



Type: Magazine Article

The Nephites under the Judges, III

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Source: *The Contributor*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (April 1881)

Published by: The Contributor Company

Page(s): 205–208

Abstract: Reynolds discusses the origins of the Nephite Gadianton band in the failed rebellion of Paanchi. Their crimes and violence over the years are discussed, as is the countering ministry of Nephi and Lehi, the sons of Helaman, in bringing thousands of Nephites and Lamanites to a knowledge of the gospel and an understanding of their duties. Wars between the Gadianton Robbers and the armies of the Nephites and Lamanites are mentioned, leading into the prophecies of the impending birth of the Savior, delivered by Samuel the Lamanite from upon the walls of the city of Zarahemla.

ligible exercise. The church became filled with people of all classes, the kneeling, rising and turning of the priest, bowing, crossing and solemn looks of the others, and reverential inclinations of the heads of all, as sacred names were uttered, with the never ceasing chanting of the choir, and the rising fumes of incense continued for about an hour, when in the same grand order as they entered, the brotherhood of priests and the sis-

terhood of nuns, with the chanting choirsters, filed in slow and measured tread out of the building, through the arched doorway by which they had entered, and the great crowd of worshipers and spectators dispersed. We learned afterwards that we had simply witnessed the saying of prayers for the repose of the soul of a certain dignitary, who had died many years ago, leaving his vast fortune to "holy mother church." *De Vallibus.*

THE NEPHITES UNDER THE JUDGES.

VII.

ON the death of the elder Pahoran, the third Chief Judge, a contention arose amongst his three sons (Pahoran, Paanchi and Pacumeni) as to who should be his successor. Pahoran, the younger was chosen by the people (B. C. 52) but Paanchi would not accept the result of the *vox populi*, and raised the standard of revolt. For this crime he was arrested, tried and executed. It was amongst the unsuccessful followers of Paanchi that the Gadianton band appears to have had its origin in the midst of the Nephites. Kishkumen, one of their boldest leaders, in order to avenge the condemnation of Paanchi, assassinated the newly elected Chief Judge as he sat on the judgment seat, and so complete was his disguise, so unexpected his act and so speedy his flight, that he was not recognized nor captured by those who pursued him, and when once out of their reach he was protected by his brother conspirators.

The oaths, signs and tokens of this iniquitous association, by which they recognized their members and protected each other in their villainies—their murders, rapine, whoredoms, etc.—were the same terrible imprecations which had been put by Satan into the heart of Cain, when he murdered his brother Abel, and which developed into the overwhelming wickedness that brought upon the groaning earth the cleansing waters of the flood; which also were implanted into the hearts of the impious creatures who sought to build the tower of Babel.

These same Satanic organizations found place, grew and flourished amongst the Jaredites and ultimately brought about their utter destruction. Again, the great enemy of mankind whispered these same accursed things into the ears of Gadianton, Kishkumen and others, and they, swearing by their everlasting maker, bound themselves to aid in the despoilation of virtue, the overthrow of good government, and in the carrying out of all the secret sins that their evil passions might suggest, or their corrupt hearts desire. Such an organization was like a cancer eating into the vitals of the Nephite body-politic, and without its speedy and thorough eradication by the most vigorous means, would infallibly end in national death, which it did.

The confusion and lack of confidence brought about by the murder of Pahoran, proved very disastrous to the Nephites, for in the next year, the Lamanites taking advantage of their internal troubles, made a sudden irruption into the centre of their country, surprised and captured the city of Zarahemla (on which occasion Pacumeni, who had succeeded his brother as Chief Judge, was slain), and then pushed rapidly and victoriously northward, with the intention of taking possession of the northern continent. However, they did not sufficiently keep up their line of communication in the rear; the Nephite general, Lehi, checked their advance, and when they attempted to return to their own territory they were surrounded by the Nephite forces, their

leader was slain and their army destroyed; what few warriors remained were taken prisoners.

The death of Pacumeni rendered the judgment seat again vacant. Heleman, the grandson of Alma, was elected to fill that important office (B. C. 50). He was a righteous man and consequently his election was very displeasing to the Gadiantons. They determined to slay him as they had Pahoran. The same vile creature was chosen to do the dastardly deed. This time Kishkumen was not successful; he was discovered and slain by one of Helaman's servants. Gadianton finding that Kishkumen did not return, surmised disaster. He hastily gathered his followers and led them with all speed into the wilderness, which they henceforth made their rendezvous, and from which they sallied forth to spread rapine and havoc amongst both Nephites and Lamanites. Nor did they confine their depredations to the borders of the wilderness, but gaining courage from their immunity from punishment, they gradually worked themselves into the more densely settled portions of the country, where, unknown to the officers of the law they established themselves, through the connivance of the more wicked portions of the community (B. C. 43), though at that time the majority of the Nephite people were seeking to serve the Lord, and consequently were greatly blessed by Him, in things both temporal and spiritual.

This happy state of affairs continued several years, and had it not been for the leaven of unrighteousness which was surely working, there was every element at this period to insure stability, strength and prosperity to the Nephite commonwealth. But dissension, contention and treason made themselves manifest, followed by bloodshed and the usual migrations of the disappointed and defeated to the Lamanites (B. C. 38), where they followed the undeviating course of apostates, stirring up animosities between the two races. War followed (B. C. 35). On account of their stiffneckedness Heaven left the Nephites to themselves, and they melted before the outnumbering hosts of

their enemies, like snow beneath the heat of the summer sun. They fled from city to city, they retreated from land to land, until all South America was in Lamanite hands (B. C. 34). Presently they rallied, and the intrepid Moronihah, inspired by the spirit of his father Moroni, led them forth to again face the foe, and little by little they recovered the more northern portions of their country, until about half thereof had been reconquered from the dark skinned invaders (B. C. 31). The great afflictions of this war brought partial repentance, and Nephi, their Chief Judge and High Priest, resigned the first named office that he might devote all his time to the work of their reformation. He was succeeded in the judgment seat by Cezoram, a man much Nephi's inferior, who owed his election to the growing influence of the evil disposed in the affairs of state.

Nephi, with his younger brother Lehi, accomplished one of the most remarkable works recorded in the history of the regeneration of mankind. These brothers not only brought thousands of Nephites to an understanding of their duties, but also led thousands of Lamanites, both in the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla to a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ; insomuch that the greater portion of the latter race were converted to God. Henceforth the distinguishing titles of Nephite and Lamanite do not relate so closely to the accident of birth and descent as they do to the manner of the life of the individual. Those who served God became known as Nephites, and those who rejected his laws and had pleasure in their iniquity and blindness were the Lamanites. After their conversion the repentant Lamanites delivered up to the Nephites all the lands they had wrested from them, and for a short period a reign of almost universal peace prevailed, and the members of both races could travel from one end of the continent to the other unmolested and undisturbed.

This blissful epoch quickly faded like a transitory ray of sunshine in a storm-cloud covered sky. The great peace brought prosperity, prosperity riches,

riches pride, and pride divisions, divisions bloodshed. Cezoram was murdered on the judgment seat by a Gadian-ton assassin (B. C. 26), and his son, who succeeded him, was slain by the same means within the year. At this time there were many of these assassins and marauders amongst the Nephites, but they were the most numerous among the more wicked portions of the Lamanites. When the righteous Lamanites discovered this condition of affairs they energetically went to work to eradicate the evil, but the Nephites gave the Gadian-ton's succor, shelter and sympathy. The results of these opposite policies were soon apparent; the Nephites dwindled in unbelief, whilst the Lamanites grew exceedingly in the knowledge of God. When these latter captured any of the evil-doers they preached the word of eternal truth to them, and in course of time they cleared their land of all these bands, but in the midst of the Nephites they increased so rapidly that they seized upon the public offices, elected the rulers, and by fraud and force obtained the sole management of the government, prostituting their positions to the basest uses (B. C. 24). We believe Chief Judge Seezoram, who was murdered by his brother Seantum (B. C. 23), to have been a member of this band, most probably a prominent leader in violence and iniquity.

As the years passed by the power of the robbers still grew, insomuch that through their instrumentality an internecine war of two years duration (B. C. 20 and 19) was waged through the land among all the people of Nephi. This horrible state of affairs was only terminated by the advent of a wide spread, desolating famine, which lasted three years, and which was ended by the mercy of the Lord when the people hunted out and exterminated the robber bands. Then, in answer to their piteous supplications and promises of reform, He sent the rain in its season, and a bounteous harvest once again crowned the toils of the husbandman (B. C. 16).

The horrors of death by famine having been averted, the people for a few months made an effort to serve the Lord, and He

blessed them with exceeding great peace. It was unfortunately of short duration. Slowly and surely they returned to their evil ways, sin had become natural to their degraded natures, contentions and crime increased, and the Gadian-ton bands again arose to carry havoc and misery to the homes and lives of the citizens (B. C. 12). The next year actual, organized war was carried on between the government and the robbers, whose numbers had so rapidly increased that they could successfully defy the armies of both the Lamanites and Nephites. Swooping down from their mountain fastnesses on to the plains below, or rushing forth out of their hiding places in the wilderness, they carried death and destruction wherever they appeared. Terror reigned in the midst of the fickle minded people, they had little disposition to serve God, and cowered before the effects of His displeasure. The Nephite mothers frightened their children into submission with the name of Gadian-ton, and gossips repeated the stories of their bloody achievements and brutal atrocities with quivering lips and trembling limbs. And they had cause; many citizens were carried into the wilderness after their forays, especially women and children, who became the victims of their demoniacal passions. The Nephites lived in constant torturing fear of their incursions for a number of years, but still they repented not; they were again ripening for destruction. Whilst in this pitiable condition (B. C. 6), a Lamanite prophet, named Samuel, visited the city of Zarahemla, but they rejected his teachings and thrust him out. Still he had a message from the Lord and would deliver it. He climbed to the top of the city's walls, and from there he raised his warning voice. He told them in no equivocal terms of their ultimate destruction through their rejection of God's laws; he prophesied of the near approach of the incarnation of the Mighty One of Jacob, and gave the signs that should attend His birth and crucifixion.

Samuel's words of warning were received by the few, but rejected by the many. Those who believed sought the

high priest Nephi, and were baptized, confessing their sins, those who believed not endeavored to kill the Lamanite prophet, as they had previously done others of the servants of God, but he fled to

his own land and was never heard of more among the Nephites. *Geo. Reynolds.*

"If" is the devil's whipper-in,
And "But" 's the charioteer of sin.

CHRONICLES OF UTAH.

III.

Only two years after the arrival of the pioneers, on the 24th of July, 1849, a spectacle was seen and rejoicings were heard in this city that will never be forgotten. The day began with firing of cannon; a fine brass band paraded the streets in two carriages. A bowery was ready to receive the people, which had been erected on one hundred and four posts, and covered with boards. It was one hundred feet long, sixty feet wide, with a canopy or awning extending one hundred feet each side, for the multitude to dine under. At 9 a.m. a procession was formed at the house of President Brigham Young, directed by Lorenzo Snow, J. M. Grant and F. D. Richards. Horace S. Eldredge as marshal led the way on horseback, attired in military uniform, followed by a brass band playing inspiring tunes. Next in order were twelve bishops with the banners of their respective wards. Then twenty-four young men dressed in white, with white scarfs on their right shoulders, and coronets on their heads, each carrying a copy of the Declaration of Independence, with swords sheathed in their right hands. In their midst, a banner with the motto "The Zion of the Lord." Next twenty-four young ladies in white dresses with white scarfs on their right shoulders and a wreath of white roses on their heads, each carrying a Bible and Book of Mormon. Banner: "Hail to our chieftain." Then followed the presiding bishop, Newel K. Whitney; Thomas Bullock, clerk; John Smith, presiding patriarch. Then four abreast, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Charles C. Rich, Daniel Spencer, Willard Richards, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Erastus Snow. Next were D. Fullmer and Wil-

lard Snow. Then twelve bishops carrying flags of their wards. Next twenty-four silver greys, led by Isaac Morley, patriarch. There was singing through the streets, with music by the brass bands, as the procession moved along.

After arriving at the bowery a large meeting was held, Presidents Young, Kimball and Richards, Patriarch John Smith, Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney and Thomas Bullock proceeded down the aisle amid enthusiastic cheering. Speeches were given; the Declaration of Independence was read; poetry was recited, the "Mountain Standard," by P. P. Pratt; an "Ode to Liberty" was sung by the twenty-four silver greys; and addresses were given by Brothers John Young, C. C. Rich, President Kimball and President Brigham Young. During intermission the bishops led the inhabitants of their respective wards to dinner, at which were present hundreds of emigrants who were invited to dine. Everybody was satisfied; not a jar or disturbance to mar the union, peace and harmony of the day.

After dinner there were a number of volunteer toasts read by the clerk, Thomas Bullock. One of these toasts will be read with interest, as will also the impromptu response to it. Volunteer toast: By John Taylor: "The Ladies of the Lake—the lillies of the valley; our mothers, wives and children. May their posterity, from generation to generation, be found to emulate their noble examples of virtue, patience, industry and patriotism." Reply, by Miss Eliza R. Snow: "We feel ourselves honored by the sentiment, and will endeavor to prove worthy of your high anticipations; and, as you have hitherto proven yourselves patriots, and the protectors of innocence and vir-