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Lessons from the Life of Nephi II: Lehi Leaves Jerusalem

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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.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

II.—Lehi Leaves Jerusalem.

TEXT:—The Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family into the wilderness. *1. Nephi, 2: 2.*

WHEN to tarry with safety in Jerusalem became no longer possible for Lehi, the Lord instructed him in a dream to take his family and depart into the wilderness. At the same time the Lord blessed him because of the course which he had taken, and because he had been faithful in declaring unto the people the things which he had been commanded.

When Lehi received the command to depart, he immediately set out fulfilling it, and taking with him his family and such goods and food as he could carry he quit the doomed city where he had so long dwelt, leaving behind him his house and property, his gold and silver and other precious things, all of which he willingly gave up that he might be obedient to the heavenly message. Lehi's family consisted of his wife, Sariah, and his four sons whose names, in the order of their birth, were Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi. These were all young men; Nephi, the youngest, being probably about sixteen years of age. Lehi had also daughters, but whether they were born at this time is not evident from the record. They are not now spoken of nor is their birth mentioned afterwards; while we are told that two sons were born to Lehi while the little colony traveled in the wilderness, to whom he gave the names of Jacob and Joseph. We are also told nine or ten years later, when the company was on the ocean, that Lehi and his wife, Sariah, were well stricken with years, so we think it quite possible that Lehi's daughters were born at Jerusalem. This is made more probable when we remember that Nephi, the youngest of the four sons, would probably be about twenty years old when his younger brothers were born. It seems reasonable when we consider the age of Sariah, that it was during this lapse of twenty

years, and not later, that his sisters received their birth.

We have no account in the Book of Mormon of the precise road which Lehi and his family took when they left Jerusalem. Undoubtedly they traveled through the wilderness of Judæa southward till they reached the eastern arm of the Red Sea. They journeyed along the Arabian shores of that sea for some little distance till they came to a valley through which a small stream flowed. To the river, Lehi gave the name of Laman after his eldest son, and the valley he called Lemuel. He did this that by so doing he might strengthen their faith, telling Laman that he trusted that he might be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness; and to Lemuel he said, "Oh, that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast and immovable in keeping the commands of God."

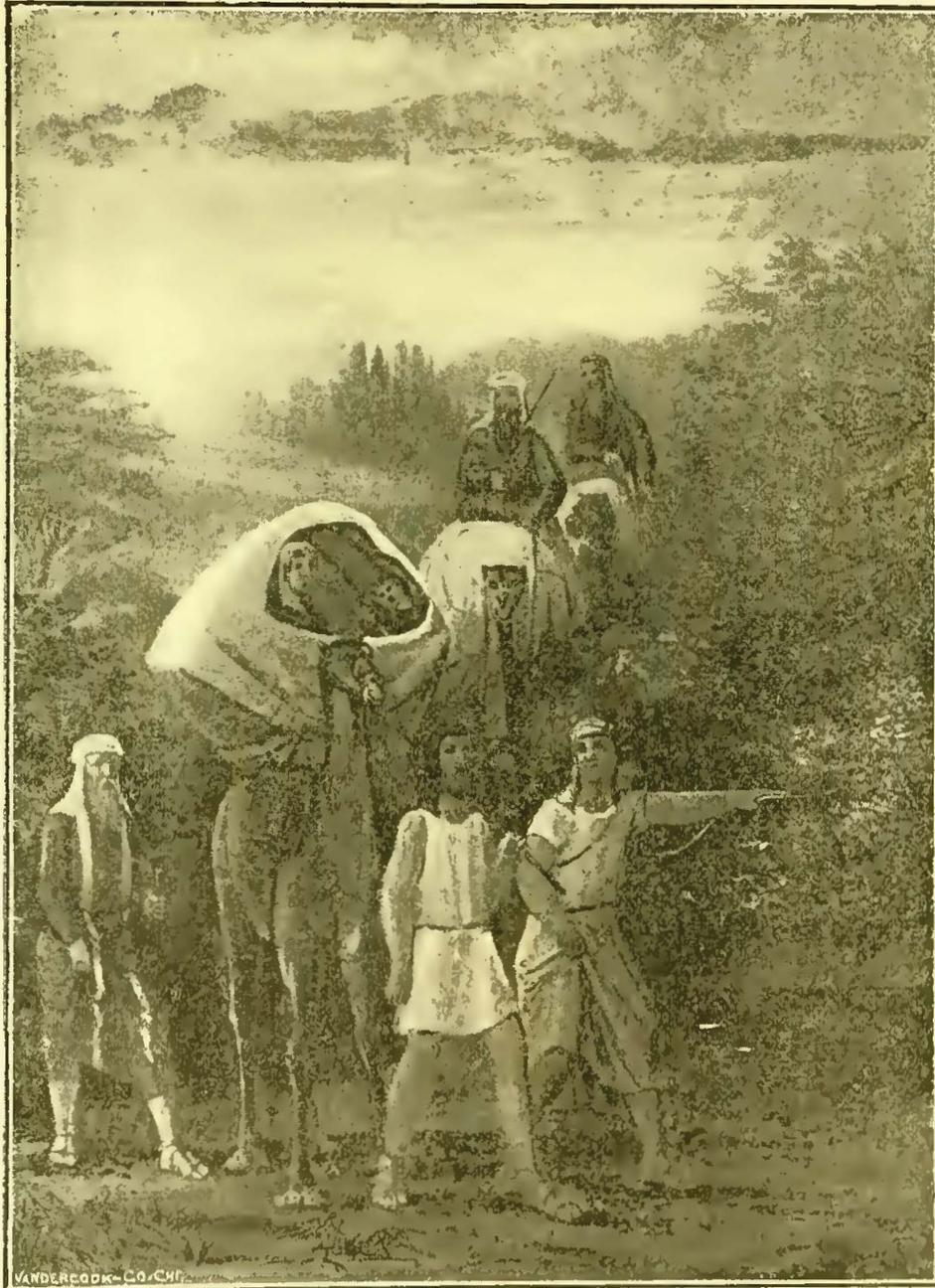
He had reasons for thus speaking to his older sons, for they were faithless and unbelieving. They regarded their father as a visionary man, and put no confidence in his prophecies and warnings. Already they had begun to murmur that he had led them from their comfortable home in Jerusalem to perish in the wilderness, and complained that he was inspired to do so simply by the foolish imaginations of his heart. But when Lehi rebuked them, they trembled at his words, for he was filled with the power of the Spirit of God, and they dared not utter anything against him, but reluctantly did as he directed them.

Sam, Lehi's third son, was a much better man than were Laman and Lemuel. He does not appear to have been a leading spirit, but he was obedient and faithful, and in almost every case sided with the right and followed the teachings of his father and the counsels of his more fervent brother Nephi.

Nephi was one of the greatest of men—true as steel, never wavering, full of integrity, faith and zeal; he loved the Lord with all his heart. It is seldom we find a character in the history of this fallen world that was as perfect

or as complete as was that of Nephi. He was naturally a leader, his faith and courage made him so, while his devout humility gave him strength with heaven. In many respects he resembled Moses ; not only was he their

Abraham, he was a father to his people ; like Melchisedec, he was their king and high priest ; like Noah, he was a ship-builder, by which he delivered his family, and like Tubalcain, "an instructor of every artificer in



LEHI AND HIS FAMILY IN THE WILDERNESS.

law-giver, but a practical teacher of his people in the every-day concerns of life. Like Enoch, he was a prophet, seer and revelator, one in whom were deposited the mysteries of God's dealings with future generations ; like

brass and iron." In one respect he was like all the prophets, for he was derided, mocked, abused and persecuted by those who should have loved him most, those whose welfare he made his constant labor.

Then Lehi pitched his tents in the valley of Lemuel and remained there until the Lord directed him to continue his journey.

The reward of obedience is the lesson that is today impressed upon us. If Lehi had not been obedient to the word of the Lord, his garments would not have been free from the blood of that doomed generation; he would not have been blessed with the approval and commendation of God, and would have remained in Jerusalem to be destroyed with the rest of the unbelieving. Obedience to God is ever the path of safety and salvation.

George Reynolds.

THE "STEEL MAIDEN'S" CRUEL CLASP.

A FEW years ago it happened to be my lot as a missionary to spend considerable time in the rare old German city of Nuremberg. Of all the continental cities, this, I think, stands pre-eminent as a well-preserved type of the walled and fortified town of the medieval ages. Today it is the cradle of industry and invention,—then it was a fortress of great strength, almost impregnable in its defenses and peopled by a race of warriors.

It is filled with curiosities of the olden time. Its churches are models of architectural beauty and wealth in interior decorations. Its moat and walls and towers are still in an excellent state of preservation and furnish a splendid idea of the plan of the outworks, with which those early Germans withstood many a hardy foe. The streets are narrow and crooked; the houses old-fashioned, but likely to stand for centuries yet; the little river which finds its way through the city and which in the olden day was relied upon to fill the moat with water in time of war, is spanned by two massive bridges. Everything one sees reminds him that he stands upon ground and gazes upon sights and scenes which are hallowed by the memories of a thousand years, and he is especially impressed if he come from America, where everything is new and where

rather than have anything old the first sign of decay is followed by a speedy clearing away of even the most revered structure.

It was with such feelings as this that I made my way one morning to the frowning castle which overlooks the town high above the broad moat and the massive walls of the old city. Founded in the tenth century this hoary pile was the nucleus around which the city grew. A brief description of it, and mention of some of the traditions which still cling to it, appeared in an earlier volume of the INSTRUCTOR. But at that time I made no detailed reference to the contents of the old museum, which, after all, was the feature that moved me most profoundly, and in at least one of its possessions makes an impression on every traveler which he can not easily forget. Follow me while I describe this most hideous relic.

Proceeding from one of the most spacious battlements, I followed a fellow tourist up a flight of rickety stairs into one of the towers of the old building, where we came into a dark chamber whose dust and cobwebs and gloom seemed to indicate that visitors seldom visit it. In the center of this dismal place stood what appeared to me to be a gigantic statue, which an attendant who had followed us up the stairs proceeded to open. The front of this image extending from the top clear to the bottom, was thrown back; and though not without some effort, the work was done so quickly and quietly that I was not aware of what the image revealed and did not have my attention called to it until just before starting down stairs again. Through the darkness to which I had now become somewhat accustomed I then observed that the statue was hollow and that here and there in it were huge spikes, still sharp though covered with rust, and of such length and size that when the doors were shut, they seemed to reach from one side of the hollow image to within half an inch of the other side. All at once the dreadful truth came over me that this was the "Steel Maiden" to whose terrible and deadly embrace were committed