

Book of Lehi

Chapter 7

An Abridgment made by Prophet Mormon

The death of Lehi. Laman and Lemuel continue their rebellion against Nephi. The formation of two groups of people: the Nephites and the Lamanites. Wars and contention begin among them. Nephi is commanded to hand down the record of his people to his brother, Jacob. The succession of the plates is set forth.

And it came to pass that Nephi and his brethren began to plant the seeds that they had brought with them from the land of Jerusalem. And they began to till the earth and harvest the fruit thereof, insomuch that there began to be an abundance of all things throughout the land.

2 And Lehi began to weaken; and before his death, he called all of his children together, and even those children of Ishmael did gather to hear the words of Lehi, their father Ishmael having died during their journeys in the wilderness.

3 Behold, Ishmael was a loyal friend to Lehi until his last day. And Lehi had many visions concerning Ishmael that warned him of the consequences if he or his children failed to follow the counsel and guidance of Lehi and his son, Nephi.

4 And Sariah had taken Habasha, the wife of Ishmael, and given her unto Lehi that he might care for her for the remainder of her days.

5 Therefore, Lehi was considered as a father to the sons and daughters of Ishmael, especially by those who had not rebelled against Nephi during their journeys through the wilderness.

6 And Nephi took Rachael, the daughter of Habasha and Ishmael, as his wife; and she bore four daughters unto him. And they were all beautiful like unto their mother and wise like unto their father. And the daughters of Nephi were greatly desired by many of the sons of Laman, Lemuel, and also by the grandsons of Ishmael. Nevertheless, they were very wise in their youth and wanted no man until they were old enough to choose for themselves by their own wisdom.

7 And it came to pass that the daughters of Nephi chose the sons of Zoram, and also one of the sons of Barhanas. And this they did because of their great love and respect for their father — Zoram and Barhanas having been lifelong friends and protectors of their father, Nephi.

8 And it came to pass that the sons of Laman and Lemuel were angry with the daughters of Nephi, for they were exceedingly desirous to have them as their wives. And Laman and Lemuel complained against Nephi, that he had put himself above them, insomuch that his daughters thought themselves above their sons.

9 And this was a source of much contention during the last days of Lehi, he being very weak and near unto death.

10 And it came to pass that Lehi called all of his children to come before him; and when they had come before him, he spoke to each one and prophesied many things concerning them.

11 And it came to pass that Lehi left his blessing on Nephi, that he should be the leader of the people, and that Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael should honor him and obey him in all things whatsoever the Lord should command him.

12 And it came to pass that after the death of Lehi, Laman and Lemuel rebelled against their brother for the last time. For behold, the Lord will suffer the wicked to dwell among the righteous that the righteous might be an example and an influence unto them. Nevertheless, he will not suffer the righteous to be destroyed completely because of the actions of the wicked.

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13 And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel began to separate themselves from the people of Nephi; and they called themselves Lamanites. And the people of Nephi were called Nephites.

14 And the Nephites were an industrious people who engaged in all manner of commerce and industry for the benefit of all the people.

15 And the Lamanites became lazy and adulterous and would not wear clothes to cover their naked bodies, thus allowing the sun to change their skin to a darkness that was passed on to their children. And after each generation, the skin of the Lamanites and their children became darker, evensomuch that there began to be a great distinction between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

16 For behold, the Nephites wore clothing that protected their bodies from the light of the sun, therefore, they were a white and delightsome people.

17 But because of their wickedness, the Lamanites developed a tolerance to the light of the sun and in this way darkened their own bodies. And thus were they fulfilling the words of Lehi that he prophesied against them saying: Oh, my pain is great because of the visions I have had concerning Laman and Lemuel. For the Lord hath shown me the curse that shall come upon them, even that they shall become a dark and loathsome people, except they repent and obey the commandments of the Lord.

18 And it came to pass that the Nephites began to hire guards to watch the Lamanites and keep them from stealing the fruits of their industry and labor.

19 And Nephi pleaded with his brethren to repent and turn again to the Lord that he might have mercy on them and save them from their own destruction.

20 But Laman and Lemuel refused to listen to their younger brother and wanted nothing more to do with him. And the Lamanites rose up against Nephi and his people and began to slay the guards that were set to keep the Lamanites from stealing from the Nephites.

21 And Nephi knew in his heart that his brethren were past feeling, and that the Spirit of the Lord no longer dwelt among them. And in his anguish, Nephi cried unto the Lord:

22 Oh, my Eternal Father, how can I make the choice to take the lives of my brethren that I might preserve my own life and the lives of my own children? How can the devil have so much power over the hearts of men that they cannot seek to live in peace and harmony one with the other? Why is it my burden to take the lives of the wicked that the lives of the righteous might be preserved? How many times must Thy great mercy be bestowed upon my brethren before they will repent and work righteousness before Thee? Please, my Father, give me the strength to do what I know must be done.

23 And it came to pass that Nephi commanded his best foundry men and his strongest guards to take the sword of Laban and construct other swords like unto it that they might protect themselves from the Lamanites.

24 And the Nephites did arm themselves and began to kill any Lamanite that attempted to rob and steal from them.

25 And the Lamanites were sore afraid of the weapons of the Nephites, and they fled into the wilderness.

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26 Now, I, Mormon, do not know what happened among the Lamanites from the time that they fled from before the Nephites and went into the wilderness, to the time that Ammon traveled among them in the land of Lehi-Nephi. For behold, they did not keep records according to the commandment that Nephi had received from the Lord.

27 Nevertheless, I know they became a wild and ferocious people who despised the Nephites and tried many times to war against them only to be driven back and slain. And they were taught by their fathers that Nephi had stolen their authority and had driven them out of the land of their inheritance, which was the choicest land in all the land roundabout, and was promised to their fathers, the elder brothers of Nephi. And thus did they harbor an exceeding hatred for the Nephites.

28 And instead of becoming an industrious, hardworking people, the Lamanites hunted wild beasts in the wilderness and depended on plunder to support them in their needs.

29 And it came to pass that the Nephites began to prosper exceedingly throughout the land. And they began to build machines and all manner of devices to help them produce their food, and manufacture their clothes, and provide them with many precious things. And their armies grew and became strong in their weaponry, insomuch that there was no threat from the Lamanites again.

30 And Nephi instructed his people to build a house of God like unto the temples of old. And this he did that he might keep the people in remembrance of the law of Moses, which they had covenanted to honor and obey.

31 And Nephi was the High Priest having been ordained by his father, Lehi, who had received his authority from the church at Jerusalem at the time when he was a member of the High Priesthood. And according to the law of Moses, this priesthood was passed down from generation to generation by way of a sacred anointing, which is the ordination that Lehi received from his father Jeshron.

32 And according to this law of Moses, only the Lord can give or take away the authority of this priesthood; the authority of which can be bestowed upon men whether they are righteous or wicked. Nevertheless, this power can only be controlled and granted to the bearer upon the principles of righteousness. Behold, thought here have been many wicked men who have had the authority of the priesthood bestowed upon them, none of these had the power associated with this authority, which power can only come from God.

33 And only by the authority of tradition, or in other words, the lineage of the priesthood, can the ordinances of the law of Moses be performed and sanctioned by the church of God.

34 Nevertheless, in many instances the Lord will call prophets and ordain them by his own hand. And these prophets have all the authority to act with the power of God, having not been sanctioned by the church and the law of Moses, but being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which sanctification is binding on all those who call themselves children of God.

35 For behold, the church of God will not always be righteous. Yea, it will not always follow the commandments of God and will suffer itself to become corrupt through the craftiness and wickedness of men.

36 For this reason the Lord calleth prophets who are not members of the church of God, who are sent to preach repentance unto the church. Nevertheless, these prophets have no authority from God to lead the church, which hath been set up according to the lower law of Moses, which Jesus Christ fulfilled during his earthly ministry among the Jews.

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37 Yea, the lower law is necessary for the perfection of the children of God, to teach them the things that they need to know in order to prepare themselves to receive the higher laws, which are the laws of heaven.

38 And Moses taught the children of Israel the higher law of God, but they could not abide therein; and therefore, they were given a lower law that they could abide by until they were ready to receive the higher laws of salvation.

39 And in the condescension of God was the lower law fulfilled and the higher law given unto the children of men.

40 Nevertheless, this higher law was rejected by the people; and the lower laws were once again established for the edification and purification of the children of God until they are worthy enough to accept and live the higher laws of heaven.

41 And now, I, Mormon, am desirous that ye know the whole law and the other mysteries that relate to it. But behold, the Spirit hath constrained me from writing more than what I have just written. And if the children of men have the desire to know the mysteries pertaining to the priesthood and the higher laws of heaven, then I would beseech you to ask God, in faith, living by every word and commandment that he hath given you through his Son, Jesus Christ.

42 And it came to pass that Nephi was not allowed to teach the people the higher laws of heaven. Yea, he was commanded to construct temples and churches among them so that the people could go and partake of the sacrifices and ordinances that pertain to the lower law of Moses.

43 And it came to pass that the people wanted Nephi to be their king and their lawgiver, and this because of the tremendous love that they had for Nephi. And it became customary among them to make the High Priest their king also. And thus was Nephi their king and their High Priest.

44 And Nephi taught many things unto his people and established righteous laws that brought equality to every man and woman throughout his kingdom.

45 And Nephi had many visions and dreams like unto his father, Lehi, and he prophesied much concerning the Jews and the Nephites and also concerning the Lamanites.

46 And again, I, Mormon, am constrained by the Spirit to write all the prophecies of Nephi, wanting to save these plates for the more secular part of the history of the children of Lehi, in an attempt to demonstrate how easily the children of God are led to destruction because they will not heed the counsel and commandments of God.

47 For it came to pass that Nephi grew old and was about to die, and not having any sons to confer the kingdom upon, he was desirous to confer the kingdom upon his brother Jacob.

48 But Jacob refused to become a king among the Nephites; for behold, Jacob began to see great wickedness swell up in the hearts of the Nephites because of their exceedingly great riches and prosperity, and therefore, he wanted to dedicate his time to the preservation of the bounteous spiritual blessings that were bestowed upon the Nephite people. And Jacob knew that the only way the people were going to have continual peace and prosperity was for them to keep the commandments of God in all things.

49 And it was the desire of Jacob to spend the rest of his life working in the church as a High Priest, continually bringing the people to a remembrance of their sins and iniquities that they might repent and be saved.

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50 And it came to pass that both Jacob and Joseph were anointed and consecrated by the hand of Nephi as High Priests and teachers of the people.

51 And the people elected another leader to be their king. And this king was also called Nephi in honor of their beloved first king, who was Nephi, the son of Lehi. And from that time forth were the kings of the Nephites called by the title of Nephi.