

Chapter 1

{Original 1830 Chapter I—comprising modern Chapters 1—5}

[Note: At least 30 years after leaving Jerusalem, and from the location of the land of Nephi in the Americas, Nephi begins this record (the "Small Plates") with an abridgment of the record of his father Lehi (see 2 Nephi 5:27-31).]

*Nephi Sets Forth the Basis For Understanding His Record
Nephi Knew the "Mysteries" (the Covenant Way) of God
Nephi Knew that the Ancient Prophets Used Language
Culture & History to Convey Covenant Understanding*

- 1 [I **Nephi**] having been born _____ of **goodly parents** aa
[covenant language]
- therefore** [I **Nephi**] was **taught** somewhat
in **ALL** the **learning** of **my father** 01
- and** [I **Nephi**] having seen **MANY afflictions** in the course of **my days**
nevertheless having been **HIGHLY favored** of **the Lord**
in **ALL** _____ **my days** bb
- [A] **yea** [I **Nephi**] having had a **GREAT** _____ (**KNOWLEDGE**)
of the **goodness**
and [of] the **mysteries of God**
- [B] **therefore** [I **Nephi**] make a _____ (**record**) of my proceedings in **my days** cc
- 2 [C] **Yea** [I **Nephi**] make a _____ **record** in _____ the (**language**) of **my father**
- [D] _____ which **record** consists of the (**learning** of the **Jews**) [?]
[C] **and** the (**language**) of the **Egyptians**
[see historical commentary]
- 3 [B] **And** [I **Nephi**] _____ **KNOW**
that the (**record**) which
[I **Nephi**] make **is** **TRUE** [P= to be]
- and** [I **Nephi**] make it [the **record**] with mine own **hand** [duality - hand = a covenant sign for **truth**]
[A] **and** [I **Nephi**] make it [the **record**] according to my (**KNOWLEDGE**)
* * *

[Note: It is intriguing that a personal testimony that the content of the Book of Mormon is "true" is given by each of the three major abridgers of the book: (1) by Nephi – 1 Nephi 1:3, 14:30, 22:30; (2) by Mormon – Alma 3:12, 3 Ne. 8:1; and (3) by Moroni – Ether 5:1-3, Moroni 10:4,29. In Ether 5:4 we find: "And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established . . . and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day."]

[Par. aa – Like beginnings "I Nephi"]

[Par. cc – Circular repetition "record"]

[Heb. 01 – Hyperbole "ALL"]

[Par. bb – Contrasting lines]

and he [my father Lehi] saw
and heard MUCH

and because of the things
which he [my father Lehi] saw
and heard

he [my father Lehi] did quake
and [did] tremble exceedingly

05

7 And it came to pass

that he [my father Lehi] returned _____ to his own house at Jerusalem
and he [my father Lehi] cast himself upon his [own] bed

and [being overcome with the Spirit
and [being overcome by] the things

which he [my father Lehi] had _____ seen

*Lehi Has Another Vision – God on His Throne
The Lord & the Twelve Come to Earth*

8

and being thus overcome with the Spirit
he [my father Lehi] was carried away [in the Spirit]
in a dream* [P= vision]

even that he [my father Lehi] _____ saw the heavens open
and he [my father Lehi] thought he saw _____ God sitting
[in the heavens]
upon His [God's] throne
surrounded with numberless concourses of angels

in the attitude _____ of singing [singing = joyful] {AL}
and [of] praising their God [praising = thankful]

[Note: "Attitude " is archaic language for being in a position that implies an action or a mental state.]

9 And it came to pass

that he [my father Lehi] _____ saw One [Christ] Descending Out
of the Midst of Heaven

*And he [my father Lehi] _____ beheld
that His [Christ's] luster was above that
of the sun at noon-day

[Heb. 05 – The use of the word "exceedingly"]

[1 Nephi 1]

10 *and he [my father Lehi] also saw Twelve Others [or Christ's Apostles] following Him ee
 *and their brightness did exceed that
 of the stars in the firmament
 11 *And they [the Twelve Others and Christ]
 came down 06
 *and went forth upon the face of the earth

[Note: The verbs “came” and “went” above are examples of what is called the “prophetic perfect” tense. This is when prophets that have viewed something in vision speak of it in the “past” tense as if to stress the point that it definitely will happen. The above statement has a duality to it that implies not only Lehi’s time, but the Meridian of time.]

Christ Gives Lehi a Book Containing God's Covenant Plan of Salvation
Lehi Reads It – a Part Speaks of the Destruction of Jerusalem

*and The First [Christ] came
*and stood before my father [Lehi]

*and [The First-Christ] gave unto him [my father Lehi] _____ a book
*and bade him that he [my father Lehi] should read [the book]
[compare Ezek. 2:9; Rev. 5:1-5; 10:2,8-10]

12 *And it came to pass

that as he [my father Lehi] read [see the note at the end of the chapter]
he [my father Lehi] was filled with the Spirit of the Lord

13 And he [my father Lehi] read saying [Quote]

Wo wo unto Jerusalem 07
for I [Lehi] have seen thine abominations 08

Yea and MANY things
did my father [Lehi] _____ read _____ concerning Jerusalem
that it [Jerusalem] should be destroyed
and [that] the inhabitants there of [Jerusalem] [should be destroyed]

[and] MANY should perish by the sword
and MANY should be carried away captive into Babylon

[Note: There is duality here. While Babylon was a location, it also symbolized the captivity and depravity of Hell.]

14 And it came to pass

that when my father [Lehi] had read
and [had] seen MANY GREAT and marvelous things [P = saw] {AG}
he [my father Lehi] did exclaim MANY [GREAT and marvelous] things unto the Lord
such as [Quote] GREAT and marvelous are Thy works
O Lord God Almighty

[Par. ee – The use of many “and”s to connect lines]
[Heb. 06 – The use of the “prophetic perfect” tense]

[Heb. 07 – Duplication = amplified]
[Heb. 08 – Plurals = amplified]

and *Thy throne is high in _____ the heavens
 and *Thy power 09
 and [Thy] goodness
 and [Thy] mercy are over ALL the inhabitants of the earth ff
 [P= is]
 and because [that] Thou [O Lord God Almighty] art merciful [deleted 1837]
 Thou [O Lord God Almighty] wilt NOT suffer those
 who come unto Thee _____ that they shall perish

[Note: These quotes were apparently taken from the plates of Lehi, the translation of which was lost.]

15 And after this manner was the language
 of my father [Lehi] in the praising
 of His God [Almighty]
 for his _____ soul did rejoice 10
 and his whole heart was filled 11
 because of the things gg
 which he [my father Lehi] had seen
 yea [because of the things]
 which the Lord _____ had shown unto him [P= shewn]

[Note: Here a "soul" or "heart" substituting for what is meant ("Lehi") is an example of "metonymy."]

*Nephi's Record Is an Abridgment of the Record of Lehi
and an Account of His Own Life of Covenant Obedience*

16 And now
 [A] I [Nephi] do NOT make a full account of the things [Bookend] hh
 [B] which my father [Lehi] hath written ii
 [B] for he [my father Lehi] hath written MANY things
 [C] which he [my father Lehi] saw in visions
 [C] and [which] he [my father Lehi] saw] in dreams
 [B] and he [my father Lehi] also hath written MANY things
 [D] which he [my father Lehi] prophesied
 [D] and [which] he [my father Lehi] spake unto his children
 [A] of which [things]
 I [Nephi] shall NOT make a full account [Bookend]

[Heb. 09 – Repetition of possessive pronoun]

[Par. ff – Distribution list]

[Heb. 10 – Metonymy (1 thing for another)]

[Heb. 11 – Word pair]

[Par. gg – Circular repetition "things"]

[Par. hh – Inclusion or "Bookends"]

[Par. ii – Simple synonymous parallelism]

[1 Nephi 1]

17 **But** [A] I [Nephi] shall make an **account** of my proceedings
in my **days** jj
Behold [B] I [Nephi] make an **abridgment** of the **record** of my father [Lehi]
[C] **upon plates**
which I [Nephi] have **made**
[C] [upon **plates made**] with mine own hands

Wherefore
after [that] [B] I [Nephi] have **abridged** the **record** of my father [Lehi] [deleted 1837]
then [A] **will**
I [Nephi] **make an account** of mine own life [Editorial Promise]
[Adapted from Greg Wright (1976:2) and Donald Parry (1992:2)]

*The Jews Mock Lehi for Declaring Covenant Disobedience
and Prophesying Destruction*

18 **Therefore** I [Nephi] **would** 12
that ye [plural] **should know**
that after the Lord had **shown** so MANY marvelous things unto [P= shewn]
my father Lehi
yea _____ [so MANY marvelous things]
concerning the _____ **destruction** of Jerusalem [duality]

[Note: Jerusalem represents a geographical locality, but Jerusalem also represents the location of the temple and thus the center of the covenant promise between the Lord and his covenant people.]

Behold he [my father Lehi] _____ **went forth** among the [covenant] people 13
and [he my father Lehi **began to** **prophecy** 14
and [he my father Lehi **began to** **declare** unto them [the covenant people]
concerning the things
which he [my father Lehi] had both **seen**
and **heard**

Lehi's Testimony of Christ Is Rejected and His Life Sought

19 **And** **it came to pass** **that** the Jews **did mock him**
because of the things
which he [my father Lehi] _____ **testified**
of them [the Jews]
for [he my father Lehi truly **testified**
of their **wickedness**
and [of] their **abominations**

[Par. jj – Chiastic or inverse parallelism

[Heb. 12 – Use of the word “Therefore” to initiate]

[Heb. 13 – Use of the word “Behold” to initiate]

[Heb. 1 – Use of the words “began to”]

And [he my father Lehi] _____ testified 15
that the things
which he [my father Lehi] _____ saw
and heard
and also the things
which he [my father Lehi] _____ read in the book
manifested plainly
of the coming of A Messiah
[the Redeemer of the world]
and [manifested plainly] also
[of] the redemption of the world

20 And when the Jews heard these things
[that he my father Lehi _____ saw
and heard
and read in a book]

yea they [the Jews] were angry with him _____ [*my father Lehi]
[they the Jews were angry] even as with *the prophets of old 16 17

whom they [the Jews] had cast out kk
and [whom they the Jews had] stoned LL
and [whom they the Jews had] slain

and they [the Jews] also sought his life [duality]
that they [the Jews] might take it [his life] away

[Note: In the above statement, Nephi compares “my father Lehi” with “the prophets of old.” The circular repetition of the term “my father Lehi” emphasizes Lehi’s link with the “fathers” of old.” Additionally, the parallel structure shows, that “my father Lehi” is actually aligned with the prophets of old. This is an example of a Hebraism called “synecdoche,” but is better remembered as “a part that refers to or designates the whole.” That is, Lehi is an example of the “prophets.” But in turn, the prophets represented Christ, and proclaimed the coming of a Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. The Jews not only sought the life of the prophets, but they sought to destroy or “take away” the message of the coming of Christ—thus the duality. The words “of old” make the various prophets of any age “part of the whole.”]

Note* Although not always warranted, I have purposely used the extended phrase “he my father Lehi” in a circular repetitive manner in this chapter in order to emphasize that Nephi is abridging the Record of Lehi (or “his father Lehi.” Moreover, in doing so it is my hope to also associate the name “Lehi” with the Abrahamic covenant. Some might term this superfluous repetition of words “tautology,” and in a way they are right, but here in this chapter I think my purpose outweighs my fault.]

[Heb. 15 – To repeat “testified” 3 times = highest degree]

[Par. kk – Working out]

[Heb. 16 – Simile (“as”) = comparison]

[Par. LL – Repetition “they” or “the Jews”]

[Heb. 17 – Synecdoche = a part designates the whole]

[Comment – Promise]

The Lord Will Deliver His Righteous Covenant People

But **behold** I **Nephi** will **show** unto you [covenant language – *Nephi’s Intent*] [P= *shewn*]
that the tender mercies of **the Lord** are over ALL **those** [P = is over all *them*] {AG}
 whom **He** [**the Lord**] hath **chosen**
 because of their **faith** [in **the Lord**]
 to make them **mighty**
 even unto the **power** of **deliverance**
 * * *

[Note: Nephi has just given the definition of what constitutes a “chosen” people. It is available to ALL; it involves covenants with the Lord, faith in the Lord, and a will to do and be what the Lord commands them to do and be.]

[Note: Skousen (*History of the Text:Part 3, 2018, p. 10*) proposes that the phrase “goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1) might also imply “wealthy parents.”]

[Note: According to H. Clay Gorton, 1 Nephi 1:13-14 can be viewed as a contrasting **inverted parallelism**. A brief outline of the pertinent elements is as follows:

- 13 A And **he read**, saying: **Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations!**
- B Yea, and **many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.**
- 14 B And it came to pass that when **my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as**
- A **Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!**

(H. Clay Gorton, *A New Witness for Christ: Chiastic Structures in the Book of Mormon, 1997, p. 127.*)

[Note: One of the most obvious and consistent examples of parallelism in the Book of Mormon is the initiator “And it came to pass,” which I have highlighted in yellow and aligned at the left margin of the page. While it is a literary link to the King James Bible, its rate of use in the Book of Mormon is almost eight times higher (KJV = 625 /1590 pages BofM = 1494/531 pages). The phrase “and it came to pass is repeated over 200 times in First Nephi alone. Much of the time it can be considered to be a parallel line form which I have termed a “like paragraph beginning” (see for example **1 Nephi 1:4,5,6,7,9**), however I do not always footnote it.]

[Note: According to Donald Parry (2007:2-3), **1 Nephi 1:15-18** is an example of a **complex chiasmic parallelism**. A brief outline of the parallel phrases is as follows:

- 15 And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God
 for his soul did rejoice
 and his whole heart was filled because of the things
A which he had seen
B the Lord had shown
- 16 **C** _____ **1.** I [**Nephi**]do not make a full account
D _____ **2.** my father hath written
3. hath written many things
4. visions
4' dreams
3' hath written many things
2' he prophesied and spake
- 17 **E 1'** I [**Nephi**]shall not make a full account
E' a. I [**Nephi**]shall make an account
of my proceedings in my days
D' _____ **b.** abridgment of the record
c. I have made
c' mine own hands
b' abridged _____ the record
C' _____ **a'** I [**Nephi**]make an account
of mine own life
- 18 **B'1.** the Lord had shown
2. things
3. people
4. to prophesy
4' to declare
3' them
2' things
A' _____ **1'** he had . . . seen
-

[1 Nephi 1]