entered the conflict, but that is not nearly so significant, from the standpoint of women, as that over seven hundred thousand women have lost their lives directly through this war, having been victims of the submarine, bombs and shrapnel. Never before have women been engaged behind the lines as they are today.

In the second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni we read, concerning the last wars of the Nephites:

"And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, the Lamanites have many prisoners, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women and children.

"And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands, and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water, save a little, do they give unto them.

"And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue;

"And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto the wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

"O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization;

"(And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people;)

"But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination,

"How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?" (Moroni 9:7-14.)

To be sure, as yet we have no knowledge of human flesh being fed to prisoners, but we know that disease germs have been injected into their blood, and it has been said that women have been nailed to doors within churches, after the brutes into whose hands they have fallen have accomplished their wicked purposes.

Nothing is clearer than that the Germans have no regard for the chastity of women. Their abominable edicts witness this fact, as also their most vile practices. Many magazine articles of recent date tell us of the outrages perpetrated on the womanhood of Belgium and France. The number of German babies to which French and Belgian women have given birth is one of the ugliest and most serious problems of the war.

Thus history repeats itself. Thus it would seem that where wickedness flourishes, civilization must sooner or later perish from the earth. The Italian armies are taxed to the utmost to protect the art treasures of centuries, of the city of Venice, from the invading armies. We grieve today because our civilization is threatened by the wicked and bloodthirsty, and those who seek to make conquest of the earth.

The history of the Nephites, Jaredites and Lamanites combined, must go far to prove that apart from righteousness no civilization can hope to be permanent; that sooner or later the covetous, angry passions of men will assert themselves in bloody battle, seeking to destroy all things worthy, with blood flowing as rivers, and nations dying or suffering to the very verge of extinction.

#### QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS.

1. What use did the Nephites make of the sword of Laban to assist in their national defense?
2. Compare war equipment of the present time with that of the peoples of the Book of Mormon.
3. Show that difference in the kind of equipment made no difference as to final results.
4. What did the Nephites and Jaredites wear to protect the vital parts of their bodies?
5. Show how the invention of gun powder and high explosives has changed methods of defense from the breastword to the trench.
6. How have children been made direct victims of this present war?
7. Discuss the extent to which they have been made indirect victims through starvation.

8. How have women been made direct victims of this war? How have they been made indirect victims?

9. Show how the chastity of woman in Book of Mormon times was violated just as it has been today.

10. What are we led to conclude will be the fate of any civilization, no matter how powerful and magnificent, when the people of the earth become wicked?

## LESSON II.

### Work and Business.

SECOND WEEK IN NOVEMBER.

## LESSON III.

### Genealogy.

ADDED OR SURNAMES—THEIR ORIGIN.

(See Chapter 9, *Surname Book*.)

#### TEACHERS' OUTLINE.

*Definition.*—A surname is a permanent name added to the personal name.

When families emerge into society, personal names are insufficient for identification.

- (a) Personal names are usually first compounded.
- (b) A nickname is often added, and if it becomes permanent and is handed down it then becomes a surname.
- (c) Sometimes people are surnamed for their place of residence.
- (d) Surnames come from offices or professions.
- (e) From trades and occupations.

#### *The Hebrew Customs.*

- (a) Usually tribal surnames.
- (b) Place names.
- (c) Nicknames.

#### LESSON STATEMENT.

A surname is a permanent name added to the personal name. A surname is often the tribal or family name and is adopted from varying causes, as we shall see presently.