

The Vision of the Tree of Life

Joseph's Stick -Lesson 3:

Introduction

Many symbolic dreams and visions are recorded in the scriptures. Then share the following examples and ask class members to explain the meaning of each symbol:

The Dream Symbolic Images	Symbolic Images Meaning
King Nebuchadnezzar	Daniel 2:31–45, D&C 65:2
a large image, or statue, of a man. Each part of the man's body was made of a different material.	
A stone destroyed the image and became a mountain, filling the whole earth.	
Message of the Dream	
Pharaoh	Genesis 41:17–31
seven lean and ill cattle devouring seven fat and healthy cattle and seven poor ears of corn devouring seven good ears of corn.	
Message of the Dream	
Apostle Peter	Acts 10:9–16, 28, 34–35
he saw unclean animals lowered from heaven in a great sheet, and he was commanded to kill and eat these animals.	
Message of the Dream	

Today's lesson discusses another symbolic dream described in the scriptures: **the vision of the tree of life received by Lehi and Nephi**. Unlike the many dreams or visions that have application only to specific people or at a specific time (like Pharaoh's dream of the cattle and corn), the vision of the tree of life applies to each of God's children.

What are symbols?

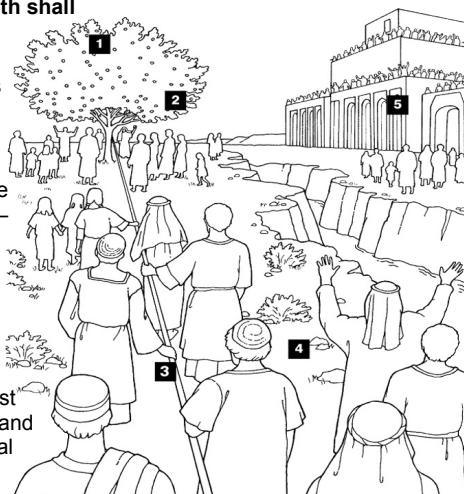
- How can symbols dreams and visions contain be applied in our daily lives?
- Think of an appropriate experiences that you might wish to share that relate to the principles illustrated by the symbols discussed in this lesson.

The symbols in the vision of the tree of life

- Lehi received a vision and told his family about it (1 Nephi 8:2). After Nephi heard his father speak about the things in the vision, he also wanted to "see, and hear, and know of [those] things" What did he do? (1 Nephi 10:17)
- Why did he experience his great vision?
- What were the actions of his brothers?
- How do we know the interpretation of the vision?(1 Nephi 11:6)

"He that diligently seeketh shall find" (1 Nephi 10:19)

- What did Nephi desire after he heard about his father's vision? (See 1 Nephi 10:17.)
- What did he do to have this desire fulfilled? (See 1 Nephi 10:17–19; 11:1–6.)
- How can Nephi's example help us as we seek to understand gospel truths?
- What experiences have had when the Holy Ghost has helped you understand gospel truths in scriptural messages?



- In what ways did Laman and Lemuel's response to their father's vision differ from Nephi's response? (See 1 Nephi 15:1–2.)
- Why were Laman and Lemuel unable to understand the truths Lehi had taught them? (See 1 Nephi 15:3, 8–11.)

The people in the vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:21)

The people in the dream can be divided into four categories based on their actions in seeking the tree and the fruit.

Identify and describe these four categories, using the passages listed below.

Scripture	Symbolic Behavior	Likened to Us
1 Nephi 8:21–23		
1 Nephi 8:24–28.		
1 Nephi 8:30.		
1 Nephi 8:31–33.		

- How are these categories manifest in the world today?
- In the vision, what kinds of roads did people travel when they let go of the iron rod or left the tree of life? (See 1 Nephi 8:28, 32; 12:17.)
- What happens to those who follow such roads?
- If we are moving toward "forbidden," "strange," or "broad" roads, how can we return to the strait and narrow path?
- What are some things we must do to stay on the strait and narrow path? How can we help others stay on the path?

Symbols:	Meanings:
1. (1 Nephi 8:10) The tree	1.(1 Nephi 11:21–22; John 3:16)
2. (1 Nephi 8:11) The fruit	2. (1 Nephi 15:36; D&C 14:7)
3. (1 Nephi 8:19) The rod of iron	3. (1 Nephi 15:23–24)
4. (1 Nephi 8:23) Mist of darkness	4. (1 Nephi 12:17)
5. (1 Nephi 8:26–27) Great and spacious building	5. (1 Nephi 11:36)

"Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Nephi 11:16)

The word condescension means coming down voluntarily to a lower level.

Consider the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

"The condescension of God (meaning the Father) consists in the fact that ... he became the personal and literal Father of a mortal Offspring born of mortal woman. And the condescension of God (meaning the Son) consists in the fact that ... he [Jesus Christ] submitted to all the trials of mortality, suffering temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death' (Mosiah 3:5–8), finally being put to death in a most ignominious manner" (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 155).

"And they were in the attitude of mocking" (1 Nephi 8:27)

- In what ways might our attitudes toward others lead them to fall away?
- Emphasize that accountable

Conclusion

Suggest that class members mark the following words in their scriptures: commence (1 Nephi 8:22), caught hold (1 Nephi 8:24), clinging (1 Nephi 8:24), and continually (1 Nephi 8:30). Point out that these words help us understand what we must do to reach the tree of life: we must commence in the strait and narrow path, catch hold of the rod of iron and cling to it, and continue moving toward the tree.

The great and spacious building, point out that the people in the building had an "attitude of mocking." This mocking led some who had partaken of the fruit to be ashamed and fall away (1 Nephi 8:27–28). Individuals are responsible for their own actions; however, our attitude toward others can either strengthen them in their righteous efforts or discourage them. I challenge you to strengthen each other and to never mock or belittle others.