

August 17-23, 2020

Helaman 1–6

“THE ROCK OF OUR REDEEMER”

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—Moronibah defeats the Lamanites and retakes Zarahemla, and Coriantumr is slain. [About 52–50 B.C.]

Helaman, the son of Helaman, becomes chief judge—Gadianon leads the band of Kishkumen—Helaman’s servant slays Kishkumen, and the Gadianon band flees into the wilderness. [About 50–49 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. [About 49–39 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. [About 38–30 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 is encircled by fire. [About 30 B.C.]

The righteous Lamanites preach to the wicked Nephites—Both peoples prosper during an era of peace and plenty—Lucifer, the author of sin, stirs up the hearts of the wicked and the Gadianon robbers in murder and wickedness—The robbers take over the Nephite government. [About 29–23 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is my foundation made of?

The title of the lesson, “The Rock of Our Redeemer” infers that the

Lord’s names of “stone” or “rock” make the best foundations and better buildings. 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. “Modern archaeology has unearthed a wealth of information concerning Jewish architecture in Israel in the past. In ancient Palestine, the forerunner to Israelite architecture was local Canaanite style. Walled towns with two-story stone, brick or wood houses usually built around a courtyard were most typical. Archaeological finds from the age of the Judges (c. 1200-c.1000 B.C.E.) reveal that Israelite towns were homogeneous in layout,

reflecting a democratic social structure with few extremes of poverty or wealth. Later centuries witnessed palaces and spacious homes built above and away from the masses.”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is the value of trees and flora?

At the same time, trees represented an 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.”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” ([1 Kings 4:25](#)) “The flora of Israel is among the richest and most varied of any country in the world. On both sides of the Jordan river there are close to 2,300 species of plants. Various forms of pine,

oak and terebrinth trees can be found in Israel's forests, and numerous types of shrubs and vines flourish on the rocky slopes of the Judean mountains." "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. From earliest times, farmers have therefore been forced to terrace the ground and build stone fences along the slopes to hold back the soil. This stone terracing is still in evidence all along the Jerusalem landscape. A deliberate attempt has been made in modern times to replant the trees and the approach to Jerusalem is once again flanked by heavily forested areas." "Israel's afforestation and land reclamation agency, JNF, by 1990, had reclaimed a total of 400,000 acres by draining swamps, clearing and leveling land. It planted 200 million trees on 200,000 acres; built over 4,000 miles of forest and access roads to outlying areas; established some 30 hilltop outposts in Galilee and over 400 picnic and recreation areas." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** In fact, JNF plants almost 3 million trees each year. **(jnf.org/menu-3/faqs)**

How do trees represent life?"

"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. A Jewish custom developed of planting a tree at the birth of a child (a cedar for a boy and a pine for a girl) and then cutting the trees down when the children married, to be used in the construction of the bridal canopy. (four posts supporting the Talit) The custom was meant to stress the everlasting bond between the nation and the land of Israel, but fell into disuse when the Jews were separated from their homeland." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** "And out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally, that is pleasant to the sight of man; and man could behold it. And it became also a living soul. For it was spiritual in the day that I created it; for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it, yea, even all things which I

prepared for the use of man; and man saw that it was good for food. And I, the Lord God, planted the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and also the tree of knowledge of good and evil." **(Moses 3:9)**

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 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 as well, Quetzalcoatl, KuKulKan and ItsamNa . . . and with scriptural insight, Jesus, who descended in the "Americas." "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)**

What is the tradition of a "new name?"

"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.)** In many Jewish families, a new name is given

when a boy (and girl) “come of age.” This could be at the boy’s bar mitzvah. In Moslem circles, a new name is received when making a pilgrimage to Mecca. Discussed in a previous lesson, it is appropriate to once again consider the value of a name, after all, the Lord has more than a hundred different names in the scriptures. “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, or delight, because Sarah had laughed, (or was delighted) 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.)

What is the Jewish opposition of changing a name?

“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.)

When did surnames begin?

“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 Kohen Zedek (Righteous priest), and Zachs is an abbreviation of Zer’a Kadoshei Speyer (descendants of the martyrs of Speyer --- a city in Germany whose Jewish population was almost wiped out during the Crusades).”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How inelegantly can a name be used or misused?

“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.”

How meaningful is connecting rock, wood and fire?

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. A familiar Bible account states, "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)**