

THE MIRACLE BALL GIVES HELP

(1 Nephi 5:42-54)

V42-54 The party resumes their journey, travels for some time, and then pauses to rest (v. 42-43). While camped, Ishmael dies and the location is called "Nahom" in token of the mourning of his daughters over his death (v. 44). The mourning apparently goes beyond the ritual associated with death as they complain over their present conditions and feel that death will overtake them as well (v. 45-46). This causes them to complain against Lehi and Nephi and desire to get out of the desert and back to Jerusalem (v. 47).

Laman takes advantage of this change in loyalties to incite rebellion against Lehi and Nephi and argue in favor of their murder with Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael. He projects his own desires for rulership onto Nephi and faults him for it (v. 48). Laman then rationalizes Nephi has deceived them by cunning tricks and lying about revelations from angels (v. 49-52). However, the voice of the Lord comes to them and chastens them exceedingly, putting an end to their plans of overthrow. They again temporarily humble themselves and the Lord provides them with food so they do not perish (v. 53).

V44-46 It appears Ishmael's death was not a result of old age. He dies while they are resting, suggesting they rested because he was unwell. The daughter's mourning includes complaints about their own afflictions and present condition saying, "we must perish in the wilderness with hunger". Then in v. 54 Nephi says "the Lord blessed us again with food, that we did not perish". This makes it plain the primary fear is death from starvation or malnutrition induced illness. If Ishmael's death was not from old age, this would explain the connection with the subsequent complaints, as they would fear their own seemingly imminent demise.

V47 I would therefore conclude the implicit argument against Lehi is given in v. 47 when the daughters of Ishmael "did murmur against my father". By context, this murmuring would be along the lines of them saying Lehi is guilty of Ishmael's death by ragging him out into the desert, and is guilty of endangering the entire party by subjecting them to death by starvation. Laman takes advantage of their already present anger against Lehi and attempts to make Nephi guilty by association because he went along with Lehi's plans in order to promote himself. Thus, both Lehi and Nephi are guilty of Ishmael's death and of jeopardizing the lives of the rest of them, so the rest of them ought to punish them for it.

V48-52 Nephi's recounting of Laman's persuasive speech is aimed almost entirely at the argument against himself, with less than half of the first sentence aimed at Lehi. As such, Laman's line of argumentation is probably not fully developed by Nephi in his recounting. For Laman to simply burst out that they ought to kill Lehi without some preceding rationalization seems unreasonable given the lengthy rationalization given for killing Nephi as well.

V50 "that he may deceive our eyes", what Laman cannot see he says never happened and what he does see is a deceptive trick by a conjurer. In other words, Laman only believes what he wants to believe (see 3 Nephi 1:38-39).

V53-54 One would assume this collusion occurred secretly so Lehi and Nephi would be unaware of the plans. As such, if the plan was to kill Lehi and Nephi by stealth, the Lord had to step in and put a stop to it immediately so as to eliminate any risk of injury to any parties. Had the Lord just warned Nephi there might have still been bloodshed in the ensuing conflict.