

BOOK OF MORMON LESSON #2
“ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO HIS WILL”
by Ted L. Gibbons

Quote of the week:

Either the Book of Mormon is true, or it is false; either it came from God, or it was spawned in the infernal realms. It declares plainly that all men must accept it as pure scripture or they will lose their souls. It is not and cannot be simply another treatise on religion; it either came from heaven or hell. And it is time for all those who seek salvation to find out for themselves whether it is of the Lord or of Lucifer. (Bruce R. McConkie, C.R., October 1983, p. 1060)

I LEHI LEAVES JERUSALEM AND TAKES HIS FAMILY INTO THE WILDERNESS. (1 Nephi 1,2)

In a very real sense, what we are reading in 1st Nephi is a journal. The Lord intends to do miraculous things with this journal, and Nephi prepares it in such a way that it can be preserved, but it is nevertheless a journal. Nephi calls it a “record of my proceedings in my days.” (1 Nephi 1:1) He later tells us that it is a journal of his spiritual experiences. He says, “And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates, for *I desire the room that I may write of the things of God.*” (1 Nephi 6:3, emphasis added)

Knowing by inspiration that the record he was creating would continue, he gave instructions to his seed about the nature of the things that should be included. He said, “Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men.” (1 Nephi 6:6)

President Kimball taught: “Let us then continue on in this important work of recording the things we do, the things we say, the things we think, to be in accordance with the instructions of

the Lord. For those of you who may not have already started your books of remembrance and your records, we would suggest that this very day you begin to write your records quite fully and completely. We hope that you will do this, our brothers and sisters, for this is what the Lord has commanded." (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p.349)

The brethren have spoken about this often. This note from the records of Oliver Huntington is most interesting.

Many times have I wished that my father had kept an account of his life, that I might look over it, and see his by-gone days, deed and fortune; and never did he make the scratch of a pen towards it, until he had seen sixty cold winters; and as yet I know but very little of his life, not enough to make any record of, although I have a very short account written, but which is beyond my reach at present, if not forever. Like men in general I presume to suppose, that I shall have a posterity; and that may; like me; wish to know of their father's life, that they might view it, and perhaps profit thereby, or at least, have the satisfaction of knowing it. This is one object that induces me to write; that my nearest kindred, might know of their kinsman. I write also for a satisfaction to myself, to look over my past life, dates and events, and to comply with a requirement, oft repeated by the prophet Joseph Smith, "That every man should keep a daily journal." (Oliver Huntington Autobiography, BYU-Special Collections, p.26)

Nephi did not begin this record when he was in Jerusalem, nor did he write it while he was journeying in the wilderness. It seems likely that Lehi kept a record of the events of the journey of his family, but Nephi did not. The account on the small plates was begun about 570 BC. (See 2 Nephi 5:28-31) On this note it might be entertaining to note that I saw a personalized license plate in Arizona many years ago that looked like this: **2NE5-31**. I suspected when I saw it that it was a Book of Mormon reference, and so I looked and it was.

2 Nephi 5:30

And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people.

2 Nephi 5:31

Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things.

The large plates were begun about 590 BC, according to 1 Nephi 19:1.

AND it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them. (1 Nephi 19:1)

Lehi lived in or near to Jerusalem. In the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, “there came many prophets, prophesying.” (1 Nephi 1:4) We know from Old Testament chronology studies that Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah were contemporaries of Lehi. Their message was that “the people . . . must repent or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” (1 Nephi 1:4) The book of Jeremiah suggests something about the iniquity of Jerusalem and the imperative need they had for repentance:

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon [Jerusalem]. (Jeremiah 5:1)

The Lord was apparently willing to pardon Jerusalem if one righteous man could be found, one just and truth-seeking man. It is difficult not to think of the Lord’s willingness to spare Sodom for ten righteous (see Genesis 18:32).

From this account we learn that Lehi believed the prophets and that he loved

his people, for when he heard of the impending destruction of the city (1 Nephi 1:4), he “prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.” (1 Nephi 1:5) What happened next seems to be a common experience among those called to teach and prophesy, particularly among those who are the leaders of dispensations and restorations. Hugh Nibley explained it this way:

[Lehi] ran home to his house in Jerusalem and threw himself on the bed. Then he thought he was carried away, and he saw what happened. He saw the Council of the preexistence. He saw the plan, the Lord coming down, and the twelve apostles. He saw how it all worked out. From then on he was one happy man. He could do nothing but rejoice after that. He went out and tried to preach, ran into real trouble, and had to leave town. (Hugh Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p.41)

In many respects this is the experience of Moses (Moses 1) and Abraham (Abraham 3) and a multitude of other prophets who are shown the plan in conjunction with their calling. Jeremiah refers this experience in this way:

For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? . . . I have not sent these [false] prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jeremiah 23:18,21,22, emphasis added)

After his vision, Lehi “went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.” (1 Nephi 1:18) The people mocked him (1 Nephi 1:19). When he continued preaching, they were angry with him ((1 Nephi 1:20) and they sought to kill him (1 Nephi 1:20). However, they could not. In response to their attempt, however, Nephi promises to “show . . . that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.” (1 Nephi 1:20) Nephi

will show us this truth many times in 1st and 2nd Nephi. Watch for examples. This is a great promise and a true principle, one that we must teach our children and each other again and again. The “tender mercies” of the Lord are over us and will make us “mighty even unto the power of deliverance.”

Like Nephi his son, Lehi was determined to “go and do” the thing the Lord had commanded him, knowing that the Lord would prepare a way. He took his family and left all else behind, departing into the wilderness. He led his family to the shores of the Red Sea, and three more days after that, until he found a river of water (1 Nephi 1:5,6). It is here that we get the first hint that all is not well in the family of Lehi.

And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord! (And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! (1 Nephi 2:9,10)

I love the language of Lehi. I would like to be firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of God.” Jacob told his son, Reuben, that he [Reuben] was “unstable as water” (Genesis 49:4), and therefore would not excel. Paul speaks of people who are blown about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). As we read these chapters we are permitted to watch people who are steadfast (Lehi, Nephi, Sam) and those who are not (Laman, Lemuel, the sons of Ishmael). We must learn from them.

Read 1 Nephi 2:11-13 carefully. Laman and Lemuel have three problems according to these verses.

Nephi 2:11

Now this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold they did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of

Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.

1 Nephi 2:12

And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.

1 Nephi 2:13

Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father.

Can you see the attitudes that impede their spirituality?

1. **They are worldly.** They murmured because they had to leave their land and their gold and their silver and their precious things.
2. **They don't know the dealings of God.** "They did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them."
3. **They don't believe the prophets.** "Neither did they believe . . . the words of the prophets"

It is worth a note here that Nephi does believe the prophets, including his father. It cannot have been any easier for him to say goodbye to Jerusalem than it was for his brothers, but he had "great desires to know the mysteries of God" and cried unto the Lord who did "visit [him], and did soften [his] heart that [he] did believe all the words which had been spoken by [his] father; wherefore, [he] did not rebel against him like unto [his] brothers." (1 Nephi 2:16)

The extent of his belief is indicated by his language throughout his writings. Nowhere in his writing does Nephi ever question his father. He does not even write "my father said the Lord spake unto him in a dream." He writes "The Lord spake unto my father in a dream." (1 Nephi 2:1; see also 1 Nephi 11:5)

Notice what Nephi does after his encounter with the Lord in 1 Nephi 2:16. He does the same thing Lehi did after his vision in 1 Nephi 1. He declares and bears testimony of the things he has seen and heard, and he prays for them.

And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words. But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them. (1 Nephi 2:17,18)

I have come to believe in the truthfulness of this sequence. If the Lord knows of our willingness to teach and testify of anything he lets us see and hear, he will let us see and hear many things. Notice as you study this record how often in the Book of Mormon the Lord shows his will and his purposes to his prophets and they immediately begin to share what they have learned with those around them. Of course some spiritual communications are designed for us only, and those we do not share. But when a witness of the truth comes with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, we must be willing to share appropriately with others.

There is another great principle alluded to in 1 Nephi 2. I call it the “Recognition of the Real Problem” principle. So many times we go before the Lord asking for help solving a problem when we have not yet identified what the problem really is. For example, the Israelites wanted Moses to get rid of the poisonous serpents. (Numbers 21:7) But the serpents were not the problem. The problem was that the Israelites had not been willing to keep the promise they made at Mt. Sinai (see Exodus 24:3,7). The serpents were a reminder. Certain Jews wanted to make Christ a king, probably because he had the ability to solve any and all social problems. “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” (John 6:15) Jesus knew that the problems of the Jews were not social; they were spiritual, and he refused the throne.

Here in 1 Nephi 2, the Lord explains the relationship between the Nephites and the Lamanites. I wonder how many prayers were offered by Book of Mormon

people pleading with the Lord to solve the problem of the Lamanites. But the Lamanites were never the problem. The scriptures teach it in this way:

And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren. For behold, in that day that they [the Lamanites] shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they [thy seed] shall rebel against me also. And if it so be that they [thy seed] rebel against me, they [the Lamanites] shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. (1 Nephi 2:22-24)

Hugh Nibley explained it this way:

No matter how wicked and ferocious and depraved the Lamanites might be (and they were that!), no matter by how much they outnumbered the Nephites, darkly closing in on all sides, no matter how insidiously they spied and intrigued and infiltrated and hatched their diabolical plots and breathed their bloody threats and pushed their formidable preparations for all-out war, they were not the Nephite problem. They were merely kept there to remind the Nephites of their real problem, which was to walk uprightly before the Lord. (Since Cumorah, p. 376)

II. NEPHI AND HIS BROTHERS RETURN TO JERUSALEM TO OBTAIN THE PLATES OF BRASS (1 Nephi 3,4)

Sometime in these discussions we will discuss the divergence of Laman and Nephi. While Nephi is walking in a brighter and brighter light, Laman is descending into deeper and deeper darkness. One example of that appears when Lehi commands his sons to return to Jerusalem for the Plates of Brass. Laman and Lemuel murmured (what a shock!) “saying it is a hard thing . . .” Well, it was hard. We are talking about a distance of around 250 miles through some pretty desolate country. And at the end of the journey they must convince a greedy, wicked, drunken, violent man to give them something incredibly valuable. Lehi knew it was a hard thing, and so did Nephi. The difference is in their responses to the difficulty. Laman and Lemuel seem to

say, “The prophet has spoken, however . . .” But Nephi says, “The prophet has spoken, therefore . . .” What kind of a response are you most likely to give when President Hinckley or your Stake President or your Bishop asks you to do something difficult?

The importance of the plates of brass is described in several places.

- T They contain a record of the Jews (1 Nephi 3:3)
- T They contain Lehi’s genealogy (1 Nephi 3:3)
- T They will enable this colony to preserve their language (1 Nephi 3:19)
- T They contain the words of the prophets (1 Nephi 3:19)
- T They contain the commandments of the Lord (1 Nephi 5:21)
- T They contain the mysteries of God (Mosiah 1:3)
- T Those who studied them would “profit thereby” (Mosiah 1:7)]

Following the request of his father, Nephi made the statement that has become the most familiar of all Book of Mormon scriptures.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (1 Nephi 3:7)

Sometimes we focus so much on Nephi’s obedience that we miss the reaction of his father. I identify with Lehi here. “And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words he was *exceedingly glad*, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord.” (1 Nephi 3:8, *emphasis added*) How great to have a son like Nephi! We would all be “exceedingly glad” to have a son with such faith.

Following Laman’s failure to secure the plates (and remember that Laman is the only source for this account), the older brothers are ready to return to the valley of Lemuel. “We tried. We failed. Let’s get out of here before someone gets hurt.” Nephi would have none of it, of course. “But behold I said unto them that: As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord

hath commanded us.” (1 Nephi 3:15)

This matter of swearing with an oath in ancient days was far more significant than many of us have realized.

For instance: Nephi and his brethren were seeking to obtain the brass plates from Laban. Their lives were in peril. Yet Nephi swore this oath: “As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.” (1 Nephi 3:15)

Thus Nephi made God his partner. If he failed to get the plates, it meant God had failed. And because God does not fail, it was incumbent upon Nephi to get the plates or lay down his life in the attempt. (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, C.R., April 1982, pp. 49, 50)

The words of the oath are significant as well.

. . . the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people: "Hardly will an Arab break this oath, even if his life be in jeopardy," for "there is nothing stronger, and nothing more sacred than the oath among the nomads," and even among the city Arabs, if it be exacted under special conditions. But not every oath will do: to be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the life of something, even if it be but a blade of grass; the only oath more awful than "by my life" or (less commonly) "by the life of my head," is the *wa hayat Allah*, "by the life of God," or "as the Lord liveth," . . . (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.5, Part.1, p.103 - p.104)

The second attempt is an effort to purchase the plates with the wealth of Lehi, who had enough of it to tempt Laban to commit four murders. “And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property, and that it was exceedingly great, he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property.” (1 Nephi 3:25) The loss of the property made Laman and Lemuel angry with Nephi, whose plan had failed so miserably, and with their father, who had initiated the enterprise. That anger

may have come from fear and a brush with death, but it probably also derived from the fact that if they should return now to Jerusalem, they have much less to return to. They begin to beat their little brothers with a rod. (1 Nephi 3:28)

The angel who called a halt to these activities made two announcements: (1) The Lord has chosen Nephi to be your ruler, and (2) Go back again; the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands. As soon as the light of this angelic presence began to dim, Laman and his sidekick were back at it. “How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?” (1 Nephi 3:31) This is an interesting insight into the character of these two, and also into the character of those who have demanded positive proof of the plates and of the restoration. Luke 16:31 says it this way:

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (Luke 16:31)

The Doctrine and Covenants says it like this:

Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you. (D&C 5:7)

Those who do not believe Lehi are not likely to believe, even when they have seen an angel. Those who do not believe Joseph’s account of the Book of Mormon and the restoration are not likely to believe Moroni himself declaring the truth in glory and thunder. The response of Laman and his brother to the angel is powerful evidence that miracles do not convert people.

We do find a moment here when Nephi and his brothers are in complete agreement. As Nephi prepares to make a third attempt to secure the plates he tells us that he “caused that they should hide themselves without the walls. (1 Nephi 4:5) No arguments here at all. If they had to make another attempt to separate the murderous Laban and this sacred record, this is just the way they wanted to make it.

What happened next is spectacular. “And after they had hid themselves, I, Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban.” This is faith and courage of the highest order. Nephi does not know how he will get the plates. But he knows that he is under divine command to get them and he knows where they are. He goes, therefore, toward the house of Laban. Laman and Lemuel were unsure about *how* the Lord could deliver Laban into their hands. (1 Nephi 3:29) Nephi wasn’t sure either. But Nephi was sure that the Lord *could deliver* Laban, and so he went. He *crept*. His life had been threatened already by Laban. And he went, he said, being “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.” (1 Nephi 4:6)

There is a principle of revelation here as well. Sometimes the Spirit leads us, step by step, without revealing the end until we are upon it.

Many years ago, a young man walked into our garage early in the morning and rode off on my son’s BMX bicycle. Mike, a twelve-year old, had worked hard and for a long time for the money to buy that bike. It was his most precious possession. A small child from the bus stop came to tell my wife what had happened. She was in a house coat, just up from bed. She got the kids out the door for school, then dressed, and got in the car. Sitting there she told the Lord how much the bike meant to our son and asked for help in finding it. She then drove to a busy thoroughfare, turned west, traveled half a mile, turned right, then right and left and into a cul-de-sac where she found the bike and the young man, who was waiting for a friend. “She went, being led by the Spirit” from corner to corner and street to street.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene -- one step enough for me."
-- Hymns, No. 119

What in the world was Laban doing drunk in full ceremonial armor in the middle of the night on the streets of Jerusalem? We know that he had been out by night among the “elders of the Jews” (1 Nephi 4:22) perhaps in secret meetings concerning the alliance of Judah with Egypt. Jeremiah talks a great deal about the elders and their animosity towards him because of his insistence that Judah maintain its relations with Babylon rather than changing allegiance and trusting in Egypt.

And Nephi kills Laban; reluctantly, of course. He said in his heart, “Never at any time have I shed the blood of man.” This is the only time I have found in the records of this young man when he showed any trace of reluctance to obey the Lord instantly. His hesitation says much for his character and for the truthfulness of the story. Some have been troubled by this act, even considering it immoral. If you have an inclination to read an excellent piece on this matter, read “I Have a Question” in the *Ensign*, September 1976, pp. 83,84, wherein Jeffrey R. Holland answers the question, “How can I explain Nephi’s killing Laban to my non-member friends? Some really reject it as scriptural.”

The final quote of that article is excellent:

One who does not understand Nephi’s relentless determination to enter that city and obtain those records, no matter what the cost to his own life or others, will never understand why it was so fundamentally necessary to bring forth the Book of Mormon in this dispensation, or why the forces of hell tried to wrench those plates from the boy prophet, or why every one of us must search the scriptures and live by every word of God. As with Nephi’s traveling through the wilderness, it is “wisdom in the Lord” that we, too, should carry the sacred records with us on our own journey toward the promised land. (See 1 Nephi 5:22) Our only alternative is to “dwindle and perish in unbelief.” (1 Nephi 4:13)

On this matter of obeying God regardless of the nature of his instruction, Joseph Smith said,

God said, "Thou shalt not kill;" at another time He said, "Thou shalt utterly destroy." This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Section Five 1842–43, p.256)

After securing the plates, Nephi insisted that Zoram accompany the family into the wilderness, and made an oath that he should be a free man if he would. (1 Nephi 4:33) It was probably important for Zoram to come along for a couple of reasons. First, with the plates gone from the treasury, and Laban dead, the keeper of the treasury would be the prime suspect, keys and all. In addition, Zoram would have known enough to point pursuit after the right family, and perhaps even in the right direction. “Now we were desirous that he should tarry with us for this cause, that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness, lest they should pursue us and destroy us.” (1 Nephi 4:36) I suspect that it was for this reason that the Lord did not command the family to take the plates when they first left the city. With a base camp over 200 miles away, they were able to flee to safety after obtaining the record. Such a flight might not have been possible with the whole family along.

Notice that after Nephi made his oath to Zoram, Zoram made one of his own. Following that, Nephi wrote, “our fears did cease concerning him.”

When you give your word, can fear cease? Do people who know you know that your integrity is absolute. Abraham Lincoln once made a promise that, on reflection and examination, turned out to have been a mistake. He pondered over the matter. “Well,” he thought, “I have said it, and be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it.” (*Lincoln and the Lady*, by Ted Gibbons, p. 16—from a letter by Abraham Lincoln written in April, 1838)

III. NEPHI AND HIS BROTHERS BRING THE BRASS PLATES TO THEIR FAMILY (1 Nephi 5)

Sarai mistakenly thought that the greatest danger to her sons was the wilderness through which they were required to travel for the plates of brass (see 1 Nephi 5:2). She may not have known much about Laban. But her concerns were legitimate. When the sons had been gone longer than a trip to Jerusalem and back should have required, she mourned for them, believing them dead, and had accused her husband of being a “visionary man” and of leading the entire family to destruction. (1 Nephi 5:2) But Lehi was not worried. He had received a promise, much like the one given to King Mosiah in Mosiah 28:7. Lehi told his wife, “I know that the Lord will deliver my sons.” (1 Nephi 5:5) This reminds us of the declaration of the Lord that “A prophet is

not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” (JST Mark 6:6) Sarai did not believe him. But when she saw her husband’s words fulfilled in every respect, when her sons returned safely to her, she bore her own testimony:

Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them. (1 Nephi 5:8)

I admire Sarai a great deal for having come so far on the basis of faith in, and love and respect for, her husband. It is easy to understand why the conditions in the valley and the extended absence of her sons should have caused her to murmur. All of us have a tendency to respond to discouragement and discomfort and danger with consternation and dread. But if she had followed Nephi’s example in 1 Nephi 2:16, the journey of her sons to Jerusalem might have been less traumatic. At any rate, there is not any indication that she ever murmured again.

Lehi examined the plates when he had received them, and gave us a brief accounting of the contents: They contained (see 1 Nephi 5:12-16)

- T The five books of Moses
- T And also a record of the Jews
- T And prophecies of the holy prophets
- T And many prophecies of Jeremiah
- T A genealogy of the family of Lehi in which he learned that he was a descendant of Joseph and therefore related to Laban.

Lehi prophesied three things about these plates.

1. “these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed.” (1 Nephi 5:18)
2. “these plates of brass should never perish” (1 Nephi 5:19)
3. “neither should they be dimmed any more by time.” (1 Nephi 5:19)

IV. NEPHI AND HIS BROTHERS RETURN TO JERUSALEM FOR ISHMAEL AND HIS FAMILY (1 Nephi 7)

No mention is made of any objection by Laman and Lemuel when Lehi sent them back to Jerusalem again. Like some of the youth in our own day, they may have preferred romance to reading the scriptures. They were not sent to find a willing family with many daughters, but to get a specific family—the family of Ishmael. In the *Journal of Discourses*, Erastus Snow reported that Ishmael's sons married Lehi's daughters. (See JD, Vol. 23. p. 184) The married sons of Ishmael are mentioned first in 1 Nephi 7:6. Hugh Nibley said of Ishmael and Lehi:

Lehi, faced with the prospect of a long journey in the wilderness, sent back for Ishmael, who promptly followed into the desert with a large party; this means that he must have been hardly less adept at moving than Lehi himself. The interesting thing is that Nephi takes Ishmael (unlike Zoram) completely for granted, never explaining who he is or how he fits into the picture--the act of sending for him seems to be the most natural thing in the world, as does the marriage of his daughters with Lehi's sons. Since it has ever been the custom among the desert people for a man to marry the daughter of his paternal uncle (bint 'ammi), it is hard to avoid the impression that Lehi and Ishmael were related. (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.5, Part.1, Ch.2, p.40)

The rebellion in the wilderness by “Laman and Lemuel, and two of the daughters of Ishmael, and the two sons of Ishmael and their families” came because they were “desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem.” (1 Nephi 7:6,7) Nephi preached to them, and warned them, as he did every time they rebelled. And every time he did, they beat the stuffings out of him for his trouble. (It is interesting that they rebelled against Nephi and the others. One only rebels against leaders, not followers.) They were not anxious to hear a sermon from Nephi, but when he gave them one, they did not kill him. Like they brothers of Joseph in Genesis 37, they tried to place him in a condition from which he could not escape, thus perhaps escaping direct responsibility for his demise. It is possible that the memory of the angel in the cave

prevented Laman and Lemuel at least from taking more drastic action against their brother.

They bound him and planned to leave him to be devoured by wild beasts.

But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound. And it came to pass that when I had said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren, and I spake unto them again. (1 Nephi 7:17,18)

Nephi in 1 Nephi 7 was a much different man from the Nephi of 1 Nephi 2. Laman and Lemuel had not changed at all. “And it came to pass that they were angry with me again, and sought to lay hands upon me . . .” They experienced no conversion from this miracle either.(1 Nephi 7:19)

Convinced that they had erred, they asked Nephi for forgiveness. “And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness. And it came to pass that they did so. And after they had done praying unto the Lord we did again travel on our journey towards the tent of our father.”

If is one thing to forgive, but perhaps it is another to forgive just moments following an attempt to murder you. But Nephi went a step beyond that. He directed them to the true source of forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

I stand in reverent awe of Nephi. He is a hero worthy of all emulation. We have been commanded to hold up the light of Christ.

Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world.
Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up--that which ye have seen me do. (3 Nephi 18:24)

No one ever did that better than Nephi, who was almost perfect in his emulation of his Savior. That commitment came from his love, of course. And it was manifest in his attitude about every experience in his life. I am pleased beyond measure by the final three words of this great man preceding his final “Amen” in the Book of Mormon. They are found in 2 Nephi 33:15.

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