

LAMANITES DEFEATED IN FIRST ENCOUNTERS

(Mosiah 6:1-25)

V1-5

These verses tie in with Words of Mormon 1:12-14, informing us why the Nephite advance against the Lamanites stalled. The context is that of an ongoing war between the Nephites and Lamanites, cf. Omni 1:1-17. The Lamanites had advanced against the Nephites capturing all of their lands until reaching the Land of Zarahemla (this is what necessitated the righteous Nephites fleeing and discovering the land of Zarahemla, cf. Omni 1:18-20). But, under king Benjamin's leadership the Lamanites are routed and driven back all the way to the original border between the Nephites and Lamanites, (see Words of Mormon 1:21-22).

This is the present setting in verse 1 as the Nephite armies are poised to invade Lamanite territories with the intention of annihilating them. Zeniff, being a Nephite among a larger Mulekite population, is familiar with the lands of his ancestors so he is chosen as a spy against the Lamanites. But in spying upon them he sees they are a good people, and does not want them to be destroyed (v. 1).

Zeniff argues for the leader of the armies to make a treaty with the Lamanites, but the leader is a severe and war-like man who is determined to kill the Lamanites. The result is the Nephite army turns on itself because of the division of opinion and many are killed. The remnants of the conflict abandon the plan to attack the Lamanites and return to Zarahemla (v. 2).

V6-12

Having obtained their ancestral lands from Lamanites, Zeniff is over-eager to inhabit and occupy that retaken land. In particular, he wants to re-inhabit the original Nephite capital. He recruits people to go with him to settle the land, but they do not rely on the Lord and are subsequently left to themselves to suffer hardships (v.6). After wandering for some time the group finally arrives at the site of the internal conflict of v. 2-3, which was near to the city of Lehi-Nephi (v.7). Zeniff and four others travel to the Lamanite city where the king over that portion of the land is so they may find out how he feels about the Nephites moving back into their ancestral lands (v.8). The king covenants with Zeniff that he can have the land (v.9) and tells the Lamanites living there to move out (v.10). Zeniff and the others with him rebuild the buildings and walls of Nephi-Lehi and Shilom (v.11), plant crops, and his group begins to prosper there (v.12).

V13-16

Zeniff realizes after the fact that the king of the Lamanites was planning trickery against him and his group the whole time (v.13). After twelve years of settlement king Laman decides its time to raid and plunder them for their goods before they get too strong (v.14-15). So, king Laman prepares his people for war (v.16).

V17-25

In the thirteenth of settlement the Lamanites come upon his people and start the plunder and murder (v.17). His people flee to the city Nephi for protection (v.18) and Zeniff prepares them for war (v.19). They go against the Lamanites in the strength of the Lord because their afflictions have chastened them (v.20-21) and the Lord hears their prayers. In the ensuing battle 3043 Lamanites are killed and only 279 Nephites die, and the Lamanites are successfully driven out of the land (v.22-25).