



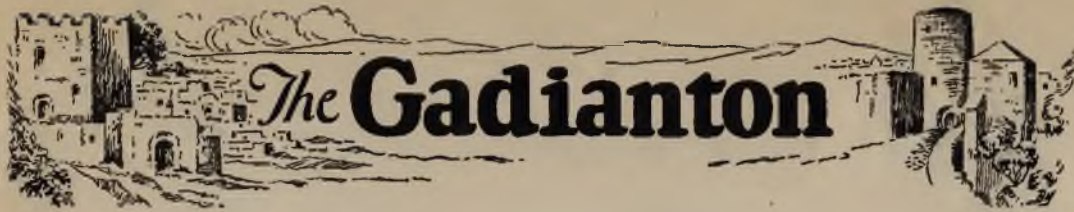
Type: Magazine Article

The Gadianton: A Story of Zarahemla, Chapter V

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Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (April 1932), pp. 199-203

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



A STORY OF ZARAHEMLA

By E. Heloise Merkley

V

"You say you wish to prove yourself worthy of the hand of Orpah, by suggesting to me the way to eventually conquer and exterminate the Gadiantons and by acting as a spy to help me do it," Gidgiddoni said.

"That is what I wish to do if you believe I am sincere," Jarom replied.

"And first, how do you propose to bring me information concerning them, if you are to cast your lot with us?"

"By appearing to them and to all Nephites also, except yourself, to be still one of them, and by staying with them except when I can bring you vital information."

"How will you keep them from discovering that you are really serving me?"

"By taking to them such information concerning your movements as will seem to them to be valuable but will not in any way enable them to gain an advantage over you. In other words by being half a spy for them while being entirely a spy for you."

"Is there not a great deal of danger in the course you propose to pursue, both from them if they discover or suspect that you help me, and from my people if they do not know you serve me, but discover that you are a Gadianton?"

"Whatever of baseness I have been taught among the robbers, cowardice is not part of it. And if I were naturally inclined to fear danger I should not now be a spy for Giddianhi. Besides, love such as mine for Orpah would wipe away

all fear so long as the danger I faced were for her sake. I trust that if any great difficulty should arise for me among the Nephites, I should be able to appeal to their Chief Captain for escape. And I trust the inspiration given by the God I have so recently learned to ask for help, to sharpen my wits so that I can escape the wrath of the Gadiantons unless it be His will that I should pay with my life for the sins of my father and of my own past. What are you, anyhow, Gidgiddoni, Chief Captain of the Nephites, to talk to me of danger?"

"I am one who has faced it often fearlessly, but never without taking it into account. And I am one who never seeks it uselessly for myself or others, and who will never consent to accept service from one who fears it for himself. But since you are not afraid by training, nature, or because you love Orpah, we will dismiss that point. Tell me then, what course you propose that the Nephites follow to conquer the robbers."

Assured now, that Gidgiddoni believed in his honesty of intent, Jarom replied with earnest enthusiasm.

"There is one great weakness in the life of the Robbers which no one seems to have noted before. One great advantage which the Nephites have and which they have never used. It lies in the matter of food. We, living like savage Lamanites among the mountains, now even more savagely than the Lamanites ever lived, are dependent upon two sources of supply for our food. We can live upon such wild game as we can kill, or we can steal from you. And steal-

ing is much more the important of the two. Make it impossible for us to obtain food by plunder, and our very numbers will soon reduce the other source of supply and leave us famished, weak, and at your mercy."

Jarom stopped, for Gidgiddoni was pacing rapidly up and down the apartment as though he had forgotten that one was speaking to him. But as soon as Jarom ceased, he raised his head and exclaimed sharply: "Go on, go on. Tell me how we can do this. Tell me, I say, for I can't wait to think it out."

"The scheme is simple enough if all the Nephites can be made to cooperate, and if they have enough supplies now on hand."

"Speak it! Tell me what it is?"

"Command all the people of the Nephites who are now scattered in the land Northward and in the land Southward from sea to sea, to gather together all their provisions and animals and to come to some central place that can be well fortified. Order that they leave their lands utterly waste and desolate with not an animal upon them. Have them destroy their homes, waste their fields, and leave everything in such a condition that the Gadiantons cannot cultivate the soil as they have been doing. For our men are lazy, except for hunting and fighting. They will not cultivate the ground until there is absolutely no hope of finding enough wild game to keep themselves alive. And if the Nephites leave no tools or animals, they cannot do it if they would. The rest depends upon how much supplies the Nephites can get together and upon how well they can be controlled to make those supplies last as long as possible. For it will take more than one year, perhaps more than two, before the game is gone."

Again Jarom fell silent, and this time Gidgiddoni continued for a moment to pace up and down and up and

down. Finally he raised his head and spoke again.

"I thank God," he said, "that you have suggested this thing to me. For if the Gadiantons do not know our plans and fall upon us before we can get the people together, they can never beat us. As Chief Captain I am informed upon the resources of my people for times of war, and I know that if properly organized and controlled, they have now enough provisions to keep them alive and well fed for seven years. I am sure, too, that there are too many robbers to live so long upon wild game before it is exterminated. It depends then upon you. If you are true to Giddianhi, you can warn him to bring down his armies upon us before we can gather our resources together. Thus you can defeat us partially. If you are true to us, you can perhaps underestimate our resources to him, represent that we cannot live long without tilling the soil, and persuade him to give us time to get things in order. I shall go now, to Lachoneus with the messenger he has sent, and he will order the people together. And I shall trust that you have spoken truly to me and that you will speak falsely to your chief for the sake of right. Go now. You are Gidgiddoni's trusted friend."

The Chief Captain extended his hand, and during the long moment that Jarom's hand was clasped in its firm grip, the young man felt the tears of pride and love rise to his eyes. For Gidgiddoni had that rare gift of personality which stirs his subordinates to a devotion that is next to worship. And Jarom was stirred as he had never before been stirred by a sense of the greatest qualities in man. As Gidgiddoni released his hand with a smile of dismissal and he turned to depart, his loyalty to the cause he had embraced was trebled over what it had been before.

As he was leaving the room a servant outside the door beckoned to him to follow her. Jarom obeyed the sign and found himself in the presence of Orpah. She was standing near a table laden with all the richest and most delicate foods known to the people of Nephi.

"Will you remain with us while you are in Zarahemla and test the hospitality of Gidgiddoni?" she asked graciously.

Jarom had never seen her look so beautiful as she did now. Prompted by he knew not what impulse of love or vanity, she had dressed herself in a robe of the most becoming shade of dull grey blue, outlined with purest white, and she had left it open a little way at the neck and her hair, arranged in luxurious ringlets was partly twisted about her head while the rest fell over her bosom and shoulders. The loose sleeves of her gown fell open and revealed the transparent whiteness of her round-

ed arms. A single white flower nestled upon her bosom just below the opening at the throat. For a second Jarom found himself unable to speak for adoring her beauty.

Then he replied to her question. "I can remain a little longer today, but I must not stay here nor be seen coming and going after this evening. To Nephites and Gadian-ton alike I must seem to be a Gadian-ton spy and as such must have very little intercourse with the family of my chief enemy."

Orpah drew nearer to him, glancing about to be sure the servant was not in hearing and said in a low voice, "Then you are no longer in reality a Gadian-ton spy?"

"No longer a Gadian-ton in any sense. I am the friend and servant of Gidgiddoni, the Chief Captain of the Nephites."

"Did father call you his friend?"

"It was as his friend that he dismissed me with words of assurance and trust."

"Oh, I am so glad," and Orpah's



"Jarom had never seen her look so beautiful as she did now. * * * He found himself unable to speak for adoring her beauty,"

hands clapped themselves together softly, "But I am forgetting. You must be famished. Please eat."

"If I were overfed, such tempting food would not go neglected," Jarom assured her, and then thoroughly enjoyed himself, with Orpah chatting gayly and exchanging with him looks that spoke far more than words, while he satisfied the craving that had gone neglected since the night before. Again he saw an entirely new side of her character, and thought that if he had not loved the Orpah who entertained children or the sad eyed maiden who pined for her home, or the sisterly guest who learned at last to love his beloved mountains, he must surely have worshipped at the shrine of this lovely hostess who entertained him so skillfully and provided such appetizing food when he was hungry.

Reluctantly at last he tore himself away from her presence to act as a spy for the Robber Giddianhi. As he was leaving she extended her hand to bid him farewell. He took it and looking into her deep grey eyes, was strongly moved to take her in his arms and declare with caresses the emotions that stirred him. But remembering that he had not yet proved himself worthy, he restrained himself, and ignored the call of her smile and glance. Pressing her hand then, as though they were friends only, he bade her farewell and turned to go. Softly her voice followed him saying, "God bless you, Jarom." Long afterwards he fancied in time of danger that he could hear the sweet tones murmuring those words, and always they brought comfort and trust.

The next few days were perhaps the most interesting Jarom had ever witnessed. But they seemed centuries long because he dared not be seen visiting at the home of Giddidoni, lest other spies of Giddianhi should observe him and think

him traitor. Twice after dark, he stole to the tree from which he had abducted Orpah, but on neither occasion did he succeed in catching a glimpse of her.

When the multitude of Zarahemlites gathered to hear Lachoneus read the epistle of the Robber Chief, the angry enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. Jarom, lost in the crowd, thrilled at the stirring shouts for battle that rose on every side of him. And he joined in them, not only to prevent himself from seeming suspicious, but because he was beginning to be thoroughly stirred with enthusiasm for the Nephite cause.

Lachoneus let the first wild clamors for war spend themselves and then began talking calmly to them of the other side of the question. And Jarom, listening, wondered. Was this man a Judge or a Priest that he should so strongly exhort the people to pray? Was he a politician or a historian that he should quote to them so much of the history of their people, using it all to prove to them that always in contests with their traditional enemies, now united with them as one people, or with dissenters of their own blood, only humility before God had ever won them the victory?

Growing more powerful as he gained their attention he rebuked them daringly for the sins they had committed, telling of their treatment of Nephi and Lehi and recounting to them the terrible days of famine and pestilence when Nephi had prayed God to rebuke them.

With the threats of the Gadiantons fresh in their minds, he had no difficulty in moving them powerfully with the relation of such miraculous events as were still in their own memories. And when he closed with a strong exhortation that before they thought of war or defense they should repent and turn to God, every knee

was bowed as the vast concourse of people cried out that they would obey his words and the teachings of their prophets if God would help them in this time of stress.

Slipping away from the multitude about Lachoneus, Jarom hastened to another part of the country where Gidgiddoni was addressing his soldiers. Less of an orator than Lachoneus, but none the less a man of God, Gidgiddoni's message to his men differed only in manner of delivery and not at all in content from that of the Chief Judge. Nor was the ultimate effect any less remarkable.

Jarom visited other cities as the messages of their leaders were carried to the people in them, and always it was the same. Anger and cries for battle at the first news of the Gadianton challenge, then a sermon on repentance and trust in God, and finally the humbling of multitude after multitude.

Interested to know how far this might extend throughout the Nephite domains, Jarom still traveled farther and farther from Zarahemla, accompanying or following those who bore the commands of the Chief Judge and the Chief Captain. Sometimes it was a judge renowned for his knowledge of the law and of human nature, who carried the word. Often it was a captain of the army, whose blunt manners seemed no impediment to his power to influence his hearers. Even the priests of the church were sent out to carry the same powerful message. But Judge, or Captain, or Priest, everywhere the result was the same, until he wearied of hearing and seeing the same thing over and wondered when they would stop preaching and begin doing something.

He had followed the messengers far beyond the narrow pass and into the Northland before he remembered that the time Giddianhi had given

him before his return was almost up, and turned his face again toward Zarahemla.

Now he began meeting another series of messengers, following upon the heels of the first group. These were not orators, nor did they make long appeals to the people. They brought only the command from their leaders that the people from every city and division of the country except only Zarahemla and Bountiful should gather to these lands.

"Leave your homes utterly waste and bring with you every animal and particle of food that you have. Do not hurry, but waste no time. And leave nothing behind you. Remember, it is food that you must bring. All the food you can possibly gather together."

Brief and definite were the instructions, and always their carrying out began immediately. Swift as was his return, unhampered with supplies, the roads were already beginning to be crowded by people moving into Zarahemla and Bountiful before he got back.

Arrived at the land of Bountiful, he was moved to marvel at the enormous activity going on there. Builders, builders everywhere! Recruited from every portion of the mighty nation, they were erecting houses to receive the thousands who were called to gather here. And they were building substantially. And outside the lands, for miles and miles the soldiers were working as soldiers never worked before, throwing up vast walls as fortifications about the two great lands of Zarahemla and Bountiful.

Jarom was fascinated at the results of his suggestion to Gidgiddoni. He wished that he might stay and watch the transformation of the land, but his time limit was past. So he hurried once more into the mountains to report to Giddianhi as a spy.

(To be continued)