

LESSON 2
“All Things According To His Will”
1 Nephi 1-7

OVERVIEW:

Lehi leaves Jerusalem and takes his family into the wilderness. Nephi and his brothers return to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass. Nephi and his brothers return to Jerusalem for Ishmael and his family. See 1 Nephi 7:6 for a discussion about Lehi’s family.

SCRIPTURES:

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI
HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY

(The headnote is a summary of 1 Nephi and is part of the original text. It was not added by modern writers. All of the headnotes in the Book of Mormon are part of the original record given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, including the inserts preceding individual chapters (Mosiah 9 and Alma 21). The brief summaries at the head of each chapter are later additions for the reader’s convenience. Institute Manual, p. 4.) *An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.* (Nephi wrote this record about thirty years after Lehi’s colony left Jerusalem and journeyed to the promised land. 1 Nephi 19:1-5, 2 Nephi 5:28-31. Institute Manual, p. 4)

CHAPTER 1

Nephi begins the record of his people—Lehi sees in vision a pillar of fire and reads from a book of prophecy—He praises God, foretells the coming of the Messiah, and prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem—He is persecuted by the Jews. [About 600 B.C.]

1 I, NEPHI, having been ^aborn of ^bgoodly ^cparents, therefore I was ^dtaught somewhat in all the learning of my father (Lehi was known to be wealthy, and some have speculated that he was a merchant who had frequent trade with Egyptian merchants. There was considerable cultural influence from Egypt in Jerusalem at this time and Lehi certainly knew the Egyptian language. Lehi was also well versed in the things of the Spirit. Therefore, Nephi was likely ‘taught somewhat’ in the secular and ecclesiastical learning of his father. Hugh Nibley said: “In the brief compass of Nephi’s account, which is an abridgment of his father’s own journal, whose type it imitates and continues (1 Nephi 1:2, 15-16), we are given an amazing amount of information, both general and particular, regarding conditions in Lehi’s day. From this it can be shown that Lehi has an excellent claim to being a thoroughly representative man of his time and place. First consider what the Book of Mormon says. Lehi was a man possessed of exceeding great wealth in the form of ‘gold and silver, and all manner of riches’ (1 Nephi 3:16; 2:4). He had ‘his own house at Jerusalem’ (1 Nephi 1:7); yet he was accustomed to ‘go forth’ from the city from time to time (1 Nephi 1:5-7), and his paternal estate, the land of his inheritance, where the bulk of his

fortune reposed, was some distance from the town (1 Nephi 3:16, 22; 2:4). He came of an old, distinguished, and cultured family (1 Nephi 5:14-16).” (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed., p. 46.)); and having seen many °afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; (Nephi saw afflictions and blessings as compatible companions. Surely anything that brings us nearer to God is a blessing. DCBM, p. 10) yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God (What were the mysteries? It means a thing that you don’t talk about. A mystery is a thing you cannot find out or learn about by your own resources. Since it’s a thing you can’t possibly find out yourself, it must have been revealed – either as a primordial revelation in the beginning and handed down, or it has been revealed to you or somebody else. The mysteries are always handed down secretly. Mysteries of godliness are what we learn in the temple and in the gospel. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:17), therefore I make a ^frecord of my proceedings in my days. (What Nephi was explaining, however, was his ability to write, something not common in his day. That which enabled him to be taught in the “learning of his fathers” was the social station of his family. Lehi was a man of sufficient means so that his family could enjoy the blessings of education. The text is a testimonial for the spiritual blessings that flow from the proper use of this world’s wealth. DCBM, p. 19)

2 Yea, I make a record in the ^alanguage of my father, (In considering the problem of the language of the plates translated by Joseph Smith it is well to keep these facts in mind: (1) the word *language* has several different meanings and includes both spoken and written concepts, such as grammatical constructions, thought patterns, and exact phraseology; (2) Joseph Smith translated from two different records (the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Mormon); these plates were prepared and written nearly 1,000 years apart, and the language of one well might not be the language of the other....Moroni, writing approximately 1,000 years later than Nephi but having access to the small plates of Nephi, can see that their written characters have been altered during the 1,000-year period; thus the written characters on the plates of Mormon are called "reformed" Egyptian because they have been "altered" by the Nephites. Ludlow, *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 1) which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. (Hugh Nibley, said: At that very time was the time of the Reformed Egyptian (Demotic) became the official government language. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:18. “We now realize that the ancient Jews could write quickly and boldly (in Hebrew), in an artistic flowing hand, with the loving penmanship of those who enjoy writing.’ And the Nephites got rid of this to learn in its place the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man! Why all the trouble? Simply to save space. What space? Space on valuable plates. When did the custom begin? With Lehi. Where and when did he learn ‘the language of the Egyptians’? In Palestine, of course, before he ever thought of himself as a record-keeper. Did the wealthy Lehi learn Egyptian characters so that he could sit in his house in the land of Jerusalem and by writing Hebrew with demotic (a form of Egyptian writing which differed from classical Egyptian hieroglyphics; it was used for recording deeds, books, etc.) symbols save a few cents a month on writing materials? And did he command his sons to learn Egyptian so they could save space when they kept records? Of course not: when they learned the language, neither Lehi nor his sons had any idea that some day it would be useful to keepers of records on metal plates. They had no other reason for learning Egyptian characters than to read and write Egyptian. It was only later when historians became cramped for space that they saw the advantage of continuing to write in Egyptian. And the Egyptian characters can only have been preserved for their use because the language was also preserved...The fact remains that the abridging and editing of the Book of Mormon was in a language known to no other people on earth but the Nephites.” (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*, pp. 16-17) As to the nature of the language in which the book was written there are no authoritative answers to be given at present. This much can be said: Moroni identified the characters with which he worked as “reformed Egyptian.” These characters, he said, were “handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.” The system appears to be a type of shorthand. Moroni added that the plates were not “sufficiently large” to make the record in

Hebrew. Hebrew is a completely alphabetic language, whereas in Egyptian a symbol can represent an entire concept. Moroni further stated that “none other people knoweth our language” and that the Lord had prepared means for the interpretation. Confirming this, Joseph Smith said: I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics: the knowledge of which was lost to the world.” Letter to James Arlington Bennett, Life of Joseph Smith, p. 460. Oliver Cowdery also affirmed that the language of the Book of Mormon cannot be interpreted by the learning of this generation. Messenger and Advocate, 1835, 2:198. DCBM, p. 20.)

3 And I know that the record which I make is ^atrue; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

4 For it came to pass (But why does the phrase “and it came to pass” appear in the Book of Mormon so much more often, page for page, than it does in the Old Testament? The answer is twofold. First, the Book of Mormon contains much more narrative, chapter for chapter, than the Bible. Second, but equally important, the translators of the King James Version did not always render *wayehi* as “and it came to pass.” Instead, they were at liberty to draw from a multitude of similar expressions like “and it happened,” “and... became,” or “and...was.” *Wayehi* is found about 1,204 times in the Hebrew Bible, but it was translated only 727 times as “and it came to pass” in the King James Version. Joseph Smith did not introduce such variety into the translation of the Book of Mormon. He retained the precision of “and it came to pass,” which better performs the transitional function of the Hebrew word. The Prophet Joseph Smith may not have used the phrase at all – or at least not consistently – in the Book of Mormon had he created that record. The discriminating use of the Hebraic phrase in the Book of Mormon is further evidence that the record is what it says it is – a translation from a language (reformed Egyptian) with ties to the Hebrew language. Donald W. Parry, *Ensign*, Dec 1992, 29. Instead of punctuation the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon divides up its phrases by introducing each by an “and,” “behold,” “now,” or “It came to pass.” Simply outrageous – as English historical texts... Dramatic texts are held together by the constant repetition of ... “It came to pass.” In Egyptian these expressions were not merely adornments,... they are a grammatical necessity and may not be omitted. Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p. 169.) in the commencement of the ^afirst year of the reign of ^bZedekiah (Daniel Ludlow writes, “Lehi and his family apparently fled from Jerusalem in ‘the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah’ (1 Nephi 1:4, 2:1-4). According to the Bible (2 Chronicles 36:11), Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he was made king over the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, the leader of the Babylonian empire. However, the exact date of Zedekiah's ascension to the throne is not mentioned in the Bible, although nearly all of the scholars agree it must have been within a few years of 600 B.C.” (*A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 89) **Jeremiah summarizes the conditions of Jerusalem during this time: Jer 5:25 - 25 ¶ Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you. 26 For among my people are found ^awicked *men*: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they ^bcatch men. 27 As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become ^agreat, and waxen rich. 28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they ^ajudge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. 29 Shall I not visit for these *things*? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 30 ¶ A wonderful and ^ahorrible thing is committed in the land; 31 The ^aprophets prophesy ^bfalsely, and the ^cpriests bear rule by their means; and my people ^dlove to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? Jer 7: 8 ¶ Behold, ye ^atrust in ^blying words, that cannot profit. 9 Will ye steal, ^amurder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and ^bwalk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and ^astand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Is this ^ahouse, which is called by my name, become a ^bden of ^crobbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD. 12 But go ye now unto my place which *was* in ^aShiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye**

heard not; and I called you, but ye ^aanswered not; 14 Therefore will I do unto *this* ^ahouse, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim. 16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not ^ahear thee. Jeremiah was evidently a descendant of Judah, and his writings are found in the Bible – the “stick of Judah.” Lehi was a descendant of Joseph who was sold into Egypt and the writings of Lehi are contained in the Book of Mormon – the “stick of Joseph.” Ludlow, *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 1), king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at ^cJerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many ^dprophets, prophesying unto the people that they must ^erepent, or the great city ^fJerusalem must be destroyed. (These predictions of gloom and doom were considered treasonable by the king.)

5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his ^aheart, in behalf of his people.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a ^apillar of fire (The pillar of fire represents the glory of God and thus the presence of divinity.... We cannot be certain who or what Lehi saw in the pillar of fire that appeared to him. Lehi could have seen God in this pillar, but since his vision of God himself is reported in the next stage of the vision, it seems more likely to me that what he beheld at this time was a messenger of God whose threatening words and presence, perhaps summoning Lehi, caused Lehi to “quake and tremble exceedingly. John W. Welch, *The Book of Mormon, First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, p. 39) and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much (I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted and were the people prepared to receive them. TPJS, p. 305); and because of the things which he saw and heard he did ^bquake and tremble exceedingly.

7 And it came to pass (Hugh Nibley wrote: “Nothing delighted the critics more than the monotonous repetition of ‘it came to pass’ at the beginning of thousands of sentences in the Book of Mormon. Here again is something that Western tradition found completely unfamiliar. Instead of punctuation, the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon divides up its phrases by introducing each by an ‘and,’ ‘behold,’ ‘now,’ or ‘It came to pass . . .’ Simply outrageous--as English literature, but it is standard Egyptian practice. Egyptian historical texts, Grapow points out, ‘begin in monotonous fashion’ always with the same stock words; at some periods every speech is introduced with the unnecessary ‘I opened my mouth.’ Dramatic texts are held together by the constant repetition of *Khpr-n*, ‘It happened that’ or ‘It came to pass.’ In Egyptian these expressions were not merely adornments, as Grapow points out, they are a grammatical necessity and may not be omitted. Paul Humbert has traced the origin of prophetic biblical expressions to archaic oracular formulas. At any rate they are much commoner in Egyptian than in the Bible, just as they are much commoner in the Book of Mormon. However bad they are in English, they are nothing to be laughed at as Egyptian.” (*Since Cumorah*, p. 29)) that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being ^aovercome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.

8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a ^avision, even that he saw the ^bheavens open, and he thought he ^csaw God sitting upon his throne (This is a heavenly council scene. DCBM, p. 26.), surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

9 And it came to pass that he saw One (Jesus Christ) descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his ^aluster was above that of the sun at noon-day. (All prophets testify of Christ.)

10 And he also saw ^atwelve (The Twelve Apostles) others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and ^astood before my father, and gave unto him a ^bbook, and bade him that he should read. (Many true prophets have a book given to them. Adam, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Moses, Lehi, John the Revelator, Joseph Smith. At the

beginning of most dispensations, a book is given to the newly called prophet. Moses received tablets (see Exodus 31:18). Lehi was given a book to read concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:11-14). Ezekiel was given "a roll of a book" (Ezekiel 2:9-10) containing the Lord's message for the house of Judah in his day. John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos was shown a book with seven seals (see Revelation 5: D&C 77:6). Is it any wonder, then, that the Lord would provide a book containing the fulness of the gospel as part of the "restitution of all things?" Merrill J. Bateman, *Ensign*, Nov 2005, p. 75)

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the ^aSpirit of the Lord.

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine ^aabominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning ^bJerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be ^ccarried away captive into Babylon. (That which Lehi read in the book dealt primarily with the destruction that was to come upon the unrepentant nation of Judah – the nation to which the Lord had called Lehi to raise a warning voice. DCBM, p. 27.)

14 And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy ^apower, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who ^bcome unto thee that they shall perish!

15 And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

16 And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account (All scripture is incomplete. No scriptural record can contain more than a fragmentary account of what a prophet taught or experienced. At the conclusion of his Gospel, John the Revelator said: There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. John 21:25. DCBM, p. 27) of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in ^avisions and in ^bdreams; and he also hath written many things which he ^cprophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. (Nephi's abridgement of the Book of Lehi. 1 Nephi chapters 1-8 are apparently an abridgment of the Book of Lehi; from that point on Nephi became an author rather than an editor. The first 116 pages that Joseph Smith translated – which were subsequently lost – came from the book of Lehi. DCBM, 27.)

17 But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an ^aabridgment of the record of my ^bfather, upon ^cplates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my ^dfather then will I make an account of mine own life. (Ludlow: In verse 17 Nephi states that he is going to make an abridgment of his father's record upon his own plates (apparently the small plates of Nephi), and "then will I make an account of mine own life." Chapters 1 through 8 of 1 Nephi seem to be a synopsis by Nephi of the record of Lehi; chapter 9 is an explanatory and transitional chapter; and finally at the beginning of chapter 10 Nephi states that he is now going "to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings." *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 2)

18 Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the ^adestruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to ^bprophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

19 And it came to pass that the ^aJews did ^bmock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their ^cwickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a ^dMessiah, and also the redemption of the world.

20 And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of

old, whom they had ^acast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also ^bsought his life, that they might take it away. (These became treacherous times for those like Lehi who spoke against Jerusalem or the pompous king of Judah. Consider the fate of Uriah ben Shemaiah, who like Jeremiah prophesied against Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.). Learning that the king sought his life, Uriah fled into Egypt – but he was pursued, captured, and brought back to Jerusalem where he was executed and dishonorably buried. (Jeremiah 26:20-23) The same fate might have been Jeremiah's but for the special intervention of certain powerful elders and princes. (Jeremiah 26:16-19, 24) Such a death could truly have been Lehi's fate as well. John W. Welch, *The Book of Mormon, It Begins with a Family*, p. 19-20) But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender ^cmercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, (To be or to become chosen is not an exclusive status conferred upon us. Rather, you and I ultimately determine if we are chosen. Please now note the use of the word *chosen* in the following verses from the Doctrine and Covenants: "Behold, there are many called, but few are *chosen*. And why are they not *chosen*?" Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men" (D&C 121:34–35; emphasis added). I believe the implication of these verses is quite straightforward. God does not have a list of favorites to which we must hope our names will someday be added. He does not limit "the chosen" to a restricted few. Rather, it is *our* hearts and *our* aspirations and *our* obedience which definitively determine whether we are counted as one of God's chosen. Enoch was instructed by the Lord on this very point of doctrine. Please note the use of the word *choose* in these verses: "Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; "And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should *choose* me, their Father" (Moses 7:32–33; emphasis added). As we learn in these scriptures, the fundamental purposes for the gift of agency were to love one another and to choose God. Thus we become God's chosen and invite His tender mercies as we use our agency to choose God. David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, May 2005, p. 100-101) because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of ^ddeliverance. (All we have to do is live up to the commandments of God, and we can destroy all the munitions. And there is no nation under the sun, today, or yesterday, or tomorrow that can touch us. Is that fanciful? Is that wishful thinking? Not if you believe in God. If you know that God lives, and that Jesus is Christ, and that they have the world and everything within their power, it is not fanciful. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 159. This America is no ordinary country. It is a choice land, "choice above all other lands". It has a tragic and blood past, but a glorious and peaceful future if its inhabitants really learn to serve their God. Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, Oct 1961, p. 30. The book was written after they arrived in America. I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are real and that they do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. The Lord's tender mercies are the very personal and individualized blessings, strength, protection, assurances, guidance, loving-kindnesses, consolation, support, and spiritual gifts which we receive from and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ. The simpleness, the sweetness, and the constancy of the tender mercies of the Lord will do much to fortify and protect us in the troubled times in which we do now and will yet live. When words cannot provide the solace we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply futile to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot yield adequate understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, truly we are blessed by the tender mercies of the Lord and made mighty even unto the power of deliverance. David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, May 2005, 99-100)

CHAPTER 2

Lehi takes his family into the wilderness by the Red Sea—They leave their property—Lehi offers a sacrifice to the Lord and teaches his sons to keep the commandments—Laman and Lemuel murmur

against their father—Nephi is obedient and prays in faith; the Lord speaks to him, and he is chosen to rule over his brethren. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 FOR behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and said unto him: Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to ^atake away thy ^blife.

2 And it came to pass that the Lord ^acommanded my father, even in a ^bdream, that he should ^ctake his family and depart into the wilderness. (When they went out, they weren't intending to cross the sea, or anything like that. They thought they would be living in the desert the rest of their days. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:77)

3 And it came to pass that he was ^aobedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

4 And it came to pass that ^ahe *departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, (There is no indication that Lehi, Sariah, or Nephi had any problem leaving the riches of the world behind. Hugh Nibley records, "that a wealthy citizen of Jerusalem should leave the land of his inheritance at a moment's notice and with no more substantial incitement than a dream may seem at first blush highly improbable, to say the least. Yet Lehi had brooded long and anxiously over the fate of Jerusalem, praying 'with all his heart, in behalf of his people.' (1 Ne. 1:5) and when the dream came, he was prepared." (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 52) The concept of leaving home and riches did bother Laman and Lemuel as recorded in verse 11.) and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness. (They must have had animals and beasts of burden. They would have to carry tents, they would have to have implements, they would have to have supplies to survive for eight years – weapons and all the rest. You don't carry those things in your hands. You have to carry them on beasts of burden. Moreover, when the brethren ran away, they escaped from Laban's police. He said, 'they pursued us but they couldn't overtake us. Well, they weren't going on foot because we know that the police of Jerusalem had good, fleet-footed Arab horses. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Hugh Nibley, 1:119. The word *wilderness* seems to be used in the Book of Mormon to refer to an uninhabited area or at least to an area only sparsely settled. Thus *wilderness* could either refer to a desert area (as it apparently does in 1 Nephi 2:4) or to a fertile area but one that is relatively uninhabited (as in 1 Nephi 18:6, 24-25; 2 Nephi 5:7). Ludlow, *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 3)

5 And he came down by the borders near the shore of the ^aRed Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders (It mentions "the borders" twice in the fifth verse. That should be capitalized because that's what that area has been called, the Jabal, which means "the Borders." Joseph Smith didn't know that. Neither did Oliver Cowdery, so they left it uncapitalized. But that area in which they went was the Jabal. Jabal is the range of mountains that separates one country from another. Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1*, p. 122) which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam. ("Sariah. The wife of Lehi. The name is derived from the Babylonian, 'Sarratu,' which, in the city of Ur, where Abraham lived, was the title of a goddess, the consort of the moon god. In the language of Abraham, 'Sarratu' became 'Sarai.' (Gen. 11:28) Later when the Lord made a covenant with the Patriarch and changed his name from 'Abram' to 'Abraham,' his wife's name was changed from 'Sarai' to 'Sarah.' (Gen. 17:15) The name means 'Princess.' In the Book of Mormon the form of the name is somewhat different. I venture the suggestion that 'Sariah' is an abbreviation of 'Sarah-Jah,' and that means 'Princess of the Lord' (Jehovah)... "...Lemuel. The second son of Lehi, probably named after Lemuel mentioned in Prov. 31:1, 4, who is supposed to be Solomon, the king. The name means either 'Godward' or 'God is bright.' "Sam. The third son of Lehi. The name is Egyptian. 'It was the distinctive name of one of the highest orders of the priesthood. The great Rameses, himself,

belonged to the order of Sam.' (George Reynolds)" (Reynolds and Sjordahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, p. 25-26) *Laman*. The first son of Lehi. His name does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Obviously, it is very similar to the Biblical name of Laban but its meaning is unclear. Hugh Nibley writes: "The only example of the name of Laman to be found anywhere to the writer's knowledge is its attribution to an ancient Mukam, or sacred place, in Palestine. Most of these Mukams are of unknown, and many of them of prehistoric, date. In Israel only the tribe of Manasseh built them. It is a striking coincidence that Conder saw in the name Leimun, as he renders it (the vowels must be supplied by guesswork), a possible corruption of the name Lemuel, thus bringing these two names, so closely associated in the Book of Mormon, into the most intimate relationship, and that in the one instance in which the name of Laman appears." (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 45) Nibley goes on to explain that Laman and Lemuel were Arabic names and that Nephi and Sam were Egyptian names (see p. 46.)

6 And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a ^avalley by the side of a ^briver of water. (Although the term "river of water" probably seemed foreign to Joseph Smith,... the use of the term in the Book of Mormon is consistent with both modern and ancient Hebrew and with other Semitic languages of the Middle East. Different words are used in these languages to differentiate between (1) a riverbed that has water flowing in it and (2) a dry riverbed. This is one of many examples that prove the Book of Mormon is translation literature. It was not written by Joseph Smith; rather it was translated by him from ancient records. Daniel H. Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 92-3. How would they find a river of water in the desert at that time? On camel the normal rate is thirty miles a day, but you can make thirty to sixty miles a day. Under pressure, you could make a hundred miles a day. Camels move right along. This was winter time when there was running water. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:122-23. If they pitched their tents in a *wadi* near a flowing stream, it may well us something about what time of year it was, perhaps spring, the time of winter runoff. D. Kelly Ogden, *Studies in Scripture*, 7:23. If not when water runs freely, it would have been a river of sand. If they had left Jerusalem during the Passover season, they may not have been as conspicuous with a lot of other travelers coming and going at the time. This would also account for the prediction that Jesus would be born 600 years after Lehi left Jerusalem, which was during Passover.)

7 And it came to pass that he built an ^aaltar of ^bstones, (Lehi built an altar of stones to make an offering and give thanks. It was an alter of unhewn stones as stipulated in Exodus 20:25. The wording in intentional, again showing the Book of Mormon to be translated from an ancient Semitic record. It was not a stone altar (which might allow for cut, fitted stones), but an altar of stones. D. Kelly Ogden, *Studies in Scripture*, 7:23) and made an ^coffering unto the Lord, and gave ^dthanks unto the Lord our God. (Lehi held the Melchizedek Priesthood to be able to perform sacrificial ordinances. TPJS, p. 172-73. The Aaronic Priesthood was the province of the tribe of Levi, and thus was not taken by the Nephites to America. It would appear, therefore, that the sacrifices performed by the Lehite colony were carried out under the direction of the higher priesthood which comprehends all the duties and authorities of the lesser. DCBM, p. 31)

8 And it came to pass that he called the name of the river, Laman, and it emptied into the Red Sea; and the valley was in the borders near the mouth thereof. (Notice that the name of the river is Laman and the name of the valley is Lemuel. In the background of Joseph Smith it was customary for the river and the valley through which the river flowed to carry the same name; hence, the Mississippi River and the Mississippi Valley, the Missouri River and the Missouri Valley. However, this is not necessarily the practice in the Middle East, and it evidently was not the practice there 600 years B.C., as is indicated by the fact that Lehi named the river after his son Laman and the valley through which the river flowed after his son Lemuel. Ludlow, *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 4)

9 And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the ^afountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the

fountain of all righteousness!

10 And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, ^afirm and ^bsteadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord! (As if to prove that no westerner could possibly have dreamed up Nephi's account, we are challenged by the remarkable expression, "like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable" (1 Nephi 2:10). Who west of Suez would ever think of such an image? At the very least the proofreader should have caught such a howler, which should certainly have been corrected in subsequent editions. For we, of course, know all about everlasting *hills* and immovable mountains, the moving of which is the best-known illustration of the infinite power of faith, but who ever heard of a steadfast valley? The Arabs, to be sure. For them the valley, and not the mountain, is the symbol of permanence. It is not the mountain of refuge to which they flee, but the valley of refuge. The great depressions that run for hundreds of miles across the Arabian peninsula pass for the most part through plains devoid of mountains. It is in these ancient riverbeds alone that water, vegetation, and animal life are to be found when all else is desolation. They alone offer men and animals escape from their enemies and deliverance from death by hunger and thirst. The qualities of firmness and steadfastness, of reliable protection, refreshment, and sure refuge when all else fails, which other nations attribute naturally to mountains, the Arabs attribute to valleys. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 105-06)

11 Now this he spake because of the ^astiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold they did ^bmurmur in many things against their ^cfather, because he was a ^dvisionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.

12 And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their ^afather. And they did ^bmurmur because they ^cknew not the dealings of that God who had ^dcreated them.

13 Neither did they ^abelieve that Jerusalem, that great city, could be ^bdestroyed (In spite of all other invasions, Jerusalem had never been destroyed. This time it would be.) according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father. (Ludlow: The term "Jew" is used in the Book of Mormon with two possible meanings: (1) a descendant of Judah, the son of Jacob (or, perhaps in a more general vein, a member of the house of Israel), and (2) a citizen of the kingdom of Judah of this particular period. Lehi and his descendants are definitely not descendants of Judah (see 1 Nephi 5:14), but they might be considered Jews in the sense that they were citizens of the kingdom of Judah. Thus Nephi states, "I have charity for the Jew—I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came" (2 Nephi 33:8). Also, the Lord refers to the Lamanites of our day as "a remnant" of the Jews. (D&C 19:27. *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p, 5)

14 And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the ^avalley of Lemuel, with ^bpower, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did ^cshake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them.

15 And my father dwelt in a ^atent. (This is the shortest verse in the Book of Mormon. It may seem to carry little meaning. However, Hugh Nibley writes: "The editors of the Book of Mormon have given a whole verse to Nephi's laconic statement, 'And my father dwelt in a tent' (1 Nephi 2:15), and rightly so, since Nephi himself finds the fact very significant and refers constantly to his father's tent as the center of his universe. To an Arab, 'My father dwelt in a tent' says everything. 'The present inhabitants of Palestine,' writes Canaan, 'like their forefathers, are of two classes: dwellers in villages and cities, and the Bedouin [tent-dwellers]. As the life and habits of the one class differ from those of the other, so do their houses differ. Houses in villages are built of durable material; . . . on the other hand, Bedouin dwellings, tents, are more fitted for nomadic life...' So with the announcement that his 'father dwelt in a tent,' Nephi serves notice that he had assumed the desert way of life, as perforce he must for his journey: any easterner would appreciate the significance and importance of the statement, which to us seems almost trivial. If Nephi seems to think of his father's tent as the hub of everything, he is simply

expressing the view of any normal Bedouin, to whom the tent of the *sheikh* is the sheet anchor of existence.” (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, pp. 57-58))

16 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young (16 years old), nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the ^amysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did ^bvisit me, and did ^csoften my heart that I did ^dbelieve all the words which had been spoken by my ^efather; wherefore, I did not ^frebel against him like unto my brothers. (Nobody liked the idea of leaving Jerusalem. Nephi liked it just as little as the others. After he prayed and cried unto the Lord, the Lord visited him and softened his heart so he would go along with his father. [Nephi] had to be convinced, too. So everybody had to be sold on this trip in the first place, including Nephi and Sam. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:126)

17 And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words.

18 But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being ^agrieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them.

19 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy ^afaith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

20 And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall ^aprosper, and shall be led to a ^bland of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

21 And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be ^acut off from the presence of the Lord.

22 And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ^aruler and a teacher over thy brethren. (The great political question among Book of Mormon peoples was "Who has the right to rule?" Did Nephi's descendants and those who followed them have a legitimate right to rule? Or should the right have belonged to Lehi's oldest son Laman and his descendants? This quarrel is the cause of centuries of political and military struggle. But this was not the only problem. Even within Nephite society, an endless number of dissenters challenged the government. They often split away to join the Lamanites when they could not win control inside the Nephite system. These dissenters typically argued for the Lamanite view, in part because they thought they could line their own nests that way. By paying close attention to how this struggle was waged, we can see one of the reasons the Book of Mormon was written. Of course it is a witness for Christ and his teachings. But in addition, it provides reasons why we should believe that the tradition of the Nephites was just and correct. The two messages of the book are tied together in such a way that whoever accepts the teachings of Christ accepts that Nephi was a legitimate ruler, and vice versa. Every group of people wants to be assured that its government is lawful and was founded properly. This is, in part, why stories of national origins and city foundings have been so important to human societies. The stories explain the origins of their laws and their rulers. Such traditions often deal with conflicting versions of the founding, explaining away all but one "authorized" account. Nephi undertook late in his life to write an account of his people on the small plates. Though we don't know what the large plates—the political history—contained, we can guess from his version of how his people originated that a major issue was who had the right to govern. His small plates defend the Nephite tradition and refute the account advanced by the Lamanites and dissenters. Nephi carefully constructed what he wrote to convince his own and later generations that the Lord had selected him over his older brothers to be Lehi's successor. Thus, one interesting way to read the account is as a political tract produced to show that his rule was authoritative. We would not expect to find this kind of political argument in Nephi's writings if they were only a journal of what happened to Nephi and his family. Nephi's entries on the small plates were not written as the events happened. Instead, he wrote years after the events, drawing on the journal or notes that he had kept plus "the record of [his] father" (1 Nephi 1:17). Furthermore, all of it was seen through his memory and mature reflections. What we tend to read as a story of flight from Jerusalem is really a carefully designed account explaining to his successors

why their religious faith in Christ and their political tradition—the kingship of Nephi—were both true and legitimate. Nephi intertwined the argument for Christ with evidence that his own authority as ruler was divinely given. They stand or fall together. Nephi, like Lehi, saw and heard Christ, and he testified that the Savior would come among Lehi's progeny. Furthermore, Christ had spoken to Nephi, appointing him "a ruler and teacher" over his brothers while delivering him from their treachery. Without Christ, the argument for Nephi's authority had no basis; and without Nephi's authority, the Nephite political claims would have collapsed in the face of Laman's seniority in the family. Noel B. Reynolds, *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, p. 220-221, 226)

23 For behold, in that day that they shall ^arebel against me, I will ^bcurse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall ^crebel against me also.

24 And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be a ^ascourge unto thy seed, to ^bstir them up in the ways of remembrance. (Hugh Nibley said: "One thing the reader of the Book of Mormon is never allowed to forget is that the Nephites lived in a polarized world, in which they were perpetually engaged either in hot or cold wars with the Lamanites. Their basic problem was one of survival; security was an obsession with them...the Nephites had by all human standards ample cause for alarm. Yet from the beginning they received full assurance that God had purposely arranged things that way, and that they had absolutely nothing to fear as long as they behaved themselves. God intended that the Nephites should have hostile Lamanites breathing down their necks: 'I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also. And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be as a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance' (1 Nephi 2:23-24). So it was a blessing to the Nephites after all to have the Lamanites on their doorstep to 'stir them up to remembrance'—'Happy is the man whom God correcteth' (Job 5:17). No matter how wicked and ferocious and depraved the Lamanites might be (and they were that!), no matter by how much they outnumbered the Nephites, darkly closing in on all sides, no matter how insidiously they spied and intrigued and infiltrated and hatched their diabolical plots and breathed their bloody threats and pushed their formidable preparations for all-out war, *they were not the Nephite problem*. They were merely kept there to remind the Nephites of their real problem, which was to walk uprightly before the Lord." (*Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed., pp. 338-9.) 1 Nephi 2:20-24 is the theme of the Book of Mormon. This is the rule for the promised land. Obey God or be swept off. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:126.)
* Verse 4 [600 B.C.].

CHAPTER 3

Lehi's sons return to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass—Laban refuses to give them up—Nephi exhorts and encourages his brethren—Laban steals their property and attempts to slay them—Laman and Lemuel smite Nephi and are reproved by an angel. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from ^aspeaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father.

2 And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a ^adream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall ^breturn to Jerusalem. (This may have been as far as 250 miles.)

3 For behold, Laban (Hugh Nibley said: Who was Laban? He was military governor of Jerusalem, we are told. They were out by night, remember, in secret council with the elders and he was in his ceremonial armor when he met with them. Laman and Lemuel said, He's in charge of fifty men in the city and ten thousand men in the field. He was in charge of the city police. He was the governor of the city, and the records were kept at his house. They were family records, and he was related to Lehi. That was where they knew they could get their records because they were kept in the house of Laban the military governor. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:89-90.) hath the record of the Jews and also a ^agenealogy of my forefathers, and they are ^bengraven upon plates of brass. ("When he says "brass

plates” it’s perfectly safe to think of those as bronze plates because brass is a mixture of copper and nickel, whereas bronze is copper and tin, and much more common and easy to make. The main thing is it is copper based.” Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 1:137. Ludlow: In many of the Semitic languages (from which we get the thought patterns contained in the Book of Mormon) it is not customary to have the adjective precede the noun. Thus the Book of Mormon mentions the "plates of brass" of Laban but never refers to the "brass plates of Laban." *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 5)

4 Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness. (It appears that Laban was a relative of Lehi’s – at least he was of the same lineage, and may have been the member of the family responsible for keeping the genealogy. DCBM, p. 37)

5 And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord. (We might ask at this point, why did the Lord wait until they were more than two hundred miles away from home to command Lehi to get the plates? Could not arrangements have been made for them before they left Jerusalem? One more test! The older brothers immediately protested, saying it was a hard thing. We usually suppose that their foremost excuse for not wanting to go was their fear of Laban; but there is no doubt that the distance and topography also had some bearing on their resistance. The Book of Mormon itself and most Book of Mormon commentaries say little, if anything, about the distance and terrain involved. Professor Hugh Nibley refers to the two return trips as "quick visits" and "quick trips," noting that "Lehi's sons made a flying trip back to Jerusalem." This writer and accompanying friends learned by walking it that the distance between Jerusalem and the Red Sea is 200 miles. (Some authors insert a figure of 150 miles or so, "as the crow flies," but ancient Judahites were not crows and they didn't fly, and it was 200 miles to the Red Sea!) An agreeable pace for a group of people on camels would be between twenty and thirty miles a day. So the journey was a minimum of seven or eight days. Add to that the three days they traveled after reaching the Red Sea, and the figures are up to 260-290 miles in ten or eleven days. That is one direction only. The round-trip that the Lord and Father Lehi were asking of the four sons was over 500 miles and at least three weeks through some of the most rugged terrain in the Near East! And they had no clue as to how they were going to obtain the plates. (And we, having the advantage of "knowing the end from the beginning," are amazed to think ahead and realize that Lehi, soon after his sons returned from their first assignment, would command them to go back again! That is over a thousand miles and many weeks on those desolate tracts of land—and we have often looked down on Laman and Lemuel for being chronic complainers. D. Kelly Ogden, *Studies in Scripture*, 7:26-7.)

6 Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast ^anot ^bmurmured.

7 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I ^awill go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no ^bcommandments unto the children of men, save he shall ^cprepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (Boyd K.

Packer “It is in the way we answer the call that we show the measure of our devotion.... Never say ‘No’ to an opportunity to serve in the Church. If you are called to an assignment by one who has authority, there is but one answer. It is, of course, expected that you set forth clearly what your circumstances are, but any assignment that comes under call from your bishop or your stake president is a call that comes from the Lord. An article of our faith [#5] defines it so, and I bear witness that it is so. Once called to such positions, do not presume to set your own date of release. A release is in effect another call. Men do not call themselves to offices in the Church. Why must we presume that we have the authority to release ourselves? A release should come by the same authority from whence came the call. Act in the office to which you are called with all diligence. Do not be a slothful servant. Be punctual and dependable and faithful.” (BYU devotional, Mar. 23, 1965 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.13))

8 And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words he was exceedingly glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord.

9 And I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey in the wilderness, with our tents, to go up to the land of Jerusalem. (The distance from Jerusalem to the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba) is about 180 miles through hot barren country infested anciently by many marauders. Lehi and his family traveled three days' journey beyond this point (1 Nephi 2:5-6). This meant at least a twelve to fourteen day trip one way, which gives added meaning to Nephi's response in 1 Nephi 3:7. Institute Manual, p. 5.)

10 And it came to pass that when we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem, I and my brethren did consult one with another.

11 And we (chance) ^acast lots—who of us should go in unto the house of Laban (While modern people might be familiar with casting lots to create a pure chance selection, it would be a disservice to these brothers to assume that the casting of lots was done to create a random assignment. Casting lots in the ancient world assumed that the randomness inherent in the lots opened the door for God to place His hand in the outcome. The casting of lots was used as a means of discovering the will of the Lord. Ludlow: The "casting of lots" was practiced extensively by the Hebrews of Old Testament times. This authentic and typical use of the custom in the Book of Mormon would indicate again that this part of the story in the Book of Mormon is concerned with a group of people with a Hebrew background and that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient record. (If you want to review some of the examples in the Bible where the casting of lots was used, see Leviticus 16:8; 1 Samuel 14:42; 1 Chronicles 26:13; Psalms 22:18; Isaiah 34:17; Joel 3:3; Obadiah 11; Jonah 1:7; Nahum 3:10; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:24; Acts 1:26.)) And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman (This was Laman's chance to lead in righteousness); and Laman went in unto the house of Laban, (Laman is the only source for this encounter.) and he talked with him as he sat in his house.

12 And he desired of Laban the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, which contained the ^agenealogy of my father.

13 And behold, it came to pass that Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee.

14 But Laman fled out of his presence, and told the things which Laban had done, unto us. And we began to be exceedingly sorrowful, and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness.

15 But behold I said unto them that: ^aAs the Lord liveth, and as we live, Nephi swears an oath. If they don't accomplish it, then God is not God.) we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have ^baccomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us. (Bruce R. McConkie: "This matter of swearing with an oath in ancient days was far more significant than many of us have realized. For instance: Nephi and his brethren were seeking to obtain the brass plates from Laban. Their lives were in peril. Yet Nephi swore this oath: 'As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.' (1 Nephi 3:15.) Thus Nephi made God his partner. If he failed to get the plates, it meant God had failed. And because God does not fail, it was incumbent upon Nephi to get the plates or lay down his life in the attempt." (Conference Report, April 1982, pp. 49-50))

16 Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father's ^ainheritance, (This was not in Jerusalem. It was to the south and east of Jerusalem. Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 1:129) for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the ^bcommandments of the Lord.

17 For he knew that Jerusalem must be ^adestroyed, because of the wickedness of the people.

18 For behold, they have ^arejected the words of the prophets. Wherefore, if my father should dwell in the land after he hath been ^bcommanded to flee out of the land, behold, he would also perish. Wherefore, it

must needs be that he flee out of the land.

19 And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these ^arecords, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers;

20 And also that we may ^apreserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy ^bprophets, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time. (The brass plates contained an account of the words of the prophets and seers from the time of the Creation to the time of Lehi and Jeremiah, or, in other words, from about 4000 BC to 600 BC. It was a more extensive and complete record of God's dealings with his children than our present Bible. It appears to be primarily a record kept by those who descended from Joseph, and also a record of prophets of the tribe of Joseph. This verse attests that all the holy prophets have testified of sacred truths common to all generations. DCBM, p. 40. Sidney B. Sperry suggests that "the prophets in both nations probably paid little attention to the political lines of division, but it is improbable that all of them had their words recorded in the scriptures of both nations. ... The Brass Plates may well have been the official scripture of the Ten Tribes. It is probable that some prophets wrote on these plates whose writings may not have been recorded on the records kept in Judah. Were Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias ... among them?" (*Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967, pp. 43-44.) The Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, in fact, may contain some of the information found on the plates of brass. Robert J. Matthews suggested that "the JST, having received the touch of restoration through the hand of the Prophet of God, resembles the doctrinal content of the Brass Plates more fully than does any other Bible." ("The Joseph Smith Translation—Historical Source and Doctrinal Companion to the Doctrine & Covenants," *Ninth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators' Symposium*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, p. 22.))

21 And it came to pass that after this manner of language did I ^apersuade my brethren, that they might be faithful in keeping the commandments of God.

22 And it came to pass that we went down to the land of our inheritance, and we did gather together our ^agold, and our silver, and our precious things. (Worldly way. While not specifically stated, it might be reasoned that Lehi left servants in charge of the family holdings. It would be hard to imagine that a significant wealth such as Lehi apparently had accumulated could go for very long entirely unguarded. Certainly the lands and goods were not sold nor exchanged prior to the journey into the wilderness, a fact which doubtless encouraged Laman and Lemuel's assumption that they could return to their former life.)

23 And after we had gathered these things together, we went up again unto the house of Laban.

24 And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and desired him that he would give unto us the records which were engraven upon the ^aplates of brass, for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things.

25 And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property, and that it was exceedingly great, he did ^alust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property.

26 And ^ait came to pass that we did flee before the servants of Laban, and we were obliged to leave behind our property, and it fell into the hands of Laban.

27 And it came to pass that we fled into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake us, and we ^ahid ourselves in the cavity of a rock. (Recently, the published research of three Non-Latter-day Saint scientists have found such a "cavity of a rock," twenty-two miles southeast of Jerusalem – just east of Hebron. The reconstruction of the site by these scholars astonishingly resembles the Book of Mormon account of Nephi's refuge in the cavern. It is expected that Nephi and his party, with the brass plates, would head toward the Hebron area to seek refuge. Historically, Joshua had designated the city of Hebron as a city of refuge, where those unjustly or rashly accused could find safety. Nephi and his party fled from the servants of Laban on the southern road which also leads ultimately to the Valley of Lemuel/Al Beda, where Lehi was camped, but additionally passes through Hebron, the city of refuge.

Ten miles east of Hebron is a cave, uncovered during construction of a highway in 1961, that for ages has been called by the local populace *Khirbet Beit Lei*, “The Ruins of the House of Lehi” (or even “The Ruins of Lehi’s Family,” as *Beit* means either “house” or “family”). Kirk Holland Vestal and Arthur Wallace, *The Firm Foundation of Mormonism*, p. 107-07. A display in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem shows artifacts from a cave some twenty-three miles southwest of Jerusalem in an area known as *Lhi* (Lahi or Lehi). They are dated to six hundred years before Jesus’ time and seem to connect to Lehi’s family departing the area of Jerusalem. The oldest-known writing of the name of Jerusalem and the spelling out of the name of Jehovah appears in the cave. Daniel Rona, *Book of Mormon Supplemental Study Material*, p. 5)

28 And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman. Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak many ^ahard words unto us, their younger brothers, and they did smite us even with a rod. (Every free man in the East carries a stick, the immemorial badge of independence and of authority; and every man asserts his authority over his inferiors by his stick, which "shows that the holder is a man of position, superior to the workman or day-labourers. The government officials, superior officers, tax-gatherers, and schoolmasters use this short rod to threaten—or if necessary to beat—their inferiors, whoever they may be." The usage is very ancient. "A blow for a slave," is the ancient maxim in Ahikar, and the proper designation of an underling is '*abd-al-'asa*, "stick-servant." This is exactly the sense in which Laman and Lemuel intended their little lesson to Nephi, for when the angel turned the tables 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*?" High Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 80)

29 And it came to pass as they smote us with a rod, behold, an ^aangel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he spake unto them, saying: Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ^bruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will ^cdeliver Laban into your hands.

30 And after the ^aangel had spoken unto us, he departed.

31 And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to ^amurmur, saying: 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? (These verses dramatize the principle that something as remarkable as the rending of the veil and the appearance of angels has little if any lasting influence upon hardened souls, souls which are not attuned to the infinite. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that: A visitation of an angel... would not leave the impression that we receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitations might become dim as time goes on, but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is renewed and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:44, DCBM, p. 41. The testimony of the Holy Ghost is the strongest testimony that can be given. It is better than a personal visit. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:153.)

CHAPTER 4

Nephi slays Laban at the Lord’s command and then secures the plates of brass by stratagem—Zoram chooses to join Lehi’s family in the wilderness. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be ^afaithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not ^bmightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands? (The regular division in the army is 10,000, as it was at the Hill Cumorah. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:127.)

2 Therefore let us go up; let us be ^astrong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of

the Red ^bSea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea. (“Nephi was not the only prophet in scripture to shed a man's blood. Moses killed an Egyptian when Moses saw the Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave; when he looked around and saw that no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand (Ex. 2:11-12). Fearing that he might get caught, Moses fled to the land of Midian...Nephi's reference to Moses as he and his brothers moved quietly toward Jerusalem that dark night turns out to be more prophetic and more significant than Nephi probably realized at the time. Nephi urged his brothers, ‘Let us be strong like unto Moses. . . . Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians’ (1 Ne. 4:2-3). Although Nephi had the destruction of the Egyptian army in mind (he assumed he would encounter Laban's fifty), in the end it was not an army that Nephi destroyed, but a single man. Nephi became strong like unto Moses, following the archetype who set into motion the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Even so, the slaying of Laban inexorably sealed the destiny of Lehi's party as exiles from the land of Jerusalem until they likewise arrived at their new Promised Land. In retrospect, the parallel between the actions of Moses and Nephi was surely strengthened by the fact that both had been involved in the excusable killing of a man.” (John W. Welch, “Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban,” *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992), 139.))

3 Now behold ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an ^aangel hath spoken unto you; wherefore can ye ^bdoubt? Let us go up; the Lord is able to ^cdeliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians. (The Lord's way.)

4 Now when I had spoken these words, they were yet wroth, and did still continue to murmur; nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem. (Joseph Smith was translating with the seer stones, he looked up with surprise and said, “Emma, did Jerusalem have walls? He didn't even know the city had walls. He didn't know anything about what he was writing here. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:159)

5 And it was by night; and I caused that they should hide themselves without the walls. And after they had hid themselves, I, Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban. (The lighting of city streets, except for festivals, is a blessing unknown to ages other than our own. Hundreds of passages might be cited from ancient writers, classical and Oriental, to show that in times gone by the streets of even the biggest towns were perfectly dark at night, and very dangerous. To move about late at night without lamp bearers and armed guards was to risk almost certain assault. In the famous trial of Alcibiades for the mutilation of the Hermes, we have the testimony of one witness who, all alone, beheld by moonlight the midnight depredations of a drunken band in the heart of downtown Athens, from which it is clear that the streets of the greatest city in the western world were unlighted, deserted, and dangerous at night. In times of social unrest the streets at night were virtually given over to the underworld, as they were in some European cities during the blackouts of the late war. The extreme narrowness of ancient streets made their blackout doubly effective. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 115.)

6 And I was ^aled by the Spirit, not ^bknowing beforehand the things which I should do. (Harold B. Lee “Walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you.” (Lucille C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower*, p.138) Obviously, caution and wisdom must be used with regards to this principle I am discussing. Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy discussed this in these terms: “It is a misconception to believe that we should consult Heavenly Father on every matter in life. He expects us to solve a portion of our problems without petitioning Him for potential solutions. It is through this process that we grow, develop, and become more perfect. He is not always concerned about mundane matters unless they are not in keeping with sacred principles. We should daily petition for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. With this presence of the Spirit, we will feel the promptings without petitioning Heavenly Father

on every personal matter. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained this principle: ‘We are often left to work out problems, without the dictation or specific direction of the Spirit. That is part of the experience we must have in mortality. Fortunately, we are never out of our Savior’s sight, and if our judgment leads us to actions beyond the limits of what is permissible and if we are listening to the still small voice, the Lord will restrain us by the promptings of His Spirit.’“)

7 Nevertheless I went forth, and as I came near unto the house of Laban I beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me, for he was ^adrunken with wine.

8 And when I came to him I found that it was Laban.

9 And I beheld his ^asword, and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof; and the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel. (Or in other words: Whoa, this is a cool sword. Swords were worth thousands of dollars. Laban’s sword becomes the sword of kings.)

10 And it came to pass that I was ^aconstrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban; but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk (was sick to his stomach) and would that I might not slay him. (Jeffrey Holland said: “A bitter test? A desire to shrink? Sound familiar?

We don't know why those plates could not have been obtained some other way—perhaps accidentally left at the plate polishers one night, or maybe falling off the back of Laban's chariot on a Sabbath afternoon drive. For that matter, why didn't Nephi just leave this story out of the book altogether?... It is not intended that either Nephi or we be spared the struggle of this account. I believe that story was placed in the very opening verses of a 531-page book and then told in painfully specific detail in order to focus every reader of that record on the absolutely fundamental gospel issue of obedience and submission to the communicated will of the Lord. If Nephi cannot yield to this terribly painful command, if he cannot bring himself to obey, then it is entirely probable that he can never succeed or survive in the tasks that lie just ahead. ‘I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.’ (1 Nephi 3:7.) I confess that I wince a little when I hear that promise quoted so casually among us. Jesus knew what that kind of commitment would entail and so now does Nephi. And so will a host of others before it is over. That vow took Christ to the cross on Calvary and it remains at the heart of every Christian covenant. ‘I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded’? Well, we shall see.” (Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, p. 139.))

11 And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the ^aLord hath ^bdelivered him into thy hands. Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had ^ctaken away our property.

12 And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands;

13 Behold the Lord ^aslayeth the ^bwicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is ^cbetter that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in ^dunbelief.

14 And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: ^aInasmuch as thy seed shall keep my ^bcommandments, they shall ^cprosper in the ^dland of promise.

15 Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the ^alaw of Moses, save they should have the law.

16 And I also knew that the ^alaw was engraven upon the plates of brass.

17 And again, I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands for this cause—that I might obtain the records according to his commandments.

18 Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own ^asword. (“Some people have wondered why God needed to have Nephi kill Laban instead of telling him simply to put on Laban's clothes and go forth in disguise to get the plates. Leaving the drunken Laban alive, however, would probably have created serious problems... Even if Laban spent the night in the streets, the next morning he would have regained his senses and would have been

furious. He would have led a search party to pursue and kill Nephi and his brothers and recover the plates of brass...With Zoram gone, people in Jerusalem could well have assumed that Zoram was the one who had killed Laban...If Laban had not been killed, however, he would have known Zoram and the circumstances well enough to have suspected what had happened and to have led an effective pursuit against Nephi and his brothers. These reasons explain why it was virtually essential to the completion of Nephi's task that Laban be killed, and with a little imagination several other reasons can probably be suggested." (John W. Welch, "Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban," *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992), 132.) The spirit assured Nephi that the present fortuitous circumstance – finding Laban drunken and incapacitated in the streets – was not an accident, but that the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. According to the law of retribution – Nephi was perfectly justified in slaying Laban. DCBM, p. 44. That which is wrong under one circumstance may be, and often is, right under another. God said, "Thou shalt not kill;" at another time He said: "Thou shalt utterly destroy." This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted – by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. TPJS, p. 256.)

19 And after I had smitten off his head with his own sword, I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit; and I did gird on his armor about my loins. (Returning by night in a third attempt to get the records, Nephi stumbled upon the prostrate form of Laban, lying dead drunk in the deserted street (1 Nephi 4:7). The commander had been (so his servant later told Nephi) in conference with "the elders of the Jews . . . out by night among them" (1 Nephi 4:22), and was wearing his full dress armor. What a world of inference in this! We sense the gravity of the situation in Jerusalem which "the elders" are still trying to conceal; we hear the suppressed excitement of Zoram's urgent talk as he and Nephi hasten through the streets to the city gates (1 Nephi 4:27), and from Zoram's willingness to change sides and leave the city we can be sure that he, as Laban's secretary, knew how badly things were going. From the Lachish letters it is clear that informed parties in Jerusalem were quite aware of the critical state of things at Jerusalem, even while the *sarim*, "the elders," were working with all their might to suppress every sign of criticism and disaffection. How could they take counsel to provide for the defense of the city and their own interests without exciting alarm or giving rise to general rumors and misgivings? By holding their meetings in secret, of course, such midnight sessions of civil and military leaders as Laban had just been attending. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 112-13)

20 And after I had done this, I went forth unto the treasury of Laban. And as I went forth towards the treasury of Laban, behold, I saw the ^aservant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban, that he should go with me into the treasury. (For Zoram, as Laban's private secretary and keeper of the keys, was himself an important official, and no mere slave. Professor Albright has shown that the title "servant" by which Nephi designates him meant in Jerusalem at that time something like "official representative" and was an honorable rather than a menial title. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 109)

21 And he supposed me to be his master, Laban, for he beheld the garments and also the sword girded about my loins.

22 And he spake unto me concerning the ^aelders of the Jews, he knowing that his master, Laban, had been out by night among them. ("The portrait of Laban is absolutely marvelous...He was in charge of everything as the military governor, and the records were kept in his office. Who was Laban? He was military governor of Jerusalem, we are told. They were out by night, remember, in secret council with the elders (the *sarîm*) and he was in his ceremonial armor when he met with them. Laman and Lemuel said, 'He's in charge of fifty men in the city and ten thousand men in the field.' He was in charge of the city police. He was the governor of the city, and the records were kept at his house. They were family records, and he was related to Lehi. That was where they knew they could get their records because they

were kept in the house of Laban, the military governor. Not a likely place to keep the genealogy of the people, but that's where it was. It was the same thing in Lachish. In a time of alarm, they were put there for safekeeping. That was the safest place to keep them. And sure enough, we learn from the Copper Scroll that when Jerusalem was threatened, they took all the documents they could and hid them in various places around the city. They were quick to get them to a safe place; that's what happened. That's probably why the brass plates and all the genealogy were being held under guard-kept under lock and key by Laban. Laban wouldn't let the brothers have them unless they paid him plenty, so they paid him plenty and he said, 'April fool.'" (Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, lecture 6))

23 And I spake unto him as if it had been Laban.

24 And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the ^aplates of brass, to my elder brethren, who were without the walls.

25 And I also bade him that he should follow me.

26 And he, supposing that I spake of the ^abrethren of the ^bchurch, (Was there a Church anciently, and if so, how was it organized and regulated? There was not so much as the twinkling of an eye during the whole so-called pre-Christian era when the Church of Jesus Christ was not upon the earth, organized basically the same way it now is. Melchizedek belonged to the Church; Laban was a member, so also was Lehi, long before he left Jerusalem. There was always apostolic power. The Melchizedek Priesthood always directed the course of the Aaronic Priesthood. All of the prophets held a position in the hierarchy of the day. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Bible: A Sealed Book*, p. 6) and that I was truly that Laban whom I had slain, wherefore he did follow me.

27 And he spake unto me many times concerning the elders of the Jews, as I went forth unto my brethren, who were without the walls.

28 And it came to pass that when Laman saw me he was exceedingly frightened, and also Lemuel and Sam. And they fled from before my presence; for they supposed it was Laban, and that he had slain me and had sought to take away their lives also.

29 And it came to pass that I called after them, and they did hear me; wherefore they did cease to flee from my presence.

30 And it came to pass that when the servant of Laban beheld my brethren he began to tremble, and was about to flee from before me and return to the city of Jerusalem.

31 And now I, Nephi, being a man large in stature, and also having received much ^astrength of the Lord, therefore I did seize upon the servant of Laban, and held him, that he should not flee.

32 And it came to pass that I spake with him, that if he would hearken unto my words, as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life. (When they gave their word, it was binding. In those days, no man would dream of breaking an oath. It would be the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "As the Lord liveth, and as I live!" Nephi swore that oath in order to pacify the struggling Zoram in an instant. Russell M. Nelson, *Heroes From the Book of Mormon*, p. 6)

33 And I spake unto him, even with an ^aoath, that he need not fear; that he should be a ^bfree man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us. (Zoram couldn't go back to Jerusalem, because the police would have pursued Lehi, like they did Uriah when he fled to Egypt.)

34 And I also spake unto him, saying: Surely the Lord hath ^acommanded us to do this thing; and shall we not be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord? Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us.

35 And it came to pass that ^aZoram did take courage at the words which I spake. Now Zoram (A strong refreshing rain. Aramaic word.) was the name of the servant; and he promised that he would go down into the wilderness unto our father. Yea, and he also made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth.

36 Now we were desirous that he should tarry with us for this cause, that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness, lest they should pursue us and destroy us.

37 And it came to pass that when Zoram had made an ^aoath unto us, our ^bfears did cease concerning him.

38 And it came to pass that we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the ^atent of our father.

CHAPTER 5

Sariah complains against Lehi—Both rejoice over the return of their sons—They offer sacrifices—The plates of brass contain writings of Moses and the prophets—They identify Lehi as a descendant of Joseph—Lehi prophesies concerning his seed and the preservation of the plates. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that after we had come down into the wilderness unto our father, behold, he was filled with joy, and also my mother, Sariah, was exceedingly glad, for she truly had mourned because of us. (They may have been gone several days or weeks.)

2 For she had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness; and she also had ^acomplained against my father, telling him that he was a ^bvisionary man; saying: Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness.

3 And after this manner of language had my mother complained against my father.

4 And it had come to pass that my father spake unto her, saying: I know that I am a ^avisionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a ^bvision I should not have known the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren.

5 But behold, I have ^aobtained a ^bland of promise (The promise was given. All things are present once you have made the transition, once you have accepted it.), in the which things I do rejoice; yea, and I ^cknow that the Lord will deliver my sons out of the hands of Laban, and bring them down again unto us in the wilderness.

6 And after this manner of language did my father, Lehi, ^acomfort my mother, Sariah, concerning us, while we journeyed in the wilderness up to the land of Jerusalem, to obtain the record of the Jews.

7 And when we had returned to the tent of my father, behold their joy was full, and my mother was comforted.

8 And she spake, saying: Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath ^acommanded my husband to ^bflee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could ^caccomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them. And after this manner of language did she speak.

9 And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer ^asacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave ^bthanks unto the God of Israel.

10 And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the ^aplates of brass, and he did search them (It is one thing to read the scriptures, this is commendable and indeed a profitable exercise. It is quite another to search them and look for the true meanings of the passages contained therein; to delve and inquire and ponder upon the particular verses and events under consideration; and to search that Spirit of truth for mastery and understanding for wisdom in being able to liken the scriptural insights unto oneself. DCBM, p. 48.) from the beginning.

11 And he beheld that they did contain the five ^abooks of Moses; (The only biblical account of the creation was revealed directly to Moses, but we are left to suppose that he copied or condensed the historical portions of Genesis from the writings of Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and the patriarchs, continuing Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were written by or under the direction of Moses. DCBM, p. 48.), which gave an account of the creation of the world (The brass plates contained a more extensive account of the Creation than that which is available in our present biblical record. We suppose the account was similar to that which we now have received through the Prophet Joseph

Smith's inspired translation of the early chapters of Genesis. DCBM, p. 49.), and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents (Very frequently the Bible will tell us what happened, while the more thorough and complete accounts as given in the JST or as taught in the brass plates, will tell us additionally why it happened. DCBM, p. 49.)

12 And also a^a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;

13 And also the prophecies of the holy prophets (The brass plates contained, for example, prophecies of Abraham concerning the coming of Jesus Christ. Helaman 8:16-17. DCBM, p. 49.), from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of^a Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of^b Jeremiah. (They had the complete Bible. These documents were very rare, and they were secret. He wouldn't have been able to get them. Laban was also a descendant of Joseph in a direct line. That's probably why they were in his house. But only one person at a time could receive these genealogical records; that was the direct descendant. In this case it happened to be Laban. The circulation was very limited. The law was read publicly once a year, but only by the scribes and Pharisees. You didn't have a copy of the Bible in those days, and what's more, nobody but Judah could have it at all. Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 1:164-65. There was more on them than there is in the Old Testament as we now have it. The prophecies of Zenock, Neum, Zenos, Joseph the son of Jacob, and probably many other prophets were preserved by them, and many of these writings foretold matters pertaining to the Nephites. From prophet to prophet and generation to generation the Brass Plates were handed down and preserved by the Nephites. At some future date the Lord has promised to bring them forth, undimmed by time and retaining their original brightness, and the scriptural accounts recorded on them are to go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Alma 37:3-5, 1 Nephi 5:18-19. MD, p. 103. Ludlow: The brass plates obtained from Laban contained the five books of Moses (apparently similar to the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), a record of the Jews from the beginning down to Zedekiah, and the prophecies of the prophets from the beginning down to Jeremiah. (1 Nephi 3:3-20; 5:11-13.) This would explain how the biblical stories were known by the American Indian groups even before the arrival of the Catholic fathers and their Bibles after the time of Columbus. Historians have concluded the American Indians knew of the story of the creation, the flood, etc., before the time of Columbus, although they have not been able to explain how the Indians came into possession of this knowledge. In volume 4 of his *Antiquities of Mexico*, Lord Kingsborough found so many evidences of biblical stories among the Indians that he concluded: It is unnecessary to attempt in this place to trace out any further scriptural analogies in the traditions and mythology of the New World, since the coincidences which have already been mentioned are sufficiently strong to warrant the conclusion that the Indians, at a period long antecedent to the arrival of the Spaniards in America, were acquainted with a portion at least of the Old Testament. (London: Robert Havell, 1831-1848, p. 409.) *Unlocking the Book of Mormon*, p. 11)

14 And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the^a plates of brass a^b genealogy of his^c fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of^d Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of^e Jacob, who was^f sold into Egypt, and who was^g preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine. (According to Joseph Smith, the 116 lost manuscript pages of the Book of Lehi also included the genealogy of Ishmael showing him to be a descendant of Ephraim. Robert Matthews, Sidney B. Sperry Symposium.)

15 And they were also^a led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them.

16 And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers. And Laban also was a descendant of^a Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the^b records. (We may properly ask ourselves how it happened that Laban – and Lehi's family, for that matter, inasmuch as they were descendants of Joseph through Manasseh happened to be living in Jerusalem. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as the reader is well aware, had been allied generations before with the Northern Kingdom of

Israel, not with Judah in the south. A reasonable answer to our question would be this: The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians when its capital of Samaria capitulated to Sargon II in 722 B.C. The forebears of Laban may well have fled to Jerusalem to prevent the sacred records from falling into alien hands. Lehi's grandfather or great-grandfather may have left his northern home for Jerusalem in order to prevent his children from inter-marrying and making religious compromises with the foreigners brought into the land by the Assyrians. Such a course would not be unreasonable on the part of many devout families. These good Israelite families thus hoped to escape pagan influences. Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, p. 43)

17 And now when my father saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed—

18 That these ^aplates of brass should go forth unto all ^bnations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed. (Since many of the precious truths of the brass plates were known and recorded by Book of Mormon prophet-writers, and since the Book of Mormon will eventually go to all the world as a witness of Jesus Christ and also of the great latter-day work, this particular prophetic utterance is being and will yet be fulfilled. In addition, undoubtedly at some future day the brass plates themselves will be brought forth and their contents thereafter will be available for study to all those with pure hearts and with ears to hear. R. Millet and J.F. McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 1:50)

19 Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should ^anever perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time. (Perhaps Lehi was indicating here a neglect by Laban of these brass treasures, a neglect which would have allowed the plates to become tarnished or corroded. DCBM, p. 49.) And he prophesied many things concerning his seed. (Bruce R. McConkie "In this connection, be it also remembered that the brass plates that Nephi took from Jerusalem contain more of the word of the Lord for the comparable period than does our present Old Testament. They, of course, will also come forth in due time as part of the restoration of all things. Indeed, Lehi prophesied 'that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed. Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time.' (1 Ne. 5:18-19.))" (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man*, p. 113.))

20 And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments wherewith the Lord had commanded us.

21 And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great ^aworth unto us, insomuch that we could ^bpreserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children.

22 Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.

CHAPTER 6

Nephi writes of the things of God—His purpose is to persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham and be saved. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.] (While 1 Nephi 6 is a break in the historical narrative, it is significant because it establishes the criteria Nephi and other Book of Mormon writers used to select material for inclusion on the plates. Institute Manual, p. 9)

1 AND now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in ^athis part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these ^bplates which I am ^cwriting; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my ^dfather; wherefore, I do not write it in this work. (Approximately ten years after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem, Nephi was commanded to begin a record of his proceedings, the record we have come to know as the large plates. On this set of plates he was to record such matters as the nature of the family's travels, the genealogy of his father, many of the prophecies of Lehi, the wars and

struggles of his people, and the details of the reigns of the kings. About twenty years later (570 BC) Nephi was given an additional writing assignment: He was to begin a record which would concentrate upon spiritual matters, the dealings and revelations of God with the Lehites. This record, known to us as the small plates, covers the material in the Book of Mormon from 1 Nephi through the book of Omni, approximately 475 years of Nephite history. At the time of King Benjamin (Mosiah 1), the small plates came to a close, and the large plates were thereafter used to record both secular and spiritual doings. Nephi was writing upon (and we are now reading from) the small plates, a record which incidentally was written in retrospect, thirty years after the fact. DCBM, p. 51.)

2 For it sufficeth me to say that we are descendants of ^aJoseph. (Manasseh through Lehi and Ephraim through Ishmael.)

3 And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon ^athese plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God.

4 For the fulness of mine intent is that I may ^apersuade men to ^bcome unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.

5 Wherefore, the things which are ^apleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world.

6 Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men.

CHAPTER 7

Lehi's sons return to Jerusalem and enlist Ishmael and his household in their cause—Laman and others rebel—Nephi exhorts his brethren to have faith in the Lord—They bind him with cords and plan his destruction—He is freed by the power of faith—His brethren ask forgiveness—Lehi and his company offer sacrifice and burnt offerings. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND now I would that ye might know, that after my father, Lehi, had made an end of ^aprophesying concerning his seed, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again, saying that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take ^bdaughters to ^cwife, that they might raise up ^dseed unto the Lord in the land of promise.

2 And it came to pass that the Lord ^acommanded him that I, Nephi, and my brethren, should again return unto the land of Jerusalem, and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness.

3 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did ^aagain, with my brethren, go forth into the wilderness to go up to Jerusalem.

4 And it came to pass that we went up unto the house of Ishmael, and we did gain favor in the sight of Ishmael, insomuch that we did speak unto him the words of the Lord.

5 And it came to pass that the ^aLord did soften the heart of Ishmael, and also his household, insomuch that they took their journey with us down into the wilderness to the tent of our father. (In *The Articles of Faith*, James E. Talmage cites the prophet Joseph as teaching the doctrine that Ishmael was from Ephraim: "Ishmael an Ephraimite – 'The Prophet Joseph Smith informed us that the record of Lehi was contained on the one hundred sixteen pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgment 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 Ephraim, and that his sons married into Lehi's family, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters, thus fulfilling the words of Jacob upon Ephraim and Manasseh in the 48th chapter of Genesis [verse 16] which says: 'And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of

the earth.' Thus these descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim grew together upon this American continent, with a sprinkling from the house of Judah, from Mulek descended, who left Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi, and founded the colony afterwards known as Zarahemla found by Mosiah -- thus making a combination, an intermixture of Ephraim and Manasseh with the remnants of Judah, and for aught we know, the remnants of some other tribes that might have accompanied Mulek. And such have grown up upon the American continent.' -- From "Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow," at Logan, Utah, May 6, 1882, see Journal of Discourses, vol. 23, pp. 184, 185." (James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, p.504-5) The two families were well acquainted with one another, especially in light of the fact that the Lehites were very careful to insure that their departure was secretive in nature. It appears that Ishmael's sons were already married to Lehi's daughters before the journey began. DCBM, p. 53-54. Hugh Nibley: Notice that they are not only willing but they are able to do it right then. They don't have to stay six weeks and get ready – settle their affairs, etc. Ishmael was ready to go. Ishmael was a desert man. Lehi was a merchant. Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 1:167.)

6 And it came to pass that as we journeyed in the wilderness, behold Laman and Lemuel, and two of the ^adaughters of Ishmael, and the two ^bsons of Ishmael and their families (including Lehi's daughters), did ^crebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam, and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters. ("Our tradition that Ishmael's ancestry went back to Ephraim, son of Joseph, is based on a discourse given by Elder Erastus Snow, in Logan, Utah, on May 6, 1882. He said, '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 abridgment 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 Ephraim, and that his sons married into Lehi's family, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters.' From the above quotation and from 1 Nephi 7:6 we may propose that two of Ishmael's sons had married daughters of Lehi and Sariah. That would mean the two families were already related by marriage, which might explain Lehi's seeming nonchalance about instructing his sons to bring Ishmael's family down into the wilderness. There might already have been marriage plans between the two families—only the setting for the ceremonies would now have to change from the city to the desert. Another reason why Ishmael's family in particular was elected to join Lehi's was that Ishmael had five unmarried daughters; the four sons of Lehi along with Zoram would in time marry Ishmael's daughters—a perfect five-way match set up in advance by the Lord." (Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 7: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, p. 30.) Why does Nephi mention Ishmael and his family so casually? 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. 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... 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, contained in the 116 pages of the lost manuscript. 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 eldest children, Laman being his first born (2 Nephi 4:3). 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. (2 Nephi 5:6). 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. 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 and before Joseph. *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, Sidney B. Sperry, Chapter 2. The interesting thing is that Nephi takes Ishmael (unlike Zoram) completely for granted, never explaining who he is or how he fits into the picture—the act of sending for him seems to be the most natural thing in the world, as does the marriage of his daughters with Lehi's sons. Since it has ever been the custom among the desert people for a man to marry the daughter of his paternal uncle (*bint al-ammi*) it is hard to avoid the impression that Lehi and Ishmael were related. It's also possible that daughters may have been born to Lehi after Nephi. For there to have been 15 years between Nephi and Jacob without children seems improbable for this era.)

7 And it came to pass in the which rebellion, they were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem.

8 And now I, Nephi, being ^agrieved for the hardness of their hearts, therefore I spake unto them, saying, yea, even unto Laman and unto Lemuel: Behold ye are mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds, that ye have need that I, your ^byounger brother, should speak unto you, yea, and set an ^cexample for you?

9 How is it that ye have not hearkened unto the word of the Lord?

10 How is it that ye have ^aforgotten that ye have seen an angel of the Lord?

11 Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten what great things the Lord hath done for us, in ^adelivering us out of the hands of Laban, and also that we should obtain the record?

12 Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all ^athings according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise ^bfaith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him.

13 And if it so be that we are faithful to him, we shall obtain the ^aland of promise; and ye shall know at some future period that the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled concerning the ^bdestruction of ^cJerusalem; for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled.

14 For behold, the ^aSpirit of the Lord ^bceaseth soon to strive with them; for behold, they have ^crejected the prophets, and ^dJeremiah have they cast into prison. And they have sought to take away the ^elife of my father, insomuch that they have driven him out of the land.

15 Now behold, I say unto you that if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish with them. And now, if ye have choice, go up to the land, and remember the words which I speak unto you, that if ye go ye will also perish; for thus the Spirit of the Lord constraineth me that I should speak.

16 And it came to pass that when I, Nephi, had spoken these words unto my brethren, they were angry with me. And it came to pass that they did lay their hands upon me, for behold, they were exceedingly wroth, and they did ^abind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts.

17 But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even give me ^astrength that I may ^bburst these bands with which I am bound.

18 And it came to pass that when I had said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren, and I spake unto them again.

19 And it came to pass that they were angry with me again, and sought to lay hands upon me; but

behold, one of the ^adaughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, did plead with my brethren, insomuch that they did soften their hearts; and they did cease striving to take away my life. (This is a thing that no Arab under any circumstance can resist. If a mother or daughter from another tribe pleads, you are under obligation – even if it is your worst enemy. It’s the chivalric oath. Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 1:169.)

20 And it came to pass that they were sorrowful, because of their wickedness, insomuch that they did bow down before me (**Bowing down was an act of apology, not submission.**), and did plead with me that I would ^aforgive them of the thing that they had done against me.

21 And it came to pass that I did frankly ^aforgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for ^bforgiveness. And it came to pass that they did so. And after they had done praying unto the Lord we did again travel on our journey towards the tent of our father.

22 And it came to pass that we did come down unto the tent of our father. And after I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent of my father, they did give ^athanks unto the Lord their God; and they did offer ^bsacrifice and burnt offerings unto him.

Additional Reading:

These verses are taught in Book of Mormon lesson 15: Mosiah 1:3-7; 3 And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the ^aplates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these ^bplates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ^cignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. (“The term *mysteries of God* as used in the Book of Mormon denotes the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are termed mysteries because they are unavailable to the natural man, not because they are mysterious or difficult to understand. They must be revealed from God through faith and obedience. They are designed to lead God’s children to eternal life. ’A mystery is a truth that cannot be known except through divine revelation—a sacred secret. In the days of Paul the important truth that Gentiles were to be admitted to the Kingdom of God without observing the Law of Moses was a ‘mystery’ (Eph. 1:9-11; Col. 1:25-27). In our day such great truths as those pertaining to the restoration of the Priesthood, the work for the dead, and the re-establishment of the Church are ‘mysteries,’ because they could not have been discovered except by revelation.’ (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, p. 141) “It was their knowledge of the mysteries of God that qualified Nephi to write his record and King Benjamin to preach his sermon. The material between Mosiah 2:9 and 5:15 constitutes a discussion of some of the most important mysteries of God.” (*Book of Mormon Student Manual*, 1981, p. 154) Neal A. Maxwell said: “As we see from the content of Benjamin’s sermon, the so-called mysteries referred to by King Benjamin are actually the plain but precious things required for salvation and for exaltation: (quotes Mosiah 1:5).” (John W. Welch, and Stephen D. Ricks, *King Benjamin’s Speech: Made Simple*, p. 6) As noted in Words of Mormon 1:17: “They had many prophets, you notice. Verse 3: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance. This is in spite of the fact that they had many prophets. Don’t get the idea that because we have a living prophet to answer all our questions and solve all our problems for us – nothing could be more absurd than that. Here he says, “Were it not for these plates...we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.” Well, don’t prophets reveal mysteries of God? The Lord told Joseph Smith, if I’ve told you a thing once I won’t tell you again; if it’s in the scriptures, don’t ask me about it. You look it up yourself; I’m not going to repeat these things. If we don’t take advantage of the revelations we have, we are not going to have more. If the heavens have been silent, there is a good reason for it. Hugh Nibley, TBM, 1:438.)

4 For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the ^alanguage of the Egyptians (It is difficult to know exactly what is meant when King Benjamin indicated that the brass plates were written in Egyptian. Perhaps the phrase ‘language of the Egyptians’ in this verse means the same thing that Nephi meant when he spoke of the language of his father (and thus the language of the Book of Mormon) as consisting of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. That is to say, the Nephite record reflected the Hebrew culture and background of the Jews, but was written in Egyptian characters. In the present context, then, the brass plates may have been records of Hebrew prophets and their prophecies, all recorded in an Egyptian script. Robert Millet, *The Brass Plates*, p 421-22. Hugh Nibley has said he thinks the brass plates would have been written in Hebrew.) therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.

5 I say unto you, my sons, ^awere it not for these things, which have been kept and ^bpreserved by the hand of God, that we might ^cread and understand of his ^dmysteries, and have his ^ecommandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the ^ftraditions of their fathers, which are not correct.

6 O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are ^atrue. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes.

7 And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to ^asearch them diligently (John Taylor said: “Search the scriptures,’ was the command of Jesus, ‘for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me.’ (John 5:39.) I would not only search the scriptures that we now have, but I would search also every revelation that God has given, does give, or will give for the guidance and direction of his people, and then I would reverence the Giver, and those also whom he makes use of as his honored instruments to promulgate and make known those principles; and I would seek to be governed by the principles that are contained in that sacred word.” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 16, p. 371, February 1, 1874). Joseph Smith said: “The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 137), that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should ^bkeep the commandments of God, that ye may ^cprosper in the land according to the ^dpromises which the Lord made unto our fathers.

Alma 3:11-12 11 And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the ^atradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were ^bcalled the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth—

12 And it is they who have kept the records which are ^atrue of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.