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## Chapter IV

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**Abstract:** Lehi's Riches—Laban Covets Them—Sent his Servants to Kill Laman and his Brothers—They flee for their Lives—Nephi Whipped by Laman and Lemuel—Visited by an Angel—Laman and Lemuel still Murmur—Nephi Leads Them to the City Walls—Laban Lying Drunk—His Sword—Most Famous Weapon in the World—Those who have Seen it—Nephi Constrained to Kill Laban—Personates Him and Obtains Plates—His Brothers Frightened—Laban's Servant, Zoram—Promises to go With Nephi into the Wilderness

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## CHAPTER IV.

LEHI'S RICHES—LABAN COVETS THEM—SENT HIS SERVANTS TO KILL LAMAN AND HIS BROTHERS—THEY FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES—NEPHI WHIPPED BY LAMAN AND LEMUEL—VISITED BY AN ANGEL—LAMAN AND LEMUEL STILL MURMUR—NEPHI LEADS THEM TO THE CITY WALLS—LABAN LYING DRUNK—HIS SWORD—MOST FAMOUS WEAPON IN THE WORLD—THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN IT—NEPHI CONSTRAINED TO KILL LABAN—PERSONATES HIM AND OBTAINS PLATES—HIS BROTHERS FRIGHTENED—LABAN'S SERVANT, ZORAM—PROMISES TO GO WITH NEPHI INTO THE WILDERNESS.

THE record does not inform us in what position Lehi had left his riches. We may reasonably conclude that he had left them in a place of security; for his sons found gold and silver and other valuable things, and carried them to Laban's house, and proposed to him to give him these in exchange for the records. Laban would not consent to give up the plates; but the property the young men offered for them was so very valuable that, as the record says, he lusted after it and was determined to have it. He therefore thrust them out, and sent his servants to kill them, so that he might obtain their property. To save their lives they had to leave their valuables and make the best of their way out of the city. They fled into the wilderness and thus escaped and hid in the cavity of a rock. Laman by this time got angry. We are not told that he got angry at Laban; but at his father and Nephi; and he made Lemuel angry also. They said a good many hard things and then they whipped Nephi with a rod, and we should infer that Sam got a share of the beating. It is very probable that he stood up for Nephi and defended him, and in that way incurred their anger. While they were beating Nephi, an angel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he said to them:



“Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands.”

After speaking to them the angel departed. We have heard of a good many people who have thought if they could only see an angel, and he should tell them anything, they would believe it, and never afterwards doubt it. Yet here were these two young men who had seen and been spoken to by an angel, and he had scarcely gone when they began to murmur. They did not believe that which the angel had told them; for they said:

“How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea even he can slay fifty; then why not us?”

We can judge from this language how little they knew about God, or His power. Nephi again had to become their teacher. He encouraged them to go up again to Jerusalem, and to be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for, said he, He is mightier than all the earth, and of course mightier than Laban and his fifty, or even his tens of thousands. He quoted to them what Moses had done, and asked them how they could doubt when an angel had spoken to them. After all that he said they were still angry and still murmured, yet they followed him until they came to the outside of the walls of the city. Nephi got them to hide themselves outside the walls. Then he, by himself, crept into the city. He had no plan arranged beforehand as to what he would do. He trusted entirely to the Lord and was led by the Spirit. He went in the direction of Laban's house. As he drew near there he saw a man lying on the ground, who proved to be Laban, full of wine, and drunk. He had on a sword, which Nephi drew from the sheath and examined. He has given us a description of this weapon, the most famous of any that we have any account of. It served afterwards as his model when he found himself under the necessity of manufacturing swords with which to arm his people to defend themselves against the attacks of his brothers and their children: he also wielded it on more than



one occasion in battle; and it was handed down among his descendants from generation to generation, being kept with their sacred records. It is still in existence, and besides being seen by the prophet Joseph, was shown to the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris—with the plates, the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi, and of which we shall say more as we proceed. The hilt of this sword was of pure gold and the workmanship was exceedingly fine; the blade was of the most precious steel.

After drawing the sword, Nephi was constrained by the Spirit to kill Laban. But he said in his heart: "Never at any time have I shed the blood of man," and he shrunk from the thought, and desired that he might not kill him. The Spirit said unto him again: "Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands." Nephi knew that Laban had sought to take his and his brother's lives; that he was a murderer at heart; he knew that he would not hearken to the commandments of the Lord, and that he also had robbed them of their property. All these thoughts would pass through his mind at such a time. The Spirit said unto him again: "Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Behold, the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish, than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief." These words brought to his mind the words of the Lord to him in the wilderness, to the effect that inasmuch as his seed should keep His commandments, they should prosper in the land of promise. He also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, unless they should have the law. Nephi knew that that law was engraved upon the plates of brass. He also knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into his hands that he might obtain the records as He had commanded. His reluctance to shed blood was strong; but the voice of the Spirit was stronger, and he obeyed it. He took Laban by the hair of the head, and he cut off his head with his own sword. He then took his garments and put them upon himself and girded his armor about his loins. Then going forth to the treasury of Laban he saw Laban's servant



who had the keys of the treasury. Him he commanded in the voice of Laban to go with him. The servant, seeing the dress and the sword, supposed it was Laban, and addressed him accordingly. He spoke to him about the elders of the Jews, for he knew that Laban had been out by night among them. Nephi replied to him as though he was Laban, and he also spoke to him about carrying the plates of brass to his brethren who were outside the walls, and ordered him to follow him. The servant thought he spoke of the brethren of the church, and still thinking it was Laban, followed him. While they were going to where Nephi's brothers were outside the walls, the servant kept up his conversation concerning the elders of the Jews, and it was not until they came in sight of Laman, Lemuel and Sam that he found out his mistake. When these latter saw two men coming towards them, and one of them Laban, as they supposed, they were frightened and ran. They imagined that Laban, having killed Nephi, had now come to kill them. It was only when Nephi called to them and made himself known to them, that they stopped. In the meantime, Laban's servant began to tremble, and he would have run back into the city, had not Nephi prevented him. Nephi was a large man and he had received much strength from the Lord, and when he saw the man's inclination to run away, he seized him and held him fast. Nephi gave him his oath that he need not be afraid, that if he would listen unto them, they would spare his life, and that if he would go down with them into the wilderness, he should be a free man such as they were. He told him that the Lord had commanded them to do what they had done; and should they not be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord? He said to him again, that if he would go with them into the wilderness to his father he should have a place among them. Zoram was this servant's name. Nephi's words gave him courage; he promised he would go with them, and he gave them his oath that he would remain with them from that time forward. Faithfully was that oath kept. At no time do we hear anything respecting Zoram faltering in his devotion to Nephi. He was ever his true friend, and his descendants were numbered with the descendants of Nephi.