

“A Sure Foundation”

Lesson
33
Summary

Helaman 1–5

Scripture Summary: *Paboran the second becomes chief judge and is murdered by Kishkumen—Pacumeni fills the judgment-seat—Coriantumr leads the Lamanite armies, takes Zarahemla, and slays Pacumeni—Moronibab defeats the Lamanites and retakes Zarahemla, and Coriantumr is slain. [Between 52 and 51 B.C.]*

Helaman the second becomes chief judge—Gadianton leads the band of Kishkumen—Helaman’s servant slays Kishkumen, and the Gadianton band flees into the wilderness. [50 B.C.]

Many Nephites migrate to the land northward—They build houses of cement and keep many records—Tens of thousands are converted and baptized—The word of God leads men to salvation—Nephi the son of Helaman fills the judgment seat. [Between 49 and 39 B.C.]

Nephite dissenters and the Lamanites join forces and take the land of Zarahemla—The Nephites’ defeats come because of their wickedness—The Church dwindles and the people become weak like the Lamanites. [Between 38 and 30 B.C.]

Nephi and Lehi devote themselves to preaching—Their names invite them to pattern their lives after their forebears—Christ redeems those who repent—Nephi and Lehi make many converts and are imprisoned, and fire encircles them—A cloud of darkness overshadows three hundred people—The earth shakes and a voice commands men to repent—Nephi and Lehi converse with angels, and the multitude are encircled by fire. [About 30 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **More Meaning to Lord’s Names “Stone,” “Rock:”** A Sure Foundation infers Stone and Rock. The Nephites and Lamanites had a background of stone and cement work which they brought from Israel. The geology of both lands shows an abundance of limestone. It is usable for both building blocks and making cement. Some Mayan ruins reflect Israelitish structure. “Walled towns with two-story stone, brick or wood houses usually built around a courtyard were most typical.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Trees Represent Abundant Life. Trees affected the weather and the health of animals and people. A tree of life was a powerful image even in the creation of the earth. “Just as Adam is placed in the Garden, in the midst of which stands the Tree of Life, so man is placed in the world in order to observe the commandments of the Torah.” “In biblical times, Jerusalem was surrounded by thick, green forests of almond, olive and pine trees. But in the course of numerous wars and settlements, much of this lush greenery was destroyed and the soil left to dry out in the summer sun and wash away in the heavy winter rains.” “Trees played a very special role in the lives of the ancient Jews. It was considered to be a sin to cut down a fruit tree which could have ultimately benefitted the land and the people.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What’s in a Name? The Book of Mormon people, Israelites, kept up the process of planting trees in their new homeland. Another Israelite practice that seemed to continue was concentrating on the choice of names given to their posterity. I am adding a considerable amount of information about Jewish names in order to emphasize the influence of culture in a name. There seems to be that kind of importance to the Nephites. Having visited descendants of Nephites and Lamanites in Meso-America, years ago, I found them following the same ancient culture and traditions. I have dear friends, LDS guides in Mexico, named Helaman, Mosiah, Moroni, Limhi, Lemuel, Alma and Ruth. Their base headquarter is at Tulum in the Yucatan, a delightful Mayan center built around a pattern of a “descending God.” There are a number of names for him, Quetzelcoatl, KuKulKan and ItsamNa . . . and with LDS insight, Jesus, who descended in the “Americas.”

Remember ing Names: “Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.” (*Helaman 5:6*)

Celebration of Name Giving: “A boy is named when he is eight days old at his circumcision ceremony, an event of great religious importance and happy celebrating. A girl is named in the synagogue on the first day following her birth on which the Torah is read.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Meaning of Names: “Names are more than just arbitrary labels for people. Each Jewish name tells a story of its own and very often reflects the nature of the time, place and atmosphere in which it was chosen. The most important source for Hebrew proper names is the Bible, and biblical names were usually descriptive and meaningful, often incorporating the name of God in praise or gratitude; thus, Nathaniel (God has given), Eleazar (God has helped), Joshua (God the Savior). Other biblical names describe the circumstances surrounding the birth. Thus Abraham called his son Yizhak [Isaac] from the Hebrew word for laughter, because Sarah had laughed at the idea of bearing a child in her old age. And Yizhak named one of his sons Ya’akov [Jacob], a play on the Hebrew word *akev* (“heel”), because he was born grasping the heel of his twin brother Esau.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Changing Names: “The Talmud attaches great importance to the preservation of Hebrew names, viewing foreign names as a sign of assimilation. According to the Talmud, one reason for the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage was the fact that they did not change their names. Yet, despite this subtle warning, Jews have tended to adapt their Hebrew names to the language of their neighbors or to take on purely non-Jewish names. This tendency, first noticeable during the Middle Ages, accelerated during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Some governments encouraged the process by passing laws which forced Jews to adopt European names. Napoleon issued such a decree, hoping to assimilate the Jews.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Surnames Only Began in Middle Ages: “It was during the Middle Ages that Jews began taking on surnames to add to their Jewish forenames. These second names, which have since evolved into family names, were at first used as descriptions to identify the individual. The most traditional method was to add the name of the father to the forename, e.g. Ibn Ezra (son of Ezra), or Jacobson (son of Jacob). The surnames Cohen and Levy were usually used to show direct descent from the priests and Levites who served in the Temple. Other sources of surnames were the occupation (Miller, Goldsmith), birthplace (Berliner, Moscowitz), or physical characteristics (Alt= old, Klein= small, Schwartz= swarthy) of the individual. Some well-known surnames are really abbreviations whose original meanings reflect the history of the family. For instance, Katz is short for *Koben Zedek* (Righteous priest), and Zachs is an abbreviation of *Zer'a Kedoshei Speyer* (descendants of the martyrs of Speyer -- a city in Germany whose Jewish population was almost wiped out during the Crusades).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Some Do, Some Don't Use Father's Name: “Like most peoples of the world, the Jews have evolved certain traditions regarding the use of names. For example, Ashkenazi Jews consider it wrong to name a child after a living father or grandfather, whereas Sephardim consider it an honor to do so for a grandparent. According to the Hasidei Ashkenaz, it is wrong to marry a woman with the same name as the husband's mother. The reason for this seems to be because of respect; the man might tell his wife to do something and the mother might think he meant her.”

New Names: “Jewish boys are officially named at the circumcision ceremony eight days after birth, and a girl's Jewish name is publicly announced when the father is first called to the Torah after her birth. Converts are also given new names -- usually ben Abraham or bat Abraham (son or daughter of Abraham) because conversion is equated with rebirth.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Fire in a Stone Prison: As mentioned, our Lord's many names emphasize His role as our foundation, his appropriate name is the “Rock of our redemption.” To connect two items discussed in this lesson, wood and stone, let us consider that Nephi and Lehi were encircled by fire. Fire is usually fueled by wood. However, they were encircled by fire in a stone prison. This is similar to the account in the Book of Daniel and later in the Book of Mormon as the Lord visited the Nephites. “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, [and] spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (*Daniel 3:24-25*) “And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.” (*3 Nephi 17:24*)

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