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Lessons from the Life of Nephi VI: The Liahona

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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.

"Where is Aunt Eunice?" she asked the child.

The effects of her dream were still so strong upon her that she could scarcely realize that she was alive, in her own bedroom, and that her mission upon the earth had not been summarily cut short.

"Aunt Eunice is down home, I guess, mamma. Do you want her?"

It was many minutes, in fact the baby had awakened and fretted for his mamma's attention before Elsie could shake off wholly the feeling that she had actually passed through the above related experiences in a dream or vision. Then she jumped out of bed, and with an energy born of a firm and high resolve, she resumed the verbal prayer which she blushed now to remember had been offered so rarely in the years gone by, because either of baby's crying or her own stupidity. Then she hurried down stairs, and the squabble that ensued at the breakfast table between Hattie and the twins relative to the last piece of pie struck her so forcibly with a recollection of the events of her dream, that her firmness in taking away the disputed pie and the giving of plain bread and milk in its place was as much a surprise to the children as the actions of Aunt Eunice had been in her dream. She resolved, too, that in the future the family bread should be good, wholesome brown bread, and that not one item of all that she had learned in her "vision," as she called it, should be lost or forgotten.

She related it in detail to her husband, and although, man like, he was not as much impressed with it as she thought the occasion required, yet he admitted that many points touched upon in the dream were well for her to act upon and adopt for her future guidance.

So that afternoon when Eunice dropped in and said she was on her way to Relief Society meeting, the face of her sister took on a burning blush as she remembered it was really fast day and that not one soul in the house had even remembered the fact; while she fairly took away the breath of her sister by arising

at once and announcing her intention of accompanying her to the meeting.

Elsie did not relate the strange night experience she had undergone to her sister, perhaps a touch of natural personal pride kept her mouth sealed. But she had at least the good sense to tell her sister that she had had a dream or vision which had impressed her very vividly with the necessity of attending more closely to her Church duties. And the two sisters, for the first time in several years, found that they had views and hopes in life which were congenial and absorbingly interesting to talk about. Whatever Eunice may have thought about the sudden change in her sister's ways of thought and action, she had the tact to keep them to herself, while she really rejoiced at the happy change.

It was no easy task for our dear friend Elsie to adopt all her wise resolutions; but in leaving her to work out her salvation on the higher and broader plane which she has fairly entered upon, we will give her our hearty support in faith, and hope that her "Vision" may never be a reality to her or to any of the mothers in Israel who read this incident.

Homespun.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

VI.—The Liahona.

By small means the Lord can bring about great things.

—*J. Nephi 16: 29.*

WHILE Lehi and his little colony were still encamped near the river Laman, the voice of the Lord came unto him, and commanded him to resume his journey on the morrow into the wilderness.

When Lehi stepped out of his tent door the next morning, he was much surprised to behold lying upon the ground close by a round ball of curious workmanship. It appeared as though it was made of fine brass, and within it were two spindles; one of which pointed the way which Lehi and his party should travel as they journeyed through the wilderness.

This ball, or Liahona, as it is sometimes called, was the means which the Lord provided for the guidance of the people of Lehi in their journey. They were about to enter a region where there were no roads, no guide posts by the wayside, nothing to direct them as to the route they should travel. Nor does it appear that they knew where the Lord intended to take them. They were dependent on Him every hour of every day as to when they should move, when they should rest, and which way they should go. It was not deemed wise by the Lord that they should open communication with the people of the land, who were probably at enmity with the Jews, and who might seek to destroy them; so He provided this ball, or compass, which took the place of the fiery cloudy pillar that went before the Hebrews in the day when they were delivered from the bondage of the land of Egypt.

So particular was the Lord that Lehi's party should not come in contact with the people of Arabia, through which land they were about to pass, that he gave them the command that they should not cook their meat, lest the flame or smoke from their fires should draw attention towards them; but He promised that He would make their meat sweet to them that they could eat it with pleasure and satisfaction without it being cooked with fire. Probably it was dried after the manner that the people in this region often dry beef and other meats.

There was one wonderful peculiarity about the Liahona. It was this: it worked according to the faith of Lehi and his sons, and according to the heed which they gave unto it. We do not recollect in all history anything that exactly corresponds with or is precisely like this instrument. But being prepared by the Lord Himself, it perfectly answered all the purposes for which it was fashioned; and we find that not only did it point the way the party should take, but, from time to time, the word of the Lord appeared on its face. In this way it became a Urim and Thummim to them, revealing the law of heaven for their guid-

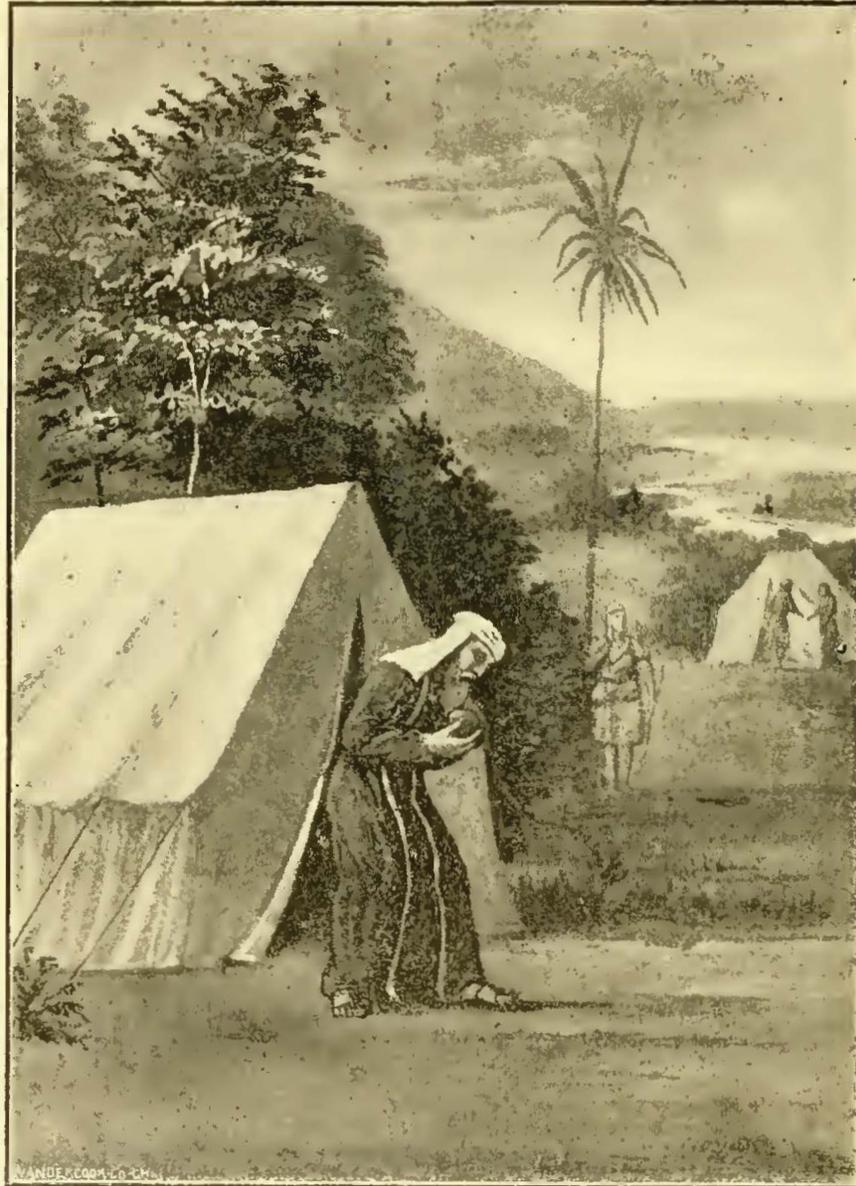
ance, admonishing them of what they should do, and rebuking them when they failed to observe the commands which were written thereon.

Certain people have objected to the statements made in the Book of Mormon with regard to this instrument because it is sometimes called a compass. They have charged that the Book of Mormon was false because it spoke of the mariner's compass ages before it was invented. But even if this ball was the mariner's compass—which it was not—there was nothing to prevent the Lord framing such an instrument for the use of Lehi a thousand years or any number of years before it was known to mankind. But this argument, if argument it dare be called, utterly fails, for late research has shown that the mariner's compass was known to the Chinese ages before it was used by Europeans. But the Liahona was not the mariner's compass nor anything like it. The only resemblance was that it was round, that it had a spindle, or needles in it, and that it was used for the purpose of showing people the path they should travel. Now the mariner's compass does not show the sailor the path he should take. Its needle points to the north, and this shows him the path he is taking, while the Liahona, through the powers placed in it by the Deity, showed by the movements of its spindle the direction that should be taken, whether to the north, east, south or west. Again, the mariner's compass does not act according to the faith and righteousness of the persons who handle it. It works according to the law which causes a magnetized needle to point towards the north, and can be used as well by one who has no faith whatever in God and heaven as by the most faithful of God's servants.

To be obedient to the Divine command, the company next day commenced to gather up whatsoever things they could carry into the wilderness, with the remainder of their provisions and their seeds, which being done, they again moved forward. To their next tarrying place they gave the name of Shazer,

which they reached after a journey of four days. After a short rest, during which time they slew game for food, they again took up their line of march, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were near the borders of the Red sea. Thus they con-

to which they gave the name of Bountiful, because of the abundance of its natural productions. To the sea which washed its shores they gave the name of Irreantum, which, (being interpreted,) means many waters. If we understand correctly, these waters were a por-



LEHI FINDING THE LIAHONA.

tinued journeying for some time, when by direction of the Liahona, they changed the direction of their travels, and moved almost directly east across the Arabian peninsula, until they reached the waters on its eastern coast. There they found a very fruitful land

tion of the gulf of Oman, or Arabian sea. This journey thus far occupied eight years from the time they left Jerusalem.

While on this journey one incident occurred, which it may be well to refer to, as it is intimately connected with the working of the

compass. It appears that in one of their expeditions for food Nephi, who was their most expert hunter, broke his bow, which was made of fine steel. Because of this misfortune they obtained no food, and, as a result, they became very hungry. Being hungry, they grew quarrelsome and rebellious. To such an extent did this spirit prevail in the camp, that even Lehi so far forgot himself as to murmur against the providences of God. Nephi, ever faithful, alone refrained from complaining against the Lord; he exhorted his brethren, as was his custom in times of trouble and sorrow, to put away the hardness of their hearts and humble themselves before the Lord and then all would be well with them. His words had their effect. Lehi felt truly chastened, and was brought down into the depths of sorrow. When in this condition the word of the Lord came to him, and he was instructed to look upon the ball and read the things that were written thereon. The reproof that the Lord gave in what He caused to be written on the ball was such as to make Lehi tremble exceedingly, but it also brought relief to the party, as the writing instructed them where food could be obtained. Nephi, having made a bow out of a piece of wood, (the bows of his brethren being useless, having lost their springs,) went with this bow and arrow and with a sling and stones, and found the game in the place that the writing had indicated. He slew enough for food for all the company. When he returned to the tents of his people, bearing the beasts he had slain, there was great rejoicing in the hearts of all, and they humbled themselves before the Lord and gave thanks to Him.

In the great storm that occurred while the little colony was crossing the great ocean, the value of the compass becomes again apparent. No sooner did Nephi take the compass in his hand, when the ship was being tossed helplessly upon the waters, than it began to work and to point the course the ship should be steered so that it might reach the destination which the Lord designed.

When the followers of Laman and those of

Nephi divided into two peoples after the death of Lehi, amongst the sacred things which Nephi took with him to his new home were the records which were engraven on the plates of brass and also the ball, or compass, which was prepared for his father by the hand of the Lord. It appears to have remained with the other sacred things of the Nephites from that time henceforth, and with them to have been handed down from one generation to another. King Mosiah transferred them to Alma, and Alma, at his death, handed them to his son, Helaman, with strict instructions as to the care with which they should be guarded.

Our lesson teaches us that God's ways are not always man's ways, and that by simple, and sometimes apparently insignificant methods, peculiar to Himself, He brings about the most perfect results; by small means God can accomplish great ends. *George Reynolds.*

A GOOD MAN'S WISH.

I FREELY confess to you that I would rather, when I am laid down in the grave, some one in his manhood stand over me and say: "There lies one who was a real friend to me, and privately warned me of the dangers of the young; no one knew it, but he aided me in the time of need. I owe what I am to him." Or would rather have some widow, with choking utterance, telling her children: "There is your friend and mine. He visited me in my affliction, and found you, my son, an employer, and you, my daughter, a happy home in a virtuous family." I say, I would rather that such a person should stand at my grave, than to have erected over it the most beautiful sculptured monument of Parisian or Italian marble. The heart's broken utterance of reflections of past kindness, and the tears of grateful memory shed upon the grave, are more valuable in my estimation than the most costly cenotaph ever reared.

He that runs fast must not run long.