

General Comments on 2 Nephi

As the author remains the same, why did Nephi split the books into two parts rather than just leaving it as one large book? The primary reason is the imminent death of the family patriarch Lehi (ch. 1-4), the elevation of Nephi as patriarch, and the resulting conflict over power which causes division (cf. 5:1-7) resulting in Nephi being the political and religious leader of one of the groups (cf. 5:8-18).

A secondary reason is the small plates apparently go real time, as they are no longer a selective abridgement of the large plates (cf. 5:28-32). This would form a natural division between the two books as the first would be an edited recounting and the second would be selective documentation as it occurred. This would especially be the case if Nephi started writing the second book in real time before he had completed abridging the large plates into the portion of the small plates that ended up comprising the first book (i.e., he was writing both 1st and 2nd Nephi at the same time).

General Comments on 2 Nephi 1-4

These chapters form Lehi's closing comments and blessings on his sons. The blessings and pronouncements are classically Semitic and comparable to any of the blessings pronounced by the other Old Testament patriarchs upon their sons. However, while the Genesis account of the early patriarchal benedictions, and occasionally maledictions, are quite terse, the blessings here are preserved in considerable detail by a firsthand witness. Thus, this account sheds a great deal of light on a custom which is oftentimes obscure in the Old Testament record.

When reading these chapters, keep in mind Nephi's primary audience is Laman and Lemuel's lineage, cf. 1 Ne. 22, 2 Ne. 3. Gentile readers are a secondary audience, cf. 1 Ne. 15:13, 2 Ne. 30:3. As such, Nephi is tailoring the message to the Lamanite remnants.

It is clear from the text the entire family is present for the blessings (cf. 2:14, 2:28). It was not a series of one-on-one discussions held in rotation through each of the recipients. This would be particularly poignant as the blessings on Lehi's grandchildren through Laman and Lemuel would have been in Laman and Lemuel's presence.

We must read these chapters in an Old Testament context to understand all of what is implied. Recall the events of the patriarchs:

Abraham and Isaac, Gen. 25:5 then Gen 25:11. No blessing documented, but Abraham deliberately sends both Tamar's child and Keturah's children away, cf. Gen. 25:6-7, so there is no question over who receives both the birthright and the blessing.

Isaac, Jacob and Esau, cf. Gen. 27:36. Jacob usurps both the birthright and the blessing, but Isaac ends up endorsing the blessing, upon Esau's confession he had already given up the birthright.

Jacob, et al., Judah promoted over his three older brothers because of their sins, cf. Gen. 49:1-8. Jacob's blessing promotes Joseph's son Ephraim over Menasseh because he will inherit the Gentile nations, through the covenant with Abraham.

First, Lehi addresses all older sons (cf. 2 Ne. 1:1-29), with Nephi being formally placed first (cf. 2 Ne. 1:28-29). Laman and Lemuel are effectively set aside, owing to their disobedience, and Sam is as well. Lehi's concern is for both them individually and for the long-term multi-generational consequences of their present behavior. Laman and Lemuel don't have a long-term view, and Lehi is trying to warn them that their bad behavior now will lead to suffering, conflict, death, destruction and war across generations. Why Sam is skipped is left unanswered in the text (maybe it was the events of 1 Ne. 16:18-22?). In the Genesis accounts, it is plain why the first three sons are skipped and the birthright goes to Judah. Here is it clear why Laman and Lemuel are skipped, but not Sam.

Zoram is blessed according to his faithfulness (cf. 2 Ne. 1:30-32). Note Lehi doesn't give him a Father's blessing, since he isn't his father. It is a standard covenantal benediction of "you will be blessed for being faithful", as opposed to anything personalized.

Lehi then turns to his younger sons, and first Jacob is blessed (cf. 2 Ne. 2). Jacob is significantly younger than Nephi, so he needs more guidance on matters of theology, and Lehi gives him an excellent primer.

The youngest son Joseph is then finally blessed (2 Ne. 3), with his namesake being identified, and a future Joseph predicted. We tend to read this chapter parochially as evidence of Smith's prophethood, when we really should be seeing it as a statement of the Lord's pervasive power and providence in managing human affairs to get the outcome He needs, while holding to a delicate balance of free agency across generations.

This is the message of the book of Genesis, where the Lord is working quietly behind the scenes to make sure He gets the outcome He desires, despite the shortcomings of the humans involved.

Lehi then blesses the children of Laman (2 Ne. 4:3-7) and the children of Lemuel (2 Ne. 4:8-9). Laman and Lemuel were likely present for these blessings, which make it clear to all interested parties where responsibilities lie. At this point, Laman and Lemuel were likely past feeling, and already making plans for how to run things in a post-Lehi setting.

Lehi then addresses the sons of Ishamel (cf. 2. Ne. 4:10, see also 2 Ne. 1:28), who were related by marriage, but whatever he said to them, Nephi didn't bother to document.

Finally, Lehi blesses Sam and his children (2. Ne. 4:11), saying he will be blessed along with Nephi, clearly suggesting his family is doing pretty well, and are not in league with Laman and Lemuel. But, what about Sam? Older than Nephi, he never does anything bad that gets mentioned. What happened that he was skipped over? It is never explained, so we are left to speculate. Maybe Nephi didn't see any point in embarrassing him, as he apparently doesn't have any sons that carry on the name of Samites (cf. Jacob 1:13), so he knows there will not be any Samites reading this account in latter days.

Where is Nephi's blessing? It is obliquely referenced twice in 2 Ne. 1:28-29 when Nephi quotes Lehi as saying it is "my first blessing", meaning the blessing Lehi gives the firstborn son. There are a number of places where it says Nephi is blessed by the Lord (cf. 1 Ne. 2:19, 1 Ne. 3:8, 1 Ne. 11:6, 1 Ne. 16:8). But, there is no explicit blessing of Nephi by Lehi documented. Did Lehi formally bless Nephi, and Nephi omits that account? Is the account of Nephi's blessing in the Book of Lehi, which we are missing? Or did Lehi not bless him as a result of him inheriting the birthright? We don't know. My guess is Nephi omitted it deliberately because he didn't want to be arrogant, and he didn't want to contribute to the pride and downfall of his ancestors, which he has seen. What suggests this is the case? Because of what follows in the next chapter, the Psalm of Nephi (cf. 4:17-35). In that Psalm, Nephi confessed his inadequacy, he says it was the Lord who did everything, not him, as he is just a weak man like any other weak man. The only difference is he relied on the Lord. This is Nephi's second confession he isn't super-human (the first confession is 1 Ne. 7, where the confrontation doesn't go well and it isn't Nephi who actually resolves the contention).

This takes us back to the relevance of who Nephi's primary audience is. It is the children of Laman and Lemuel. He doesn't want to insult them, he wants them to accept his

writings, not be put off by them. So, Nephi downplays his prominence and confesses his weakness.

Comments on 2 Nephi 1

While Laman and Lemuel are likely past feeling at this point, Lehi is still pleading with them to change their ways. The example he uses in v. 2 is that of them rebelling but repenting so they didn't end up drowning the entire party (cf. 1 Ne. 18:9-15). Lehi still sees the possibility of them repenting as real.

The imagery of "awake...arise" is employed emphatically through v. 13-23. Lehi is bringing in the imagery of Isaiah's use of the same terms (cf. Isa. 26:19, Isa. 51:17, Isa. 52:1-2, Isa. 60:1-2), encouraging his sons to repent, but also bringing in the imagery of his own imminent demise. It seems likely that Lehi is appealing not only to Laman and Lemuel, but also their future offspring, given the context of Isa. 26:19, which is likely informing the present text. For Lehi, this is a matter of life and death, in both the literal and spiritual contexts.

1 And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, 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 rebellions upon the waters, and the mercies of God in sparing their lives, that they were not swallowed up in the sea.

v1-2 After accounting for the various things he taught to his brothers (cf. 1 Ne. 19:23-24 and 1 Ne. 20-22), Nephi turns his attention to Lehi's teachings to his other sons. Lehi discusses what great things the Lord has done for them in getting them out of Jerusalem (v. 1), despite their life-threatening rebellions on the way over (v. 2).

These two verses serve as an introduction to the subjects of the rest of this chapter. Verse 1 introduces the subject of v. 3-12, namely leaving Jerusalem for their Land of Promise, and verse 2 introduces verses 13-23, the rebelliousness of Laman and Lemuel.

Lehi's selection of the specific case of rebellion on the waters is intentional and pointed. There were other cases of rebellion before this one, but in this specific case, the entire extended family's life was put at risk because of their behavior. If the ship had sunk, they all would have died. The previous rebellions would not have annihilated the Lehites.

3 And he also spake unto them concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained—how merciful the Lord had been in warning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem. 4 For, behold, said he, I have seen a vision, in which I know that

Jerusalem is destroyed; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished.

5 But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord. 6 Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.

7 Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever.

8 And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. 9 Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall 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 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 inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

10 But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, 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 Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

11 Yea, he will bring other 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 scattered and smitten. 12 Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words.

v3-11 Lehi explains the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant as it has been tailored specifically to his family.

Had they not left Jerusalem when they were warned (v. 3), they would have died there (v. 4), as it has been sacked by Babylon.

While they have been through a lot, they have landed in a good place that the Lord has given to them and their children, and others whom the Lord will lead (v. 5-6).

The land is for those who will keep the Lord's commandments, and as long as they do they will enjoy peace and freedom, as long as they are righteous. If they break the commandments and sin, then they will be at risk of captivity (v. 7).

Others are kept away from the land to keep it from being overrun by Gentile nations (v. 8). Instead, it is kept as a land for the Lord's people, where they will prosper, as long as they keep His commandments (v. 9).

If they do not keep the commandments, and forget all of the things the Lord has done for them, then they will be judged and condemned (v. 10).

And they the Lord will bring the Gentiles to this land, to punish them (v. 11). Lehi hopes all his children and grandchildren through the generations listen to his words, so this doesn't happen (v. 12).

v4-6 While the original land promised to Abraham to be possessed by his posterity is presently occupied by Gentiles, because of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem (v. 4), Lehi has obtained lands for inheritance through the Abrahamic covenant for his own lineage, through Joseph and Menasseh (v. 5-6).

v4 The underlying thesis is Lehi's concern over the fact that Israel's land of inheritance, via the Abrahamic Covenant is presently lost. Yes, naturally, it is a good thing the family escaped the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, but the wider consequence is none of Abraham's seed are in possession of the land promised to him. Much to Lehi's benefit, he has obtained another land for his lineage by covenant. So, even if the original ancestral land has been presently forfeited, a new one has been obtained.

But, if his sons repeat the same mistakes the rest of Israel has made, then they will be destroyed and swept off this land even as those they left behind were first swept from Northern Israel by Assyria and from Jerusalem by Babylon. This forms the thesis for v. 7-22.

v6-8 The political, social, and theological implications of these verse is extraordinary. Lehi makes it perfectly clear the Lord takes a very active hand in crafting human events and history as He sees fit, in so much that He controls emigration. As we in present times look back at the little bit of well-documented history and see how complicated the social and

political factors were resulting in the colonization of the Americas and subsequent waves of emigration, we would have to admit the Lord is very much "hands on" when it comes to earthly matters. People often see God as diffident and distant. How could He be when He is engineering populations so actively as to control who does and who does not emigrate to certain areas? As such, this verse should impact how we form our opinions on emigration issues. Also consider the implications of v. 8, as it necessarily implies the Lord is keeping Gentiles away from the New World in order to prevent them from populating it.

The ambiguity of this verse is offset by the detail given in 1 Ne. 13 concerning who these people are who will be led to this land promised to Lehi.

v7-22 These verses form an emphatic exhortation by Lehi aimed at his rebellious sons. Lehi has seen the same visions of what is to occur in the New World as did Nephi (cf. 1 Ne. 14:29). He is well aware they will probably not repent, and has seen their wars and ultimate demise at the hands of Gentiles. Regardless, being the soft-hearted father he is (cf. 1 Ne. 8:37), he attempts to entreat them one last time before he dies.

Lehi is drawing a parallel between the current events forcing their family to flee Jerusalem (v. 3-4) and the potential fate of his sons. Just as Israel and Judah rebelled against the Lord and were subsequently scattered for it, so will this branch of Joseph be scattered and dispossessed in the same manner if they follow in their predecessor's footsteps. Which fate is prescribed for all of natural Israel in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 as a result of rebelling against the Lord their God.

Lehi is clearly addressing an audience wider than just Laman and Lemuel. His predictions are aimed at subsequent generations who dwindle in unbelief. While Lehi is confident he will be embraced by the Lord upon giving up his mortal body, he is quite concerned about these rebellious sons of his not being embraced by the Lord. Thus, while Lehi is righteous and has maintained the covenant, there is no guarantee of salvation for any of his children by birthright. And if his sons are rebellious and do not walk in their father's footsteps, then their children probably will not either, and the whole lineage is jeopardized.

Lehi's statements effectively dispose of the notion of children obtaining salvation based upon the merits of lineage, a false doctrine popular during Christ's mortal ministry. It also warns against the impact an individual can have on entire populations. Laman was just one man, but he negatively influenced generations to come. This was part of the Lord's

long-term planning, but Lehi is hoping he can persuade Laman and Lemuel to make things less bad.

v7-9 These two verses explicitly identify Lehi's lineages, but also leave the door open to other people whom the Lord leads out of Jerusalem. We learn of the Mulekites later in the text (cf. Omni 1:14-19), but, perhaps, there were others led out that didn't make it. Had Laman and Lemuel's rebellions succeeded, the Lehites would not have made it.

v7 "a land of liberty unto them", cp. 10:11-14, the promise here is completely conditional upon the righteousness of the inhabitants.

v9 "shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land", this formula is repeated frequently throughout the entire Book of Mormon and is definitely one of the main themes.

v10 is couched in legalistic rhetoric. Lehi cites several arguments and points of evidence against the rebellious:

1. Having a knowledge of the creation of the earth and all its inhabitants, referring to the Genesis account of the Creation and origin of Israel,
2. Knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord performed since the Creation, referring to the history of the origin of Israel,
3. Having power given to them to do all things by faith, referring to the contemporary miracles performed in their very sight,
4. Having all the commandments from the beginning, referring to the documentation of the various laws given to humans, and particularly the Law of Moses,
5. Having been brought into the land of promise, cp. 1 Ne. 17:13.

As the brothers have access to the Law of Moses, the History of Israel, and the Prophets up through Isaiah, have witnessed firsthand several notable miracles, and have even been brought to a completely different continent through miraculous means, the evidence supporting the reality and presence of the Lord is damning. These rebellious sons are without excuse.

This evidence would also apply to any of Lehi's descendants as well, particularly the Nephites, as they have access to the Scriptures and witness various miracles and know they are a branch of Israel nowhere near the land of Israel. Lehi is appealing not only to his immediate sons, but to all of this posterity as is plain from v. 12.

v11 is a distillation of the message of 1 Ne. 13.

13 O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.

14 Awake! and arise from the dust, and hear the words of a trembling parent, whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return; a few more days and I go the way of all the earth. 15 But behold, 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.

16 And I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes 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 wrath upon you, that ye be cut off and destroyed forever; 18 Or, that a cursing should come upon you for the space of many generations; and ye are visited by sword, and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and captivity of the devil.

19 O my sons, that these things might not come upon you, but that ye might be a choice and a favored people of the Lord. But behold, his will be done; for his ways are righteousness forever. 20 And he hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence. 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 men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity; 22 That ye may not be cursed with a sore cursing; and also, that ye may not incur the displeasure of a just God upon you, unto the destruction, yea, the eternal destruction of both soul and body.

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

v13-23 Lehi pleads with Laman and Lemuel to repent. The text forms a clear parallelism, centering on v. 17-18. Lehi implores

them to cast off the chains of sin and rebellion, which will lead them to into eternal death, and instead put on the Lord's armor of righteousness (v. 13, 23).

Lehi is about to go into the grave, but he will be redeemed from the grave by the Lord's mercy and love (v. 14-15). He encourages them to rise up, so they will not go down to an unredeemed death (v. 21d-22).

Lehi encourages them to keep the commandments of the Lord (v. 16-17c), so they will be righteous, and not cut off and cursed (19-21c).

If they fail to keep the Lord's commands, then they personally will be eternally cursed and their children will suffer in mortality for generations (v. 17c-18).

The images of waking, casting off chains, and shaking off dust are drawn from Isa. 52:1-2 (see also Isa. 26:19, Isa. 51:14-17). These chapters in Isaiah are summoning Lady Zion up from an obscurity imposed upon her as a result of her rebellion. Lehi is using the rhetoric from Isaiah to summon his own branch of Israel to lift themselves up from the same fate.

v15 "I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love", typically when referring to the arm of the Lord the context is that of Judgement, cf. 2 Ne. 8:5. And that is the main theme of the present text as well, with the rebellious sons of Lehi being judged and punished. However, in sharp contrast to this is the relationship Lehi has with the Lord. Rather than the Lord's arm being exposed in judgement against him, it is extended in mercy to him, cp. Jacob 6:5, Alma 5:33, Moroni 5:11. Lehi's intent is to show the Lord is always willing to embrace and show mercy, and to get his sons to obtain it rather than be smitten by the Lord's hand.

Another point which comes across is Lehi's plain and simple testimony of the Lord. He states emphatically he has a very good relationship with the Lord, one close enough that he is confident that when he dies he will be embraced by the Lord. As such, Lehi is exhibiting his faith in the Lord as well as of the afterlife. His rebellious sons probably don't give much stock to either of these things as they have little faith, so Lehi bears down on them with his personal witness of the reality of both.

v16-17 again show Lehi's loving and compassionate disposition towards his sons. Lehi is not a harsh authoritarian.

v18-19 The "my sons" is inclusive of subsequent generations as well as the present, as indicated by the "many generations" and

"a favored people of the Lord" statements. Lehi has seen the fate of his lineage so he is aware of the broad scope of what is going to happen, hence the confession "his will be done" in v. 19. But, he doesn't let this prevent himself from exhorting whatever individual he might reach to repent.

We also have to remember a father and prophet's duty is to warn and exhort so as to release himself from the responsibility of leaving them in ignorance. Thus, Lehi is shaking the blood off his own cloak when it comes to his rebellious sons. Lehi does not explicitly state this (as his less genteel son Jacob later does, cf. Jacob 1:19), but the effect is the same nonetheless.

v23 "the armor of righteousness", while this seems like a New Testament reference, the imagery was developed by Isaiah (cf. Isa. 11:5, Isa. 49:2, Isa. 52:7, Isa. 59:17, see also Ps. 91:4) and used by Paul (cf. Eph 6:13-15).

24 Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, 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 hunger in the wilderness; nevertheless, ye sought to take 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 accused him that he sought power and authority 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 sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness 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. 27 And it must needs be that the power 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 Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened 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 blessing, yea, even my first blessing. 29 But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.

v24-29 While Lehi made a series of general arguments against the rebellion of both his immediate sons and later generations

in v. 10, he now addresses the present sons with detailed examples of their rebellion by citing specific cases (v. 24-26).

His comments are cast in the light of his imminent death. He is clearly aware of the struggle between Laman, the oldest son, and Nephi, the spiritual son, with regard to leadership. His death will result in Laman establishing himself as patriarch. Given this power and the past resentment of Nephi's spirituality, Lehi knows the result will mean trouble. In an attempt to minimize contention, Lehi endorses Nephi as the patriarch of the family after Lehi's death (v. 27-29).

v28-29 "I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing", the tradition of a father's blessing was such that he could give it to whoever he liked as he saw fit. The birthright was not something the father had power over, it was automatically transferred to the eldest son unless he did something to jeopardize his standing. However, the blessing, sometimes called the "birthright blessing", was entirely up to the father, as was the case with Joseph blessing Ephraim above Manasseh. Tradition developed such that the firstborn son received both, but that was merely a tradition.

The details of this conditional blessings are given in 4:3-9.

v28 "and Sam", we need not include Sam in with Laman and Lemuel when it comes to labeling him as rebellious just because he is grouped together with them here. In 4:11 we are informed Sam is blessed along with Nephi and is not blessed in the same manner as is Laman and Lemuel in 4:3-9.

What Lehi is doing is listing his sons in age order and telling them to defer to Nephi. The traditional order of ascension in the family is eldest first. But, in this case Lehi makes it plain to the three older brothers their younger brother Nephi is to lead them. Note Jacob and Joseph, who are younger, are left out of the equation.

30 And now Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever. 31 Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed with 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.

v30-32 Lehi offers a blessing to Zoram even though he isn't his father or master (v. 30). The blessing he offers him is one that is based upon his personal righteousness and willingness to listen to Nephi (v. 31). As such, he and his children will be blessed as is Nephi.

The underlying context is Lehi isn't in the position to offer a father's blessing on Zoram. But, since he is the departing patriarch he shows his respect for Zoram by mentioning the general blessings of righteousness which are available to him and his posterity.

Contrast this blessing with what is said of the sons of Ishmael in 4:10. There, Lehi is not recorded as blessing them because that would have been Ishmael's responsibility. However, with Zoram having nobody to bless him, Lehi goes ahead and does what he can.

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