

An Overview of First Nephi

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An Overview of The First Book of Nephi

CHAPTER 1

Statement of Authorship (1:1 – 1:3)

Nephi began writing this record, known as the “Small Plates of Nephi”, about thirty years after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:28-31). He was commanded of the Lord to make these plates, *"for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people"* (1 Nephi 9:3). The Small Plates, which will be discussed later, contained the material for the first six books of The Book of Mormon (1 Nephi through Omni).

In the first three verses, Nephi says a few words about himself and the record he is about to write. The advertising of one’s reliability is a correct and indeed a required fixture of any properly composed Egyptian autobiography of Nephi’s time.¹ Note the similar statements of authorship at the beginning of many of the writings of The Book of Mormon, such as Jacob 1:2, Enos verse 1, Jarom verses 1-2, Omni verse 1 and Mosiah 9:1.

In verse 2, Nephi says, *"I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians."* Nephi's reference to "the learning of the Jews," makes it clear that the text was written in the Hebrew language. For the sake of saving space Nephi used Egyptian characters or word symbols. Mormon 9:32-34 tells us, *"we have written this record...in the characters which are called...reformed Egyptian, being altered by us, according to our manner of speech...if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. But the Lord knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language...he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof."* For more information on the "prepared means for interpretation," read Ether 3:22-24; Mosiah 8:13. By using reformed Egyptian characters, Mormon was capable of conveying much more information in a few words. Apostle V.J. Lovalvo, in *It is*

Written Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth, (page 265) quotes from Sjodahl pp. 42-43, "It has been demonstrated that the entire book, [*of Mormon*] including the lost pages, could have been written on forty-five pages..."

Lehi Called to be a Prophet (1:4 – 1:15)

Nephi begins his writings by telling us that it was during the first year of King Zedekiah's reign (600 B.C.) that the Lord spoke to Lehi. In that same year many prophets came prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or Jerusalem would be destroyed. Along with Jeremiah there was Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. II Chronicles 36:15-16 tells us of the warnings of the prophets, and how the people mocked and, "misused His messengers."

Because of these warnings, Lehi, prayed mightily to God on behalf of his people. As he prayed, there came a pillar of fire before him, and "*he saw and heard much*" (verse 6) which caused him to quake and tremble. Lehi was troubled by this experience. He cast himself upon his bed, was overcome with the Spirit and carried away in a vision.

In Lehi's vision, "*he saw God sitting upon His throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels*" (verse 8). He also saw Jesus Christ and His twelve Apostles. In the vision, Lehi was given a book which "*manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world*" (verse 19). The same book also foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and how, many inhabitants would perish, and others would be carried away captive into Babylon. Read Jeremiah 39:1-10 and II Kings 25 1:21. This vision comes to fruition in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign.

Although all of the details of his visions are not supplied, it can be assumed that Lehi was at this time called to be a prophet, for soon afterward he began to preach and prophesy to the people of Jerusalem.² Compare Lehi's calling with the calling of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-10) and also the prophet Micaiah (I Kings 22:19-22).

Difference Between Book of Lehi and Book of Nephi (1:16 – 1:17)

Nephi began writing his book on the Small Plates shortly after the death of his father. As a result, he had all of Lehi's writings (known as the Book of Lehi) at his disposal. He explains in verses 16 and 17 that his book would consist of an abridged version of his father's life followed by a more detailed account of his own life. He probably felt to make that point at this time as he had just concluded describing Lehi's first visions in an abbreviated form. It appears that the abridgment of Lehi's record ends with 1 Nephi chapter 8. After a few brief comments on the purpose of the two sets of plates in chapter 9, Nephi begins chapter 10

with the account of his own life. This account consumed the rest of the First Book of Nephi and all of the Second Book of Nephi.

Lehi Prophecies Regarding Destruction of Jerusalem (1:18 – 1:20)

Lehi's love for his people is displayed in verses 18-20. Because of the devastation he saw in the vision, he went among the people and told them about the things he had seen and heard. The people responded by mocking him. When he further told them that his vision revealed the coming of a Messiah for the redemption of the world, they became angry and sought to kill him, "*even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out and stoned*" (verse 20).

CHAPTER 2

The Lord Commands Lehi and his Family to Leave Jerusalem (2:1 – 2:4)

The Lord spoke to Lehi in a dream, commanding him to take his family and depart into the wilderness. He left his house, gold, silver, and many precious things. He took nothing, except his family, provisions, and tents. The family consisted of his wife, Sariah, and their four sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi.

The term "Land of His/Our/Their Inheritance" appears frequently throughout The Book of Mormon. It refers to land allotted to a particular family, either by being passed down from father to son or by a newly divided territory. See Alma 43:12, Jacob 3:4 and many other references to lands of inheritance and how important they were to their respective owners. At the time Lehi lived in Israel, nobody could belong to the "old aristocracy" if he did not still possess the land of his inheritance, regardless of wealth, influence or ability.³ Lehi was leaving *everything* behind and trusting completely in God when he departed into the wilderness.

It was noted earlier that the text of The Book of Mormon was written in the Hebrew language. It is interesting to note that Hebrew uses conjunctions much more frequently than English and also repeats related elements such as prepositions, articles and possessive pronouns. Hence, a proper English sentence would read, "Lehi left his house, land, gold, silver and precious things"; a Hebrew sentence translated into English reads as verse 4:

*"...**And** he left **his** house, **and** the land of **his** inheritance, **and** **his** gold, **and** **his** silver, **and** **his** precious things, **and** took nothing with him, save it were **his** family, **and** provisions, **and** tents, **and** departed into the wilderness."*

Such repetition seems to be a waste of precious space on the plates, except for the fact that it is required by the Hebrew language. This kind of repetition is so prominent in The Book of Mormon that a Hebrew professor, a specialist in the history of the Hebrew language, once used a passage in The Book of Mormon in a lecture to illustrate this principle. He explained that it was a better illustration than passages from the English Bible.⁴

Lehi and his Family Travel Near the Red Sea (2:5 – 2:7)

Lehi and his family traveled for three days down to the borders near the Red Sea. Today we know this area as the Gulf of Aqaba, about 150 miles from Jerusalem. They pitched their tents by the side of a river. Here "he built an altar of stones, made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks to God" (verse 7). This Lehi did, even as had been commanded by God to the people of Israel. See Joshua 8:31 which states "*they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings*". Lehi's sacrifice was a "peace offering" (see Leviticus 3) or "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (see Psalms 107:22) which was the accepted way of expressing thanks to God. A "burnt offering" was used to make atonement for sin (see Leviticus 1:2-4). There are two recorded occasions when Lehi offered these (1 Nephi 5:9 and 7:22).⁵ They will be discussed later when those chapters are covered.

Laman and Lemuel Murmur Against Lehi (2:8 – 2:14)

While at the site of their first camp, Lehi followed a desert custom by assigning names to the stream and the valley where they were camped.⁶ He named the stream Laman and the valley Lemuel, after his two oldest sons. Lehi then reprimanded his two sons, telling them that they should take on the qualities of the stream and valley, respectively.

This is the first indication that Laman and Lemuel will be the "troublemakers" of the family. Verse 11 states that they murmured against their father because he "*had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, ...to perish in the wilderness*". It is interesting to compare their reaction to that of the children of Israel who asked Moses, "*hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?*" (Exodus 14:11)⁷

Laman and Lemuel received their first rebuke from God at this time. Verse 14 states that "*their frames did shake*" as Lehi spoke to them because he was so filled with the Spirit of God. This was enough to get them to go along for now but they would need additional rebukes from God later.

Lehi Dwells in a Tent (2:15)

With the announcement that his “*father dwelt in a tent*” (verse 15), Nephi serves notice that Lehi had assumed the desert way of life.⁸ It was obviously a very important point as Nephi records it four times (1 Nephi 2:15, 9:1, 10:16, 16:6). As the leader of the expedition, Lehi’s tent served as the headquarters for all activities, discussion and decisions (see 1 Nephi 3:1, 4:38, 5:7, 7:5, 7:21-22, 15:1, 16:10).⁹

Nephi Seeks the Lord Diligently (2:16 – 2:24)

Having a great desire to know of the mysteries of God, Nephi cried unto the Lord, and the Holy Spirit convinced him that the things his father said were true. Nephi related this to his brothers, but only Sam believed him. Being grieved because of his brothers’ unbelief, Nephi cried unto the Lord on their behalf. The Lord revealed unto him that they would be led to a land that was choice above all other lands. The Lord promised that they would prosper if they kept His commandments. The Lord further told Nephi that as long as he kept His commandments he would be made a ruler and teacher over his brothers, and that they would have no power over his seed, “except they shall rebel against me also.” Sadly, we read in 4 Nephi verse 45, “*both the people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceedingly wicked.*” In Mormon 8:7 we read, “*Behold, the Lamanites have hunted my people, the Nephites down from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more; and great has been their fall.*” This occurred about 400 years after the coming of Christ.

CHAPTER 3

Lehi Sends Sons Back to Jerusalem to Obtain Plates of Brass (3:1 – 3:8)

After speaking with the Lord, Nephi returned to his father's tent. Lehi told him that the Lord had commanded him in a dream to send he and his brothers back to Jerusalem. They were to go to the home of Laban and obtain the brass plates that contained the record of the Jews and the genealogy of their forefathers.

Nephi’s brothers (assumedly Laman and Lemuel) murmured at this request, but Nephi said, “*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*” (verse 7).

First Attempt at Obtaining the Plates of Brass from Laban (3:9 – 3:14)

When the brothers returned to Jerusalem, they cast lots to see who should ask Laban for the records. It fell upon Laman. [The practice of casting lots for making decisions was common in biblical days. In Acts 1:23-26 the Apostles chose Matthias to take Judas' place by casting lots.] Laman went into Laban's house and asked for the plates but his request angered Laban insomuch that he thrust him out and threatened to slay him. At this point, Nephi's brothers were ready to return empty-handed to Lehi in the wilderness.

Second Attempt at Obtaining the Plates of Brass from Laban (3:15 – 3:27)

Nephi was able to persuade his brothers to return to the home of their father and take their gold, silver and riches, and offer them to Laban in exchange for the plates of brass. In verses 19-20, Nephi explained to his brothers the importance of obtaining the plates. They were needed to preserve the language of their fathers and the words of the prophets for their children. Read Omni verses 14-19 for reference to the consequences of a people who brought no records with them when they came to this land. They were descendants of Mulek who was one of the sons of King Zedekiah. (Helaman 6:10) The Mulekites were led out of Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi and his family. This was the same time that King Zedekiah was carried away captive into Babylon. Read Helaman 8:21-22 and Jeremiah 39:1-7.

When the brothers brought their considerable property to Laban, he took it away from them without giving them the brass plates. Instead, he thrust them from his house and sent his servants to slay them. Leaving their riches behind, they fled into the wilderness and hid from Laban's servants in a cave (the cavity of a rock).

Laman and Lemuel Smite Nephi with a Rod (3:28 – 3:31)

Laman and Lemuel were angry with Nephi. Their lives had been threatened. Perhaps they were more angry because they had lost their riches. They began striking Nephi (and Sam) with a rod.

In the culture of that time, men often asserted their authority over inferiors by beating them with a stick, perhaps their walking sticks. Government officials, superior officers, tax collectors and schoolmasters would use a short rod to threaten (or if necessary to beat) their inferiors.¹⁰ It can be inferred that Laman and Lemuel were trying to assert their authority as the older brothers through this beating from the description in verse 28: "*Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us, **their younger brothers**, and they did smite us even with a rod*".

However, an angel appeared before Laman and Lemuel, stopped the beating, and said, "*Why do you smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen **him** to be a ruler over **you**,...because of your iniquities?*" (verse 29)¹¹

The angel then told the brothers, "*...go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands.*" (verse 29) Even with this marvelous experience of seeing an angel, Laman and Lemuel still murmured and didn't believe that Laban would be delivered into their hands.

CHAPTER 4

Nephi Convinces his Brothers to Try Again for the Plates (4:1 – 4:4)

Nephi convinced Laman and Lemuel to return to Jerusalem and reminded them of how the might of God through Moses had divided the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:15-16, 21-22) and how the armies of Pharaoh that had tried to destroy the people of Israel were drowned (see Exodus 14:23-31). Nephi also reminded them that the angel had told them directly that Laban would be delivered into their hands.

Nephi Kills Drunken Laban (4:5 – 4:18)

Nephi crept into the city toward the house of Laban and saw a man on the ground drunken with wine. He discovered the man to be Laban. He took Laban's sword from the sheath and "*was constrained by the Spirit that [he] should kill Laban*" (verse 10). Nephi had never shed the blood of man before and shrank from the order. The Spirit continued to speak to Nephi, finally saying, "*It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief*" (verse 13). Nephi came to the realization that his seed could not prosper in the land of promise if they did not keep the commandments of God according to the law of Moses (which was engraven upon these plates of brass). (Refer to Mosiah 1:3-5 and Omni verses 14-17 for the consequences of having no records.) Finally, Nephi "*did obey the voice of the Spirit,...and...smote off his head*" (verse 18).

This is not the only instance in scripture where the concept of "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should...perish" is invoked. In 2 Samuel chapter 20, King David sought the life of Sheba, a rebel guilty of treason. When Sheba took refuge in the city of Abel, Joab, the leader of David's army, demanded that Sheba be released to him. The people of Abel beheaded Sheba instead, and Joab withdrew the army. This episode became an important legal precedent justifying the killing of one person in order to preserve an entire group.¹² Accord-

ing to Jewish tradition, this precedent was invoked to justify the execution of evil King Jehoiakim (see also Jeremiah 22:18-19 and 2 Chronicles 36:6). This incident occurred less than a year before Lehi and his family left Jerusalem.¹³ It can be assumed that Nephi would have been familiar with this episode so hearing the Spirit speak the words, “It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should...perish”, would have been enough to convince him that killing Laban was in accordance with God’s plan. Years later, the same concept was invoked by Alma when dealing with Korihor (Alma 30:47) and it was also used, in concept, by Caiaphas to convince the council of chief priests and Pharisees that they should seek to put Jesus to death (John 11:49-51).¹⁴

Nephi Obtains the Brass Plates from the Servant of Laban (4:19 – 4:30)

Disguising himself as Laban by wearing the dead man's clothes and speaking in his voice, Nephi was able to convince Laban’s servant to retrieve the brass plates from the treasury. Nephi instructed the servant to carry the plates to his “elder brethren” beyond the city walls. The servant thought that Nephi was referring to the brethren of the church, and complied with the request accordingly. When Nephi’s brothers saw them coming, they began to flee, thinking that Nephi had been killed and that Laban was coming for them. However, Nephi called out to them (presumably in his own voice) so his brothers would recognize him. Of course, Laban’s servant then realized the position he was in and prepared to flee himself.

Zoram Agrees to Accompany Nephi and his Brothers (4:31 – 4:38)

Nephi, being large in stature, was able to seize the servant and prevent him from fleeing. Nephi then made a solemn oath to the servant, whose name was Zoram, that he would spare his life and make him a free man if he would agree to go down into the wilderness with them. Why was this oath so effective in convincing Zoram to trust Nephi? This was a time when a man would rather die than break a solemn oath. To be binding and solemn, an oath needed to be by the life of something. Thus, an oath declared “by my life” would carry a lot of credence. In fact, the only oath stronger than that was one declared “by the life of God” or “as the Lord liveth”. The only way that Nephi could possibly have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths: “*as the Lord liveth, and as I live*” (verse 32).¹⁵

Zoram, in turn, made an oath “*that he would tarry with [them] from that time forth*” (verse 35). Zoram proved true to his oath. Years later, Lehi referred to Zoram as “*a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever*” (2 Nephi 1:30).

Their mission now accomplished, Nephi and his brothers departed once again for the wilderness, together with Zoram and the plates of brass.

CHAPTER 5

Nephi and his Brothers Return to their Parents (5:1 – 5:9)

Upon the return of Nephi and his brothers, Lehi and Sariah were filled with joy. Sariah had been troubled during their long absence and had complained to Lehi, calling him a “visionary man” that had sent their sons to perish. She was comforted when her sons returned and acknowledged that the Lord had protected them and given them power to accomplish what He had commanded them.

Verse 9 states that the family “*did offer sacrifice **and** burnt offerings unto the Lord*” at this time. As mentioned earlier in this book (1 Nephi chapter 2), the sacrifice was to give thanks to God while burnt offerings were used to make atonement for sin (see Leviticus 1:2-4). What sin was being atoned for? Since the sins of any member of the party would affect the entire group, this burnt offering could have been to atone for any or all of the following: Sariah’s lack of faith and complaining against Lehi, Laman and Lemuel beating their brothers with a rod, or even the killing of Laban by Nephi. Unwilling to take any chances that the relationship between his family and God had not been securely reconciled, Lehi offered burnt offerings, exactly the right sacrifice for the occasion.¹⁶

Lehi Studies the Plates of Brass (5:10 – 5:16)

Lehi searched the records that were engraven on the brass plates and learned that they contained the following:

- The five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
- A record of the Jews, including prophecies, down to the reign of King Zedekiah
- Many of the prophecies of Jeremiah (who was still alive at that time)
- The genealogy of Lehi (which indicated that he was a descendant of Joseph, the son of Jacob, and that Laban also was a descendant of Joseph)

The Plates of Brass Will Never Perish (5:17 – 5:22)

Being filled with the Spirit, Lehi prophesied that these plates would never perish, and that they will ultimately go forth unto all of his seed.

We should note here that the brass plates contained other books that are not in our Old Testament. In 1 Nephi 19:10, Nephi makes reference to the words of the prophets Zenock, Neum, and Zenos. Their writings were on the plates of brass and contained things that pertained to the Nephites. Also see 2 Nephi Chapters 3 and 4 for reference to the prophecies of Joseph, who was carried into Egypt. See Alma 46:24-25 and 3 Nephi 10:17 for reference to the prophecies of Jacob, the father of Joseph. None of these writings appear in the Bible as we know it. 1 Nephi 13:23-29 makes reference to the contents of the Bible that we have today. These verses explain why certain plain and precious portions of scripture were removed. In 1 Nephi 13:23, the angel tells Nephi that the book possessed by the Gentiles will contain many of the prophecies and *"is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord...wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles."* Note: A Gentile is defined as a person who is not of the house of Israel. Therefore, everyone is either a Gentile or an Israelite.

Just as was prophesied by Lehi, the plates of brass were preserved and handed down through the generations. Mosiah 28:20 tells us that all of the records and the interpreters were conferred upon Alma, the son of Alma, by King Mosiah, who commanded, *"that he should keep and preserve them...handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been ...from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem."* Also read Alma 37:3-5 and 3 Nephi 1:2. The plates of brass were eventually hidden in the earth by Mormon, along with the other plates that were entrusted to him (see Mormon 6:6).

Much of the information on the plates of brass has already come forth but 1 Nephi 5:18-19 would seem to indicate that all of the information on these plates will eventually come forth in the future, undimmed by time, according to the prophecy of Lehi.

CHAPTER 6

Nephi Establishes Ground Rules for Writing on the Small Plates (6:1 – 6:6)

Having completed the episode of obtaining the brass plates, Nephi paused in his writing to describe how he would be selecting material for recording on the “Small Plates”; noting that he would be specifically excluding the genealogy of his fathers and other details which were already recorded in Lehi’s record. He wanted this record to be a missionary tool, as indicated in verses 3-4: *"I desire the room that I may write of the things of God...that I may persuade men to come unto God..."* He also established ground rules for future writers of these plates: *"I shall give commandment unto my seed that they should not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men"* (verse 6). This remained in effect until the final verse was recorded on the Small Plates by Amaleki: *"I am about to lie down in my grave; and these plates are full"* (Omni verse 30). From that time on, all writings, both sacred and secular, were recorded on the Large Plates.

A summary of the information contained on each of the records mentioned thus far:

- ▶ **Small Plates** – 1st and 2nd Books of Nephi, Books of Jacob, Enos, Jarom and Omni
- ▶ **Large Plates** – Book of Lehi (not included in the Book of Mormon), Books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, 3rd Nephi, 4th Nephi and Mormon
- ▶ **Brass Plates** – Five books of Moses, Prophecies, Genealogy (see previous chapter for complete list)

CHAPTER 7

The Lord Instructs Lehi to Obtain Wives for his Sons (7:1 – 7:5)

The Lord spoke to Lehi again, telling him that his sons *"should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise"* (verse 1). He was told to send his sons back to Jerusalem to *"bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness"* (verse 2). The brothers went back and spoke to this family. The Lord softened the hearts of the entire household and they all agreed to accompany Lehi’s sons into the wilderness. Ishmael’s family consisted of himself, his wife, five daughters and two married sons with their families (see verse 6). The five unmarried daughters became the wives of Zoram and the four sons of Lehi.

In addition to having five daughters, it is possible God chose Ishmael’s family because he may have been a descendant of Ephraim (one of the two sons of Joseph, the son of Jacob). Since Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh (the other

son of Joseph), (see Alma 10:3) his descendants through the marriage of his four sons, would be descendants of both Ephraim and Manasseh.

The Book of Mormon does not record the lineage of Ishmael. According to Joseph Smith, the lineage of Ishmael was recorded in the Book of Lehi and subsequently translated by him.¹ Unfortunately, the 116 pages comprising the Book of Lehi were lost after being translated.

In the joining of the families of Ephraim and Manasseh, the blessings that Jacob (Israel) pronounced upon the sons of Joseph are fulfilled. Genesis 48:16-20 reads in part, "...bless the lads;...and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. He blessed them that day saying, "in thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh." For a fuller understanding of this prophecy, read the article entitled *Ephraim and Manasseh* by Apostles Joseph Lovalvo and V. James Lovalvo of The Church of Jesus Christ.

Laman and Lemuel Rebel Again and are Chastened by Nephi (7:6 – 7:15)

As the group traveled in the wilderness, Laman and Lemuel led another rebellion against Nephi with support from two of Ishmael's daughters (presumably the ones they would eventually marry) as well as the two sons of Ishmael and their families. This group desired to return to Jerusalem. Since the family of Ishmael had been apparently united in accompanying Lehi's family into the wilderness (see verse 5), it can be assumed that Laman and Lemuel were instrumental in stirring them up.

Nephi proceeded to admonish his older brothers, reminding them that they had seen an angel (1 Nephi 3:29) and witnessed how God had delivered Laban into their hands so that they were able to obtain the plates of brass (1 Nephi 4). He concluded by telling them that returning to Jerusalem would mean they would perish with many of the other inhabitants.

Nephi is Bound with Cords (7:16 – 7:19)

Laman and Lemuel became angry with Nephi after his discourse. They tied him with cords and prepared to leave him in the wilderness to be eaten by wild beasts. Demonstrating that the power of God was with him, Nephi prayed for deliverance and the cords were immediately loosed from him and he was again standing before his brothers, continuing to admonish them. Laman and Lemuel would have tried to kill Nephi but they were stopped by several members of Ishmael's family, including one of the sons who must have realized things had gone too far.

Laman and Lemuel Pray for Forgiveness (7:20 – 7:22)

Laman and Lemuel did their best to repent of what they had done by bowing down before Nephi and asking for his forgiveness. Nephi forgave them but he also properly instructed them to bow down before the Lord and ask for His forgiveness and they did so. When the group arrived at the tent of Lehi, sacrifices of thanksgiving were again offered. Due to the sinful actions of several of the group members during the journey, burnt offerings were required and were offered as well (see discussion of 1 Nephi 5:9 in this book).

CHAPTER 8

Lehi Relates His Dream of the Tree of Life (8:1 – 8:8)

Lehi spoke to his family about a dream, or vision he had seen. The experience made him rejoice for Nephi and Sam, but made him fearful for Laman and Lemuel. Nephi later approached the Lord to know the meaning of his father's dream (1 Nephi 11:1-6). It was subsequently revealed to him (and recorded in 1 Nephi chapters 11 and 12). Much of chapters 11 and 12 will be discussed together with this chapter in order to bring out the meaning of Lehi's dream.

At the beginning of the dream, Lehi saw a man dressed in a white robe (see coverage of 1 Nephi 14:18 for a possible identification of this man) who bade him to follow him in a dark and dreary waste. Lehi followed the man for many hours in darkness. Finally, Lehi prayed unto the Lord for mercy.

The Tree of Life and the Fruit thereof (8:9 – 8:12)

After praying to the Lord in his dream, Lehi "*beheld a large and spacious field*" (verse 9) which represented worldly spiritual conditions (from verse 20).

In this field, Lehi saw "*a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy...I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and...it was most sweet, above all I had ever tasted...the fruit thereof was white to exceed all the whiteness I had ever seen*" (verses 10-11).

In chapter 11, Nephi was "*caught away in the Spirit of the Lord*" (11:1) and expressed a "*desire to behold the things which [his] father saw*" (11:3). Nephi then saw this same tree and described it as "*exceeding...all beauty [with a] whiteness [that] did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow*" (11:8). Nephi asked the Spirit to show him the interpretation (or meaning) of the tree. In response to this request, the Spirit showed to Nephi the city of Nazareth in which he "*beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white*" (11:13). Nephi further described this woman as "*most beautiful and fair above all other virgins*" (11:15). The

woman was the virgin Mary, “*the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh*” (11:18). This part of Nephi’s vision concluded with Nephi seeing Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms and an angel asking, “*Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?*” (11:21). Nephi’s response to the angel’s question was that the tree “*is the love of God...it is the most desirable of all things*” (11:22). The angel added, “*and the most joyous to the soul*” (11:23). It is clear from Nephi’s response and the verses quoted above that the tree in Lehi’s dream represents the love of God expressed to mankind by the act of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, taking upon himself flesh and coming to earth to implement the plan of salvation. Consider the following:

1. The description of the tree was quite similar to the description of the virgin Mary while she was carrying the Son of God in her womb. Nephi emphasized “*exceeding whiteness and great beauty*” in both descriptions. Jesus is described in Luke 1:42 as the fruit of Mary’s womb. Thus, it can be said that both the tree and the virgin’s womb brought forth fruit that was “*desirable to make one happy*”, “*most sweet above all [that was] ever tasted*” and “*filled [the] soul with exceeding great joy*” (verses 10-12).
2. Immediately after Nephi first saw the virgin, the Spirit asked him, “*Knowest thou the condescension of God?*” (11:16) Nephi responded, “*I know that he loveth his children*” (11:17). He was thus recognizing that God’s act of “*condescension*” was how He showed His love to his children. (According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word “*condescend*” means “*to descend voluntarily to the level, regarded as lower, of the person that one is dealing with.*”) Clearly, this is what God did in sending His Son to earth to deal with us on our level. Luke 1:35 reads in part, “*...The angel answered, and said unto her [Mary], the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*” The key word here is, “*Highest*”, there being no other power higher than God.

Response of Lehi’s Family in the Dream (8:13 – 8:18)

After Lehi ate the fruit in the dream, it filled his soul with such joy that he had the desire to share it with this family. This is the same desire felt by those who have tasted of the Lord Jesus Christ – they desire to share Him with their family, friends and loved ones.

In the dream, Lehi’s wife Sariah and their two younger sons, Sam and Nephi, responded to his call by coming forth to partake of the fruit. His two oldest sons, Laman and Lemuel, refused to partake of the fruit. This prompted Lehi’s fear for them as expressed at the end of chapter 8.

The Rod of Iron (8:19 – 8:23)

The next scene that Lehi described introduced several new elements to the dream:

- A “straight and narrow path” leading to the tree
- A river running parallel to the straight and narrow path
- A long “rod of iron [that] extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree” (verse 19)
- Many people who attempted to navigate the path to the tree by holding on to the rod of iron
- A “great mist of darkness” that obscured the vision of many of the people and caused them to wander off the path and become lost

Jesus said, “*strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:14). This description fits the straight and narrow path that led to the tree (love of God, Christ, salvation) described in the dream.

The river running parallel to the path was clearly a hazard and would provide a significantly negative result to people who wandered off the path. The angel speaking to Nephi in 1 Nephi chapter 12 referred to this river as a “*fountain of filthy water...the depths thereof are the depths of hell*” (12:16). This is consistent with the result that can be expected for people who wander off the straight and narrow path and do not make it to Christ.

The rod of iron in the dream made it easier to stay on the path. The people who clung to the rod of iron were able to make it all the way to the tree. In 1 Nephi chapter 11, Nephi “*beheld that the rod of iron, which [his] father had seen, was the word of God*” (11:25). This shows us how important it is to hold on to the Word of God as it is the only thing that will keep us on the straight and narrow path.

Lest it be too easy to stay on the path, a great mist of darkness comes in the dream, causing many people who attempted to follow the path to wander off and lose their way. What causes people to wander off the straight and narrow path when they are trying to follow Christ? Clearly, “*the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost*” (12:17).

The Great and Spacious Building (8:24 – 8:34)

Some in the dream did manage to hold on to the rod of iron and make their way through the mist of darkness to the tree and partake of the fruit. However, the enemy threw another assault at them from a “great and spacious building” that Lehi saw on the other side of the river. This building was filled with finely-dressed people, both young and old, who were mocking those people that were

partaking of the fruit. As a result, “those *that had tasted of the fruit became ashamed...and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost*” (verse 28).

Nephi later learned that “*the great and spacious building was the pride of the world*” (11:36), the “*vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men*” (12:18). This causes people to lose their way even after finding it to Christ. Note that verse 28 states that this occurs “*after they had tasted of the fruit*”. “Once saved, always saved” is a fallacy. All servants of Christ need to be vigilant against the enemy and not allow pride to steal away what the Lord has given.

It appears that verses 2 through 28 of chapter 8 are taken directly from Lehi’s own writing. In verses 29-30, Nephi states that he is not going to record all of Lehi’s words and summarizes the rest of the dream from that point forward.

Lehi Fears for Laman and Lemuel (8:35 – 8:38)

It was clear from this dream that Laman and Lemuel, who had shown no tendency for following God up to this point, were not destined to do so in the future either. Obviously, Lehi was quite distraught over the fate of his two sons and did his best to “*exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off*” (verse 37). He never gave up on them, exhorting them even on his death bed (see 2 Nephi chapter 1). Laman and Lemuel were eventually separated from the people of God after Lehi’s death.

CHAPTER 9

Difference Between the Large Plates and the Small Plates (9:1 – 9:6)

In this chapter, Nephi explains the necessity for keeping two sets of records and what each set of plates would contain. Curiously, Nephi calls both sets of plates by the same name – the Plates of Nephi. To distinguish between them, the “*plates upon which [Nephi made] a full account of the history of [his] people*” (verse 2) became known as the “Large Plates of Nephi” (see Jacob 3:13) while the plates created “*for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of [Nephi’s] people*” (verse 3) became known as the “Small Plates of Nephi” (see Jacob 1:1). (See the discussion of 1 Nephi chapter 6 for the contents of each set of plates.) In verse 5, Nephi states that “*the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose..., which purpose I know not*”. This “wise purpose” will be explored further in the discussion of 1 Nephi chapter 19.

CHAPTER 10

Nephi Begins His Own Account (10:1)

Near the beginning of his record on the Small Plates, Nephi stated that they would contain an abridgement of the record of his father followed by an account of his own life (see 1 Nephi 1:17). In verse 1, Nephi states that even though he is beginning his own account at this point, he would still be speaking considerably of his father and brothers as well.

Lehi Prophecies of Carrying Away of the Jews into Babylon (10:2 – 10:3)

After Lehi made an end of speaking about his dream of the tree (see 1 Nephi chapter 8), he spoke to his family concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews into Babylon (see 2 Kings 25:11 and Jeremiah 52:3-15). He said that in the Lord's due time, the Jews would be brought back to the land of their inheritance. For the biblical reference to "the land of their inheritance," see Genesis 13:14-15, "*The Lord said unto Abram...look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward...the land which thou seest...will I give...to thy seed forever.*" Also see Genesis 15:18, "*unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto...the River Euphrates.*" Note: The river of Egypt mentioned here was not the Nile, but a stream that is about fifty miles south of Gaza.

Prophecies of the Coming of the Messiah (10:4 – 10:11)

In verse 4, Nephi's record moves rather abruptly to a different subject discussed by Lehi – the coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ) who was to come 600 years from the time Lehi's family left Jerusalem. From Lehi's studies of the Plates of Brass (see 1 Nephi 5:10-16), he was familiar with the many prophets who since the time of Moses had testified of this Redeemer (See Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:20-24 and 3 Nephi 20:23). Lehi told his family of these prophecies – one of them is quoted in verse 8 (the one from Isaiah 40:3 regarding John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord). Other prophecies mentioned describe the baptism of Jesus (by John the Baptist in Bethabara, beyond Jordan) as well as His death and resurrection. It is unclear whether these are Lehi's own prophecies or simply a rehearsal of prophecies contained on the Plates of Brass but they are entirely accurate nonetheless.

Lehi Compares the House of Israel to an Olive Tree (10:12 – 10:16)

After mentioning that the Jews would reject the gospel of Christ, resulting in Jesus revealing himself (through the Holy Ghost) to the Gentiles (see verse 11), Lehi went on to compare the house of Israel to "*an olive-tree, whose branches*

should be broken off and...scattered upon all the face of the earth" (verse 12). In Jacob chapters 5 and 6, Jacob quotes the words of the prophet Zenos, as they appear on the Plates of Brass, also likening the House of Israel to an olive tree. He also speaks of the scattering and the promise of the gathering together of Israel in the last days.

Lehi acknowledges that this was the reason they were being led to the land of promise, "*unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon the face of the earth"* (verse 13). In Jeremiah 29:18-19 we read, "*I will deliver them to be removed to all kingdoms of the earth...because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets."*

Here is a summary of Lehi's prophecy regarding the House of Israel and the Gentiles:

1. Jews to reject the gospel of Christ
2. House of Israel to be scattered throughout the world
3. Gentiles to receive the fullness of the Gospel
4. House of Israel to accept Christ and be gathered together again (or to be "grafted in", using the olive tree metaphor)

For references to the gathering of Israel, see Ezekiel 36:24 and Isaiah 27:12-13.

Near the beginning of his record on the Small Plates, Nephi stated that his record would contain an abridgement of the record of his father followed by an account of his own life (see 1 Nephi 1:17). In verse 1 of this chapter, Nephi states that he is beginning his own account at this point, even though he would still be speaking considerably of his father and his brothers as well.

Nephi Desires to See and Know of Things Lehi Saw (10:17 – 10:22)

After hearing Lehi describe his vision of the tree and the prophecies of the future events, it could be said that Nephi was "spiritually jealous". He had a powerful desire to see and hear what his father had seen and heard and also to know about the things that his father had spoken of by the power of the Holy Ghost. Nephi's exciting account of what happened next is recorded in chapters 11-14.

Nephi then explained to his brothers the necessity of an awful hell as depicted in Lehi's vision. His logic is as follows:

- If a person's works are filthy, the person is filthy
- If a filthy person dwells in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God must be filthy also
- The kingdom of God is not filthy; therefore a filthy person must dwell in some other place

- In order to have a place for the filthy to dwell, there is an awful hell prepared, in which the devil is the foundation

It follows from the above that “*the final state of the souls of men is to dwell in the kingdom of God, or to be cast out*” (verse 35) into an awful hell.

CHAPTER 11

Nephi to be Granted the Desire of his Heart (11:1 – 11:7)

Immediately after desiring “*to know the things that [his] father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known...[Nephi] was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord*” (verse 1). Conversing with the Spirit as if he was a man (see verse 11), Nephi expressed his desire as well as his belief in all the words of his father. The Spirit rejoiced and stated that Nephi would not only see the vision of the tree but would also witness and bear record of the coming of the Son of God.

The Meaning of Lehi’s Vision of the Tree (11:8 – 11:25)

The first part of Nephi’s vision, in which the meaning of Lehi’s vision of the tree is revealed, was covered in detail as part of the discussion of Lehi’s vision in 1 Nephi chapter 8. To summarize, Nephi saw that the tree represented the love of God as expressed to mankind by the coming of Christ in the flesh. See the discussion of chapter 8 for the details.

Nephi Witnesses the Coming of Christ (11:26 – 11:33)

When the angel in Nephi’s vision told him to “*behold the condescension of God*” (verse 26), Nephi saw “*the Redeemer of the world*” (verse 27), also known as the Lamb of God or Jesus Christ. Nephi was privileged to witness many events pertaining to the life of Christ:

- The prophet who would prepare the way before Him
- The baptism of Jesus
- The Holy Ghost coming down out of heaven to abide upon Him in the form of a dove
- Jesus ministering unto the people in power
- His twelve apostles
- Jesus healing multitudes of people of all manner of diseases and sicknesses by the power of God
- The arrest and judgment of Christ
- His crucifixion on the cross

In summary, in this part of his vision, Nephi saw “the condescension of God” or the Son of God, the Creator of all things from the beginning, voluntarily submitting himself to all the suffering and trials of mortality, even unto death (read Mosiah 3:5-8 and Alma 7:11-13).

The Battle for the Souls of Mankind (11:34 – 11:36)

After viewing the crucifixion of Christ, Nephi saw that the responsibility would shift to the twelve Apostles to lead the battle for the souls of mankind. Nephi saw the large and spacious building from Lehi's vision and was told that it represented the wisdom and pride of the world which are key elements in drawing people away from serving Christ. These are also key elements in preventing the House of Israel from accepting Christ as depicted in Nephi's vision by "*the house of Israel...gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb*" (verse 35). This part of the vision ended with the collapse of the great and spacious building. The angel observed, "*Thus shall be the destruction of all nations...that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb*" (verse 36).

CHAPTER 12

Nephi Sees the Future of his Descendants (12:1 – 12:15)

As Nephi's vision continued, he observed his seed (descendants) and that of his brethren upon the land of promise. See 1 Nephi chapter 18 for an account of the journey of Lehi's family to the land of promise (the Americas). Nephi saw that there would be many generations of wars and great slaughter between these two groups of people throughout the years. The bulk of The Book of Mormon describes the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Many other future events were revealed to Nephi at this time regarding what would happen to his descendants after the crucifixion of Christ. These events are listed in the table below along with a reference to where the actual occurrence of each event is recorded in The Book of Mormon.

| Verse | Event | Fulfillment Recorded |
|-------|---|----------------------|
| 4 | Mist of Darkness throughout the Land | 3 Nephi 8:20-22 |
| 4 | Lightning, Thunder, Earthquakes, etc. | 3 Nephi 8:6-19 |
| 5 | Darkness Lifted from the Land | 3 Nephi 10:9 |
| 5 | Many Killed by the Destruction | 3 Nephi 8:9-16 |
| 6 | Jesus Appears to the Nephites | 3 Nephi 11:8-10 |
| 7-8 | Jesus Chooses 12 Nephite Disciples | 3 Nephi 12:1 |
| 11 | Three Generations of Righteousness | 4 Nephi vv. 14,18,22 |
| 12 | Unrighteousness Begins in Fourth Generation | 4 Nephi vv. 23-26 |
| 13-15 | Battles Between Nephites and Lamanites | Mormon chapter 2 |

After mentioning the 12 Nephite disciples in verses 7-8, the angel described how they will be used in the future to judge Nephi's descendants. Since the 12 Apostles of Jesus from Jerusalem will be used to judge all of the House of Israel (see Matthew 19:28), they will also be involved in judging the descendants of Nephi, including the 12 Nephite disciples. It is possible (although there are no records to verify) that Jesus may have chosen other groups of 12 from the other tribes of Israel to be involved in judging the people of those tribes as well.

Interpretations of Additional Elements of Lehi's Vision (12:16 – 12:18)

As the people shown in Nephi's vision were sinking into sin on their way to ultimate destruction, the angel took the opportunity to show how these events related to the later elements in Lehi's vision, specifically the fountain of filthy water, the mists of darkness and the large and spacious building. See the discussion of 1 Nephi chapter 8 for the description of these elements of Lehi's vision.

God often uses things that people are familiar with to bring forth a message. This appears to have been the case with the fountain of filthy water as its description resembles that of a desert *sayl* – a raging torrent of liquid filth that sweeps whole camps to destruction. One of the worst places for these torrents of liquid mud is in the scarred and bare mountains which run parallel to the west coast of Arabia. This was the very region through which Lehi traveled on his great trek so the image of such a tool of destruction would have been very familiar to him.¹

Nephi Sees the End of his Lineage (12:19 – 12:23)

Mormon chapters 2 through 6 describe the final battles between the Nephites (the seed of Nephi) and the Lamanites (the seed of his brethren) which ended in the destruction of the Nephite people. Nephi saw this occurring in his vision as recorded in verses 19-20.

This chapter ends with Nephi seeing that the "victorious" Lamanites would be fighting among themselves for hundreds of years. Eventually, they would "*dwindle in unbelief*" (verse 22) and become "*a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations*" (verse 23). From a time perspective, these events would begin after the end of the time period covered by The Book of Mormon (5th century A.D.) and continue for at least 1000 years. Note that the Lamanites would go back to the way they were at the time they were first cursed (see 2 Nephi 5:21-24) – dark, loathsome, filthy, idle, etc.

CHAPTER 13

The Great and Abominable Church (13:1 – 13:9)

The focus of Nephi's vision shifted to "the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles" (verse 3) in the beginning of chapter 13. Specifically, Nephi "saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church...which is most abominable...and...the devil was the founder of it" (verses 4-6). We won't attach a name to a specific church here but the church Nephi saw would have to be one that demonstrated a desire for "the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing and the harlots" (verse 8) and would "destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity" (verse 9). For a side discussion of why the sentence in verse 8 is structured as it is, see discussion of 1 Nephi 2:4.

Nephi Foresees Events of American History (13:10 – 13:19)

Nephi saw how the Gentiles would be used to carry out "the wrath of God [that was] upon the seed of [his] brethren" (verse 11). As of the 15th century A.D., the Americas had not yet been "discovered" by the Gentiles. In Nephi's vision, he saw that "many waters...divided the Gentiles from the seed of [his] brethren" (verse 10).

Christopher Columbus

He then saw a man from among the Gentiles, "separated from the seed of [his] brethren by many waters; and [he] beheld the spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man" (verse 12). Nephi saw him cross the many waters unto his seed in the promised land.

We know from our American history that the man Nephi saw was Christopher Columbus. Several biographies have been written about Columbus, and all declare that he truly was inspired by God to make the voyage. An excerpt from Columbus' own book, *Book of Prophecies*, which is available only in Spanish, is quoted in the book, *The Light and the Glory*, (p. 17): "It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures...I am a most unworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely...No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of our Saviour, if it is just and if the intention is purely for His holy service..." For other biographies on Columbus, see the Bibliography.

The Pilgrims and the Puritans

Nephi also saw *"the Spirit of God...wrought upon other Gentiles, and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters"* (verse 13). We discover here that Nephi was given the knowledge of the conditions that would be prevailing in Europe during the time of the Gentile expeditions to this hemisphere.

In the study of American history we learn that the Separatists, otherwise known as Pilgrims, were forced to flee from England after suffering years of persecution because of their desire to leave the Church of England. Their determination was to do away with liturgical tradition and have the freedom to pray and worship God in the manner inspired by their study of the Bible.

Another group called "Puritans", not desiring to leave the Church, sought to purify it from within. The ruling monarch, King James I, decreed that all Puritans not willing to conform to ecclesiastical authority had to leave the country. Interestingly enough, we read in *The King James Version, The First 350 Years*, by F. F. Bruce, that this is the same King, who in 1604 was instrumental in making the resolution, "That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes..." King James said that among the notes in the Geneva Bible, there were some that were "very partial, untrue, seditious, and savoring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits". He conceded that no one would object to notes intended to make the sense plainer, and indeed notes of this kind were provided in the new version. This version of the Bible, published in 1611, is the one that we use today.

There were many Gentile expeditions to the promised land after Columbus' discovery. Expeditions arrived from Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and England. All of these nations were under tyrannical rule and many of their citizens sought to be free.

Treatment of the American Indians

Nephi *"beheld the wrath of God...upon the seed of [his] brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten"*(verse 14). The many stories in American history of how the American Indians were mistreated by the white man (see verse 15) illustrate how this prophecy was fulfilled. It is not necessarily the case that God inspired the white man to relegate the Indians to reservations, lie to them, steal from them, etc. but it is clear that the Lamanites received no protection from God from the natural greed of the people who were brought to the Americas.

Prosperity of Early Americans

Whereas the Lamanites would be having a hard time in the land of promise, Nephi *"beheld the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble them-*

selves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them" (verse 16). History attests that although the Pilgrims and Puritans suffered many hardships, they were blessed not only in their service to Him, but the land became theirs. Not all had noble desires nor were they seeking religious freedom. Stories of the gold Columbus had received in exchange for worthless trinkets, and later, the tales of the expanse of fruitful lands that seemed to be free for the taking, had spread throughout that part of the world. Lehi later prophesied, "When the time cometh that they," (the descendants of those brought from Jerusalem to the Americas) "shall dwindle in unbelief...He," (the Lord) "will bring other nations unto them, and He will give them power...and He will take away from them the lands of their possessions" (2 Nephi 1:10-11). See the Bibliography for a few of the many books detailing the history of the early "Gentile" settlers in this land.

The American Revolution

When Nephi "*beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together...to battle against them" (verse 17), he was witnessing the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. Verse 13 indicates that the first settlers coming from England did so by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Before the Gentiles could accomplish the purpose for which they had been separated by God; religious and political freedom had to be attained. This would come only by defeating the despotic rulers from which they had fled. History tells us that this was not an easy feat. The colonists treasured the privilege of self-governing and were careful not to provoke the Crown into any action which might diminish their autonomy.*

Nearly a century before the Revolution, Charles II's advisors warned him that "freedom" was being preached in the colonies, and urged him to do something to regulate the Colonists. In 1683, Charles II demanded that Massachusetts either swear allegiance to the Crown or relinquish its charter. In January of 1684 the Colonists voted not to submit. The King was enraged and was determined to send five thousand troops to force Massachusetts to comply. It is recorded that in February of 1685, before the plan could be implemented, he died of apoplexy. His brother, James II succeeded him, and sent Sir Edmund Andros to strike at the heart of the resistance, which had begun with their religion. Andros ordered that Episcopal services be held in their meetings, thereby removing the freedom to worship as they wished. In the following years many greed-motivated measures were imposed upon the Colonies.

In 1689, word reached the Colonies that James II had been overthrown by William and Mary and the Colonists regained their rights as freeborn Englishmen. Peace of a sort returned until 1760 when George III took power. He and his ministers relentlessly increased the pressures calculated to bring the Colonists to their knees. This did not discourage them. The preaching from American pulpits stressed that God's will would be done. In 1767, Josiah Quincy's sermon was printed in the Boston Gazette, "In defense of our civil religious right...we fear not the hour of trial; though the hosts of our enemies should cover the field like lo-

custs, yet the sword of the Lord and Gideon shall prevail." (*Bancroft, History VI, page 102*)

In September of 1768, the Boston Gazette printed: "If an army should be sent to reduce us to slavery, we will put our lives in our hands and cry to the judge of all the earth...They come to cast us out of this possession which Thou hast given us to inherit. Help us, Lord, our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude." (*Bancroft, History VI, page 195*)

The Colonists continued to maintain the hope that things could be resolved peacefully, but seven years later, in April of 1775, "the shot that was heard round the world," was fired on Lexington green. By this time, not only the Massachusetts ministers were voicing the plea for freedom, but people throughout the colonies made themselves heard on this matter.

On March 23, 1775 Patrick Henry gave his famous speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses: "There is no longer room for hope. If we wish to be free, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Host is all that is left us!.. God presides over the destinies of nations, and will raise up friends for us... Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" (*Bancroft, History VII, page 274*)

If we follow the course of events from April 1775 in Lexington, Massachusetts to when the last shot was fired in October of 1781 in Yorktown, Virginia, we must come to the conclusion that it was God's will for America to break away from her mother country. History bears out the many times that the hand of God intervened on behalf of the poorly-armed, outnumbered patriots battling against a great army of trained soldiers and mercenaries. 1 Nephi 13:18-19 tells us, "*I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle... The Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.*"

Plain and Precious Things to be Removed from the Bible (13:20 – 13:29)

Nephi next saw a book being carried by the Gentiles. The book was the Bible, described by the angel as "*a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many*" (verse 23).

The angel told Nephi that this book would originally contain "*the plainness of the gospel of the Lord*" (verse 24) but would fall into the hands of that great and abominable church (see 1 Nephi 13:4-6). This church would take things away

from the book such that "*many parts which are plain and most precious*" (verse 26) would be taken away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. This would be done "*that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men*" (verse 27). After the plain and precious things were taken away, the book would go forth unto all nations, including the Gentiles which crossed the many waters to escape captivity. Because of the things which were taken away from the book, many people would stumble.

Gentiles to be Used to Smite the Seed of Joseph (13:30 – 13:31)

Nephi then saw how the Gentiles would be used by God to smite the Seed of Joseph. As mentioned earlier, this can be seen in American history in the way the white man treated the American Indians. However, it is important to note that the angel stated that "*God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy*" (verse 30) the seed of Joseph in the Americas. According to verse 30, these surviving Israelites would not only include the seed of Nephi's brothers but also a "mixture" of his own seed, apparently the results of mixed marriages between Nephites and Lamanites.

In the study of American history we learn that when the American Revolution ended in 1781, the new nation was in control of the land east of the Mississippi. Beyond the Appalachian Mountains, the land still belonged to the Indians (the seed of Lehi). In 1790, the first of many conflicts over land possession broke out between the Indians and the new nation, resulting in the death of countless Indians. These encounters continued, until by the middle of the nineteenth century, the new nation had taken possession of the land extending to the Pacific Ocean (*The Conquest of the West* (pp 9-10, et al).

We read in *The New Indians*, by Stan Steiner, "It had been thought by many that the Indian was the vanishing American...He was thought to have unhappily vanished from the face of the land. One hundred years ago [in the 1800's] a cadet at West Point, George Armstrong Custer, wrote in a term paper for his ethics class: 'The red man is alone in his misery. We behold him now on the verge of extinction, standing on his last foothold...and soon he will be talked of as a noble race who once existed but have passed away.'" This was man's thinking, not God's. His promises, as found in verse 30 and elsewhere in the scriptures, are faithful.

Coming Forth of The Book of Mormon (13:32 – 13:36)

Although God would use the Gentiles to bring about His plans during this period of history, they would still be in what was described as an "*awful state of blindness...because of the plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which [would be] kept back by that abominable church*" (verse 32). However, Nephi is told that God would be "*merciful unto the Gentiles in that day*" and would "*bring forth unto them,....much of [the] gospel, which [would] be plain and precious*"

(verse 34). It is clear that this is referring to the coming forth of The Book of Mormon as verse 35 states that Nephi's seed would do the writing and, after the destruction of his seed, "*these things [would] be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb*" (verse 35).

Other Books to Come Forth (13:37 – 13:42)

After the coming forth of The Book of Mormon, the Gentiles would bring it and the Bible to the Lamanite people – "*both (books) [would] be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth*" (verse 41).

In addition, Nephi was told that there would be other books that would help establish the truth of the earlier writings and would identify the plain and precious things that were taken away from them. It is generally assumed (though not specifically stated in the text here) that these books will be the records of the other ten tribes of Israel.

CHAPTER 14

Believing Gentiles to be Numbered with House of Israel (14:1 – 14:7)

The final phase of Nephi's vision begins with the revelation that the Gentiles will have the opportunity to share in the promises to the House of Israel. Specifically, it is mentioned that "*they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever*" (verse 2), thereby sharing in the promise to the Seed of Joseph.

In order to receive these promises, it will be necessary for the Gentiles to look to Christ and allow Him to "*manifest himself unto them in word, and...deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks and harden not their hearts against [Him]*" (vv. 1-2). These stumbling blocks were caused by the removal of the "plain and precious things" from the Bible (see previous chapter). The latter part of verse 2 states, "*and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.*" This is reinforcing what was stated in 1 Nephi 13:39 concerning the commission assigned to the Gentiles, who "*shall hearken unto the Lamb of God*" (verse 1) to bring the fullness of the gospel to the House of Israel. Read 2 Nephi 6:6-12 and 10:7-9.

Whereas the future is bright for those who follow Christ, the future is bleak for those who try to lead people away from Christ. Verse 3 tells us that such people shall suffer "*utter destruction...not the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end.*" Note that whether good or evil, the soul never dies. Read Mosiah 3:24-27, 16:10-11; Alma 12:16-17.

The magnitude of the work of Jesus Christ is expressed in verse 7 – it is unique in that it is "*everlasting either on the one hand or on the other*":

- A. Those who believe in Christ will receive “*peace and life eternal*”
- B. Those who reject Christ will suffer temporal and spiritual destruction and be subject to the “*captivity of the devil*”.

The Church of Jesus Christ vs. The Church of the Devil (14:8 – 14:17)

The angel showed Nephi a time when there would be just “*two churches, the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God, belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations*” (verse 10). The Book of Revelation describes this same period of time when each person will have to make the choice to either be aligned with Christ or with the devil. The “666” mark of the beast will identify those who belong to the “church” of the devil (see Revelation 13:16-18 and 14:9-11). Only those who refuse the mark of the beast will belong to Christ – they will be unable to buy or sell (see Revelation 13:17) and may be subject to beheading (see Revelation 20:4) but they will receive great rewards in heaven.

This church of the devil is described by Nephi as “*the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters*” (verse 11). Revelation 17:1 uses virtually the same words to describe that same entity.

Regrettably, due to the false miracles of the Anti-Christ (referred to as the beast in the Book of Revelation) and his false prophet (see Revelation 19:20), as well as the threats mentioned earlier, a large majority of the people will accept the mark of the beast, making them part of the church of the devil at that time. As a result, Nephi saw that the numbers of the church of the Lamb of God at that time would be few.

Nephi then witnesses the Battle of Armageddon, led by Christ Himself, as described in Revelation chapter 19. Note the similarities in the descriptions:

| 1 Nep | | Rev | |
|-------|--|----------|---|
| 14:13 | The great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth...to fight against the Lamb of God. | 19:19 | I saw the beasts and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse (Jesus). |
| 14:14 | The power of the Lamb of God...descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb...and they were armed with righteousness. | 19:8 | And to her (the church) was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. |
| 14:15 | The wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars. | 19:20-21 | The beast...and the false prophet...were cast alive into a lake of fire...And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse. |
| 14:16 | The wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots. | 19:2 | He (God) hath judged the great whore. |

Verse 17 states that at this time, *“the work of the Father shall commence in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel”*. This would seem to correspond to the next event in the Book of Revelation where Satan is bound for a thousand years, *“that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled”* (Revelation 20:3). It is most likely that the remainder of the House of Israel would then be able to come to a knowledge of Christ during this time when Satan is not able to deceive them.

End of Nephi’s Vision (14:18 – 14:30)

The final part of Nephi’s vision consists of *“a man...dressed in a white robe”* (verse 19). This man is identified by the angel as the Apostle John, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. It is interesting to note that Lehi’s vision began with *“a man...dressed in a white robe”* (1 Nephi 8:5). Was it in fact the Apostle John who led Lehi through the dark and dreary waste in his vision? It is not confirmed in the text but since Nephi follows his sighting of John with the statement, *“I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw, and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me”* (verse 29), it seems possible that this may have been the case. Nephi’s statement in verse 29 does pertain to his entire vision but the man in the white robe could well be included, especially since it comes right before this statement is made.

Nephi was instructed by the angel not to write the remainder of the things that he would see concerning the end of the world since John would be recording them in the Book of Revelation. It can be assumed that Nephi witnessed events such as the devil being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, the new heaven and new earth after the first were passed away, and the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. Read Revelation chapters 20 and 21.

Nephi concluded the account of his vision by stating that the Lord had shown him the things that his father had seen, just as he had requested (see 1 Nephi 10:17), and even had them explained by an angel.

CHAPTER 15

Nephi Grieves for Hardness of Hearts of his Brothers (15:1 – 15:6)

After Nephi's vision was concluded, he returned to his father's tent and found his brothers still reacting to Lehi's description of his own vision, "*disputing one with another concerning the things which [their] father had spoken unto them*" (verse 2). Nephi realized that Lehi's words were difficult to understand but he was saddened that his brothers were not of the mind to "*inquire of the Lord*" (verse 3) due to the "*hardness of their hearts*" (verse 4). This led him to think of the eventual destruction of his people that he had witnessed in his vision and this brought additional sorrow to Nephi at this time. Also read Alma 45:10-14 and Helaman 13:5-11. For the fulfillment of this prophecy, read Mormon chapter 6.

House of Israel Compared to an Olive Tree (15:6 – 15:20)

Nephi's brothers told him, "*We cannot understand the words...concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles*" (verse 7).

Nephi explained that by inspiration the House of Israel was compared to an olive tree with each of the tribes representing branches of the tree. Lehi and his family represented a branch of the tree that was to be broken off as they would be relocating to a place far from the main body of Israel (see 1 Nephi 10:12). Years later, when their descendants (or seed) had "*dwindled in unbelief*" (verse 13), the Gentiles would be used to restore the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. This process would begin when the "*fullness of the gospel of the Messiah [would] come unto the Gentiles*" (verse 13), signified by the coming forth of The Book of Mormon to the Gentiles (beginning with Joseph Smith who was a Gentile – see title page of The Book of Mormon).

Nephi's statements indicate that he had been shown that his people would come to a point of complete ignorance concerning their history. In Mormon 6:6, it reads "*...I, Mormon...having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the*

records which had been handed down by our fathers...to fall into the hands of the Lamanites therefore...hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records... With no records, later generations had no remembrance nor recollection of their forefathers or origin. Their language, which was Hebrew (see 1 Nephi 1:2 and Mormon 9:32-34), both oral and written, was lost to them. Most lamentable, this people who had been blessed with knowledge in mathematics, the arts and sciences (as proven by archaeologists) also lost all knowledge of God. Mormon prophesied, *"...this people shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people...because of their unbelief and idolatry...they are without Christ and God in the world; they are driven about as chaff before the wind."* (Mormon 5:15-16). Mormon further stated, *"the Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, for the Gentiles who shall possess the land."* (Mormon 5:19).

When the descendants of Lehi (the seed of Joseph) recognize who they are and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, it will be a time of rejoicing as they are restored to their Israelite brothers and to "the *true fold of God*" (verse 15). Nephi compared this to the branch that was cut off being reattached (or grafted in) to the original tree (see verse 16).

Nephi had been shown the scattering, not only of his seed, but also of the other tribes of Israel. Read I Nephi 19:13-16. Prophecies concerning the scattering and the gathering of the house of Israel are mentioned many times in the Bible as well as in the Book of Mormon. From the days of Moses, the people of Israel received warnings from God that they must do as He commanded or, as recorded in Leviticus 26:33, *"I will scatter you among the heathen...and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste."* For many years, the prophets warned the people of their impending fate for their disobedience to God's commands. After the first deportation of more than ten thousand captives taken into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, (II Kings 24:10-16) the prophecies concerning the scattering were in the process of being fulfilled.

In *The History of Israel*, (p. 294) Martin Noth writes, "Important though the tribes living in Palestine continued to be for the history of Israel, the fact that parts of Israel were living in other lands far from the homeland also acquired significance...Stray individuals who had emigrated for one reason or another or had been driven somewhere by the catastrophic historical events, soon became lost and were absorbed in the foreign environment. For obvious reasons we rarely hear any more of them." On page 338 he states, "We know even less about the fate...of the more important groups in the Diaspora, not to mention the smaller groups of scattered Israelites."

By virtue of the records of Mormon, we have knowledge of the family of Lehi, who are of the House of Joseph, but at this time, knowledge concerning the other tribes, excluding Judah, is still a mystery. A few references that speak of the scattering are: Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:36-37; 64; Nehemiah 1:8; Ezekiel 11:16; 1 Nephi 19:13-14; 1 Nephi 22:3-8.

The Lord's promise to gather his people is mentioned in several pieces of scripture. See Deuteronomy 30:1-5, Nehemiah 1:9; Jeremiah 23:3; 29:12-14; 32:37-38; Ezekiel 37:15-22. Ezekiel 37 speaks of the two sticks which would become one in the hand of the prophet, signifying the Bible and the Book of Mormon (the fullness of the Gospel which shall be given to the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles to the House of Israel; 1 Nephi 10:14). Ezekiel 37:21 reads, "*...I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side...*" Jesus reveals in 3 Nephi 21 the time when these things will begin to take place. Verses 1-3 states, "*...I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall take place – that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people...when these things which I declare unto you...shall be known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob...these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you*" (the house of Joseph). Also read 3 Nephi 16:11; 20:29-31.

Nephi Explains Lehi's Vision to his Brothers (15:21 – 15:29)

Nephi's brothers, who had not been privileged to see the vision that Nephi had, now questioned him regarding some of the elements of Lehi's vision. Nephi's responses, summarized below are based on what the angel told him in his vision. See coverage of 1 Nephi chapters 8, 11 and 12 for more detail on Lehi's vision and the meaning of each of its elements.

| Element of Vision | Meaning | Verse |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Tree | Tree of Life | 22 |
| Rod of Iron | Word of God | 24 |
| River of Water | Filthiness, Awful Gulf, Awful Hell | 27-29 |

Justice of God to Divide the Wicked from the Righteous (15:30 – 15:36)

According to Nephi's description in verse 30, Lehi saw something in his vision that represented the "*justice of God [that] did also divide the wicked from the righteous*". Whatever Lehi saw was as bright as a flaming fire. This is not mentioned in 1 Nephi chapter 8 but Nephi did say (in 1 Nephi 8:29) that he was not recording all the words of his father so this part would be among what was left out when he started summarizing.

Nephi then explained to his brothers the necessity of there being an awful hell as depicted in Lehi's vision. His logic is as follows:

- If a person's works are filthy, the person is filthy
- If a filthy person dwells in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God must be filthy also

- The kingdom of God is not filthy; therefore a filthy person must dwell in some other place
- In order to have a place for the filthy to dwell, there is an awful hell prepared of which the devil is the foundation

It follows from the above that “*the final state of the souls of men is to dwell in the kingdom of God, or to be cast out*” (verse 35) into an awful hell.

CHAPTER 16

Nephi Exhorts his Brothers to be Righteous (16:1 – 16:6)

Nephi's brothers took personally his description of the awful hell that awaits the wicked. They said to him, "*Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we can bear*" (verse 1). He did not apologize for the frank words but rather told them that "*if [they] were righteous and were willing to hearken to the truth, ... then [they] would not murmur because of the truth, and say: Thou speakest hard things against us*" (verse 3). After Nephi exhorted them yet again "*to keep the commandments of the Lord*" (verse 4), his brothers "*did humble themselves before the Lord*" (verse 5). Nephi was optimistic that his brothers would choose righteousness this time but it wasn't long before the brothers returned to their sinful ways. The same cycle was repeated many times.

Five Marriages (16:7 – 16:8)

As had been intended when Ishmael and his family were brought from Jerusalem to join Lehi and his family in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi Chapter 7), the five unmarried men (Laman, Lemuel, Sam, Nephi and Zoram) married the five daughters of Ishmael. Zoram, presumably older than the sons of Lehi, married the oldest daughter. Laman and Lemuel presumably married the two rebellious daughters (see 1 Nephi 7:6). With the establishment of families unrelated by blood to Lehi's family (the families of Zoram and the two sons of Ishmael), future marriages were provided for Lehi's other children and grandchildren.

This fulfilled God's commandment to Lehi that they should raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise (see 1 Nephi 7:1).

Discovery of the Ball or Director (Liahona) (16:9 – 16:17)

At this point, the party was still camped in the valley which Lehi called Lemuel, located about 150 miles (or three days' journey) from Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2:6-14). The two trips back to Jerusalem to retrieve the brass plates and the family of Ishmael had originated from this valley. Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision occurred in that location as well.

Finally, the time had arrived for the party to depart from the valley of Lemuel as "*the Lord spake unto [Lehi] by night, and commanded him that on the morrow he should [continue] his journey into the wilderness*" (verse 9). The next morning, Lehi found "*upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship...of fine brass. Within the ball were two spindles...one pointed the way [they] should go into the wilderness*" (verse 10). It came to be known as the Liahona (meaning compass) and was sometimes called the director (see Alma 37:38).

The party followed the direction of the compass-like ball and traveled for four days, camping at a place they called Shazer. A large oasis region in Arabia near the Red Sea has recently been identified as a likely location of Shazer. This region is said to have the best hunting in all of Arabia and would be about a four day journey from the presumed location of the valley of Lemuel.² This would be consistent with Nephi's description that they were in "*the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea*" (verse 14) and would explain why they stopped there to do their hunting.

Resuming their travels, they continued to "*follow the directions of the ball, which led [them] in the more fertile parts of the wilderness*" (verse 16) such that they were able to "*obtain food for [their] families*" (verse 17).

Nephi Breaks his Bow (16:18 – 16:23)

While hunting for food, Nephi broke his bow, "*which was made of fine steel*" (verse 18). His brothers became angry with him because they were unable to obtain food, especially since their bows had "*lost their springs*" (verse 21). Nephi's brothers and the sons of Ishmael complained exceedingly because of the hunger and fatigue they were experiencing, and even Lehi "*began to murmur against the Lord*" (verse 20).

Nephi made a new bow out of wood and a new arrow "*out of a straight stick*" (verse 23). Two points can be noted which lend authenticity to the narrative:

1. According to ancient Arab writers, the only bow-wood obtainable in all Arabia was the Nab wood that grew only "amid the inaccessible and overhanging crags" of Mount Jasum and Mount Azd, which are situated in the very region where...the broken bow incident occurred.³
2. The kind of arrow used in a bow of fine steel would be a heavier type. It would not work well with a wooden bow. Thus, it would have been necessary for Nephi to make a new arrow even though there is no indication that his original arrows were damaged in any way.

The Ball Directs Nephi to Find Food for the People (16:24 – 16:33)

At Nephi's request, Lehi inquired of the Lord where they should go to obtain food. After Lehi was "*chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord*" (verse 25), he was told to "*Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written*" (verse 26). When he did so, he and the other members of the party were amazed to see that the writing had changed and would continue to change from time to time. Usually, directions were pointed to by the spindles (1 Nephi 16:10). (In verse 28 they are referred to as pointers.) (see also Alma , chapters 37, 40 and 44). What was written was their chastisement (verses 26-27) and also spiritual knowledge concerning the ways of the Lord (verse 29). Writing appeared

from time to time upon or above the spindles for spiritual guidance which would disappear when directions from the spindles or pointers were necessary. Among the things written on the ball were directions which Nephi followed to “*the top of the mountain*. It was there that he was able to *slay wild beasts [and] provide food for [the] families*” (verses 30-31). Nephi wrote, “*how great was their joy!*” And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord, and did give thanks unto Him” (verse 32).

There were also other writings on the ball which gave them “*understanding concerning the ways of the Lord*” (verse 29). New writings appeared “*according to the faith and diligence*” (verse 29) of the people. The working of the spindles was also dependent on “*the faith and diligence and heed which [they] did give unto them*” (verse 28).

This ball was handed down from one generation to another, even as were the plates of brass, the records of Nephi and the sword of Laban (see Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37:38). Alma made reference to the ball in his instructions to his son Helaman, saying, “*it is 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 this compass*” (Alma 37:44). Alma also told him that the compass worked according to the faith that Lehi and his family had in God. When “*they were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith...they did not progress in their journey; therefore they...did not travel in a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst*” (Alma 37:41-42).

The party then continued on their journey in the wilderness, a journey that would last eight years (see 1 Nephi 17:4).

Ishmael Dies and is Buried in Place Called Nahom (16:34 – 16:39)

Ishmael died during the journey. It is recorded that he was “*buried in the place which was called Nahom*” (verse 34). Unlike Shazer and the valley of Lemuel, it appears that Nahom was not a name selected by Lehi’s party but was an already established name (the place which **was called** Nahom). Inscriptions recently found on altars in the area dating back to 700 B.C. confirm that such a place did exist.⁴

It is unclear whether Ishmael died in Nahom or whether he died in the wilderness and was brought to Nahom to be buried. The presumed location of Nahom lies a few miles off the likely path that Lehi’s party would have been traveling so it appears that they may have actually gone to Nahom specifically to bury Ishmael.⁵ The Hebrew word meaning “to mourn or to be consoled” is *naham*⁶ so it is possible that Nahom was viewed (at least by Lehi’s party) as a suitable place for the burial of a loved one.

The daughters of Ishmael mourned his death and murmured against Lehi because he had brought them out of Jerusalem, thereby causing them many sufferings. They were certain that they would all perish in the wilderness, and they expressed a desire to return to Jerusalem.

Laman attempted to stir up Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael by saying, "*let us slay our father and also our brother, Nephi, who has taken it upon himself to be our ruler*" (verse 37). This was at least the second time since their departure from Jerusalem that the brothers sought to slay Nephi (see 1 Nephi 7:16-19 for the first instance). Although Laman felt that Nephi had "*taken it upon himself to be [their] ruler*", 1 Nephi 2:22 and 3:29 indicate that Nephi was chosen by the Lord for that responsibility. (Also read 2 Nephi 1:24-27).

To quell this uprising, the Lord spoke audibly to the malcontents. They heard "*the voice of the Lord...speak many words unto them, and...chasten them exceedingly*" (verse 39). After they were chastened, they repented and the Lord again blessed them with food as they continued in their travels.

CHAPTER 17

The Party Arrives at the Seashore (17:1 – 17:6)

The journey continued from Nahom with the record indicating that they "*did travel nearly eastward from that time forth*" (verse 1). Up to this point, they had been traveling in a south southeast direction through what is now Saudi Arabia, "*in the border near the Red Sea*" (1 Nephi 16:14). On a geographical note, northwest of Marib, the ancient capital of the Sabean kingdom of south Arabia, almost all roads turn east, veering from the general north-south direction of the main trail. Further, the eastward bend occurs in the general area inhabited by the Nihm tribe (a likely candidate for the place called Nahom).⁷

As the months turned into years, the women began to bear children in the wilderness. The Lord blessed the women inasmuch as they were able to nurse their children (in spite of an unbalanced diet of raw meat) and they "*were strong, yea, even like unto the men*" (verse 2).

They traveled in the wilderness for eight years, finally arriving in the land they called Bountiful, because much fruit grew there. Today, this is most likely Oman. The land bordered on a great sea (the Arabian Sea) which they called Irreantum (meaning many waters).

Nephi Commanded to Build a Ship (17:7 – 17:18)

After some time had passed at the land of Bountiful, the voice of the Lord summoned Nephi "*into the mountain*" (verse 7) where He commanded him to "*con-*

struct a ship [to] carry [the] people across [the] waters" (verse 8). The Lord said He would show Nephi how to build the ship. This is reminiscent of the Lord directing Noah in the manner that he should construct the ark (see Genesis 6:14-16) as well as the brother of Jared building the barges "*according to the instructions of the Lord"* (Ether 2:16-17). These men were not shipbuilders but their intent was to follow God's commandments and what seemed impossible to man is possible with God (see verses 50-51).

To get him started on the project, the Lord showed Nephi where to "*find ore to molten [to] make tools to construct the ship"* (verse 9). Geologists have recently discovered two large deposits of iron ore in the Dhofar region of Oman, both lying within a few days' walk of any campsite along the seacoast. The deposits are not large enough to merit mining activity in the area but could have easily provided enough ore for Nephi to make his tools.⁸

When Nephi's brothers saw that he was making preparations to build a ship, they thought he was being ridiculous and called him a fool for even thinking that they would be able to cross the sea. They refused to help because "*they did not believe that [he] could build a ship; neither [did] they believe that [he had been] instructed of the Lord"* (verse 18).

Hardened Hearts Lead to Destruction (17:19 – 17:47)

The brothers then began to murmur about the many years of suffering that they and their families had spent in the wilderness. They accused Lehi of misjudging the people of Jerusalem, stating their belief that they were "*a righteous people [who] kept the statutes...of the Lord, and all His commandments, according to the law of Moses"* (verse 22).

In response to the accusation, Nephi explained how God expects people to listen to him when he gives direction. As an example, he asked them, "*Do ye believe that...the children of Israel would have been led away out of the hands of the Egyptians if they had not hearkened unto the words of the Lord?"* (verse 23). He went on to explain how God provided for the Israelites when they followed His direction, including parting the Red Sea, drowning the Egyptians who were pursuing them, feeding them with manna and bringing forth water from a rock. After God had provided for the Israelites in all these ways, "*they hardened their hearts...and reviled against Moses and...God"* (verse 30). As a result, "*he did destroy"* that generation of Israelites (verse 31). Read the book of Exodus for the detailed account of Israel's departure from Egypt.

Likewise, when the next generation of Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan, "*driving out the [people] of [that] land,...scattering them to destruction"* (verse 32), it was due to the unrighteousness of the Canaanite people. All flesh is equal in God's eyes. The former 7 nations of Canaan were ripe in iniquity and had "*rejected every word of God*". This hint of scripture tells us that God must

have sent Prophets among the Canaanites warning them of their impending destruction. This also coincides with other scriptures where God worked with the nations of the Gentiles, such as when Jonah was sent to Assyria's capital city of Nineveh (Gentiles) to warn them to repent and also Genesis 14:18-20 and Hebrews 7:1-4 where God raised up a Gentile king (Melchisedec) who was after the holy order of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Alma 13:14-19 shows that the people in Melchisedec's generation as well as Jonah's did repent and God spared them. God sweeps nations off a chosen land and gives it to another; not because he loves one above another but because the former nation was ripe in iniquity.

"Now, after all these things, the time [had] come that [the Israelites in Jerusalem had] become wicked" (verse 43). Knowing that God is no respecter of persons (He "esteemeth all flesh in one" (verse 35)), Nephi knew "that the day must surely come that they must be destroyed" (verse 43). This was the reason their father was commanded to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2:1-2).

Nephi then directed his comments against his brothers by comparing them to the wicked people of Jerusalem who had sought to kill Lehi. They had done the same thing (see 1 Nephi 16:37) by attempting to kill Nephi on multiple occasions. We can easily visualize Nephi sadly shaking his head as he lamented how his brothers were *"swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord [even after they had] seen an angel, and...heard His voice from time to time" (verse 45).*

Nephi's Brothers Shocked by the Lord (17:48 – 17:55)

Needless to say, the brothers were quite angry with Nephi because of his words and attempted to throw him into the sea. As they approached him, Nephi rebuked them saying, *"In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God...and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed" (verse 48),* and told them that they needed to quit murmuring and help him in the building of the ship. After this, the brothers were afraid to come near Nephi for the next several days for fear that they would wither [similar to a time when Moses was filled with the power of God: *"And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him" (Exodus 34:30)].*

The Lord then told Nephi to stretch forth his hand and touch his brothers, promising that they wouldn't wither but rather, *"I will shock them, saith the Lord...that they may know that I am the Lord their God" (verse 53).* Nephi complied with God's commandment and the brothers were so shaken, they were ready to worship Nephi, saying, *"We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee" (verse 55).* Nephi redirected them to worship God and once again the Lord had "straightened out" his brothers, even if only temporarily.

CHAPTER 18

The Ship is Built and the Party Sets Sail (18:1 – 18:8)

With Nephi's brothers now willing to assist him, work began on the ship. It should be pointed out that Oman, the likely location they were working in, has in recent years been finally recognized for its ancient shipbuilding. Clearly, the necessary materials for constructing a ship would have been available there.⁹

The Lord directed Nephi in the building of the ship such that the finished product was built "*after the manner which the Lord had shown...not after the manner of men*" (verse 2). Clearly, Nephi was in close communion with God at this time as he often went into the mountain to pray, and it was there that the Lord showed him "*great things*" (verse 3). When the ship was fully constructed, Nephi's brothers admitted they were wrong to doubt that God could direct Nephi to build a ship (see 1 Nephi 17:18) and "*that the workmanship was exceeding fine; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord*" (verse 4).

The party loaded all the provisions that the Lord had instructed them to gather in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 8:1 and 16:11) and then entered the ship themselves, "*every one according to his age*" (verse 6). Since the voyage was to take many months, it was logical that entering by age would entitle the oldest, together with his family to have first choice of accommodations and so on down to the youngest. At this point, it must have occurred to Nephi that he needed to mention that Sariah had given birth to two more sons (Jacob and Joseph) while the party was traveling in the wilderness. Both boys would have been quite young at this time as it appears that they were both still being breastfed by their mother (see verse 19). About 20 years later, they would be consecrated as priests and teachers among the Nephite people (see 2 Nephi 5:26). Also, Jacob would eventually assume the role of record keeper after the death of Nephi (see Jacob 1:1-2).

Nephi's Brothers Bind Him with Cords (18:9 – 18:22)

During the voyage, an ugly scene took place on the ship. It began when Nephi's brothers, the sons of Ishmael and their wives "*began to make themselves merry...they began to dance and to sing, and to speak with much rudeness...they did forget by what power they had been brought thither*" (verse 9). Their reveling and unseemly behavior caused Nephi to fear that the Lord would become angry with them, causing them to sink into the sea. As a result, Nephi spoke to them, "*with much soberness*" (verse 10), presumably telling them to cease such behavior. Predictably, Laman and Lemuel became angry and bound Nephi with cords.

Whereas the Lord had on a previous occasion allowed Nephi to simply break free of cords with which his brothers bound him (see 1 Nephi 7:16-18), this time He did not directly free Nephi but chose to show His power in a different way. First,

the Liahona ceased to work and the ship encountered a “*great and terrible tempest*” (verse 13) and they were driven back upon the waters for four days.

During these four days, Lehi tried speaking to his sons and the sons of Ishmael, but “*they did breathe out much threatenings against anyone that should speak for [Nephi]*” (verse 17). Lehi and his wife became very ill, even to the point of near death. Nephi's wife and children tearfully begged for his release but to no avail.

Finally, the brothers “*began to see that the judgments of God were upon them*” (verse 15) and “*that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea*” (verse 20) so they removed the bands from Nephi's swollen and sore wrists and ankles. Nephi took the compass and it began to work again. He prayed unto the Lord “*and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm*” (verse 21).

The Ship Arrives at the Promised Land (18:23 – 18:25)

An interesting element relative to the Nephite and Jaredite migrations is broached in verse 23. The Nephites give the amount of time spent in the wilderness (8 years) but not how many days upon the water. Conversely, the Jaredites give no record of how long they were in the wilderness from the plain of Shinar but states their time upon the water as 344 days (see Ether 6:11).

The voyage continued across the ocean, finally arriving at the “*promised land*” (verse 23). Viewing a map of the world, we can trace the likely path of their voyage. Upon entering the Arabian Sea, they sailed southeast, going past the Equator into the Indian Ocean. They continued south, then bearing eastward, keeping north of Australia. They went through the Timor, Arafura and Coral Seas into the Pacific Ocean. They maintained an easterly course to the west coast of the Americas. The exact landing location is uncertain but it is generally believed to be somewhere in the Chilean/Peruvian vicinity.

It was clear that God was with the people at this point as the seeds that they “*brought from the land of Jerusalem...did grow exceedingly*” (verse 24). Also, they found beasts of every kind in the forests – cows, oxen, horses, goats, “*and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men*” (verse 25). It can be assumed that these beasts existed in the land as a result of originally being brought by the Jaredite people (see Ether 6:4).

The people also found, “*ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper*” (verse 25). Read Deuteronomy chapter 33, where Moses pronounces a blessing upon each of the tribes of Israel. In verses 13-17, dealing with the tribe of Joseph, part of the blessing concerned the precious things of the earth that Joseph and his descendants would possess. The precious ores found by Nephi and his family, who are part of the house of Joseph, were not limited to just that one locality. In Helaman 6:9, it states, “*they did have an exceeding plenty of gold and silver, and of all manner of precious metals, both in the land south and in the land north*”.

CHAPTER 19

Nephi Makes “Large Plates” to Keep Records On (19:1 – 19:6)

Following the commandment of the Lord, Nephi used some of the ore that was found (see 1 Nephi 18:25) to make plates for the purpose of engraving the records of his people. Known as the Large Plates of Nephi, these are the same plates described in 1 Nephi 9:2 and referred to in Jacob 3:13. Nephi engraved upon these plates the record of Lehi (which included Lehi’s prophecies) as well as Nephi’s own prophecies and a detailed account of the party’s journey through the wilderness.

In order to understand which plates Nephi is referring to in this section, it is important to understand that the words of this chapter (as well as all of 1 Nephi) came from the Small Plates of Nephi. Therefore, in verse 1, we are reading what Nephi wrote in 570 B.C. or later (see 2 Nephi 5:28-31) about the creation of the Large Plates (which occurred approximately 591 B.C.).

Understanding the above, we can then see how in verse 2, Nephi is comparing the Small Plates he is engraving on at that time (570 B.C.) with the Large Plates that he created in 591 B.C. (the time frame that he is writing about). To make it as plain as possible, here is the entire verse 2 with editorial comments:

“And I knew not at the time (591 B.C.) when I made them (the Large Plates) that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates (the Small Plates); wherefore, the record of my father, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those plates of which I have spoken (the Large Plates); wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates (the Small Plates) are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates (the Large Plates).”

Nephi further describes the purpose of the Small Plates in verse 3, ending with the somewhat mysterious statement, *“and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord”*. The other wise purpose became clear many years later when the Book of Mormon was being translated and the first 116 pages of the translation were lost by Martin Harris. These lost pages contained the information referred to in verse 1 of this chapter as engraved on the Large Plates by Nephi. If not for the Lord’s foreknowledge of this event and Nephi’s obedience to His commandment to create a second set of plates (the Small Plates), we would have no record of Lehi and Nephi today. For further information on this subject, read the section entitled, “116 Pages of the Manuscript Lost” in the book, *It is Written Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth* by Brother V.J. Loyalvo (pp 211-213).

Verse 4 further describes the purpose of the Large Plates, adding that Nephi left instructions that “*these plates should be handed down from one generation to another*”. Although Nephi has written about the Small Plates in this chapter, it would have been out of sequence to describe the creation of those plates at this time so he notes in verse 5 that he will give that account later (which he does in 2 Nephi 5:30-31).

Prophecies from the Plates of Brass Regarding Christ (19:7 – 19:10)

From the writings of Zenos and Zenock on the Plates of Brass, Nephi details several prophecies regarding Jesus Christ:

- He would come 600 years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem
- He would be scourged and spit upon
- He would be lifted up on a cross and crucified
- He would be buried in a sepulchre
- Three days of darkness would be given as a sign of His death

See Isaiah 53, 2 Nephi 6:9-11, 2 Nephi 10:3-6, 2 Nephi 25:13-15 and Mosiah 3:9 for other prophecies concerning the crucifixion of Christ.

Israel to Suffer Consequences for Rejecting Christ (19:11 – 19:14)

The prophet Zenos recorded several prophecies regarding the House of Israel which would be a result of their rejection of Jesus Christ. Immediately after His crucifixion, there would be much destruction. See 3 Nephi 8:6-18 for a description of the destruction that occurred in the western hemisphere – “*the thunders, and the lightnings...the openings of the earth*” (verse 11) and more. Matthew 27:51 records that the rocks rent in Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy recorded in verse 12 of this chapter. Since the first part of the prophecy states that “*the Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day*” (verse 11), it can be assumed that all of the tribes of Israel experienced similar events when Christ was crucified – the righteous receiving praise and the unrighteous experiencing destruction.

The next part of this prophecy of Zenos dealt with the more long-term future of the House of Israel. The statement that “*those who are at Jerusalem... shall be scourged by all people, because they crucify the God of Israel*” (verse 13) was confirmed by statements made by Jesus when He was on the cross (see Luke 23:28-30). Zenos goes on to say that Israel “*shall wander in the flesh...and become a hiss and a by-word, and be hated among all nations*” (verse 14). The persecution throughout history of the Jewish nation and the country of Israel has been a fulfillment of this prophecy as well as the treatment of the seed of Joseph (Native Americans) in this land.

See Leviticus 26:32-33, Deuteronomy 28:37, Jeremiah 24:9-10 and 29:18-19 for

similar prophecies regarding the House of Israel.

God Will Remember the Covenants Made to Israel (19:15 – 19:21)

Continuing with the prophecy of Zenos, Nephi relates that there will eventually come a time that Israel shall "*no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel [and then God] will remember the covenants which He made to their fathers*" (verse 15). At that time, God will gather in all the people of Israel "*from the four quarters of the earth*" and "*every nation kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed*" (verses 16-17). Specifically mentioned in verse 16 are those of the House of Israel who are of the "*isles of the sea*" and even today we are beginning to see those people come to an understanding of who Christ is and who they are.

Other scriptures referring to covenants made to Israel and to the Gentile nations include: 2 Nephi 6:11-14; 10:7-18; 25:16-18; Leviticus 26: 40-46; Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:10-15; 3:29-30; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:6-11.

Nephi had two audiences in mind while recording these prophecies – first his own people "*that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer*" (verse 18) and then eventually "*all the House of Israel*" (verse 19) whenever the writings would come into their hands. He was humbled by the knowledge that God had revealed to him insights that had been revealed to the "*prophets of old*" (verse 20) and had thus spared him from perishing in Jerusalem. Nephi was thus convinced that it was important for his people to be aware of the prophecies "*written upon the plates of brass*" (verse 21).

Nephi Teaches the People from the Plates of Brass (19:22 – 19:24)

In this chapter, we start to see why it was so important that Lehi's party have the Plates of Brass to take with them to the promised land. All of their understanding and faith in Christ was based on the writings of the prophets on these plates. Nephi taught the people regularly from these writings to "*more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer*" (verse 23). To give an example of what he was teaching and to illustrate its importance, Nephi actually engraved the words of Isaiah (chapters 48 and 49) onto his plates. These words appear as 1 Nephi chapters 20 and 21.

CHAPTER 20

House of Israel Ignored What God Revealed to Them (20:1 – 20:8)

Isaiah Chapter 48 is addressed to the "*house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel*" (verse 1). The first verse also makes mention of those who had "*come forth out of the waters of Judah*". Joseph Smith believed that this referred

to baptism and he added the phrase “or out of the waters of baptism” to the 1840 edition of The Book of Mormon (the phrase still appears in the current LDS version but does not appear in The Church of Jesus Christ version).

Verse 2 makes it clear that these words are intended for those who strayed from God. The phrase used is “*they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel*” (verse 2). Interestingly, the Bible version of this verse clouds the message because its meaning is exactly opposite: “*they...stay themselves upon the God of Israel*” (Isaiah 48:2).

In frustration, the prophet declares how God revealed Himself to Israel on many occasions, foretelling future events and then bringing them to pass. However, they were stiffnecked and refused to fully accept what God was showing them. The parallels between Laman and Lemuel and the people referred to in this prophecy are clear as God continually revealed Himself to Nephi’s brothers but they refused to fully accept Him. It is not surprising that Nephi began teaching them from this chapter and why he told them “*liken them unto yourselves*” (see 1 Nephi 19:24).

God Will Not Cut Off the House of Israel (20:9 – 20:22)

In spite of their hardheartedness, God will not cut off Israel. Even if just for His own sake, God will bring them to the knowledge of Him. As Isaiah says, God “*will not suffer [His] name to be polluted*” (verse 11 – note different wording from the Bible version). In many prophecies, God states some of the things He has done for Israel and what He would have been able to do had they been righteous. The chapter closes with the statement that in spite of God’s efforts on behalf of Israel, they will not enjoy peace while they remain in a wicked state. An added phrase at the beginning of verse 22 (“*And notwithstanding he hath done all this, and greater also*”) makes it easier to understand who is being referred to.

Comparison of 1 Nephi Chapter 20 and Isaiah Chapter 48

Although this chapter represents the words of Isaiah as read by Nephi and recorded in Isaiah Chapter 48, there are actually many differences between the two versions of the text. In fact, not a single verse is exactly the same. See the following table for a comparison of the two chapters (differences are highlighted).

| Verse | 1 Nephi Chapter 20 | Isaiah Chapter 48 |
|-------|---|---|
| 1 | Hearken and hear this , O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, yet they swear not in truth nor in righteousness. | Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. |
| 2 | Nevertheless , they call themselves of the holy city, but they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel, who is the Lord of Hosts; yea , the Lord of Hosts is his name. | For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name. |
| 3 | Behold , I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them. I did show them suddenly. | I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass . |
| 4 | And I did it because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; | Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; |
| 5 | And I have even from the beginning declared to thee; before it came to pass I showed them thee; and I showed them for fear lest thou shouldst say – Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them. | I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee: lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. |
| 6 | Thou hast seen and heard all this; and will ye not declare them ? And that I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. | Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it ? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. |
| 7 | They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou heardest them not they were declared unto thee , lest thou shouldst say – Behold I knew them. | They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them. |
| 8 | Yea, and thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time thine ear was not opened; for I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb. | Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. |
| 9 | Nevertheless , for my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off. | For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. |
| 10 | For , behold, I have refined thee, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. | Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver ; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. |
| 11 | For mine own sake, yea , for mine own sake will I do this , for I will not suffer my name to be polluted, and I will not | For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it : for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory |

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| | give my glory unto another. | unto another. |
| 12 | Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called, for I am he; I am the first, and I am also the last. | Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. |
| 13 | Mine hand hath also laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. I call unto them and they stand up together. | Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. |
| 14 | All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; who among them hath declared these things unto them ? The Lord hath loved him; yea, and he will fulfill his word which he hath declared by them; and he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall come upon the Chaldeans. | All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. |
| 15 | Also, saith the Lord: I the Lord, yea, I have spoken; yea, I have called him to declare , I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. | I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. |
| 16 | Come ye near unto me; I have not spoken in secret; from the beginning, from the time that it was declared have I spoken ; and the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. | Come ye near unto me, hear ye this ; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I : and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. |
| 17 | And thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I have sent him , the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way thou shouldst go, hath done it . | Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go. |
| 18 | O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandment – then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. | O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: |
| 19 | Thy seed also had been as the sand; the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. | Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. |
| 20 | Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter to the end of the earth; say ye: The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. | Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. |
| 21 | And they thirsted not; he led them through the deserts; he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also and the waters gushed out. | And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. |
| 22 | And notwithstanding he hath done all this, and greater also , there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked. | There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked. |

CHAPTER 21

God to Gather Scattered Israel into Zion (21:1 – 21:26)

Isaiah Chapter 49 is addressed to the *“house of Israel...that are broken off and are driven out, because of...wickedness...[and] are scattered abroad”* (verse 1). As in the previous chapter, it is interesting to note how the Book of Mormon version of this verse makes the meaning much clearer. The Bible version of the verse simply starts out, *“Listen, O isles...”* (Isaiah 49:1).

Verses 1-8 make reference to an unidentified servant who will be used to *“raise up the tribes of Jacob...[and to be]...a light to the Gentiles”* (verse 6). The writings of Isaiah mention many such servants so it is unclear whether these references are to specific individuals or to a type of individual. The servant described here has some of the attributes of Christ (*“mouth like a sharp sword”* (verse 2), bringing *“salvation unto the ends of the earth”* (verse 6)) but also distinctly human traits (*“formed...from the womb [to] be his servant”* (verse 5)).

The scattered tribes will be led into Zion like lost sheep being led by their shepherd. Some of the language used in the prophecy sounds similar to the 23rd Psalm: *“their pastures shall be in all high places”* (verse 9) and *“he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them”* (verse 10).

Many years will pass and the time will come when Israel (and perhaps the Gentiles as well) will begin to think that the Lord has forgotten about Zion *“but he will show that he hath not”* (verse 14). Note that this comforting phrase appears only in the Book of Mormon version. Lest anyone would think that the Lord forgets what He has promised, we are reminded that He carries the nailprints as a constant reminder *“graven...upon the palms of [His] hands”* (verse 16).

The Gentiles will play a key role in leading the House of Israel into Zion. They will be used to *“set up [God’s] standard to the people; and they shall bring [the people into Zion] in their arms and...carried upon their shoulders”* (verse 22). An oft-quoted phrase describing the relationship between the Gentiles and the House of Israel is *“kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers”* (verse 23).

Comparison of 1 Nephi Chapter 21 and Isaiah Chapter 49

This chapter more closely matches Isaiah than the previous chapter. See the following table for a comparison of the verses that are different (differences are highlighted).

| Verse | 1 Nephi Chapter 21 | Isaiah Chapter 49 |
|-------|--|--|
| 1 | And again: Hearken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out, because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel. Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. | Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. |
| 4 | Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain; surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. | Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. |
| 7 | Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nations abhorreth, to servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful. | Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. |
| 8 | Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, O isles of the sea , and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee any servant for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; | Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; |
| 9 | That thou mayest say to the prisoners: Go forth; to them that sit in darkness: Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. | That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. |
| 12 | And then, O house of Israel , behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. | Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. |
| 13 | Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established ; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more ; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. | Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. |
| 14 | But, behold , Zion hath said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me – but he will show that he hath not. | But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. |
| 15 | For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compas- | Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son |

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| | sion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel. | of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. |
| 17 | Thy children shall make haste against thy destroyers; and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee. | Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee. |
| 18 | Lift up thine eyes round about and behold; all these gather themselves together, and they shall come to thee. , And as I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on even as a bride. | Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee , as a bride doeth. |
| 20 | The children whom thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the first , shall again in thine ears say : The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell. | The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other , shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. |
| 21 | Then shalt thou say in thine heart: Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where have they been? | Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? |
| 24 | For shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives delivered? | Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? |

CHAPTER 22

Nephi Explains the Meaning of Isaiah’s Prophecies (22:1 – 22:12)

When Nephi made an end of his reading, his brothers questioned him as to the meaning of the prophecies. Nephi later wrote (see 2 Nephi 25:1) that “*Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews*” so it is not surprising that his brothers didn’t understand the prophecies that were read to them. Specifically, they were curious as to whether these prophecies would “*come to pass according to the spirit and not the flesh*” (verse 1). Although the brothers weren’t very spiritual, they apparently knew enough to ask this question. Perhaps they were hoping that the prophecies referred only to a spiritual separation for the House of Israel as that would seem to be a “less real” occurrence than if it actually occurred in the flesh. However, Nephi assured them that the prophecies were “*pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual*” (verse 3) and that the tribes of Israel at that very time were already being “*scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea*” (verse 4).

Commenting on the latter part of the prophecy, Nephi described to his brothers the role of the Gentiles in the latter days. He told them that “*God [would] raise up*

a mighty nation among the Gentiles...upon the face of this land (the Americas); and by them [the descendants of Nephi and his brothers would] be scattered” (verse 7). Examples of this through history include Cortez conquering the Aztecs in Mexico (1519-1521), de Soto and Pizarro participating in the conquest of Peru and the overturning of the Incan empire (1530-1533) and the scattering of the American Indians in early U.S. history.

Nephi then described how the Gentiles would be used by God for a “*marvelous work [that would be] of great worth [to the descendants of Nephi and his brothers and to] the Gentiles [and to] all the house of Israel*” (verses 8-9). This will be a spiritual work in which the Gentiles will bring Israel to a knowledge “*of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying [that in them] shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*” (verse 9). The Book of Mormon itself will be a key tool in the convincing of the Seed of Joseph and other books will come forth (see 1 Nephi 13:39) which will be used to convince other tribes of Israel. This work will culminate in the establishment of Zion when “*they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance...and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer*” (verse 12).

The Lord’s Enemies Will Be Destroyed (22:13 – 22:19)

Drawing both from the prophecies of Isaiah as well as what was revealed to him in his own vision (see 1 Nephi 11-14), Nephi foretells what will happen to those who try to fight against God. The following table summarizes the end result for each type of enemy:

| Type of Enemy | End Result | Verse |
|---|--|--------------|
| Great and Abominable Church (Church of the Devil) | Shall war among themselves | 13 |
| | Shall tumble and great shall be the fall | 15 |
| Nations that War Against the House of Israel | Shall be turned one against another | 14 |
| All that Fight Against Zion | Shall be destroyed/cut off | 14,19 |
| Proud, Wicked, Enemies of the Righteous | Shall be destroyed by fire | 15,17 |

It is interesting to note that while those who are enemies of the righteous will eventually be destroyed by fire, “*the righteous...shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire*” (verse 17). The reception of the Holy Ghost after baptism is commonly referred to in the scriptures as the “baptism of fire” (see 2 Nephi 31:13, 3 Nephi 12:1-2 and Mormon 7:10 for some examples). Since the Holy Ghost directs people to be righteous, it can be said that the righteous will be saved from destruction because of the Holy Ghost (or by “fire”).

Prophecies of Christ and the Latter Days (22:20 – 22:28)

Nephi continues to discuss prophecies of future events by quoting the words of Moses (from the brass plates): “*A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you*” (verse 20). Both Peter (see Acts 3:22) and Jesus (see 3 Nephi 20:23) later confirmed that this prophecy referred to the coming of Christ.

The next prophet quoted by Nephi (probably the prophet Zenos – see below) truly saw our day as he states that churches will be “*built up to get gain, and...to get power over the flesh, and...to become popular in the eyes of the world*” (verse 23). Recent history has shown people amassing natural wealth in the name of religion and coercing people to do things by leading them to believe that it is what God wants them to do. Some modern day churches are favoring “politically correct” policies over scripturally-based positions, seeking the praise of men over the praise of God.

The gathering of the House of Israel (concurrent with the Peaceful Reign or Zion) is also touched upon by Nephi as he states that the Lord will gather “*his children from the four quarters of the earth...and there shall be one fold and one shepherd*” (verse 25). The terminology used in this verse is very similar to that attributed to the prophet Zenos (in 1 Nephi 19:16) so it can be assumed that Nephi is drawing from the writings of Zenos at this point. Since this comes immediately after the prophecy regarding latter day churches which ends with “*according to the words of the prophet*” (verse 23), it’s likely that the earlier prophecy (see previous paragraph) can also be attributed to Zenos.

Nephi provides additional detail regarding the Peaceful Reign:

- It will occur “*according to the flesh*” (verse 27). This is not a heavenly kingdom that is being described but a time of peace on the earth while people live in the flesh.
- Satan will be bound “*for the space of many years [and will have] no power over the hearts of the people, for they [will] dwell in righteousness*” (verse 26)

End of the First Book of Nephi (22:29 – 22:31)

The last 3 verses sound like the end of a book, beginning with “*And now I, Nephi, make an end*” (verse 29) and ending with “*And thus it is. Amen*” (verse 31). Other Book of Mormon writers end their writing with similar terminology. However, the Second Book of Nephi picks up where this chapter ends, with Lehi speaking to Nephi’s brothers after Nephi had finished speaking with them about these prophecies. With that in mind, it is clear that this is not the end of the story but rather just a dividing point in the Book of Nephi.

The reason Mormon chose to divide the writing of Nephi into two books is found in what Nephi says next...*"For I durst not speak further, as yet concerning these things"*. He makes the same statement in 2 Nephi 30:18. *"I must make an end of my sayings"*.....The mystery of these two statements is revealed in an earlier writing by Nephi. (See 1 Nephi 14:17-28) When he says. *"I make an end for I durst not speak further as yet concerning these things"*, (1 Nephi 22:29) he is not referring to the end of the book, but rather, to the subject. He was under command of God not to write of any future events beyond the gathering of Israel and the time of a peaceful reign when Satan would be bound for a "long time" (2 Nephi 30:18). The remaining future events, including the end of the world, were relegated to the Apostle John who would be born over five centuries later.

² George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, Inc., 2003), 73-78.

³ Brian D. Garner, *Search These Things Diligently* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 2003), 28.

⁴ Parry, Peterson, and Welch, *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, 81-82.

⁵ Welch and Thorne, *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, 55.

⁶ Sorenson and Thorne, *Rediscovering The Book of Mormon*, 92.

⁷ Parry, Peterson, and Welch, *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, 88-89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 128-129.