



Type: Magazine Article

Mulek of Zarahemla, Chapter X—Conclusion

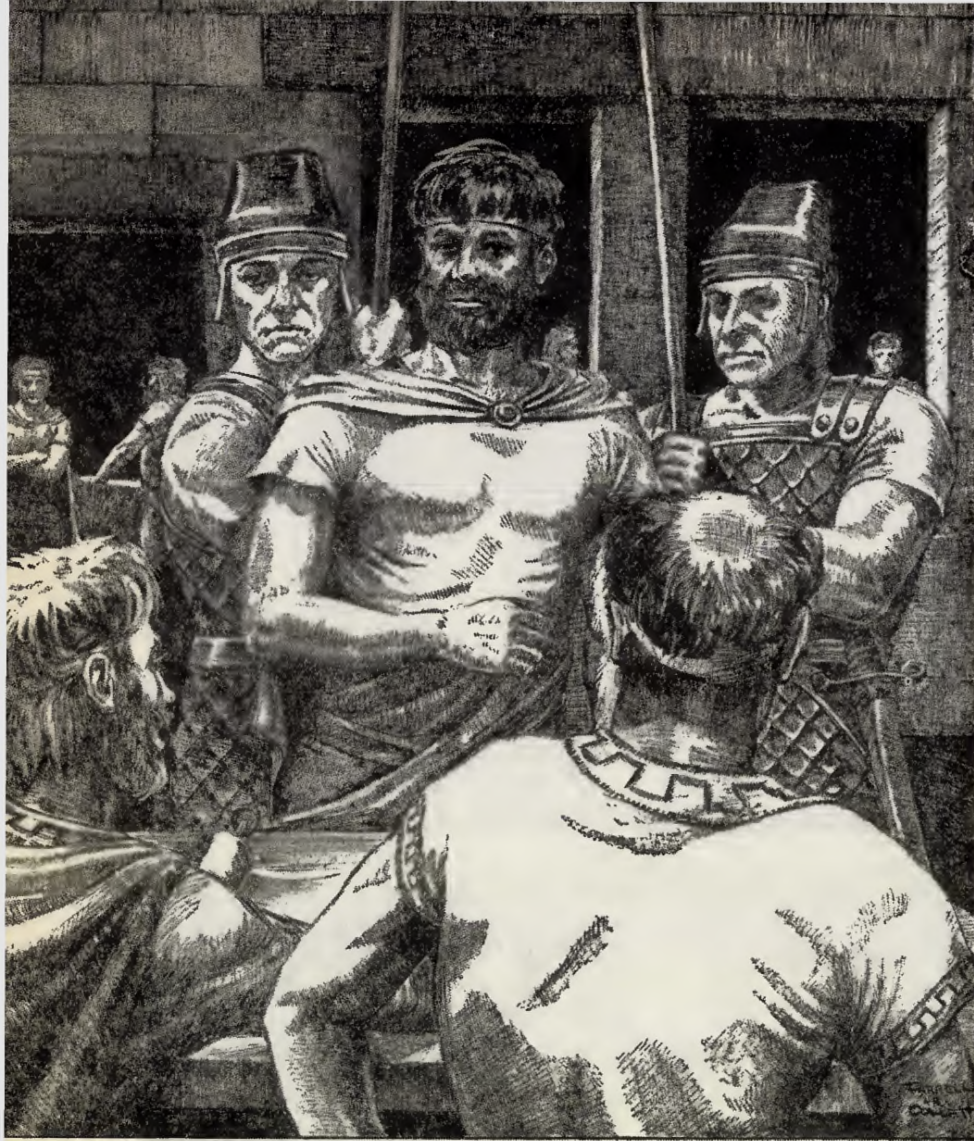
Author(s): Jesse N. Washburn

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 51, No. 10 (October 1948)

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

Page(s): 634–636

Abstract: This series is a novel based on the fictional character Mulek, an inhabitant of the city of Zarahemla during the war between Amalickiah and Moroni. The tenth part consists of chapter X.



Mulek was taken from his barren room, the only home he had had for a long time, and presented before the bar of justice.

MULEK *of* Zarahemla

By J. N. WASHBURN

CHAPTER X—CONCLUSION

THE war dragged on, and every nerve became raw from sacrifice, danger, and anxiety. Transportation was slow; communication, almost non-existent; and for weeks, and even months, families would receive no word from loved ones in dangerous places.

Then came a development which replaced the war as a topic of discussion, as a cause of worry, as a source of heartache. The trials of the king-men began in deadly earnest. Many a home was desolated; many a heart was broken. Justice struck where it was necessary; tragedy, where it would. Many were the stricken mothers and fathers who wished sorrowfully, or thanked God devoutly, that their

tall sons had fallen in the field of honorable battle.

The tribunals were impartial. Everything that could be urged in a man's favor, together with that brought to condemn him, was heard and weighed.

Mulek's turn came along with the others. He was taken from his barren room, the only home he had had for a long time, and presented before the bar of justice. He was perfectly calm as he faced the tribunal.

Pahoran, the chief judge, had left the city, refusing to have anything to do with the case lest it be said that the prisoner's wealth and prominence had influenced him favorably or adversely. He had appointed a competent judge to hear the matter and excellent men of law to accuse and to defend him. So much pre-

caution was needless, effort and interest of little point, for this was one of the shortest cases on record.

The judge asked Mulek many questions in a voice that was low but full of feeling. The prisoner answered truthfully to the best of his knowledge all that was required of him. Then the charge was read, the charge of treason, an attempt to overthrow the government of the country.

"Are you guilty or innocent of the acts enumerated in the accusation?"

Without the slightest hesitation, his fine brow unclouded, his eyes direct, Mulek answered, "I am guilty. I say it to my shame."

"Have you any reason to question any point in the matter or to contest any of the allegations herein set forth?"

"Nay," he answered in a firm voice; "I am guilty of each separate charge as specified. I have sinned grievously against both God and my country and deserve to be punished according to the law, which I consider just."

At that point one of the members of the tribunal motioned to the judge, and together they conferred for a moment.

"We wish to point out," the judge observed soberly, "that we do not here bring you into question for your violation of the laws of God, but for breaking the statutes of our land."

Mulek smiled. "I fully understand the point and thank you for your courtesy. I fear the judgment of God far more than any that can be passed upon me."

"You desire, then, to present nothing in mitigation of your offense?"

"What is there to be said? I have acted in full knowledge of the laws and of the consequences of my conduct. Is envy of the chief captain to be urged in my defense? Is anger an excuse? Shall I ask leniency because I desired to overthrow the government of the judges? Nay, there is nothing to be said."

The lawyers and judges were disturbed; they were not accustomed to such defense. At length they conferred and then pronounced judg-

ment. Mulek was sentenced to death.

After a moment of tense and freighted silence Mulek turned to his judge and, to the amazement of the whole court, thanked him.

The other men would have liked to say more, to protest their regret, to offer sympathy and understanding, but Mulek's calm self-possession discouraged them. In the end they gave up trying, and the prisoner was led back to his cheerless cell. He went to the window, to his accustomed place and looked out, hour upon hour. Outwardly he was cool as a rock. Within he was like a tempest. He was not in the least aware of his surroundings. He did not think; he could only feel; and all his feelings ran together to one central place which was like a furnace.

THERE was very little light left when Mulek roused himself from his total absorption. As he turned away from the window where he had been so long, he brushed his leg against the Scripture and knocked it to the floor. He stooped and picked it up, almost tenderly, for it represented now his only bond with reality. His eyes fell upon the words, words he had read many times but which seemed now to hold him.

"And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.

"And if their works are evil, they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on the one hand, the other on the other—

"The one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh.

"And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness."

When the light became too dim for further reading, Mulek replaced the record on the stool and sat down on the edge of his bed. He was again aware of his surroundings. He believed what he had read with a fervency and faith of which he was soon to give ample proof.

ONE EVENING, a few days later, the guard Amnigaddah tapped respectfully on the door of Mulek's cell. The prisoner, quite lost in thought, at first did not notice. A louder and more impatient knocking, however, soon brought him to his feet.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened, and the jailer entered. He stepped forward, and Mulek noticed that he did not lock the door behind him. He came quite close.

Suddenly, and for the first time since the beginning of his confinement, Mulek experienced a strong urge to escape, like a compelling physical need. It seemed like an insistent call to action. He tingled in every nerve, and his heart began to race.

Could he do it? He believed he could. In equal combat he would stand an equal chance with the other, for he was younger. In a surprise attack he should easily overcome Amnigaddah. It would then be a simple thing to fight his way out into the darkness.

Fight?

He turned suddenly crimson at the thought. Was he, Mulek, going to sell himself now like a slave? Did his new-found gifts of soul, heart and mind, then, mean so little? What price should he pay for physical freedom? What price was it worth?

He had always hated haste as undignified. He had always looked upon flight as cowardly. Was he now less a man than he had formerly been? What good, then, was all his recent achievement of spiritual strength and moral assurance? Was his peace of mind so small a thing? It was for a moment only that he gave place to the temptation to strike the guard and flee. It would

be sacrifice, not safety. He was ashamed of himself.

The guard was speaking, but Mulek had not heard a word; he had seen the movement of lips.

"What is it you say?" he asked, pulling himself together with a profound sigh.

"There is a woman who wishes to see you."

For an instant again Mulek lost himself. A woman! It was Zorah, the thought of whom he had long since resolutely put behind him.

"Is she alone?"

"Nay. There is a man with her, but she desires to enter alone, with your permission."

His momentary hesitation and confusion passed.

"Be so kind as to show her in."

Amnigaddah bowed and went out to return in a few seconds with the woman, heavily veiled, straight as a sapling, her movements rhythmical as water. She raised her veil, disclosing a face in which the eyes were alive.

"I am honored and happy to see you, Zorah," the young man said without strangeness, restraint, or embarrassment. "Won't you be seated?"

"Thank you, Mulek." Her voice was low and tremulous with feeling. For a moment he could not speak.

"You are very pale," he said.

She smiled the faintest of smiles. "I have been ill. I have been again in the city of Zarahemla with my uncle. It was there that I fell prey to a strange malady. But I am better now. And you? Tell me about yourself."

MULEK walked about slowly, his hands clasped. He was not floundering for words, for he had nothing to hide. It was only that he was living again, and all at once, many moments of his old life. Moods, feelings, and impressions tumbled over each other in their haste to find expression.

"I have thought of you often and been the richer for your memory. I am glad to know you have been ill, for it explains why you have not been here before, and I know that I was not mistaken in you. It is sweet consolation." He was silent for a moment. "You have heard of my trial and judgment." It was not a question.

(Concluded on page 636)

MULEK OF ZARAHLEMA

(Concluded from page 635)

"That is why I have come. There is, of course, nothing to be done?"

"Nothing. Nor would I ask it."

"You are much changed."

"For which I thank God. I would not give one moment of my present hope for all my former prospects. This is a peace which passes all comprehension."

"You have no fears?"

"None. There is only joy, and regret that it should have come to me so tardily. I have found a life, rich and imponderable, compared with which my former existence was but as a shadow of a dream's image." He had lifted his eyes, and there was in them a brightness that was like stars. Zorah looked at him in fascination, her own eyes riveted on his rapt countenance.

She rose, somewhat unsteadily.

"I am glad I came," she declared softly. "I have been fearful for you, but now I am transported. I came to give you such comfort as was in my power, and I leave, a stronger person for having seen you."

Mulek walked with her to the door and knocked for the guard. She looked up at him at departure, her eyes lingering long upon him.

"Good-bye, Mulek," she said simply. "May God give me one day such strength as yours."

"Good-bye, Zorah."

She went out with that, and the big door closed behind her.

Mulek closed the record and sat down, his head still bowed, his eyes open but unseeing. For hours he had been reading, feeding his soul on the blessed words of promise that had brought him out of hopelessness.

He was tired, tired in body and mind. The day had not been an easy one. He had, of course, known there would come a time that would test his strength and courage, and he had tried to prepare for it. This was that time.

IN recent days when he was not reading, he had spent the time looking out of the window upon the world he loved, at the city he had loved and dishonored. It was wonderful how lovely shadows could be, how they met and merged, how they embraced each other as it were, how cool, how friendly they could be.

The grass in the temple grounds seemed to be greener than he had ever seen it before, a restful, pleasant green. The fountains that sprayed their goodness like dew-drops upon the flowers, enriching now this bed of color, now that, with the changes of the breeze, must have a touch of magic in them. Mulek felt he could have looked forever and never have enough.

Yet, as he watched the shadows from the west on that day, he knew he was looking upon all those objects for the last time, and he found them far more glorious than he had ever seen them before.

He was surprised that he was not sad, glad that he was thoughtful and at peace. He had been speculating for days upon the possible nature of that land to which he was going.

Would there be grass there, and flowers, and trees, birds, and singing insects? It would be strange if there were, and far more strange if there were not.

Then his restless mind went elsewhere, still pursuing. Would there be people there also? Of course there would, yet strangely, he had never thought about this objectively. An idea came to him as a vagrant thought that returned to hold him enthralled, fascinated, completely lost in the wonder of it. Might he not see Alma and Mosiah, Nephi, Isaiah, David, perhaps? Would his father and mother be there waiting for him? Who was to deny it? Who was to reject the whole pattern, the essence of the word of God? For upon this immortality, this continuing to live, the entire structure of religion was founded. There could be no slightest doubt about it; he would be with those who had lived and gone on to richer living.

Suddenly he begrudged the hours that still must pass. No earthly

pleasure had ever given him half the sheer bliss of this new prospect. He was becoming consumed with a vast eagerness to begin the new life. Then it came to him that there could be no better time for him to say farewell to all he had known. He had found peace. Peace, he had learned, was a thing of the spirit, quite without relation to outward circumstances. A man, quite weaponless on a summer day, could be at war even though alone in a desert waste. Another, in the midst of conflict, could know the perfect ecstasy of tranquility. It was not a question of *where* or *when* but of the state of the soul.

But he rejoiced in more than that. His people, too, would soon be at rest, for the reports from the fronts were encouraging. The war that had for so long ravaged the land would soon come to an end in the utter defeat of the ravager. And from it all the nation had learned much for its eternal good, as Mulek had learned much from his own time of struggle.

None would rejoice more than he to know that the land would once more be safe. Though he would have no part in the victory, and had contributed nothing to it, he was uplifted in contemplation of the universal hope. Though he would not participate in the celebrations that would signalize the end of hostilities, he enjoyed in his spirit the prospect of them. Though countless hearts would require the healing balm of time to make them whole, though unnumbered fathers and mothers would look with tear-filled eyes upon the empty places at their firesides, though thousands of homes that had known the pain of parting would not know the thrill of reunion, the land would be at rest.

Mulek stirred. The shadows had become long, slanting far toward the east. He went once more to the window, to that friend who had been his only confidant throughout his long imprisonment, and looked again at the world and at the city. This was his city; these were his people. He wished them happiness.

Long he remained there, and when at last he turned away, darkness had fallen, and he had in his heart bidden a silent farewell to the world. He waited with exultation the coming of morning.

(THE END)

HAVEN

By Gay Winquist

As one sucked back in rapture's undertow
Lest go his hold and drifts in dreamless space;
Caught in the ebb tide of emotion's flow,
With mind washed clean of thoughts that reel and race;
I come to you for quiet—after din;
You shut the clamor out—the stillness in.