

2 NEPHI 1–5

John W. Welch Notes



2 Nephi 1

2 Nephi 1:1 — Lehi Gathers His Posterity to Teach and Bless Them

2 Nephi 1–4 contains Lehi’s final words as a patriarch to his posterity. It echoes the promises and prophecies of Jacob in Genesis 49 to his posterity. As we read these chapters, we could spend time pondering our own patriarchal blessing and its promises, blessings, and how it has shaped our life. One of the great realities of the Restoration is referred to as continuing revelation. Where else in the world can a person go to get a patriarchal blessing?

Patriarchs in our midst have the blessing of laying their hands on your head to give you guidance that will lead you in the paths of righteousness. Lehi set a wonderful precedent for us, as he blessed his posterity. And why did Joseph Smith commence this practice as early as 1833? In many ways, the Book of Mormon served de facto as the guiding handbook during the early years of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by Joseph Smith. Seeing Lehi bless his children and grandchildren may well have been the model that inspired Joseph to ask permission to have his own father commence doing likewise in this dispensation.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “Lehi’s Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 61–82.

2 Nephi 1:3 — Through His Mercy, the Lord Helped Lehi's Family

There are many ways to be merciful. As Alma taught in his blessing to his son Corianton, one way that God can be merciful, without robbing justice, is by temporarily staying justice while giving us more time to repent. Of course, He could proceed immediately to judgment as soon as we sin. He doesn't need to collect witnesses or evidence against us; He already knows all of what we have done. But knowing all of that, He withholds judgment to give us time, knowing that we might yet choose righteously.

Has Lehi done that too? Yes. While he had recalcitrant sons, he warned them. But did he withhold blessings from them? No. They still have the blessing of the Land of Promise, if they will only come around. Lehi shows a Christ-like attitude here. In setting a good example for all, Lehi is merciful not only in the sense of withholding judgment, but also in demonstrating a loving kindness, where he shows blessings and a positive (not just the neutral) part of being merciful.

2 Nephi 1:4 — Lehi Received a Vision of Jerusalem's Destruction

Lehi and the family of Ishmael left Jerusalem before its destruction. In 1 Nephi 7:7, Laman and Lemuel and some of Ishmael's family wanted to go back to Jerusalem. Its destruction, as Lehi had prophesied, was not yet certain. But Nephi also was allowed to see the things that his father had seen (1 Nephi 11:1; 14:29), which may have included what Lehi read in the heavenly judgment book (1 Nephi 1), as well as Lehi's dream (1 Nephi 8). Before leaving the Old World, Nephi subdued his brothers, assuring them that the people in Jerusalem were wicked and were "at this day about to be destroyed . . . save only a few, who shall be led away into captivity" (1 Nephi 17:43). Having arrived at the new land of promise, Lehi now confirmed that he had "seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished" (2 Nephi 1:4). The Lord blessed Lehi with a knowledge that Jerusalem had been destroyed, confirming Lehi's prophecies in yet another vision. We know from various historical sources that Jerusalem was destroyed sometime between 590 BC and 586 BC by the Babylonians.

Lehi's prophecy in this regard was historically confirmed in Nephite history about 400 years later. In Omni 1:15, Mosiah learned that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, King of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. One of Zedekiah's sons, Mulek, escaped the Babylonian captivity and with a group of people left Jerusalem, crossed the ocean, and came to the western hemisphere. They were the people of Zarahemla, and their ancestors had witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Should Readers Pay Close Attention to the Mulekites? \(Omni 1:19\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 434 (May 17, 2018). “Mulek’s witness of Jerusalem’s destruction proved that Lehi and Nephi were true prophets and, therefore, that Laman and Lemuel had unjustly rebelled against them.”

2 Nephi 1:5 — Lehi Refers to Many Similarities between Moses and Himself

There are many similarities between Lehi and Moses which Nephi mentions in his record, especially near the end of his father’s life. Being recognized as “a prophet like unto Moses” added authority to religious leaders in the minds of ancient Israelites. Consider a few of the similarities between Moses and Lehi:

- Both of them left a civilization—a place of wickedness—and crossed a wilderness to a Promised Land.
- Both suffered afflictions.
- Both had their people enter into covenants with the Lord.
- Some in their company wanted to go return to that place, while some were faithful.
- Both prophets had great visions; Lehi saw a pillar of fire, and Moses saw the burning bush. In each case, both saw God and were called to be prophets through these visions.
- They both had the law of the Lord. Lehi ensured that he had the brass plates which contained the five books of Moses. Moses received the law from on high.
- Moses and Lehi both crossed a sea by the power of God.
- They both believed in temple worship and had temple ordinances.
- They both knew of the need for atonement and protection by the blood of the Lamb.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is Lehi Depicted as Similar to Moses? \(2 Nephi 3:9–10\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 268 (January 30, 2017).

2 Nephi 1:7–9 — The Americas Are a Choice Land

2 Nephi 7:7 opens by saying “Wherefore this land is consecrated unto him whom God shall bring,” and ends with, “unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever.” I believe this refers to the whole land of America, the whole Western Hemisphere, the North and South American continents. This all is a chosen land, a choice land, a land that has been blessed by God since the beginning, and it all will remain a promised and choice land so

long as the inhabitants “shall keep his commandments” (1:9). But they will be “brought down into captivity . . . if iniquity shall abound” (1:7), but their lands will be taken away if they “reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God”(1:10–11).

I believe one of the reasons that so many people have joined the Church in the Western Hemisphere is because these are the lands that were given to Joseph and the descendants of Joseph, the descendants of Lehi that are still here, and the people that left Europe and came to America, many of whom were descendants of Ephraim. In patriarchal blessings throughout North and South America, the descendants of Joseph, either Ephraim or Manasseh, are most consistently found or declared. The Book of Mormon is a record of Joseph, the son of Jacob (Ezekiel 37), and Lehi was of the tribe of Manasseh, a son of Joseph (Alma 10:3). So the Book of Mormon rings familiar in many ways to Lehi’s descendants.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Where is the Land of Promise?](#) (2 Nephi 1:5),” *KnoWhy* 497 (January 8, 2019).

2 Nephi 1:14 — Lehi Speaks to His Sons about His Impending Death

In 2 Nephi 1:14, Lehi spoke to his sons, “Awake, arise from the dust, hear the words of a trembling parent whose limbs you must soon lay down in a cold and silent grave from whence no traveler can return.” Critics of the Book of Mormon have said that Joseph Smith plagiarized these lines from Shakespeare. This phrase, however, is probably a reference to Job 10:20, from which both Lehi and Shakespeare likely drew.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Did Lehi Quote Shakespeare?](#) (2 Nephi 1:14),” *KnoWhy* 26 (February 4, 2016).

2 Nephi 1:15 — Lehi Knows That He Is Redeemed

In 2 Nephi 1:15, Lehi said, “The Lord hath redeemed my soul, I have beheld his glory, I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.” Lehi had seen the Lord Jesus Christ and experienced his glory and was sealed up unto eternal life. As he approached death, Lehi was prepared to leave this life with the knowledge that he had finished the course, kept the faith, and that his salvation was sure—a wonderful blessing of eternal assurance.

2 Nephi 1:20 — Lehi’s Posterity Will Prosper in the Land If They Keep the Commandments

In 2 Nephi 1:20, Lehi said, “[God] hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.” Lehi repeats this stipulation over and over because he wants his sons to keep the commandments. After he is gone, he wants them to prosper, and Lehi knows that the way they will prosper is if they keep the commandments. These words of this promise are mentioned predominantly in the book of Deuteronomy. Lehi remained true to his prophetic calling to establish firmly the principles taught in Deuteronomy, the book of scripture that had been found during Lehi’s young adulthood. Many passages and practices embedded in Deuteronomy, along with Isaiah and the Psalms, will persist down through the centuries of Nephite righteousness, as well as among the teachings of Jesus.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“How Is Prosperity Defined in Nephi’s Small Plates? \(Words of Mormon 1:6\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 383 (November 21, 2017).

2 Nephi 1:28–29 — The Significance of Lehi’s “First Blessing”

2 Nephi 1:28 says, “And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.”

At first, Lehi speaks to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and the sons of Ishmael, and tells them that their blessing is contingent on them (ye) obeying Nephi. Notice that Lehi doesn’t include Zoram, Jacob, or Joseph in this contingency. The word “you” in the subsequent statement, “I leave unto you a blessing,” can be read as a singular pronoun, addressing Laman, who would in the case of their obedience be entitled to Lehi’s “first blessing” and thus he could claim the power and privilege of being Lehi’s first son, the son who was presumably redeemed as an infant by Lehi in the temple. I assume that this would mean that Laman would receive a double portion of Lehi’s estate (twice as much as each of the other sons receive, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 22:17).

But if Laman and those others (note the plural “ye”) do not hearken unto Nephi, Laman will lose that blessing and Nephi will step into that position. As Lehi continued in 2 Nephi 1:29, “But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.” Thus, the right of leadership would be taken away if Laman and the others do not hearken unto Nephi. At that point, Nephi would become Lehi’s primary successor.

The Lord had promised Nephi that he would be the teacher and leader in the event of the brothers' iniquity (1 Nephi 2:21–22; cf. 3:29), and Lehi arranged his estate accordingly. Thus, Lehi provided that all could receive the blessings of prosperity and peace, if they would obey the commandments of God, the operation of religious laws, and the interpretation of scripture, as Nephi shall teach.

Lehi wanted his children to be in harmony, so he left them, as much as possible, in a position of equality. To compensate for the legal requirement that Laman receive the double portion, Lehi provided that Sam's portion would be combined into Nephi's: "thy seed shall be numbered with [Nephi's] seed" (4:11). Lehi's division of his estate was his final, creative effort to keep his family together in righteousness. Unfortunately, his plan did not last for long.

2 Nephi 1:30–32 — Lehi Blesses Zoram

Zoram's blessing was that he would dwell in safety and prosperity, as long as he remained aligned with Nephi. When Nephi, shortly after the death of Lehi, left the land of first inheritance, Zoram went with him. Thus, Nephi's oath and promise to Zoram, made outside the walls of Jerusalem, that "you shall have place with us" (1 Nephi 4:34), was fulfilled. That promise was not made by Laman or Lemuel. Zoram was bound into this family because of Nephi, and Lehi honored Nephi's bond.

The descendants of Zoram, the Zoramites, continue to be a separate tribe well into Nephite history. Zoram had been a servant to Laban, probably a soldier of some kind under Laban's command. Thus, it is interesting and realistic that Lehi provided that Zoram's seed would live in security with Nephi's seed (1:32). Zoram was willing to go with Nephi, probably for a number of reasons, not the least of which were the terms of Zoram's blessing. If he doesn't stay with Nephi and doesn't remain a "true friend" or ally of Nephi (1:30), the promises and his rights of inheritance in this confederation would be compromised and voidable, because those are the conditions upon which those blessings are given.

When they left, Nephi's group was composed of Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites. Jacob was given the temple, Joseph was made a teacher, and Zoram appears to become the military leader. Zoramites are mentioned many times in the Book of Mormon, but almost always in connection with military positions or affairs.

This was their tribal cast or their role in this society. Centuries later, Alma the Younger becomes worried because the Zoramites have left the Land of Zarahemla and have moved to the Land of Antionum. They have built their own city, they have withdrawn, and they have severed relationships with the Nephites. Alma the Younger will take a

group of missionaries to go to preach to them. He wants to bring them back for spiritual reasons, but also because he is afraid that the Zoramites will form an alliance with the Lamanites (Alma 31:4), effectively renouncing Lehi's arrangement set forth here in 2 Nephi 1.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How is the Name Zoram Connected with Pride?](#) (Alma 31:25)," *KnoWhy* 458 (August 14, 2008).

2 Nephi 2

2 Nephi 2 — Seeing Temple Themes throughout Lehi's Blessing to Jacob

Jacob received a special blessing from Lehi and was eventually "consecrated" to become a temple priest to the Nephites (5:26). In a lot of ways, Lehi's blessing prepares him for that sacred calling. Lehi's blessing covers the topics of the Creation, Fall, and Atonement—all things taught and represented in the Temple. Although our temple ordinances weren't practiced anciently in exactly the same way that we have them today, the endowment and blessings of the temple have remained standard, being appropriately tailored for the eras and the needs of people over time. But the basic configuration and essence of the ordinances of the temple remain the same.

Many ancient societies included versions of the creation story in their temple worship. The Egyptian temples begin with a lotus blossom and a lotus lily pad coming up out of the Nile River. For the Egyptians, this was the beginning of the emergence of plants and living beings out of the water and the inorganic world. From this came all of the developments and expansions of life. The tall pillars in Egyptian temples are actually lotus stalks, showing how the orderly earth came up out of primordial chaos.

The temple in Jerusalem was not so very different. The Holy of Holies was the inner sanctum where God dwelled. In order to get into the Holy of Holies, one had to go through a room that was twice the size of the Holy of Holies, sometimes referred to as "the holy place" or the *hekal*. On the walls of that room were scenes from the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life, represented by the candelabra and paintings of plants and other things. We wouldn't call it the "world room," but it is, in a sense, a representation of the created world. One had to symbolically pass through it to reach the veil. On the veil in some eras were heavenly images: the sun, the moon, the stars, the colors of the light spectrum, and so on. Cosmological elements were present in essentially all ancient temples.

In overview, Lehi's blessing operates in much the same way. Verse 1 states, "And now Jacob. I speak unto you. Thou art my firstborn in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness." The *firstborn* male among Israelite children held special privileges or rights. So, it is noteworthy that even though Jacob technically wasn't Lehi's firstborn son (Laman was), Lehi describes him as being the *firstborn* in the wilderness, perhaps signaling that some sort of special privilege or blessing was reserved for Jacob. The firstborn or firstlings of a flock were sacrificed (or consecrated) upon altars, which is a prominent temple theme pointing to Jesus Christ, who is also sometimes referred to as the Firstborn. The wilderness theme is also important to consider. Jacob was the firstborn *in the wilderness*, and the wilderness—represented as the lone and dreary world—is also a temple theme.

Righteousness (mentioned in v. 3) is clearly a temple concept, as well as *holiness* (v. 11). As for *misery* (v. 11), we know that Satan wants everyone to be miserable like unto himself, which is a point brought up in verse 18. Misery is also a temple element—something we must pass through, but which isn't the end or purpose of life.

In verse 11, Lehi famously pronounced that "it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things." The basic opposition of good and evil, pleasure and pain, hot and cold, sin and righteousness, runs through all of this creation. Without opposition, there would have been "no *purpose* in the end of its creation" (v. 12), so we also know that Lehi is thinking about the purpose of life and creation, something he would have known about from his activities as a prophet in the temple of Jerusalem.

Starting in verse 14, we can see that Lehi's explanation is not just given to Jacob but to all of his sons: "And now, my sons . . ." In a way, this is quite fitting. It is as if Lehi knows that Jacob will become the temple priest who will officiate for all his people, and therefore he talks through Jacob to all of his sons. Verse 14 discusses things both "in the *heavens* and in the *earth*." Verse 15 discusses the creation of "our first parents," Adam and Eve, and of "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air," and of the *tree of life*. This verse also mentions the *forbidden fruit* in opposition to the tree of life, and in verse 18 the devil enters into the scene to entice Adam and Eve to partake of that which is forbidden, promising them that "ye shall not die but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Adam and Eve are driven out into the world (v. 19), their days were prolonged that they might repent (v. 21), commandments were given (v. 21), having posterity is central (v. 23), and all are allowed to choose, of their own free will, whether to obey the great Mediator or suffer the captivity under the kingdom of the devil (v. 27, 29). When looked at altogether, Lehi's blessing to the future High Priest Jacob is a series of temple-related concepts and themes.

Let me relate to you an interesting experience I once had. We had an academic presentation by Douglas Davies, an Episcopalian scholar from England, who had spent a lot of time studying architecture and the way that sacred buildings, such as churches or temples, typically embody a people's most important values and principles. Architecture of sacred space is not accidental, he insisted. People spend a lot of time and effort to make sacred structures compatible with their religious worldview. Anthropologists and people who study religion evaluate sacred structures and how they relate to the religious ideals of their participants. For instance, architecture in Congregationalist churches emphasizes the presence of the congregation. Catholic churches emphasize the high altar which is up above the ordinary people. In our own temple buildings, there are important designs, symbols and stained glass windows. The décor is thought through very, very carefully, by people who have spent a lot of time studying the importance of symbolism.

Now this Episcopalian scholar had never been in a Latter-day Saint temple, except on a tour through one temple that hadn't yet been dedicated, so he didn't know exactly how it functioned. But he knew enough to know that what we enshrine in our temple is the plan of salvation, beginning with the creation room, going into the Garden of Eden, being cast out, finding our way in the lone and dreary world—as anyone can see in the model at the Visitors' Center in Salt Lake City. As you go from the creation room, you go up a few steps into the garden room; then you go up several more steps into the celestial room, with yet more steps into the terrestrial room. The lights get brighter as you are going up, although many people are almost unconscious of all this. And then you enter the celestial room, representing the highest degree of glory, and completing the cycle in the sealing rooms. What we have here is a wonderful architectural representation of the Plan of Salvation, and understanding all this Professor Davies said, "I know how important the Plan of Salvation is to Latter-day Saints." It was interesting to have him acknowledge that the Plan of Salvation is interwoven with temple-related themes.

How long did Joseph Smith have to figure out these basic principles? How long did he have to translate 2 Nephi 2? Not even half a day. At his standard rate, this occupied maybe two hours of translation. All this came out in a flood of revelation, one idea after another, stitched together in a way that, as you outline and diagram Lehi's blessing to Jacob, and follow it through, you find interwoven many temple themes, existential axioms, cogent logical arguments, theological propositions, and an understanding of the great big picture of our situation here in this world.

What Lehi has given here, and what Joseph Smith in one fell swoop has revealed to us, is the picture on the box of the puzzle of the Plan of Salvation. It yields a beautiful picture, and the pieces are perfectly clear. They fit together. It talks about the fullness of time and the fullness of the gospel, and it presents the full picture. This is what really matters. How blessed we are to have the fullness of the gospel revealed to us on the pages of the Book of Mormon. These are eternal truths that are fundamental to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to our hope, to our faith, to our motivation to be charitable, and to our opportunity to return back to the presence of God. If you compromise any of these core principles, then the picture begins to blur, pieces are missing, and the sections begin to fall apart.

2 Nephi 2:2 — The Lord Will Consecrate Jacob’s Afflictions for His Gain

“Behold in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow because of the rudeness of thy brethren, nevertheless Jacob my first born in the wilderness thou knowest the greatness of God and he shall *consecrate* thine afflictions for thy gain.” The word *consecrate* means to dedicate, to imbue with sacredness, to make sacred or holy. In the ancient world, one would go to the temple and make a vow or promise, typically covenanting one’s willingness to do certain things, to suffer, pay or sacrifice in a certain way, so that the Lord would reciprocate by honoring the person’s request for certain blessings. In this passage, Jacob’s privation and suffering is acknowledged, and his father Lehi vows to him that all of the things that he will suffer through in his life will be consecrated to God and this will bring blessings to him.

Jacob suffered as a young child from the difficulty of years of journey, danger, horrendous fears of shipwreck, the lack of adequate food or water. Jacob never knew Jerusalem, never knew the comforts of home, never knew the riches the family of Lehi once enjoyed. But his father said that the Lord would consecrate all these afflictions for his gain. In Doctrine & Covenants 98:3, the Lord said, “All things wherewith ye have been afflicted shall work together for your good,” and to the Prophet Joseph Smith he said, “All these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good.” Lehi imparted a similar message of reassurance, both to Jacob and importantly to all who read and regard his words today.

2 Nephi 2:3 — Jacob Will Spend His Days in the Service of God

“Wherefore thy soul shall be blessed. . . . Thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother Nephi. And thy days shall be spent in the *service* of God.” Jacob became the keeper of the sacred records, but he also had a special role in the temple that Nephi built in the city of Nephi. Jacob was given priestly duties as the High Priest of the temple. In Hebrew, the same word can be translated as *servant* or *slave*. When Samuel was dedicated by his mother,

he became a servant in the house of the Lord, he belonged to the temple. Jacob is being dedicated here by his father, as Samuel had been, to spend his days, in other words, his whole life serving in the temple.

We have been commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is a commandment of the Lord, one that we as his servants or slaves are obligated to obey. Now we don't like to think of ourselves as *belonging to* anyone else, or being *slaves* of God, even though it was then, or would be now, a high honor to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. It is the greatest wish that David can express in Psalm 23: "That I may live in the House of the Lord." What does this imply? Temple symbolism presents the heavenly realm as a model, a prototype of the eternal world, and to dwell in the temple represents living in the presence of God forever.

The scriptures indicate that we are God's "peculiar people." The English word *peculiar* comes from a Latin word, *peculia*, which means *personal property*. And indeed, we are bought with a price. We are *peculiar* because we belong to God, having been purchased by Christ's blood, and therefore we belong to him as his servants. This is a very important part of the way in which ancient Israelite religion and the relationship between God and man were understood. All this would have applied to Jacob's consecrated state as a lifetime servant of God.

2 Nephi 2:3 — Jacob Is Redeemed

"Wherefore," Lehi says, "I know that thou art *redeemed*." All of the sacrifices of the temple are a part of redemption, being bought back from sin. Under ancient Israelite law, the faithful brought the first fruits of their crops or herds and offered them as a sacrifice, and with this they became redeemed from a state of being outcast or lost. To better understand this, think of the way we use the word *redeem* in mortgage foreclosure law: A property that has gone through foreclosure has had the mortgage paid and the debt cleared by the "redeemer," the person who will now own the property. Under ancient Israelite law, as seen in Leviticus 5, the *redeemer* had to be a relative. It wasn't possible to redeem someone else's land as a third-party volunteer or business partner. In fact, there was an obligation on the part of family members to redeem the land if one of their kinsmen became poor. Because the Holy Land belonged to the tribes as their inheritance, it was important that that land stay within the family.

This was so important that the Law of Moses said that if one of your kinsmen needed to sell his property, that property was subject to a right of first refusal given to a kinsman who could buy it for the price that had been paid by an outside purchaser, thereby preventing the family property from being lost to the family (see Leviticus 25:25–28). Thus, the notion of redemption is a part of the law, and it is used as a symbol of the way

in which we are redeemed from our transgressions and sins. We have debts that we owe to God, and we don't have the resources to pay, but we have a Savior who comes and pays the price of our redemption. We are redeemed by a kinsman of our own—our elder brother—as part of the plan for how God's children, all of us, with Christ our elder brother, will be able to return to His presence.

Lehi also says in verse 3, *Thou hast beheld that in the fullness of times thy Redeemer cometh to bring salvation unto men*. Lehi knew that Jacob had passed the test and even at an early age was assured of his salvation. Apparently, Jacob had been shown a vision similar to the vision of Lehi of the Lord's coming in the fullness of time to bring salvation to everyone in the world.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament Help Us Understand What it Means to be Redeemed?](#) (2 Nephi 2:3)," *KnoWhy* 436 (May 24, 2018).

2 Nephi 2:3–4 — Jacob Saw His Redeemer

In 2 Nephi 11:3, Nephi will bring to his side two witnesses to corroborate his understanding of the prophecies of Jesus Christ and the history of salvation. He called his brother Jacob as one witness, and Isaiah as the other. Nephi said: "And now my brother Jacob also has seen him as I have seen him, wherefore I will send their words, [meaning Isaiah's and Jacob's words] forth as companions." Thus, we have three witnesses testifying of these things.

When did Jacob see these things? We are not told, but in 11:4, Lehi says, "And thou hast beheld in thy youth his *glory*." When I see the word *glory*, I think of the beauty of the celestial room. I love the depictions and the feelings of what that anticipates for us. For the ancient Israelites, the Holy of Holies was the place of glory. There was found the pure altar of mercy, the mercy seat with the glory, the seraphim, the burning beings who guard and protect the presence of God. It is there in the Holy of Holies that Isaiah saw God (see Isaiah 6; 2 Nephi 16).

Lehi, Nephi and Jacob have been out in the wilderness for many years. They don't have a temple yet, but they have certainly had experiences. They long for a temple, and they've been blessed with visions of seeing the glory of God almost as if they were in the Holy of Holies. They will soon build a temple. It will be the first order of business as soon as Nephi can build what will be called the City of Nephi.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Who Are the Witnesses of Christ in 2 Nephi?](#) (2 Nephi 11:2–3)," *KnoWhy* 37 (February 19, 2016).

2 Nephi 2:4 — God Is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Continuing verse 4, "Wherefore thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh. For the spirit is the *same* yesterday, today and forever." The Holy of Holies in the ancient Jerusalem temple was a cube, 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits—a perfect cube. It represented the perfect creation and the holy unity of God who is constantly always good in every way imaginable.

2 Nephi 2:4–5 — The Way Is Prepared and Salvation Is Free

"And the *way* is prepared from the fall of man and salvation is free." There was a *way* that led to the Tree of Life, and that path had to be protected by flaming swords so that the people wouldn't partake of the fruit early and live forever in an impure state. Lehi knew that, from the moment that Adam and Eve were discovered in a fallen state after their transgression, a *way* was provided and a Savior was promised so that they would not perish.

In the flesh, Jesus Christ will say, "I am the truth and the *way* and the life." And the word that he uses there for *way* is this word that is also in Genesis 3. It is in Lehi's vision as well, with the iron rod that guides you on the way. Walking in the way is one of the main themes of Psalm 1, which is the introduction of the path that leads back to God. We need a Redeemer, someone who will offer us the gift of salvation.

All people will be resurrected with a gift that is definitely free. Gerald Lund has argued very cogently, that our resurrection is free because all people must stand physically in His presence. But if the grace of Christ did not also create the *way* in which we could move up that path toward exaltation, all would be in vain. So, not only is our resurrection free and given to all people, but the creation of the path and the *way* in which we can become exalted is also free and open to all people. Furthermore, moving along that path is also possible for all people, because everyone has been "instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil" (2:5).

2 Nephi 2:6–10 — The Holy One of Israel Will Make an Atonement for Mankind

Lehi teaches his son Jacob about Jesus Christ in the next few verses. In verse 7, He will offer himself as a *sacrifice* for sin. In verse 8, no flesh can dwell in the *presence* of God, that's the Holy of Holies. In verse 9, He is the *first fruits* which belonged to God and had to be brought to the temple under the Law of Moses. Through the sacrifice of the first

fruits one could be reconciled with God. Lehi would have known that from his own revelations and also from Isaiah Chapter 53.

“He offers himself to answer the ends of the law unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” Those last words are found in the Psalms, and they will also be spoken by Jesus from the darkness of the cloud in 3 Nephi, and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. “Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God save it be through the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah.”

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How is the Day of Atonement Understood in the Book of Mormon?](#) (2 Nephi 2:10),” *KnoWhy* 479 (October 25, 2018).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Was the Requirement of a ‘Broken Heart’ Known Before the Time of Christ?](#) (2 Nephi 2:7),” *KnoWhy* (February 5, 2016).

2 Nephi 2:8 — The Merits, Mercy, and Grace of the Savior

We might ponder what those three words mean. Right in the next phrase, Lehi says that the Savior will lay down his life according to the flesh. Those are his merits, and he taketh it up again by the power of the spirit that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead being the first that should rise. That’s certainly his suffering, his overcoming of death which gives him the power, gives him the merits, the strength, the worthiness, to be able to then become the first-fruits unto God inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men and there I see the mercy, the intercession which allows for further time for repentance to take place, that they that believe in him shall be saved. And that’s the grace that operates to allow us to be saved. And then, because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God and must stand in the presence him to be judged according to the truth and holiness which is in *him*. We will not only be judged according to our works, but we will be judged in accordance with the mercy, truth, and holiness of God as well.

Intercession is a word relating to how the priests, particularly the high priest in the temple of Israel, would make an *offering*, an atoning sacrifice which would act as an intercessory sacrifice—one person doing it for the benefit of the whole nation—and this what Lehi is referencing. *Christ* will make himself an intercessor, offering himself as a *sacrifice* for all the children of men. That is classic temple imagery.

2 Nephi 2:11 – Opposition in All Things

Verse 10 tells us that in this way all men may *come* unto God and stand in the presence of him to be judged. *Judgment* is another word of temple significance bringing the idea of opposition as we see in the creation account with the light being separated from the dark, the wet from the dry, the mountains from the valleys, the animals from the plants, male and female. We learn in the temple that opposition is the fundamental characteristic of the world in which we find ourselves and when we understand that, then lots of things like obedience and disobedience, choosing Christ or choosing Satan, life or death become fundamental choices explaining the reasons why we are here.

How are things opposed to each other, but also as Lehi says a compound in one? God created something which in the beginning was pure and unified and good, but then in the world where you have opposites, we must learn to choose one or the other. Lehi understands that there is a choice between good and bad, between happiness and misery and yet this will not necessarily deteriorate into chaos. It's controlled because each thing has something that is set in opposition to it.

Everything that comes from God is good. Light, life, truth, joy and good. Satan takes away light; darkness is the absence of light. Satan takes away life; death is the absence of life. Satan takes away truth; falsehood is the absence of truth. Satan takes away joy; misery is the absence of joy. And Satan takes away good; evil is the absence of good. It is the existence of opposites coupled with our agency that gives meaning and purpose to our mortal probation.

2 Nephi 2:13 – The Importance of Laws

In Lehi's understanding and fundamentally sound way of viewing things, there can only be law when you have a choice between two opposing alternatives. If there are no laws and if you don't have all of these opposites that Lehi has described, then you end up with a situation where there couldn't really have been a creation of things. There could have been a creation of one thing, but it would have been a compound in one; there would have been no differentiation. But when God created things (plural), then you have some that can act and some that can be acted upon, and that is the beginning of Lehi's discussion of agency. When you get to verse 27 toward the end of what Lehi says, there is no question that this is all moving toward our understanding of the importance of agency: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh and all things are given them which are expedient unto man and they are free, and so they must be free to obey the laws of God and free to break those same laws, ready to accept the consequences for either action they choose."

2 Nephi 2:14 — God Created All Things in Heaven and in Earth

Lehi understands that the world was created for certain purposes. One may wonder how close the version of Genesis was on the brass plates to the version that we now know as the Book of Moses, but there are some very interesting connections between the Book of Moses and passages reflected in the Book of Mormon that make it look like there were some strong similarities between the brass plates version of Genesis and what we now have as the Book of Moses. Moses 1:39, for example, reads, “For this is my work and my glory,” where the purpose of the creation is clearly set forth, and we have Lehi similarly reflecting that same purpose. The Plan of Salvation was set forth from the very beginning in the Council in Heaven. The world in which we live is not an arbitrary, random place. It is a place where we have come to do certain things, to accomplish certain purposes and objectives, and every person who comes has the opportunity to act and not just be acted upon, to choose between right and wrong, between Christ and the way of life and Satan and the way of death (2 Nephi 2:25–27). Making that choice, and hopefully making it to our eternal joy, is our number one purpose in this existence. As we are shown in the endowment in the temple, our world was created not just for amusement, but as an environment in which people can make serious choices.

2 Nephi 2:16–18 — The Devil Fell from Heaven and Entices Men to Sin

In verse 16, notice that in order for the purpose to be accomplished, it was necessary that man should be enticed by one or the other. I like that word *entice*; it’s a little different than the word *tempt*. We can be enticed by a lot of things and not all of them are bad in the sense that they come from Satan. Some things are better and other things are worse. One of the reasons that there is an opposition in all things is that we might be *enticed*—drawn to things—and because of that enticement, we can then make choices.

In verse 17, Lehi stated, “And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven.” He is referring to the brass plates. Lehi had the plates of brass and he had studied them and in the plates of brass he learned that an angel of God had fallen from heaven and had become a devil, “for he sought that which was evil before God.” What does that phrase mean? “To seek evil before God?” It may refer to the Council in Heaven when before God, meaning in the presence of God, Satan chose to rebel or to not adopt the plan of the Father, and because of that he became fallen. This is an important part of the Plan of Salvation.

Verse 18 reads, “And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind.” Some people think that Lucifer’s misery is that he was cast out of the presence of God and cannot go back. No. He is not

miserable because he cannot be with God; He opposes God and fights against him. His misery is not that he cannot be *with* God; his misery is that he can never become *like* God. He can never have a physical body, he can never be a husband, he can never have children, he can never have posterity. He is miserable because he is stopped in his progress. Satan is our adversary, a serpent, a father of lies, the evil one, the dragon, perdition, Beelzebub. He fights against God and does everything that he can to turn God's children against God.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Lehi 'Suppose' the Existence of Satan? \(2 Nephi 24:12\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 43 (February 29, 2016).

2 Nephi 2:21 — The Days of Mankind Were Prolonged

Why were the days of the children of men prolonged? It is so "that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent." Repentance is not just an option; it is a requirement. All people must repent, and that's why the Doctrine and Covenants, repeatedly says, "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation" (see D&C 6:9; 11:9).

Lehi teaches here that we are in a state of *probation*. The word *probe* is identical philologically to *prove*. It's a time when we can prove ourselves, not only to God but also to ourselves. It's a time of testing as to whether we will repent or not. We learn by our experiences, and in our *probation* we learn the difference between good and evil. For Lehi, there really are only two options. It's either the Savior or the devil. It's either happiness or wickedness. It's either joy or misery. It's corruption or incorruption. Lehi understands too, however, that we aren't just being thrown out into the wilderness. He has lived through the wilderness where he has been guided by the Liahona, by the revelations that he has received. He knows that the Lord doesn't just send his children without resources. This idea connects with the concept of mercy, as in Alma 42, where Alma connects mercy explicitly with God withholding the execution of the judgment. You see, if you commit a sin, if you violate his law, he would be perfectly just if he were to lower the boom on you immediately, right? He doesn't need further evidence. He knows it all. He doesn't have to call witnesses. There's no risk that he would judge improperly. His judgment will be righteous, so why doesn't he just go ahead? Since he is *just*, God could have created a world in which as soon as we committed any transgression, we would immediately experience a punishment or a consequence. But

that is Satan's plan, or pretty close to it, isn't it? When you get slapped real hard and too quickly before you have learned for yourself, you're being coerced or forced into it.

In verse 21 we learn that the "days of the children of men were prolonged ... and their time was lengthened." So that means we have a time on earth to prepare to meet God, a probationary time, a time of testing, a time of repentance. Their time was lengthened. In the beginning they were given lots of years to go through this process and to have many, many children. Methuselah lived 969 years; his days were indeed lengthened. Noah lived 950 years, and Adam lived 930 years. No doubt, their days were lengthened!

Now we have fewer years. We may have 80 or 90 or 79 or 91, or however many years we have, but we still have a probation. We still have a time on earth when it is our time to prepare to meet God.

2 Nephi 2:22 – How Can All Things Have No End?

Verse 22 makes it pretty clear that if there had not been a transgression, all things that were created would have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created, and they would have remained forever and had no end or purpose. That word *end* can also mean *purpose*. This is a good description of where we came from and why we are here.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Do We Have Three Different Accounts of the Creation?](#) (2 Nephi 2:22)," *KnoWhy* 400 (January 18, 2018).

2 Nephi 2:23 – Joy Is Linked with Families

They would have had no children. They would have remained in a state of innocence but they would have had no joy, right? I know that sometimes teenagers bring misery, but there is also joy and rejoicing in your posterity. Well the fall was a planned event; it was a noble thing for Adam and Eve to fall, otherwise they would have remained in the garden. And they would have had no children, and we would have been in the pre-mortal existence waiting for them to do something so that they could have children so that we could become mortal. I know I was up there, chanting, *eat the fruit! eat the fruit!* because until that happened, they were just eating pomegranates and riding zebras and having a good time, but they needed to fall in order for the plan to take effect.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Can the Book of Mormon Strengthen Marriages and Families?](#) (Jacob 3:7)," *KnoWhy* 302 (April 19, 2017).

2 Nephi 2:24–25 — Adam Fell That Men Might Be

The word *might* is the most important operative word in this famous saying, not the resultant word *joy*. Adam fell that men *might* be. Adam and Eve did not know all things—they did not know exactly how they could fulfil this commandment to multiply and replenish the earth once they were cast out. It took a great deal of faith for Adam to choose to fall.

Until there was a fall, we were just waiting. There was no way for the great family of God to receive bodies until after the fall of Adam. Because Adam fell, we are and by his fall came death. By reason of transgression cometh the fall and the fall bringeth death. The fall was to bring mortality, and men were placed on earth to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. The great purposes of God would have been frustrated without the fall of Adam.

And then Lehi says, “men are that they might have joy.” Lehi knows from his vision of the tree of life that a joyous outcome is not guaranteed but must be chosen. Initially, Adam says more definitely in Moses 5:10: “for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy.” Adam is confident that he shall or will have joy. And in verse 11, in her response, Eve states more specifically that the joy to be experienced was, at least initially, “the joy of our redemption”: his wife Eve answered, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed [children], and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”

Before the Fall, they were not mortal; after the fall they were mortal. Before the fall they were not subject to physical death; after the fall they were subject to physical death. That is one of the things Satan lied about, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). Before the fall they were in the presence of God; after the fall they were cast out or cut off from the presence of God. Before the fall they were spiritually alive; after the Fall they suffered a spiritual death—they died spiritually, they died as pertaining to things of righteousness, they were cut off from the presence of God. That is what spiritual death is. Before the fall they were in a state of innocence; after the fall they had knowledge. Before the fall they did not know the difference between good and evil; after the fall they knew the difference between good and evil. Before the fall they would have had no children; after the fall they had children. So let us vote. How many people believe that the fall was good? Yes! And yet so many Christian believers do not have that understanding. The fall was a great blessing. It was part of the plan—first the creation in a certain condition, then the fall changed that condition. We said they are subject to death and they are

subject to spiritual death. Now we need to do something to *save* them and to redeem them, and that is why Lehi immediately follows with the message of a Savior.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Did Lehi Teach that the Fall was Necessary? (2 Nephi 2:22–25)," *KnoWhy* 269 (February 1, 2017).

Book of Mormon Central, "What are the Origins of Lehi's Understanding of the Fall? (2 Nephi 2:25)," *KnoWhy* 28 (February 8, 2016).

2 Nephi 2:26–27 — Christ Is the One Who Sets Us Free to Choose

For Lehi, one of the results of the redemption of Christ is to make us free. Only then can we have joy by choosing properly. We have freedom to choose, and that is because the redemption of Christ allows us to choose either life or death. Without that redemption, we could not have that choice. Now it doesn't mean that we are free to do whatever we want. We are not free to violate the laws of gravity. We are not free to do things and not suffer the natural consequences. It means free to make a choice between Christ and life or Satan and death.

Lehi goes on to explain how this will happen. You are free, first of all, to make a choice and in order to make that choice, you know good from evil. Again, one of those oppositions, and because of the redemption and because of your experience you can know good from evil, you are then free to act for yourselves and not to be acted upon. That is crucial—you aren't being compelled and you aren't being driven. It is Satan's plan to have you be acted upon. The only proviso in the Plan of Salvation is you are free not to be acted upon "save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given" (v. 26). Everyone is subject to this. No flesh can dwell in the presence of God save it be according to this plan.

So, we have here the Creation, the Fall, and now we have the Atonement—three grand pillars of eternity. "And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall" (v. 26). How does mankind get back into the presence of God? He died spiritually—being cut off from the presence of God—so he has to be born again right? The Book of Moses tells us that Adam was born again, that he was baptized, that he received the spirit of God and came back into the presence of God spiritually (see Moses 6:64). But in order to enter the presence of God and overcome spiritual death it had to be done by the power of the Redeemer, and Adam received spiritual life just like all of us receive spiritual life. Faith in Jesus Christ, repentance of sins, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. I am not exactly sure who laid their hands on Adam's head, but

he received the Holy Ghost and endured to the end in righteousness, for 930 years! He endured to the end, and he received a crown of eternal life. He is the great Michael, and he will preside at the final gathering—a conference that will be held before the Second Coming of the Savior. Adam will receive the keys back from all the prophets and deliver them up to Christ. I like to think that it was that mighty Michael who was the one who came to the Garden of Gethsemane as an angel and comforted the Lord in his great agony.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did Lehi Teach About the “Two Ways”?](#) (2 Nephi 2:27),” *KnoWhy* 287 (March 15, 2017).

2 Nephi 3

2 Nephi 3:1–2 — Lehi Blesses His Son Joseph

How old was Joseph when this blessing was given? Probably under ten years old, perhaps just barely old enough to understand what is being said here. But how would this have impacted the life of a very young person, especially one in Joseph’s situation?

He is reminded of his namesake. Joseph of Egypt was a man of great accomplishment, and it is good for young people to know for whom they have been named. That would have had a powerful effect on young Joseph. This is something to instill in a person at a very young age, so that at a young age one can appreciate the tradition and background one comes from.

Lehi will quote heavily from the scriptures as he speaks to Joseph. Jacob will be set apart as the priest, and Joseph will be set apart as the teacher. Joseph is, in a way, being mentored. He is being taught how to teach. You read the scriptures, you apply them to your situation, and that ties in to the need for establishing and maintaining their traditions.

2 Nephi 3:3 — Joseph’s Seed Will Not Be Utterly Destroyed

Another blessing Joseph will receive is that his people will not be utterly destroyed. For a young person that is a heavy thing to say; you will have influence and your family will not be destroyed. That is a hopeful thing for a young person to hear, especially one in Joseph’s situation.

If he is eight to ten years old, he has seen his older brothers quarrel. He was probably fairly traumatized by what happened on the ship. His parents are old. They have just landed. The

family knew how to survive in Arabia, but they are in a completely new environment. This would be enough to cause doubt, insecurity, and tears in any young child.

In 2 Nephi 3 Joseph is promised four times that his seed will not be destroyed. How can Lehi be so confident of that? He knows that these were promises given to Joseph in Egypt. Lehi sees himself as carrying much of the burden of ensuring that the tribe of Joseph goes forward. He is passing some of that burden to young Joseph, in effect saying to him: “you are going to be the one through whom these promises are kept!” There is also reassurance in that these are old promises and the Lord has protected us so far, you can count on him to protect you further.

2 Nephi 3:4 — Lehi Is a Descendant of Joseph

In 2 Nephi 3:4, Lehi says, “I am a descendant of Joseph.” From the Book of Mormon, we learn that Lehi was a descendant of Joseph through his oldest son Manasseh. From Erastus Snow in the *Journal of Discourses* quoting Joseph Smith and also Joseph Fielding Smith in *Answers to Gospel Questions*, the Prophet Joseph informed us that Ishmael was of the lineage of Ephraim. He brought his daughters and his two sons. Lehi’s sons married Ishmael’s daughters and perhaps Ishmael’s sons had already married Lehi’s older daughters, and so both branches of Joseph’s posterity were represented. The people of Lehi were pure Josephites. That is why this can be called the *stick of Joseph*. It is a record of descendants of Joseph.

2 Nephi 3:5–21 — Lehi Quotes Prophecies Made by Joseph in Egypt

In this prophecy Lehi quotes only several small parts of the much longer text of words spoken to Joseph by Jacob found in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 48:7–11, and also containing words spoken by Joseph to his brothers in JST Genesis 50:24–38.

For example, Lehi said that “the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch that would be broken off” (3 Nephi 5:5). This tracks the ancient prophecy in JST Genesis 50:24 that “the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins . . . (not the Messiah).”

Lehi spoke of “a choice seer” that would be raised up “out of the fruit of [the] loins” of Joseph of old (3 Nephi 3:7). The version in JST Genesis 50:27 used the words “a choice seer” who will be “raise[d] up out of the fruit of thy loins.”

Lehi promised his son Joseph that this seer would be called Joseph “after the name of his father” (2 Nephi 3:15). That prophecy to which Lehi was referring is now found in JST Genesis 50:33, “and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father.”

And Lehi said, “Thus prophesied Joseph: I am sure of this thing, . . . for the Lord hath said unto me, I will preserve thy seed forever” (2 Nephi 3:16). In the longer JST version, the text assures that “the Lord sware unto Joseph that he would preserve his seed forever” (JST Genesis 50:34).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Lehi Likened the Scriptures to Himself](#) (2 Nephi 3:18),” *KnoWhy* 418 (March 22, 2018). “Most of what Lehi quoted to his son is similar to the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 50:24–38. However, the differences between the Joseph Smith Translation and Lehi’s blessing in the Book of Mormon show how Lehi specifically applied the scriptures to the lives of his descendants.”

2 Nephi 3:5–6 — Joseph in Egypt Prophesied of Joseph Smith

Who is this seer that Joseph of Egypt saw? Joseph Smith was the choice seer raised up by the Lord.

2 Nephi 3:7 — Joseph Smith’s Reputation

Verse 7 states that “he [the seer Joseph Smith] shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins . . . [and] he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins.” While his name will be known throughout the world for good or for ill, it was foreseen that the descendants of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, would esteem Joseph Smith highly. Indeed, many who have come into the restored Church of Jesus Christ have discovered through their patriarchal blessings that they are the fruit of the loins of Joseph, and they also know that he is a true prophet. They sing with enthusiasm, “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah.”

Brigham Young said, “I feel like shouting hallelujah all the time when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith.” His work was to translate the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, and Doctrine and Covenants 135:3 states that “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Can We Know What to Believe about Joseph Smith’s Personal Character?](#) (3 Nephi 18:1),” *KnoWhy* 413 (March 6, 2018).

2 Nephi 3:9–11 — Joseph Smith Will Also Be a Prophet Like Moses

In 2 Nephi 3:9, we read, “He shall be great like unto Moses.” Doctrine and Covenants 28:2 states that “no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.” Then in D&C 107:91 we read, “And again, the duty of the President of the

office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses.” By fulfilling these priesthood responsibilities, Joseph Smith fulfilled this prophecy of Lehi.

In 2 Nephi 3:11 it is prophesied that this seer will “bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins ... to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.” The word that had already gone forth is the Bible. Joseph Smith brought forth the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Mormon was written to the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, proving to the world that the holy scriptures, the Bible, that the holy scriptures are true. The Book of Mormon proves that the Bible is true. It is not the other way around. And that also is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Lehi.

2 Nephi 3:12 — Ezekiel Foresees a Stick of Joseph

In Ezekiel 37, the prophet Ezekiel prophesies that the records that would become the Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon will become one in the hands of readers. When we study the Bible and Book of Mormon together, it is profitable to notice the subtle ways in which these two volumes of scripture connect together.

The name Ezekiel means “God will strengthen,” and God certainly strengthened both him and Lehi. Did Lehi know Ezekiel? Potentially. Ezekiel would have been a young man at the time Jerusalem was destroyed. He must have been very prominent and well-educated, for he was among the few who were taken into Babylon. He was likely about the same age as Nephi.

In that relatively small circle of prophets in Jerusalem, there is no reason why Lehi and Ezekiel should not have known each other. Ezekiel was a priest in the temple, and many of his prophecies relate to promises that Lehi was also concerned with. Ezekiel likely knew that people, like Lehi and also Rechab, were leaving. Ezekiel may not have had any idea where Lehi had gone, but he would have known that Lehi and his family were suddenly gone. He knows God is watching over them, that the Lord will be their strength. As a prophet, he is aware of the scattering of Israel, and he will prophesy about the strength of the Lord bringing them back together again.

Like Lehi, Ezekiel was also a man of great visions. The last nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel are visions of the eternal covenant and the eternal temple that would be restored in the millennial last days. Interestingly, in Doctrine and Covenants 29:21, the Lord speaks of the whore of all the earth being cast down by devouring fire, for abomination shall not reign, quoting Ezekiel 38:22 and mentioning Ezekiel by name. Lehi used similar phrases in his teachings and prophecies.

Did Ezekiel know that these people going out into the far reaches of the world would write and that their writings and his would someday come back together again? Lehi never quotes Ezekiel 37. However, in 2 Nephi 3:12, Lehi says something similar to his youngest son Joseph: “Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write, and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah shall grow together.”

Lehi then states, in 2 Nephi 3:12, five reasons for why these two records need to come together. These five purposes should be carefully considered:

1. To confound false doctrines.
2. Unto the laying down of contentions.
3. To establish “peace among the fruit of thy loins.” Notice that it does not say establishing peace in the whole world. That may be an unachievable objective, but when this book is brought together with scriptures from Judah, it can establish peace in the hearts of those who are of the House of Ephraim and the seed of Joseph, the son of Lehi. Giving peace is one of the great purposes the Book of Mormon will serve for all.
4. To bring them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days.
5. To bring them to the knowledge of the covenants of the Lord. Moroni reiterates this final purpose on the Title Page of the Book of Mormon, thus emphasizing the importance of the book fulfilling these purposes.

2 Nephi 3:12 – Did Ezekiel Prophesy Using a Visual Aid?

In his prophecy, Ezekiel may have used two sticks—or tablets or rods—speaking to a group of people. He could have taken one and written on it “*Judah*” or “*Judah and his posterity*.” He would have then taken the other and written, “*for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim* and for all the House of Israel and his companions.” And then what does the Lord say? “Ezekiel, I want you to put those two together, and they will be one in your hand.”

Prophets in Israel loved to do this sort of thing, to act out certain events. When Jeremiah wanted to prophesy that the children of Israel were going to be taken into captivity, he draped chains and ropes all over his body and walked through the streets of Jerusalem saying, “We are going to be taken captive.” It did not make him popular, but it made an impression. Likewise, Abinadi graphically used a “simile curse” in prophesying about King Noah’s demise (Mosiah 12:3). In saying, in effect, to the people, “Just as I am putting these two little sticks together in my hand, something much bigger is going to happen someday when the Lord will bring these two together,” Ezekiel dramatically

conveys the idea that the gathering will happen because two books—two writings, two staffs of authority—will come back together.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “Why Is the Book of Mormon ‘Another Testament of Jesus Christ’? (2 Nephi 3:12),” *KnoWhy* 494 (December 18, 2018).

2 Nephi 3:15 — The Naming of Joseph Smith

It is interesting that Lucy and Joseph Smith, Sr. named their first son Alvin, their second son Hyrum, and only then named their *third* son Joseph Smith, Jr., after his father. That is not how it usually worked in the 1800s. If there was going to be a Junior, he was usually the firstborn son. But Alvin was not the great seer of whom Joseph in Egypt and Lehi had prophesied. It was Joseph Smith, Jr., the thirdborn son. Somehow, the Lord inspired his parents to name their children in that order.

Joseph Smith, Sr. was the first to hold the office of patriarch in this dispensation. He was the oldest man of the blood of Joseph, meaning that he was the oldest direct lineal descendant of Joseph of Egypt on the earth at the time. Brigham Young said that the Lord watched over the blood from Ephraim down through the generations until it came to Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith and that Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite.

Whatever that may mean, Joseph Smith Jr. also had the blood of Joseph, the blood of Israel, the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, flowing in his veins, and he was the great seer that has been prophesied by his ancestor Joseph who was sold into Egypt.

2 Nephi 3:20 — A Voice from the Dust

The Book of Mormon contains the voices from those that are in the dust. “And they shall cry from the dust.” From the Plates of Brass, Lehi would have known the words of Isaiah 29:4, “And they speech shall be low out of the dust.” The testimony of the dead lives, and that testimony is that Jesus is the Christ, that He has risen from the grave, and that He is the only begotten Son of God.

Further Reading

Jeff Lindsay, “‘Arise from the Dust’: Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 1: Tracks from the Book of Moses),” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 22 (2016): 179–232.

2 Nephi 4

2 Nephi 4:1–2 — The Prophecies of Joseph in Egypt Are Great

In 2 Nephi 4, Nephi says, “I, Nephi, speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken, concerning Joseph, who was carried into Egypt.” Joseph in Egypt “truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater ... and they are written upon the plates of brass.” Eventually, in the restitution of all things, we can hope to have in more detail these prophecies of Joseph in Egypt.

2 Nephi 4:3–7 — Lehi’s Grandchildren Are Free from the Sins of their Parents

Lehi promises his grandchildren that they will not suffer in the eyes of God because of the failures of their parents. In Deuteronomy 24:16, a very important principle of Jewish law was established, and it was recognized in the days of Lehi, that prohibited vicarious punishments: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” This was not the case in most ancient Near Eastern laws. Under the Code of Hammurabi, for example, if a physician committed malpractice and killed the son of a freeman, then the son of the doctor was to be killed. In his blessing to Laman’s and Lemuel’s children, Lehi assured them that they will not be punished for their parents’ wrongdoings.

2 Nephi 4:11 — Sam Is Blessed to Be Numbered among the Nephites

In his last will and testament, Lehi arranged his posterity into seven different groups, but he went out of his way to divide his property into eight shares. This was because Laman, as the oldest son, was entitled under Deuteronomy 21:17 to a share twice the size of the other sons’ portions of Lehi’s estate. Typically this was the rule because the oldest son had the obligation to take care of his mother and other dependents in the family, and therefore the oldest son needed a larger part of land, or more of the cattle, or whatever the father was dividing up.

But Lehi has a problem. God had called Nephi to be the leader of the people, and Lehi reaffirms Nephi’s call to be his successor. But how can Nephi be Lehi’s successor if he does not have the resources to manage not only his own family but to lead the whole group? And Lehi also wants, I think, to keep balance and harmony in the family as much as possible. So, in order for Nephi and Laman to have equal resources, Lehi gave Laman the “first blessing,” while at the same time combining the allocations of Sam and Nephi, putting the two of them into one tribe. Lehi says to Sam, “thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi. And thy seed shall be numbered with his seed” and

the two of your will merge. I think this is clever estate planning. Lehi is trying to do everything he can to divide his estate up as fairly and as effectively as he can.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Lehi Divide His People into Seven Tribes?](#) (Jacob 1:13)," *KnoWhy* 319 (May 29, 2017).

2 Nephi 4:15 — Nephi Delights in the Scriptures

Besides the Lord speaking in Doctrine and Covenants Section 25, the only other people who use the words, "My soul delighteth" are Isaiah and Nephi. The only two who use the words "the robes of righteousness" are Isaiah and Nephi. Jacob uses this phrase, but he is quoting Isaiah. Nephi loves Isaiah and his writings, and he is so familiar with these words and passages that he may not even have realized that he was quoting any phrase in particular.

2 Nephi 4:16–35 — Nephi's Psalm

The text in 2 Nephi 4:16–35 is often called the Psalm of Nephi. It is among the most eloquent, sublime writings found anywhere in scripture.

What circumstances is it written in response to? Lehi has just died, and Nephi feels strongly motivated to admonish his brothers. But he doesn't have the strength of his father who has held this group together, and now Nephi finds himself completely alone. He tries to admonish his brothers, and it doesn't work. He laments. He feels that he is weak and has failed. By the end, however, he is back on track and he knows in whom he trusts.

We can tell that his confidence has been rebuilt and restored. On the Small Plates of Nephi, there would have been no chapter break after the end of verse 35 where he concludes, "Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen." The text would have gone straight into the opening of 2 Nephi 5: "Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of my brethren."

With that reinforcement, Nephi has renewed his commitment, and he has renewed his strength of spirit. Whatever self-reservations he had felt before, he now thinks, "I'm going to try again. I know that I've failed once already, but maybe God can soften their hearts." However, what happens? "But behold, their anger did increase against me, insomuch that they did seek to take away my life" (v. 2). They murmured and God warned Nephi in 2 Nephi 5:5 to leave. That was the setting and the subsequent development in which this psalm was written.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Is ‘Nephi’s Psalm’ Really a Psalm?](#) (2 Nephi 4:16–17),” *KnoWhy* 30 (February 10, 2016).

2 Nephi 4:16–35 — Literary Styles of Nephi’s Psalm

There are about 30 different Hebraic literary forms or styles of writing, but the basic one is parallelism. There are different kinds of parallelism, such as *synonymous* parallelisms, *synthetic* parallelisms, or *antithetic* parallelisms. All of those different types of parallelisms are present in Nephi’s Psalm. It is a masterful work in the highest tradition of the Hebrew lament and also of the Hebrew Psalms of praise and of reassurance.

One article by Matthew Nickerson is called “[Nephi’s Psalm: 2 Nephi 4:16–35 in Light of Form-Critical Analysis](#).” Nickerson examines the ways in which biblically trained scholars have studied the writing style of the “lament psalm.” There are about twenty Psalms in the Old Testament that fall within the form of the lament. In the lament, there are five stages:

- Stage 1 is an invocation, where you invoke or address God
- Stage 2 is a complaint, where you register some kind of complaint
- Stage 3 is where you confess and profess your trust, reassuring God that you will trust in Him
- Stage 4 is a petition—you ask for something
- Stage 5 is when you make a vow of praise

It is not hard to see that Nephi’s Psalm follows that pattern precisely.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Is ‘Nephi’s Psalm’ Really a Psalm?](#) (2 Nephi 4:16–17),” *KnoWhy* 30 (February 10, 2016).

2 Nephi 4:16–35 — The Lord’s Name Uttered Ten Times

The word *Lord* (which would be the translation for the name *Jehovah* or YHWH) appears ten times in this Psalm. There is something very significant about ten utterings of the holy name of Jehovah. Under Jewish law and ritual practice, this could only happen once every year, on the Day of Atonement. If you spoke the name of Jehovah aloud except under these circumstances, you were committing blasphemy, which was a capital offense.

On the Day of Atonement, however, the high priest offered a prayer of repentance. On that day the people had to fast. The high priest would then offer prayers on their behalf. There would be two goats, one would be sacrificed and another—the scapegoat—would be sent out into the wilderness to bare the sins of the people away from the city.

In the course of these prayers, statements of thanksgiving, and blessings, the high priest alone could speak the name of Jehovah ten times aloud. And each time the people heard the name, the Jewish texts say that they had to fall down on their face, to be completely reduced to the dust of the earth, before the great presence of the goodness of God.

We do not know when Lehi died, but within a few months Nephi wrote this Psalm. It is possible that it was composed on the first Day of Atonement after the death of Lehi. In any event, the Psalm of Nephi makes a perfect Day of Atonement text. It shows how we are ultimately dependent upon the Lord, not just for guidance and for strength, but for his forgiveness, that we might become one again with him to be encircled in the robes of his righteousness and then we can go forward trusting in him.

Further Reading

Matthew Nickerson, "Nephi's Psalm: 2 Nephi 4:16–35 in Light of Form-Critical Analysis," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no. 2 (1997): 26–42.

2 Nephi 4:16 — Nephi Delights in the Word of God

Throughout this psalm there are *parallelistic couplets* identifiable by the way the lines break. Here the *soul* is parallel to *heart*, and *delighteth* is parallel to *pondereth*, and *things of the Lord* parallel *things which I have seen and heard*, which are the things of the Lord. This is not, however, a synonymous parallelism. This is a parallelism that intensifies. At first Nephi just delights, but then he ponders it. It is something heavier.

It is not just "the things of the Lord," but more than that—"the things which I have seen and heard." It's not distant things that the Lord has said to someone else, but it is now intensified with a more personal reception. We can follow that same pattern in our lives as we first delight, but then say, "I need to ponder." It must be done deeply and continually and in more than just a passing way.

2 Nephi 4:17 — A Subtle Wordplay

The word Lord here—whenever it appears in this Psalm—would be *Yahweh* in Hebrew, the word for Jehovah. And that is connected philologically to *I am*. So, there is a subtle connection between the great goodness and marvelous works of the Lord, I am, and Nephi's sober comparison, "O wretched man that I am." There is a play on ideas, if not play on words here, between that divine name of God, *I am*, compared to what I am.

2 Nephi 4:18–25 — Nephi Trusts in the Lord

Nephi worries here. He says, "I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me," and "when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins." But he then goes on to state that "nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted." "My God hath been my support."

Then Nephi leads us into a series of statements of what the Lord has done for him.

- He hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness
- He hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep
- He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh
- He hath confounded mine enemies, and unto the causing of them to quake before me
- He hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the night-time Upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man

Each of these are personal events in Nephi’s life. He has told us about these in 1 Nephi. So, this psalm is not simply a lyrical poem of abstract experiences. This offers a template for meaningful and successful prayer. When we remember things that God has done, we should not just say in one word, “Thanks.” We should give thanks and remember in detail the specific ways God has blessed in our personal lives.

2 Nephi 4:26–30 — Nephi Will Praise the Lord Forever

In the *Lectures on Faith*, Joseph Smith said that faith is mental exertion, not physical force. We have all done our part at lifting ourselves out of something, but ultimately it is the Lord who lifts us. And we have to be willing because God won’t yank us out of our problems or circumstances against our own will or desires. That’s a wonderful thing about what Nephi says here. He talks about God being with him, about the wonderful gifts he has received from God. Why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow and my flesh waste away and my strength slacken because of mine afflictions? Why should I yield to sin? And why should I give way to temptations? Why? Why? Why? And why am I angry because of my enemy? Awake my soul! Come on!

Much more, I will praise the Lord forever and I will rejoice in the rock of my salvation. There is great power in that moment when one yields to the welcoming enticings of the Lord and of the Spirit.

2 Nephi 4:31–35 — Nephi Petitions for Grace and Pledges His Loyalty

Nephi petitions the Lord, “wilt thou redeem my soul?” and “wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!” He also asks the Lord to “hedge not up my way but the ways of mine enemy” and “Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?” And, indeed, the Lord had made his enemies quake and shake in his presence, as we saw in 1 Nephi 17. Nephi himself

wants to shake the same way, but at the appearance of sin. Then “O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!” And “I will trust in thee forever.”

2 Nephi 5

The book of 2 Nephi is almost exclusively a book of sacred writings. It is comprised of inspired prophecies, spiritual teachings, divine revelations, and beautiful personal testimonies of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah. Here, on his small plates, Nephi turned toward spiritual things, as he and his righteous followers sought to find strength in the Lord and to establish themselves successfully in their new land of promise. Unlike the book of 1 Nephi, very little in the book of 2 Nephi deals with historical facts, political developments, or social tensions. Those types of worldly matters and concerns were reported by Nephi mainly on his large plates. The one exception to that rule is here in 2 Nephi Chapter 5, where Nephi establishes the pillars of his leadership over his people, as he became their ruler and teacher. Those pillars were (1) law, (2) authority, (3) temple, (4) kingship, (5) membership, and (6) record keeping. All of these organizational elements worked together to unite Nephi’s people (7) under God, building upon Him as their foundation.

2 Nephi 5:4–7 — Following Lehi’s Example, Nephi Departs

In how many ways does Nephi’s departure from the land of first inheritance echo Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem? (5:4–7). Both Lehi and Nephi left under threats of death (5:2, 4) because of their words (5:3); both were warned by the Lord to depart and flee into the wilderness (5:5); both took their families, took their tents, journeyed for many days, and pitched their tents (5:6–7). Might Nephi’s mentioning of these detailed similarities be significant in reflecting and fulfilling Nephi’s need to establish himself as Lehi’s legitimate successor? How might this pattern of obedient and organized response to serious threats help anyone in following the Lord’s prophet in fleeing from threats to spiritual dangers?

2 Nephi 5:10 — The Prominence of the Law among the Nephites

Why does Nephi specifically affirm that they kept the law of Moses “in all things”? What would be involved in doing this? From his sacrifice and deliverance in obtaining the plates of brass, Nephi knew the seriousness of obeying the law as completely as possible. Nephi’s determination in this regard set a strong precedent that ran through Nephite societies and governments in the lands of Nephi with King Noah, in Zarahemla under King Benjamin, and on down until the coming of Christ among the Nephites in Bountiful and his pronouncements regarding His giving and fulfilling of that law (3

Nephi 15). Nephi testifies that his people “did prosper exceedingly” in the land, as their crops and herds flourished (5:11), as the law in Deuteronomy particularly assured. How does it help promote righteousness and spirituality to strive to observe the requirements of the Lord with exactness?

Further Reading

John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2008), 12–16, 33–47.

2 Nephi 5:12–14 — Nephi’s Three Symbols of Authority

What three symbols of power and authority did Nephi take with him? (5:12–14). He mentions particularly (1) the plates of brass, (2) the Liahona, and (3) the sword of Laban. In many kingships throughout history, three elements have dignified royal authority, namely the book of the law, the orb or the world sphere, and the sword of defensive power and justice. What can these three symbols represent in our lives and in the world today, as we strive to make righteous judgments and to become kings and queens unto the most high God ourselves?

Further Reading

Gordon C. Thomasson, “Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 21–38.

2 Nephi 5:16 — The Temple’s Importance to the Nephites

In how many ways might it have been important for Nephi to build a temple “after the manner of the Temple of Solomon”? (5:16). Just as the answer to this question had many answers among the people of Nephi, one can appreciate how temple-building can and does deeply increase one’s devotion and commitment to eternal things in every land and among every people still today. Certainly, the temple was central in Lehi’s and Nephi’s world. It was the place where people gathered to be taught the law of the Lord, to express their loyalty to God and to their leaders, to make purifying sacrifices, to pray, and to experience and express joy. Life in Nephi’s world was almost unthinkable without a temple. And so, one of the very first things Nephi does when he establishes his new city was to construct a temple. Having been taught many useful building skills and becoming hard workers (5:15, 17), Nephi and his people, at great sacrifice, built a glorious temple, modeled after the Temple of Solomon. Although not as opulent, it was no less the House of the Lord. It was the center of life, devotion, and happiness for Nephi and his people. The temple is no less important in the world today, and maybe even more so.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 297–387.

2 Nephi 5:18 — Nephi’s Righteous Kingship

Why might Nephi have been reluctant to become a king? (5:18). He certainly knew that he had been cut out by the Lord to become a ruler and teacher over his brothers. But becoming a king would have been something else! Nephi had not been raised in the royal household. He was not of the tribe of Judah, let alone in the bloodline of King David. Kings were anointed and consecrated in coronation ceremonies (see Psalms 2), but who would have enthroned Nephi? Only the voice of God himself, elevating the new monarch to this high and holy office. Reading in Deuteronomy 17:14–20, Nephi would have learned the Lord’s scriptural handbook of instructions for his kings: read the law all the days of your life; and do not multiply wives, gold, silver, or possessions unto yourself. Considering Nephi’s humble example and the guidelines found in Deuteronomy, what qualities should be found in the character of good leaders of all kinds still today?

Further Reading

Taylor Halverson, “Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as Criteria for Book of Mormon Kingship,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 24 (2017): 1–10.

2 Nephi 5:23 — Maintaining Membership Markers

Kings or queens are nothing without an identifiable group of people who are willing to follow them. Maintaining a sense of belonging, social cohesion, loyalty, and membership is essential in forming any kind of organization, whether it be public or private, national or familial, social or religious. As their leader, Nephi did all that was within his power to help his people, and he needed to deter members of his small and fragile group from defecting back to their cousins. Especially because those family members who would not obey Nephi’s words were “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (5:20)—which would have meant that they should neither enter the temple of Nephi nor intermarry with the people of Nephi (compare Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:1)—it was important to the survival of that fragile society that those dissenters should “not be enticing” unto the people of Nephi (5:21). Their hearts were hard as flint; their hands were impure; but these social problems were not indelible. They were not innate. These defects could be overcome simply if those dissenters would “repent of their iniquities” (5:22). This concern, especially in antiquity, was not about any modern construct of the idea of race,

but was rather about ensuring generational obedience to the first commandment to have no other god before the Lord (Exodus 34:14–16).

2 Nephi 5:30–32 — The Acute Need for Accurate Records

Nephi gladly reports that his people “lived after the manner of happiness” (5:27), and he was told by the Lord to begin keeping a second set of records “for the profit of thy people” (5:30). Nephi’s obedience to this commandment distinctively guaranteed that his people would always be a record-keeping people. In modern times, the first instruction given to the Church upon its organization on April 6, 1830, only ten days after the Book of Mormon had come off the press, was that “there shall be a record kept among you” (D&C 21:1). And thus it has always been among the faithful. In addition to its religious purposes (1 Ne. 6:4–5; 9:5), sincere records also enhance our memory, provide wisdom in addressing social and political challenges, and will be one of the bases on which we will be judged according to our knowledge and accountability (see, for example, Mosiah 3:24).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is It Important to Keep Records?](#) (1 Nephi 9:5),” *KnoWhy* 345 (July 28, 2017).