

Book of Mormon 5
Hearken to the Truth and Give Heed unto it
(1 Nephi 16-22)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is spiritual inspiration and background. It includes true accounts)

I. In much earlier years, though I swallowed the story of the Liahona, it caught a bit in my throat. While believing in messengers that came from Heaven, the sudden appearance of a metal object from Heaven was beyond my previous radar.

A. And yet today, **man himself has created very similar things**. Our GPS systems, our iPhones and iPads, etc., are material objects created by man which can give us immediate guidance to where we are going and what we would like to know.

B. Obviously God had such capabilities long before man.

II. Also overcoming any hesitancy to believe is that the Liahona is verified by accounts from natives in the Americas.

A. In speaking of how their ancestors came to their lands, remarkably two separate, ancient writings: (the *Totonacapan* (1), and *Popol Vuh* (2), tell they were guided by a sacred device which “opened the way.” These same accounts agree that it was provided by God and worked by the power of God (Milton R. Hunter, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*, p. 70).

B. Further some scholars say “Liahona” is a combination of two Hebrew words which actually describe the way the instrument works: the words “Lahab-hennah” combine the meanings of “point” and “whither.” So the very meaning of the word means it points whither one should go.

III. And after all, the Lord has given wondrous means of guidance through the ages.

A. He gave the Israelites a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day.

B. So why should He not give Lehi’s family the Liahona.

1. “And there was also written upon [its spindles] a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it” (Nephi 16:29).

IV. We learn much later that **the Lord gave the Liahona not only to meet the immediate needs of Lehi’s people, but also as a “type” of the guidance through His Word.**

A. “For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to [the Liahona] which would point them a straight course to the promised land” (Alma 37:44).

V. **The Lord gives guidance to those who seek Him, according to their needs.**

A. Lehi and his family were just setting out to cross a vast wilderness, **most of which includes the greatest sand desert in the world.**

1. To have gotten lost would have been disastrous. They desperately needed a guide. And the Lord provided it.

B. While many have perished in that wilderness, there are ways to cross portions of it. But one must know how to find the trails that lead from watering hole to watering hole.

VI. Through their experience, **Nephi tried to help his brothers see the importance of guidance through the wilderness of life via the scriptures** (Ch. 22:2).

A. He shared the teachings and prophecies in the scriptures so his brothers might understand how vital they were as guides (Ch. 22:3-31).

B. Finally, he added his personal testimony of their necessity. "... the things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true; ... Wherefore, ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified..." (v. 30-31).

VII. Like Nephi, a highly intelligent young man, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, began to discover the wonders of God's guidance through the Scriptures, just as his people began to enter an even more terrible wilderness. For Hitler had begun to rise to power in Germany.

A. Unfortunately the greatest theologians in Germany at that time were severing the ties of the scriptures from their true source --- God. Thus they led the German people to abandon their greatest source of guidance.

B. But Dietrich realized the scriptures and revelation through prayer were absolutely essential guides. Because of his heeding God's words, he came to see very early that Hitler's claim to be a Christian was false. He could see very early that Hitler would lead Germany into terrible darkness, and he did all he could to try to warn others, even in the end to being murdered for his efforts.

C. Unfortunately, his warnings were not heeded. Most others, not searching guidance from its true source, were deceived until it was too late. Terrible darkness descended.

VIII. Nephi was guided not only by the Liahona and the scriptures, but by the Holy Ghost as well.

A. He also **tried to help his brothers understand how essential was this great guide.**

B. He reminded them that the spirit had tried to speak to them "in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words..." (Ne 17:45).

C. At a regional conference held in Fort Worth, Texas on May 21, 2000, Elder Neal M. Maxwell shared the following experience about the Holy Ghost.

During World War II, he was serving in the Pacific. He was among American forces who were endeavoring to take back an island from the Japanese, an extremely dangerous task. During the fighting he found himself in very grave danger and the casualties very high among those he was fighting beside.

Suddenly his mother, in the United States, not knowing details of where her son was or what he was doing, felt a strong impression that her son was in severe danger. She told her family, urgently, "Pray for Neal!" The family immediately did so.

Neal survived this terrible battle when so many did not. As time passed, and he returned home, the incident came up. He and his mother were able to coordinate the times of his grave danger and her impressions. They matched exactly.

D. Elder Maxwell thus taught that The Holy Ghost is wondrous as it "customizes" guidance specifically for us.

1. He taught that while prophets and scriptures give guidance applicable to all, **the Holy Ghost can give specific guidance to us as individuals, according to our own specific**

needs. Because our needs vary from individual to individual, and from time to time, this is vital.

X. **Those who heed** the guidance of the Lord grow in their abilities to receive further, greater guidance.

A. We see this in Nephi's life.

1. Because he heeded the Lord's guidance in previous situations, [the breaking of the bow,* finding food, etc.], the Lord continued to guide him by personal revelation through even harder tasks.

2. He guided him in undertaking to build a ship that would cross a vast ocean (1 Ne. 17:8-11; 18:1-4). Thus the Lord's guidance helped him solve this new specific need.

3. Also highly important, when they arrived in the Promised Land, the spirit gave him specific guidance in how to make "plates of ore," teaching him what to record upon those plates, and specifically that **while his record would be considered as "naught" by some, it would eventually be of powerful and great worth to the souls of men** (1 Ne. 19:7).

B. Both Elder Scott and President Nelson have similarly counseled us on **how to heed, and thus make our spiritual guidance more effective.**

1. They have taken great pains to counsel us that while often our spiritual impressions come at inconvenient times [such as in the middle of the night], we should not hesitate to get up and to write them down. And then of course to act on them at the appropriate time.

2. By doing this, we will demonstrate our faith and our obedience. The result will be that **the spirit will continue to guide us, like Nephi, to even greater light, knowledge, and acts of obedience.**

*When Lynn and Hope Hilton undertook the assignment by the *Ensign*, blessed by the brethren, to try to find Lehi's Trail through the Arabian wilderness, they found this interesting information about the possible reasons why Nephi and his brothers had so much trouble with their bows.

Nephi says clearly that for a time they followed along the East Coast of the Red Sea, so the Hiltons also followed that route. They found an area, also fitting the timeline, where the weather was "a merciless combination of heat, humidity, sand, and salt --- a force strong enough to destroy steel. We were stunned to see holes rusted through car fenders in a few months' time." This would explain why Nephi's bow, weakened by such conditions, would have snapped. It would also explain why his brothers' bows [if they were wooden], would have lost their spring.

Finally, a native archaeologist helped them see that locally there grew a pomegranate tree whose wood would be more adapted to the weather there, and would have made a good bow. Its wood was both limber and tough.

This would explain why Nephi's new bow, made on the spot, would have had the resiliency now to obtain the food they needed.

(See Lynn and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, *The Ensign*, Oct. 1976).