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Chapter LXIV

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Abstract: The Money of the Nephites—Their Coins—Barley the Standard of Value

and utter devilishness, we doubt if it was ever equalled in this suffering world. But it is not our province in this chapter to enter into historical details. The law is our subject, and of that we can say little. If it were possible to conceive of such a contradiction, we should say that the law of anarchy reigned supreme. Might made right; and the more numerous Lamanites ultimately overcame and annihilated their Nephite brethren. We can well conceive of the nature of the laws during the fierce struggle that preceded this dire calamity, from the light of this nation's previous history; they were no doubt framed, enacted and administered for the benefit of the rich and the strong, and to the injury of those in whose bosoms burned one lingering spark of righteousness. The history of the Nephites, from beginning to end, fully justifies the saying of the wise man, Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE MONEY OF THE NEPHITES—THEIR COINS—BARLEY THE STANDARD OF VALUE.

IN THE early days of the Nephite nation, when its people were struggling to develop their own peculiar and distinctive civilization, each province, district or even city had its particular standards of weights, measures and money. This state of affairs frequently

prevails in young communities, and is an evidence that the growth of Nephite civilization was much the same as in the nations of the eastern hemisphere. As the population of a nation increases, its powers of government consolidating and its commerce developing, these various and conflicting standards of exchange give rise to much unnecessary confusion, many perplexing difficulties and frequent misunderstandings and complications, which hamper trade and commerce, retard material progress, and delay the unification of the nation. It thus becomes the work of the far-seeing statesman or wise ruler to bring all these various local rates to one national standard, recognized as legal and equitable in all parts of the realm.

This work the second Mosiah accomplished for the Nephites. When he revised and codified the national law for the government of the people under the Judges, he abolished the local distinctive rates and introduced one universal standard. Of the ratios of the various weights and measures, either before or after the enactment of Mosiah's wise law, we are told nothing in the Book of Mormon; it is simply stated that the Nephites had not adhered to the standards in use among the Jews in Judea, but had altered their reckoning and their measures, very frequently as caprice, convenience, or local exclusiveness inspired. As to the ratios of the coins legalized by Mosiah's code they are highly artistic, evince a large acquaintance with monetary matters and point to a high degree of civilization as then existing among the Nephites.

The following is the table of these coins as given in the Book of Mormon:

GOLD COINS.

1 Senine		equal to	1 Sennin.
1 Seon,	2 Senines,	"	1 Annor.
1 Shum,	4 "	"	1 Ezrom.
1 Linnah,	7 "	"	1 Onti.

SILVER COINS.

Of smaller coins—

- 1 Shiblun was equal to half a Senine, or Sennin.
 1 Shiblun " " a quarter of a Senine or Sennin.
 1 Leah " " an eighth of a Senine or Sennin.

While an Antion of gold was equal to three Shublons.

Though not directly so stated, we judge from the context that the Shiblun, the Shiblun and the Leah were silver coins.

The names of these coins seem to be identical with, or derived from those of familiar persons or places. Thus we have a Leah, a Shiblun,* and an Annor,† all names of persons. Also an Antion, which word is found in Antionah‡ and Antionum,§ a Shiblun which differs from Shiblun§ only in one letter, and a Shublun from Shiblun,* and a Linnah from Linnah,§ to the same extent.

This custom of naming coins after well known or distinguished persons is a practice not confined to the Nephites. Other nations have done the same; as for instance, in France a twenty-franc gold piece is called a Napoleon.

One little item that in itself may appear trivial is not without its weight in the consideration of the minor or incidental evidences of the truth of the Book

* A son of Alma the younger.

† A Nephite officer under Alma.

‡ A chief ruler in the city of Ammonihah.

§ Three Nephite generals killed at Cumorah.

of Mormon. A measure of barley is especially mentioned as the unit of value on which the monetary system, or the value of the coins of the Nephites was based. One senine was worth one measure of barley, and its multiples were, of course, multiples of this measure of barley, but we have no information as to what the contents of this measure may have been.*

Now the old English unit of measurement was a barley-corn, or grain of barley. Three barley-corns make one inch, is the way the table commenced.

Believing, as the Latter-day Saints do, that the Nephites were a branch of the house of Israel, and also that the races whence the English have most largely sprung had much of the blood of Israel in their composition, the agreement of these two units on the grain so frequently mentioned in the Bible (as with the Nephites all grain seems to have been of equal price) is not without its value in either argument. The fact, also, that the Nephites made grain the standard of value shows how highly agriculture must have been esteemed among that people.

*The payment per day, fixed by law, for a Nephite judge when actually engaged in his official duties was one senine, otherwise one measure of barley.

