

CHAPTER II

Did Father Lehi Have Daughters?

Many readers of the Book of Mormon are left with the impression that Father Lehi had no daughters. And, indeed, in the superscription of 1 Nephi only the names of sons are set forth:

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi....

In the course of their eight-year sojourn in the wilderness (1 Nephi 17:4), two sons were born to Lehi and Sariah. The eldest was called Jacob and the younger Joseph (1 Nephi 18:7). And Lehi speaks of Joseph as his "last-born," apparently meaning the last-born of all his children. No girls are mentioned as being born in the wilderness. So it is easy to get the impression that Lehi and Sariah had no daughters.

Nevertheless, it will be shown here that Father Lehi did have daughters, at least two, with the probability being that he had four.

Our investigation of the problem began with Nephi's mention of Ishmael and his family in 1 Nephi 7. The question was asked, "Why does Nephi mention Ishmael and his family so casually?" Important as Ishmael is in Nephi's account, it seemed passing strange that he should give us so little information about the man and his background. It was noticed, too, that when Nephi and his brothers were bringing Ishmael and his family into the wilderness from Jerusalem, two of the five daughters of Ishmael and his two sons and their families rebelled against the rest of the party (1 Nephi 7:6). Only after considerable thought was it

finally concluded that Ishmael was related in some way to Lehi. If the two men were related, that fact would readily explain Nephi's casual mention of Ishmael and his family. But the question still remained, "How were they related?"

A possible solution, or a lead to the solution of the problem, came when it was remembered that Elder Erastus Snow had once delivered an address in which he mentioned Ishmael and Lehi. An investigation was made, and Elder Snow's remarks were found to give the desired clue. In his discourse, delivered in Logan, Utah, May 6, 1882, Elder Snow said these important words:

The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi, was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgement is given us in the First Book of Nephi, which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael was of the lineage of Ephriam, and that his sons married into Lehi's family, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters...¹

It is very probable, of course, that Joseph Smith's knowledge of the marriage of Ishmael's sons to Lehi's daughters was obtained when he translated the Book of Lehi,² the "116 pages" mentioned above. We may conclude thus far, since Ishmael's two sons "married into Lehi's family," that Lehi had at least two daughters. It also seems obvious that these daughters were among his oldest children, Laman being his first-born (2 Nephi 4:3).

One may at first be content to assume that the wives of Ishmael's sons were the only daughters of Lehi, except for the fact that there is a later reference in the Nephite record to Nephi's "sisters." When the Lord commanded Nephi and his faithful followers to flee into the wilderness away from the rebellious Laman and Lemuel and their families and associates, they complied as requested.

Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, *and also my sisters*, and all those who would go with me. (2 Nephi 5:6. Italics mine.)

The fact that "sisters" is mentioned means that at least two sisters went with Nephi into the wilderness. Were these sisters the elder daughters of Lehi who had married Ishmael's sons? It would seem highly improbable. For we remember that Lehi's married daughters were among those who had rebelled against the faithful members of Nephi's party when they were bringing Ishmael's family from Jerusalem (1 Nephi 7:6). It would be hard to believe that these rebellious daughters of Lehi would leave their husbands and children and desert to Nephi's camp without his mentioning the fact. Their sudden repentance is something that Nephi does not record. The only reasonable conclusion that we can come to is that the sisters of Nephi who accompanied him into the wilderness were two younger daughters of Lehi. They were doubtless born to the patriarch in the wilderness after he had left Jerusalem. Unfortunately their names are not given, nor is any special mention of their births recorded in the sacred text. Apparently they were born after Jacob, Lehi's first-born in the days of his tribulation in the wilderness (2 Nephi 2:1), and before Joseph, his last-born (2 Nephi 3:1).

Thus we are driven to the conclusion that Father Lehi had at least four daughters, an interesting fact in Nephite history.

¹*Jour. of Dis.*, XXIII, 184.

²See the Prophet's account in his "preface" to the first edition of the Book of Mormon.