

LESSON 6
“Free to Choose Liberty and Eternal Life”
2 Nephi 1-2

OVERVIEW:

Lehi exhorts his sons to repent, obey the Lord’s commandments, and put on the armor of righteousness. Lehi testifies of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Lehi teaches the importance of opposition and the freedom to choose good from evil.

SCRIPTURES:

THE SECOND BOOK OF NEPHI

An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth. (Why 1st Nephi and 2nd Nephi? First is doctrine and a story. Second is totally doctrinal. Second builds upon the foundation of the First. 33 Chapters, only one has history (5), the rest are doctrinal in nature.)

CHAPTER 1

Lehi prophesies of a land of liberty—His seed shall be scattered and smitten if they reject the Holy One of Israel—He exhorts his sons to put on the armor of righteousness. [Between 588 and 570 B.C.] (This is like a patriarchal blessing for America. America will be a gathering place for Ephraimites. Deuteronomy also talks about going into the promised land of Israel; the blessings on the land for obedience, and the cursing upon the land for disobedience.)

1 AND now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our ^afather, Lehi, also spake many things unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem.

2 And he spake unto them concerning their ^arebellions upon the waters, and **the mercies of God in sparing their lives**, that they were not swallowed up in the sea.

3 And he also spake unto them concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained—**how ^amerciful the Lord had been in ^bwarning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem.**

4 For, behold, said he, I have ^aseen a ^bvision, in which I know that ^cJerusalem is ^ddestroyed; (2 Kings 25 – sometime after 588 BC.) and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have ^eperished. (Lehi knows he has obtained a land of promise.)

5 But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a ^aland of promise, a land which is ^bchoice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath ^ccovenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. (Orson Pratt said: “Different portions of the earth have been pointed out by the Almighty, from time to time, to His children, as their everlasting inheritance. As instances—Abraham and his posterity, that were worthy, were promised Palestine, Moab and Ammon—the children of righteous Lot—were promised a portion not far from the boundaries of the twelve tribes. The meek among the Jaredites, together with a remnant of the tribe of Joseph, were promised the great western continent...In the resurrection, the meek of all ages and nations will be restored to that portion of the earth previously promised to them. And thus, all the different portions of the earth have been and will be disposed of to the lawful heirs...” (Journal of Discourses 1:332-333 as taken from Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 80)) **Yea, the Lord hath ^dcovenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be ^eled out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.** (The Americas, both North and South, are for Mannaseh and Ephraim. At the April conference of the Church, held at Nauvoo in 1844, the Prophet Joseph Smith

declared that the whole of America was Zion. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:73-74.)

6 Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall^a none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord. (It would be hard to suppose that this statement applies to each individual that has come from the Old World to the New. It apparently refers to groups, not individuals. We know that the Jaredites, the Nephites, and the Mulekites were all brought to this land by the hand of the Lord, notwithstanding the fact that some of their number were unworthy of an inheritance in this promised land. More recent history affords Pilgrims and Puritans as illustrations. Of such the Lord approved in the collective sense but certainly not in the individual sense in all cases. The context of this phrase seems to sustain that conclusion. The preceding verse speaks of those led out of other countries “by the hand of the Lord.” The verse that follows states that the land was consecrated to those the Lord would bring. This does not appear to be inclusive; rather it suggests a selection or choosing on the Lord’s part as to those who will be his covenant people. DCBM, 1:184.)

7 Wherefore, this^a land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring (God is aware of their coming.). And if it so be (Prophecy is of two kinds: conditional and unconditional.) that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of^b liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall^c abound^c cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever. (Mark E. Petersen “...We Americans must learn that [our nation] can continue to exist only as it aligns itself with the powers of heaven. If we turn our back upon the Almighty, even by ignoring him, we jeopardize our national future. If we deliberately oppose his purposes, we place ourselves in danger of destruction. These stern facts have been taught to Americans from the beginning of our national history, starting with our first President, George Washington. He realized and he publicly announced that we obtained our independence through an act of providence, since we were far too weak to gain it by ourselves. Knowing this, he warned that if we are to survive as a free and independent nation, we must obey the Almighty God who brought us into being. Abraham Lincoln, another inspired President, said virtually the same thing, warning that if we fail to obey the commandments of God, we shall go down to ruin...It is no imaginary ruin that faces our nation if we reject Jesus Christ, as Lincoln pointed out so dramatically. And it is possible that our greatness can be buried in profound obscurity if we refuse to turn to God.” (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1968, pp. 59, 61, 62 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.81) Those desiring the protection of heaven must clothe themselves in the robes of righteousness. Where they are, the protecting hand of the Lord will be also. DCBM, 1:185))

8 And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be^a kept as yet from the knowledge of other^b nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. (Had the knowledge of the Americas been made known even a century earlier, the religion transplanted to the Western World would have been that of the Church of Europe at its lowest stage of decadence. DCBM, 1:185)

9 Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a^a promise, that^b inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall^c prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall^d keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their^e inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever. (The land has both a blessing and a curse.)

10 But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in^a unbelief, (It doesn’t say *if*, it says *when*; the Lord knew it was going to happen.) after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into

this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true ^bMessiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is ^cjust shall rest upon them. (JST Genesis 14: 30 For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; 31 To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world. This statement restored to us in the JST was undoubtedly in the brass plates. DCBM, 1:187)

11 Yea, he will bring ^aother nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be ^bscattered and smitten.

12 Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be ^abloodsheds, and great visitations among them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words.

13 O that ye would awake; awake from a deep ^asleep, yea, even from the sleep of ^bhell, and shake off the awful ^cchains by which ye are bound (bad habits Marvyn J. Ashton said: “Who among us hasn’t felt the chains of bad habits? These habits may have impeded our progress, may have made us forget who we are, may have destroyed our self-image, may have put our family life in jeopardy, and may have hindered our ability to serve our fellowmen and our God. So many of us tend to say. ‘This is the way I am. I can’t change....’ Lehi warned his sons to ‘shake off the chains’ because he knew that chains restrict our mobility, growth, and happiness. They cause us to become confused and less able to be guided by God’s Spirit...Samuel Johnson wisely shared, ‘The chains of habit are too small to be felt until they are too strong to be broken’ (*International Dictionary of Thoughts*, p. 348)...Living a life of righteousness is a chainbreaker. Many of us today are shackled by the restrictive chains of poor habits. We are bound by inferior self-images created by misconduct and indifference. We are chained by an unwillingness to change for the better....Shaking off restrictive chains requires action....It requires commitment, self-discipline, and work. Chains weigh heavily on troubled hearts and souls. They relegate us to lives of no purpose or light. They cause us to become confused and lose the spirit....These chains cannot be broken by those who live in lust and self-deceit. They can only be broken by people who are willing to change. We must face up to the hard reality of life that damaging chains are broken only by people of courage and commitment who are willing to struggle and weather the pain....To change or break some of our chains even in a small way means to give up some behavior of habits that have been very important to us in the past....Even if our present way of life is painful and self-destructive, some of us...become comfortable with it. Those who are committed to improvement break chains by having the courage to try.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1985, pp. 13-5 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 83-4)), which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal ^dgulf of misery and woe. (Some foolishly try and justify conduct they know is wrong with, “It’s such a little sin; it won’t matter.” While it may be true that the particular conduct is not at the top of the scale, the more dangerous part is the road that it puts you on. “Little wrongs” just seem to have a way of leading into “bigger wrongs.” The words of the American clergyman Harry Emerson Fosdick provide further instruction here: “The tragic evils of our life are so commonly unintentional. We did not start out for that poor, cheap goal. That aim was not in our minds at all. ... Look to the road you are walking on! He who picks up one end of a stick picks up the other. He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to” (*Living under Tension* [1941], 110–11). W. Eugene Hansen, *Ensign*, May 1996, p. 39. Robert J. Matthews: As defined by Alma, the "chains of hell" are the limitations people place upon themselves because of unbelief. As a result of unbelief, the greater manifestations of the Spirit and the greater gifts of spiritual knowledge are withheld, which leaves individuals unsaved and unaware of eternal things. Alma says that in such a state people are led by the devil down to destruction (Alma 12:11). Such unbelievers are actually in a spiritual

deep-freeze and are in danger of freezing to death, but don't even know that they are cold. Unless they are awakened and aroused and made to exercise, they will die spiritually. The devil slips his chains around them so subtly and carefully that he snares and binds them almost before they realize it. The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the World, p. 53)

14 Awake! and arise from the dust, and hear the words of a trembling ^aparent, whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent ^bgrave, from whence no traveler can ^creturn; a few more ^ddays and I go the ^eway of all the earth.

15 But behold, the Lord hath ^aredeemed my soul from hell (His calling and election made sure.); I have beheld his ^bglory, and I am encircled about eternally in the ^carms of his ^dlove. (Hugh Nibley said: "To be redeemed is to be atoned. From this it should be clear what kind of oneness is meant by the Atonement--it is being received in a close embrace of the prodigal son, expressing not only forgiveness but oneness of heart and mind that amounts to identity, like a literal family identity as John sets it forth so vividly in chapters 14 through 17 of his Gospel...This is the imagery of the Atonement, the embrace: 'The Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love' (2 Nephi 1:15). 'O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies!' (2 Nephi 4:33). 'Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you' (Alma 5:33).") (Approaching Zion, pp. 567, 559))

16 And I desire that ye should remember to observe the ^astatutes and the judgments of the Lord; behold, this hath been the anxiety of my soul from the beginning.

17 My heart hath been weighed down with sorrow from time to time, for I have feared, lest for the hardness of your hearts the Lord your God should come out in the fulness of his ^awrath upon you, that ye be ^bcut off and destroyed forever;

18 Or, that a ^acursing should come upon you for the space of ^bmany generations; and ye are visited by sword, and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and captivity of the ^cdevil.

19 O my sons, that these things might not come upon you, but that ye might be a choice and a ^a favored people of the Lord. But behold, his will be done; for his ^bways are righteousness forever.

20 And he hath said that: ^aInasmuch as ye shall keep my ^bcommandments ye shall ^cprosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence. (Those who are obedient will prosper both spiritually and temporally in the land.)

21 And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my heart might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be ^amen, (men of Christ) and be determined in ^bone mind and in one heart (Zion), united in all things (Salvation consists of our learning to think as Christ thinks, believe as he believes, feel as he feels, and do as he would do. Thus in Paul's language we obtain the mind of Christ, for as the Lord said to those of our dispensation, "If ye are not one ye are not mine. D&C 38:27. DCBM, 1:189), that ye may not come down into captivity;

22 That ye may not be ^acursed with a sore cursing; and also, that ye may not incur the displeasure of a ^bjust God upon you, unto the destruction, yea, the eternal destruction of both soul and body. ("This expression does not have reference to the annihilation of the body and spirit of the wicked. Such an interpretation would contradict many passages of scripture, the better part of which have been spoken by Nephite prophets. The Book of Mormon is most emphatic that the resurrection is universal and that it consists of the inseparable union of body and spirit. (See Alma 11:44-45; Alma 40:19-23.) The body and soul could properly be thought of as having been destroyed in the sense that they come forth in some resurrection other than the first or celestial resurrection. Such was Lehi's meaning in this instance (see 1 Nephi 14:3).") (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, p. 189))

23 Awake, my sons; put on the armor of ^arighteousness. Shake off the ^bchains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust.

24 Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been ^aglorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem; and who hath been an instrument in the hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise; for were it not for him, we must have perished with ^bhunger in the wilderness; nevertheless, ye sought to ^ctake away his life; yea, and he hath suffered much sorrow because of you.

25 And I exceedingly fear and tremble because of you, lest he shall suffer again; for behold, ye have ^aaccused him that he sought power and ^bauthority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare.

26 And ye have murmured because he hath been plain unto you. Ye say that he hath used ^asharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his ^bsharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities. (Nephi's boldness and clarity leave Laman and Lemuel without excuse that they didn't know. They have been given every opportunity to return to God.)

27 And it must needs be that the ^apower of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the ^bSpirit of the Lord which was in him, which ^copened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.

28 And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a ^ablessing, yea, even my first blessing.

29 But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my ^afirst blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him. (The blessing and birthright were traditionally given to the oldest son under the patriarchal order. This practice was modified at times in particular situations: "A patriarch could bless his offspring by calling upon the powers of heaven. As he gave the birthright blessing to one of his sons, for instance, the keys and powers of the priesthood were extended to the next generation. In the patriarchal order, under the law of primogeniture, these priesthood rights normally were to be given to the eldest son." (D. Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, p. 1138) Bruce R. McConkie said: "Lineage alone does not guarantee the receipt of whatever birthright privileges may be involved in particular cases. Worthiness, ability, and other requisites are also involved. Jacob prevailed over his older brother Esau because 'Esau despised his birthright.' (Gen. 25:24-34; 27; Rom. 9:10-12.) The Lord placed Ephraim (the younger) before Manasseh to fulfil his own purposes (Gen. 48); and Nephi, junior in point of birth to Laman and Lemuel, was made a ruler and a teacher over them, a circumstance that became the cause of much contention for many generations. (1 Ne. 2:22; 16:37-38; 18:10; 2 Ne. 5:3; 19; Mosiah 10:11-17.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 88))

30 And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the ^aservant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true ^bfriend unto my son, Nephi, forever.

31 Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed ^awith his seed, that they dwell in prosperity long upon the face of this land; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among them, shall harm or disturb their prosperity upon the face of this land forever.

32 Wherefore, if ye shall keep the commandments of the Lord, the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of thy seed with the seed of my son. (Zoram is an example of how one can inherit covenant blessings through faithfulness.)

CHAPTER 2

Redemption cometh through the Holy Messiah—Freedom of choice (agency) is essential to existence and progression—Adam fell that men might be—Men are free to choose liberty and eternal life.

[Between 588 and 570 B.C.] (One of the best theological chapters in the Book of Mormon. The three pillar concepts are the Creation, the Fall and the Atonement.)

1 AND now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my ^afirst-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren. (Chris Conkling: Every reference to Jacob thus far has included sorrow, suffering, afflictions, or wandering. While some who suffer become insensitive, even brutal, Jacob grew in the opposite direction, just as Lehi foretold. (See 2 Ne. 2:2.) These early afflictions left Jacob with a certain gravity that persisted until the end of his long life, when he concluded his record on an unusually sad note. ... We should not assume, however, that Jacob's life was without joy and comfort. Lehi reveals that Jacob had "beheld in [his] youth [God's] glory" (2 Ne. 2:4), and Nephi notes that "my brother, Jacob, also has seen [the Redeemer] as I have seen him" (2 Ne. 11:3). Despite everything, Jacob had the comfort of an absolute witness of his Messiah. Ensign, Feb 1992, 7-8)

2 Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine ^aafflictions for thy gain. (It is in our extremities that we become acquainted with God, which is life's greatest blessing. The soul of the righteous is sanctified through suffering. To a lamenting Joseph Smith, then incarcerated in the Liberty prison, the Lord granted the assurance, "All these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good." D&C 122:7. DCBM, 1:190. Elaine Cannon said: "Adversity in our own lives can bring life's purpose to mind. Bad times have certain scientific value, according to Emerson. In his "Conduct of Life" essays he says that the trying times are occasions a good learner would not miss. One can learn a great deal. Can it be, then, that if one doesn't kick against the pricks, increased understanding comes-the nature of God, the importance of the adventure of life?" (Elaine Cannon, *Adversity*, p. 4) Marion G. Romney said: "If we can bear our afflictions with the understanding, faith, and courage,... we shall be strengthened and comforted in many ways. We shall be spared the torment which accompanies the mistaken idea that all suffering comes as chastisement for transgression... I have seen the remorse and despair in the lives of men who, in the hour of trial, have cursed God and died spiritually. And I have seen people rise to great heights from what seemed to be unbearable burdens." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1969, pp. 59-60 as taken from the *Book of Mormon Student Manual*, 1981 ed., p. 69) If you have troubles at home with children who stray, if you suffer financial reverses and emotional strain that threaten your homes and your happiness, if you must face loss of life or health, may peace be unto your soul. We will not be tempted beyond our ability to withstand. Our detours and disappointments are the straight and narrow path to Him. Marion G. Romney, CR, Oct 1987.)

3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be ^aspent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, (Your salvation is sure) because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; (It's not our righteousness that saves us, but that of the Savior.) for thou hast ^bbeheld that in the ^cfulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men. (Jacob has seen in vision the Savior and his mission. D&C 93:1 states, Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.)

4 And thou hast ^abeheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and ^bsalvation is ^cfree. (Unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to gospel law, consists in the mere fact of being resurrected. In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality; it is the inseparable connection of body and spirit so that the resurrected personage lives forever... Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God. This kind of salvation follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one's mortal probation. MD, 669-670. We believe that through the

sufferings, death, and atonement of Jesus Christ all mankind, without one exception, are to be completely and fully redeemed, both body and spirit, from the endless banishment and curse to which they were consigned by Adam's transgression; and that this universal salvation and redemption of the whole human family from the endless penalty of the original sin, is effected without any conditions whatever on their part; that is, they are not required to believe or repent, or be baptized, or do anything else, in order to be redeemed from that penalty; for whether they believe or disbelieve, whether they repent or remain impenitent, whether they are baptized or unbaptized, whether they keep the commandments or break them, whether they are righteous or unrighteous, it will make no difference in relation to their redemption, both soul and body, from the penalty of Adam's transgression. The most righteous man that ever lived on the earth, and the most wicked wretch of the whole human family, were both placed under the same curse without any transgression or agency of their own, and they both alike will be redeemed from that curse, without any agency or conditions on their part. Orson Pratt, *Articles of Faith*, p. 477-78. You have been indebted to other men in the first instance for evidence; on that you have acted; but it is necessary that you receive a testimony from Heaven for yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God. That is more than the testimony of an angel. When the proper time arrives, you shall be able to bear this testimony to the world. When you bear testimony that you have seen God, this testimony God will never suffer to fall, but will bear you out; although many will not give heed, yet others will. You will, therefore, see the necessity of getting this testimony from Heaven. Never cease striving till you have seen God face to face. Strengthen your faith; cast off your doubts, your sins, and all your unbelief, and nothing can prevent you from coming to God. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid His hands upon you. We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Saviour in former days laid his hands on his disciples, why not in latter days? *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, p. 123)

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they ^aknow good from evil. (Lehi was speaking of those who reach accountability, though he did not explicitly state so. Jacob later made this point clearly. (See 2 Ne. 9:25-26.) Exactly what did Lehi mean when he said, "Men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil" and "The law is given unto men"? We know from other places in scripture that the medium or the means by which this instruction comes to all men is known as the Light of Christ.

Through and by the Light of Christ, individuals come to a basic level of understanding of good and evil. Gerald N. Lund: *Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund*, p. 194) And the ^blaw is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is ^cjustified; or, by the law men are ^dcut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off (We can't keep all of the laws all of the time. The law is merciless. Justice.); and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. (Gerald N. Lund: "*By the law no flesh is justified.*" (2 Ne. 2:5.) In that simple statement lies the primary reason why there must be a Redeemer, and so examining Lehi's fifth fundamental at greater length is essential. The word *justified* and its cognate forms *justification*, *justice*, or *just* all have the same basic root meaning. To be "just" means to be right or be in order with God. Therefore to be justified (the process of justification) is defined as the "declaration of right, thus judicial acquittal, the opposite of condemnation. . . .

Justification may be defined, in its theological sense, as the nonimputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness. Why was it, then, that Lehi said that *no* flesh is justified by the law? Because no one keeps the law perfectly! If the law of justice were the only thing operating, no one could be justified (declared to be right or just) by virtue of the law alone, because as Paul said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23; see also Rom. 5:12; 1 Ne. 10:6.) *Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund*, p. 195)

6 Wherefore, ^aredemption cometh in and through the ^bHoly ^cMessiah; for he is full of ^dgrace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a ^asacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, (Christ met the demands of the law because he lived a perfect life.) unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto ^bnone else can the ^cends of the law be answered.

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, ^asave it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who ^blayeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the ^cresurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

9 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make ^aintercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession for ^aall, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be ^bjudged of him according to the truth and ^choliness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the ^dpunishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the ^eatonement— (Russell M. Nelson said: “In the English language, the components are *at-one-meant*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. *Expiation* means ‘to atone for.’ *Reconciliation* comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning ‘again’; *con*, meaning ‘with’; and *sella*, meaning ‘seat.’ *Reconciliation*, therefore, literally means ‘to sit again with.’...In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means ‘to cover’ or ‘to forgive.’ Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning ‘a close embrace’—no doubt related to the Egyptian ritual embrace....While the words *atone* or *atonement*, in any of their forms, appear only once in the King James translation of the New Testament, they appear 35 times in the Book of Mormon. As another testament of Jesus Christ, it sheds precious light on His Atonement.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1996, pp.34-5 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 85))

11 For it must needs be, that there is an ^aopposition in all things. (No virtue can exist without its corresponding evil: Without the evil of danger there could be no courage, without suffering there could be no sympathy, without poverty there could be no generosity, and so forth. Without darkness there could be no light, without cold there could be no hot, without depths there could be no heights. Thus there must be wickedness so there might be righteousness, death so there might be life, that which is satanic so there might be that which is godly. Were there no opposites, all things must remain “a compound in one.” Imagine a world in which all things were the same color, were the same size, and had the same function – a world in which one could neither have nor be without; a world with neither sound nor silence; a world in which there was no beauty or lack of it; a world without love or hate, the sweet or the sour, virtue or vice. DCBM, 1:195) If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. (Evil is with us, it is that influence which tempts to sin, and which has been permitted to come into the world for the express purpose of giving us an opportunity of proving ourselves before God, before Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, before the holy angels, and before all good men, that we are determined to overcome the evil, and cleave to the good, for the Lord has given us the ability to do so. Brigham Young, Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 70.)

12 Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no ^apurpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the ^bjustice of God.

13 And if ye shall say there is ^ano law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not ^bthere is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away. (It is the existence of opposites coupled with the agency of man that gives meaning and purpose to our

mortal probation. Laws are essential to the purposeful life, as is a clear distinction between good and evil. Any therapy that purports to free men from the burden of sin by denying the existence of sin also denies to its adherents that joy and peace which can only be known by obedience to the laws of God. Any religious system in which a profession of faith is accepted as a substitute for true repentance denies its practitioners not only relief from the burden of sin but also the very knowledge of how one obtains God's favor and progresses in the direction of the divine presence. DCBM, 1:195. Ronald Reagan has been quoted as saying, "sometimes when I'm faced with an atheist, I am tempted to invite him to the greatest gourmet dinner that one could ever serve. And when we have finished eating that magnificent dinner to ask him if he believes there's a cook." (*Quote Book #4*, compiled by James H. Patterson, p. 5) James. E. Faust: Being acted upon means somebody else is pulling the strings. Many of you worry about your future. I think every conscientious young man does. But you do not realize what opportunities lie ahead of you. After a lifetime of dealing with human affairs, I am persuaded that your future will be beyond your dreams if you observe the following: 1. Do not live on the edge. 2. Avoid not only evil, but even the appearance of evil. 3. Follow the counsel of Lehi to act for yourselves and not be acted upon. 4. Seek first the kingdom of God and receive the great promise that all else will be added upon you. 5. Follow the counsel of Church leaders. Ensign, Nov 1995, 46-7)

14 And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and ^alearning; for there is a God, and he hath ^bcreated all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be ^cacted upon. (Agency is the greatest principle next to life itself. David O. McKay.)

15 And to bring about his eternal ^apurposes in the end of man, after he had ^bcreated our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the ^cfowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the ^dforbidden ^efruit in ^fopposition to the ^gtree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. (And you are enticed by the one or the other, and you are enticed equally in either direction. The devil enticeth and inviteth in one direction. At the same time God inviteth and enticeth in the other, and you are pulled between orbits. Which way you go depends on you; you will decide which one you will follow. Neither one is overpowering or irresistible because if that was so then you wouldn't be responsible. You'd say, "It's stronger than I and I have to yield." But that's not so. *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:275)

16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should ^aact for himself. Wherefore, man could not ^bact for himself save it should be that he was ^centiced by the one or the other. (Imbedded in every part of the plan is the right of every man to act for himself, to choose one or the other of the opposites which present themselves before him. If he chooses to do that which is for his welfare, which enables him to progress, he chooses the good. If he chooses that which retards his progress, he chooses the evil. Whatever conforms to the plan of God for His earth children is good; whatever is opposition to the plan is evil. That is a simple, plain definition of evil. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 205-6. Richard G. Scott: Difficulty comes when agency is used to make choices that are inconsistent with those covenants. Study the things you do in your discretionary time, that time you are free to control. Do you find that it is centered in those things that are of highest priority and of greatest importance? Or do you unconsciously, consistently fill it with trivia and activities that are not of enduring value nor help you accomplish the purpose for which you came to earth? Think of the long view of life, not just what's going to happen today or tomorrow. *Don't give up what you most want in life for something you think you want now*. Ensign, May 1997, p. 54. Marvin J. Ashton: We can choose our reactions to difficulties and challenges. One way to learn how to incorporate the voice of gladness through tragedy or happiness is to learn to apply gospel principles. They never teach us to be overcome by the negative, by gloom, or by cynicism. From guidelines given to us in the scriptures and by the words of prophets, we learn that life is a teaching experience. Self-pity and discouragement do not come from the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But life can be both bitter and sweet. It is up to us to choose whether we want to reflect the voices of gloom or gladness. *Conference Report*, Apr 1991, p. 24. Neal A. Maxwell: If there is one lament I cannot abide, it is the poor, pitiful, withered cry, "Well, that's

just the way I am." You can change anything you want to change, and you can do it very fast. Only Satan would say, "You can't change. You won't change. It's too long and too hard to change. Give up. Give in. You are just the way you are." That is a lie born of desperation. Don't fall for it. *We Believe in Christ*, p. 6-7. Boyd K. Packer: The angels of the devil convince some that they are born to a life from which they cannot escape and are compelled to live in sin. The most wicked of lies is that they cannot change and repent and that they will not be forgiven. That cannot be true. They have forgotten the Atonement of Christ. Christ is the Creator, the Healer. What He made, He can fix. Ensign, May 2006, 28)

17 And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read (on the brass plates), must needs suppose that an ^aangel of God, according to that which is written, had ^bfallen from heaven (Lucifer); wherefore, he became a ^cdevil, having sought that which was evil before God.

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he ^asought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all ^blies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, ^cknowing good and evil.

19 And after Adam and Eve had ^apartaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of ^bEden, to till the earth. (The events associated with the Garden of Eden make it the archetype of our temples. Here Adam received the priesthood, here Adam and Eve walked and talked with God, here our first parents were eternally married by God himself; here they learned of the tree of good and evil and of the tree of life; here they were taught the law of sacrifice and clothed in garments of skin; and from there they ventured into the lone and dreary world that they and their posterity might prove themselves worthy to return again to the divine presence. Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism*, p. 258)

20 And they have brought forth children; yea, even the ^afamily of all the earth.

21 And the days of the children of ^amen were prolonged, according to the ^bwill of God, that they might ^crepent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of ^dprobation, and their time was lengthened, (That is to say, the eternal consequences of sin are temporarily postponed giving mankind an opportunity to repent of their sins. In such a way, those who have gained a knowledge of good and evil by experiencing opposites, can become free from the eternal consequences of their choices.) according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were ^elost, because of the transgression of their parents.

22 And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. (Adam was in no sense mortal until after his transgression. That his immortal spirit came from another world is verily true, just as it is true of each one of us, for we all lived in the spirit existence before we came into this world and obtained bodies which inherited mortality through the fall of Adam. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:6)

23 And they would have had no ^achildren; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no ^bjoy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no ^csin. (Joseph Fielding Smith said: Adam and Eve therefore did the very thing that the Lord intended them to do... The Lord said to Adam that if he wished to remain in the garden, then he was not to eat the fruit, but if he desired to eat it and partake of death he was at liberty to do so. So really it was not in the true sense a transgression of a divine commandment... It was the divine plan from the very beginning that man should be placed on the earth and be subject to mortal conditions and pass through a probationary state as explained in the *Book of Mormon*." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 4, pp. 79-82 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.92) Joseph Fielding Smith: When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, there was no blood in their bodies. Their lives were quickened by spirit; therefore they were in a state where they could have lived forever, and so likewise could every

other mortal creature. (II Nephi 2:2-25.) When Adam fell, the change came upon all other living things and even the earth itself became mortal, and all things including the earth were redeemed from death through the atonement of Jesus Christ. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol 3.)

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who ^aknoweth all things.

25 ^aAdam ^bfell that men might be; and men ^care, that they might have ^djoy. (D&C 93- we won't have a fullness of joy until we're resurrected.)

26 And the ^aMessiah cometh in the fulness of time, (“The expression used here has reference to the day of Christ's mortal ministry, usually designated as the meridian of time. Using the same expression as Nephi, Paul wrote, ‘When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons’ (Galatians 4:4-5). Paul also spoke of ‘the dispensation of the fulness of times’ as the day in which we live- the day in which all things are to be restored (see Ephesians 1:10). Those living before Christ's earthly ministry would properly see his coming as a time of fulness or a time of completion not only of the law of Moses but also of thousands of messianic prophecies. In the revelations of the Restoration the phrase is used to identify our dispensation as the fulness of all past dispensations (see D&C 27:13; D&C 121:31; D&C 124:41; D&C 128:18, 20).” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, p. 191)) that he may ^bredeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are ^credeemed from the fall they have become ^dfree forever, knowing good from evil;

(Acquiring a knowledge of good and evil is vital for God's children. Without it they could not become as he is. Elder James E. Talmage wrote: “A knowledge of good and evil is essential to the advancement that God has made possible for His children to achieve; and this knowledge can be best gained by *actual experience*, with the contrasts of good and its opposite plainly discernible.” *A Study of the Articles of Faith*. 12th ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 54.

Mortality is necessary to the acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil. Elder Talmage said: “A knowledge of good and evil is essential to progress, and the school of experience in mortality has been provided for the acquirement of such knowledge.” *Vitality of Mormonism* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1919), 46. President George Q. Cannon declared: “It is for this purpose that we are here. God has given unto us this probation for the express purpose of obtaining a knowledge of good and evil--of understanding evil and being able to overcome the evil--and by overcoming it receive the exaltation and glory that He has in store for us.” *Journal of Discourses*, 26:190-191.) to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the ^elaw at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. (We are free to choose our actions, but not the consequences of those actions. “Standing alone, these verses (verses 22-26) would justify the eternal worth of the Book of Mormon. The most transcendent event in all history was the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The Atonement came in answer to the Fall. Without an understanding of the Fall there can be no meaningful understanding of the Atonement. In turn, to understand the Fall one must understand the nature of the Creation, for it is from the original state in which things were created that they have fallen and to which, through the Atonement, they are in large measure intended to return. These three principles - the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement - are inseparable and have properly been called the three pillars of eternity. Within the covers of the Bible we can read an account of the Creation, of Adam's fall, and of the events that surrounded Christ's atoning sacrifice. Yet it is to the Book of Mormon that we must turn to learn why things were created as they were, why it was essential to the eternal plan for the salvation of man that Adam fall, and why the blood of Christ needed to be shed in an infinite sacrifice. To this end, few verses have ever been penned that are more instructive than those here written by father Lehi. First, he told us that if Adam had not fallen, all created things- that is, Adam, Eve, plants, animals, and even the earth itself- would have remained forever in the paradisiacal state in which they had been created. None would know death, none would know corruption or change of any kind, and none could produce after their own kind. All must have remained forever as they existed at the completion of the creative act.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, p. 199-200.

Henry B. Eyring: we are not the helpless victims of our circumstances. The world tries to tell us that the opposite is true: imperfections in our parents or our faulty genetic inheritance are presented to us as absolving us of personal responsibility. But difficult as circumstances may be, they do not relieve us of accountability for our actions or our inactions. Nephi was right. God gives no commandments to the children of men save He prepares a way for them to obey. The world might be willing to excuse our bad behavior because those around us behave badly. It is not true that the behavior of others removes our responsibility for our own. *Ensign*, Nov 1999, 34)

27 Wherefore, men are ^afree according to the ^bflesh; and ^call things are ^dgiven them which are expedient unto man. (We are granted sufficient knowledge of the mysteries of heaven to save ourselves, yet not enough to negate mortality as a time and place of trial and testing. It is not expedient that we have answers to all things or that we be able to see the end from the beginning. DCBM, 1:102) And they are free to ^echoose ^fliberty and eternal ^glife, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, (There can be no forced righteousness, for, as Lehi taught us, if there is no opportunity for wickedness, there can be no opportunity for righteousness. DCBM, 1:202) according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be ^hmiserable like unto himself. (Brigham Young said: “You are aware that many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. The spirit that the Lord puts into a tabernacle of flesh, is under the dictation of the Lord Almighty; but the spirit and body are united in order that the spirit may have a tabernacle, and be exalted; and the spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit. In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the Devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the Devil then has power to overcome the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both. Recollect, brethren and sisters, every one of you, that when evil is suggested to you, when it arises in your hearts, it is through the temporal organization. When you are tempted, buffeted, and step out of the way inadvertently; when you are overtaken in a fault, or commit an overt act unthinkingly; when you are full of evil passion, and wish to yield to it, then stop and let the spirit, which God has put into your tabernacles, take the lead. If you do that, I will promise that you will overcome all evil, and obtain eternal lives. But many, very many, let the spirit yield to the body, and are overcome and destroyed.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 69-70 as taken from the *Book of Mormon Student Manual*, 1981 ed., p. 73-4))

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great ^aMediator, (An advocate is one who defends or pleads for or in behalf of another. A mediator is one who reconciles or brings about agreement between parties. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, p. 26) and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the ^aevil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to ^bcaptivate, (The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power. TPJS, p. 181) to bring you down to ^chell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom. (Elder Orson Pratt discussed why: “By one man came death—the death of the body. What becomes of the spirit when the body dies? Will it be perfectly happy? Would old father Adam’s spirit have gone back into the presence of God, and dwelt there eternally, enjoying all the felicities and glories of heaven, after his body had died? No; for the penalty of that transgression was not limited to the body alone.” He then explained: “When he sinned, it was with both the body and the spirit that he sinned: it was not only the body that did eat of the fruit, but the spirit gave the will to eat; the spirit sinned therefore as well as the body; they were agreed in partaking of that fruit. Was not the spirit to suffer then as well as the body? Yes. How long? To all ages of eternity, without any end; while the body was to return back to its mother earth, and there slumber to all eternity.” He then taught that without the atonement of Christ, the effect of the fall would

have brought “an eternal dissolution of the body and spirit--the one to lie mingling with its mother earth, to all ages of eternity, and the other to be subject, throughout all future duration, to the power that deceived him, and led them astray; to be completely miserable.” *Journal of Discourses*, 1:284)

30 I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; (For those with a knowledge of the gospel, probation ends at death. For those who have not had the opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality, the days of probation continue into the world of spirits. DCBM, 1:202) and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object save it be the everlasting^a welfare of your souls. Amen.