

## Judah Among the Ephriamites

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*History of the Jews in Utah and Idaho*, by Juanita Brooks; vwestern Epics, Salt Lake City; 1973; 252 pp; \$7.95.

This might well be the most difficult book Juanita Brooks ever undertook. Consider the formidable problems: Though Mrs. Brooks is the scholar's scholar of Mormonism, what can she do about the fact that the Jews had no significant part in the pioneer history of the Great Basin?

As late as 1854, when the Saints had been in Utah seven years, had built Salt Lake City in the desert and were actively colonizing the Intermountain area, there were at this time exactly two Jews in the entire Territory. Subsequently, when virtually every Mormon village had a neighborhood store operated by a Jew, these merchants were transient residents. Because of the strongly pro-Mormon curriculum of Utah schools, Jewish families either had to send their children outside for education or, as the young people approached adolescence, move away.

Thus Mrs. Brooks was faced with the task of telling the story of Mormon country through Jewish eyes, when during the pioneer period Jews were hard to find, while Jewish converts could be counted on the fingers of one hand. A formidable task indeed for the historian; but Mrs. Brooks has done her usual amazingly competent job of research to cope with it.

It was a Jew, Abraham Jonas, Grand Master of Masons in Illinois, who came to Nauvoo to install a lodge there on March 15, 1842. And after the death of Joseph Smith,

Governor Thomas Ford selected Mr. Jonas to persuade the Mormons not to retaliate. Mr. Jonas' appeal was so effective that the Mormon audience responded with a hearty "Amen."

In Utah, the festering trouble between the Saints and the U. S. Government was brought to a head as the result of a game of cards between a Jewish convert named Levi Abrams (known as "Abraham the Jew") and Judge W. W. Drummond, a bitterly anti-Mormon Federal appointee. The judge lost his money to the Jew, and sent his colored servant to horsewhip Abrams, who in turn swore out a warrant against Drummond. The judge was apprehended by an armed posse,

arrested and brought a prisoner to his own court, where he was subjected to ridicule and embarrassment. . . . It was such tactics as this that gave justification to Judge Drummond's bitterness and desire for revenge.

Drummond's report to Washington triggered off the Utah War of 1857. The forces set in motion by the altercation over the card game

grew into such power that they affected the lives of twenty-five hundred soldiers and most of the people of Utah.

An anecdote typifying Jewish canniness concerns Louis Kolitz, who ran a candy store on Main Street. Bishop Nibley sold him a load of sugar at one cent a pound, reason for the bargain price being that it had been tainted with kerosene. Kolitz soon asked Nibley if any more was available. Surprised, Nibley asked, "What did you do with the first load?"