

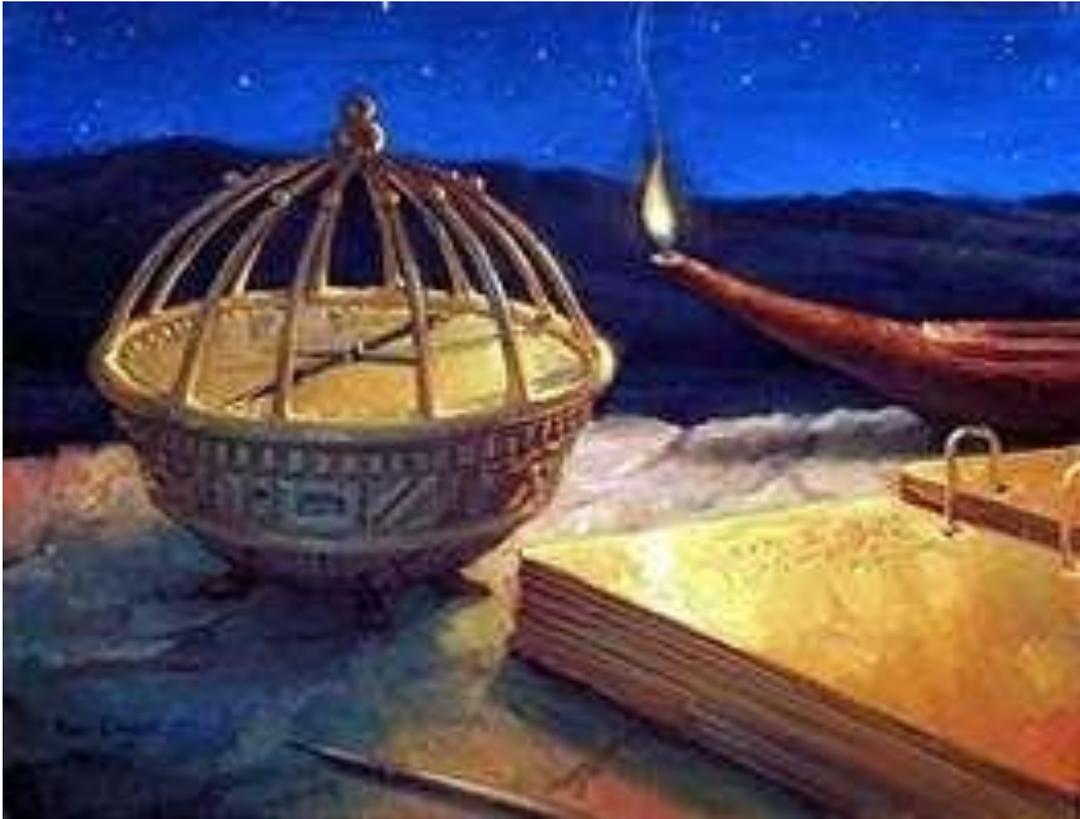
# The Liahona

Miracles by Small Means

Chapter 1

Questions Regarding the Liahona

## Can the Scriptures Support a Magnetic Liahona?



<http://www.ldsinfertility.org/on-my-mind-why-a-tree/>

In these beginning chapters of my book, I attempt to briefly address what the Book of Mormon text specifically has to say about the Liahona, and a number of pertinent questions that might be raised as to the possibility that the Liahona was magnetic. I am fully aware that my assertions are impossible to prove, especially when compared to a "miraculous" Liahona which can be "miraculously" adapted to whatever the text says. But I believe some insights might be gained here.

Question#1  
Should I speculate  
when the scriptures seem silent?

Question #1. Should I speculate about a magnetic Liahona when the scriptures seem silent in this regard?



<http://www.mormonchannel.org/scripture-stories/1>

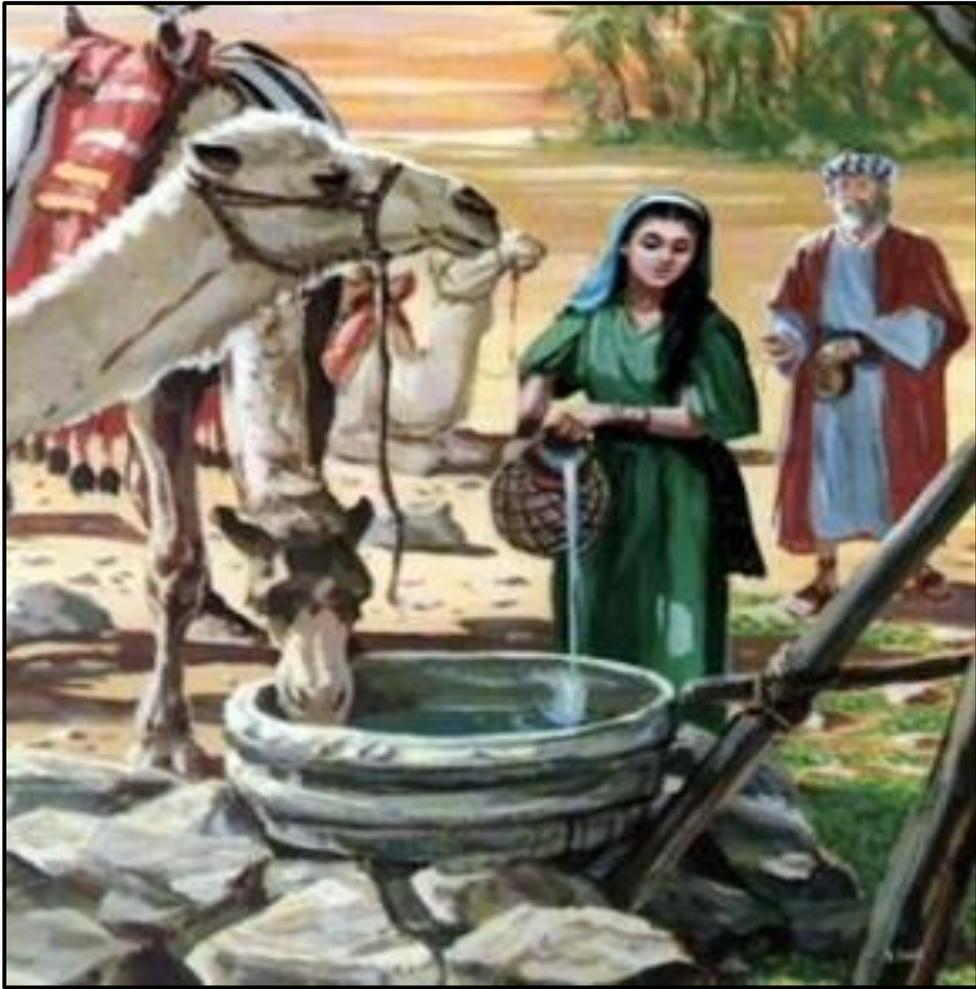
## Lehi's Family Leaves Jerusalem

According to 1st Nephi, Lehi's party spent 8 years in the wilderness. I love this picture of Lehi's family departing from Jerusalem, yet the artist has taken quite a few liberties that are not specified in the text. For example, in the text no camels are mentioned. Nor are sheep mentioned.



## Tents Could Weigh up to 500 lbs

But how does one transport tents that weigh up to 500 lbs? And how does one offer sacrifices or sustain themselves without any sheep?



<http://childrenschapel.org/biblestories/rebekah.html>

## Watering Camels = People

In the text, no people other than family members are mentioned, despite the fact that travel in the Arabian desert is governed by water, and all water sources are claimed by people. There is no chance of traveling the length of the Frankincense Trail without running into people.

## Text Lacking

### Valley of Lemuel to Bountiful

#### 34 Verses

As with most history, it can be said that the historical text of the Book of Mormon is lacking in size. A number of the Nephite record-keepers said as much. For example, for the trip from the Valley of Lemuel to Bountiful, in which Nephi was dependent upon the Liahona seemingly every day, the text consists of only 34 verses. And only 16 verses are used to describe an ocean voyage that would have taken many months, if not years. In the rest of the Book of Mormon narrative, there are relatively few verses related to the Liahona.

Matthew 7:7

Ask -- it shall be given you

Seek – ye shall find

Knock – it shall be opened unto you

So is there anything to gain by speculating about the Liahona? I think Matthew, chapter 7, verse 7 provides some guidance:

Ask and it shall be given you

Seek and ye shall find

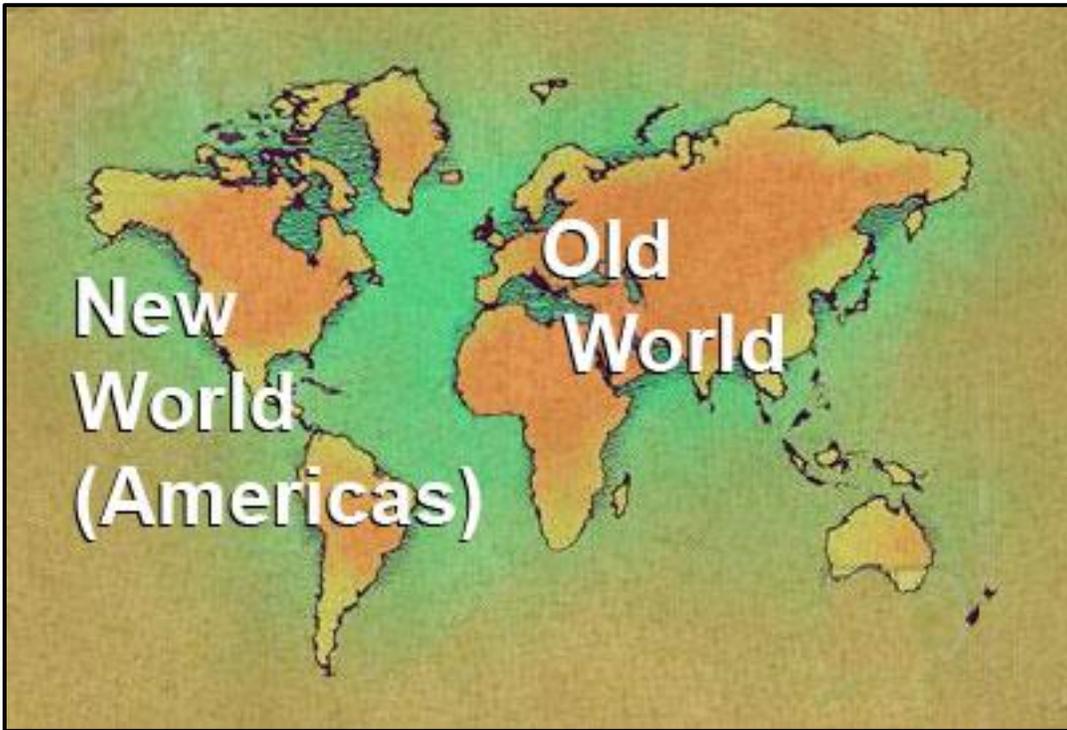
Knock and it shall be opened unto you

I consider these steps to be a continuing chronological process, open-ended in time and truth.

## Question #2

Why did the Liahona appear  
at the time and place that it did?

Question #2. Why did the Liahona appear at the time and place that it did?



<http://www.geozoo.org/Topics/Homes>

## Many Waters Separated Old World & New World

We have previously discussed how Nephi was taken up onto an exceedingly high mountain where he received a vision of the future related to his calling. In that vision he learned that "Many waters" separated his Old World from the New World or Promised Land (1 Ne. 13:12)

## Nephi Would Need an Ocean-going Ship

1. Construction Materials
2. Construction Expertise
3. Navigational Expertise
4. A Political climate to accomplish this

In other words, Nephi would need an ocean-going ship. Thus Nephi would need to go where there were ship-construction materials, ship-building experts, ocean-going navigational experts, and where the political climate was right for attempting such a project.



<http://www.faithcrc.net/?m=201209>

### Option #1: Tyre or Sidon

To Nephi at this time there were seemingly only two locations with the capability to build an ocean-going ship. One of these was north with the Phoenicians at the port of Tyre or Sidon. But that would mean going back through Jerusalem and right through the Babylonian controlled countryside. So that option was not viable.

### Main Trade Routes in Lehi's Time



### Option #2: Southward

The other option was at the southern end of what is termed the Frankincense Trail, where ocean-going ships took on loads of incense.



Satellite Image: Huge Cliffs at Khor Rori

George Potter and Richard Wellington have proposed the Book of Mormon site of Bountiful in the Old World to be the ancient port of Khor Rori in southeastern Arabia (Dhofar, Oman) for a number of reasons. This satellite view of Khor Rori illustrates the massive cliff outcroppings which shield the inlet from the monsoon storms, perfect for shipbuilding.

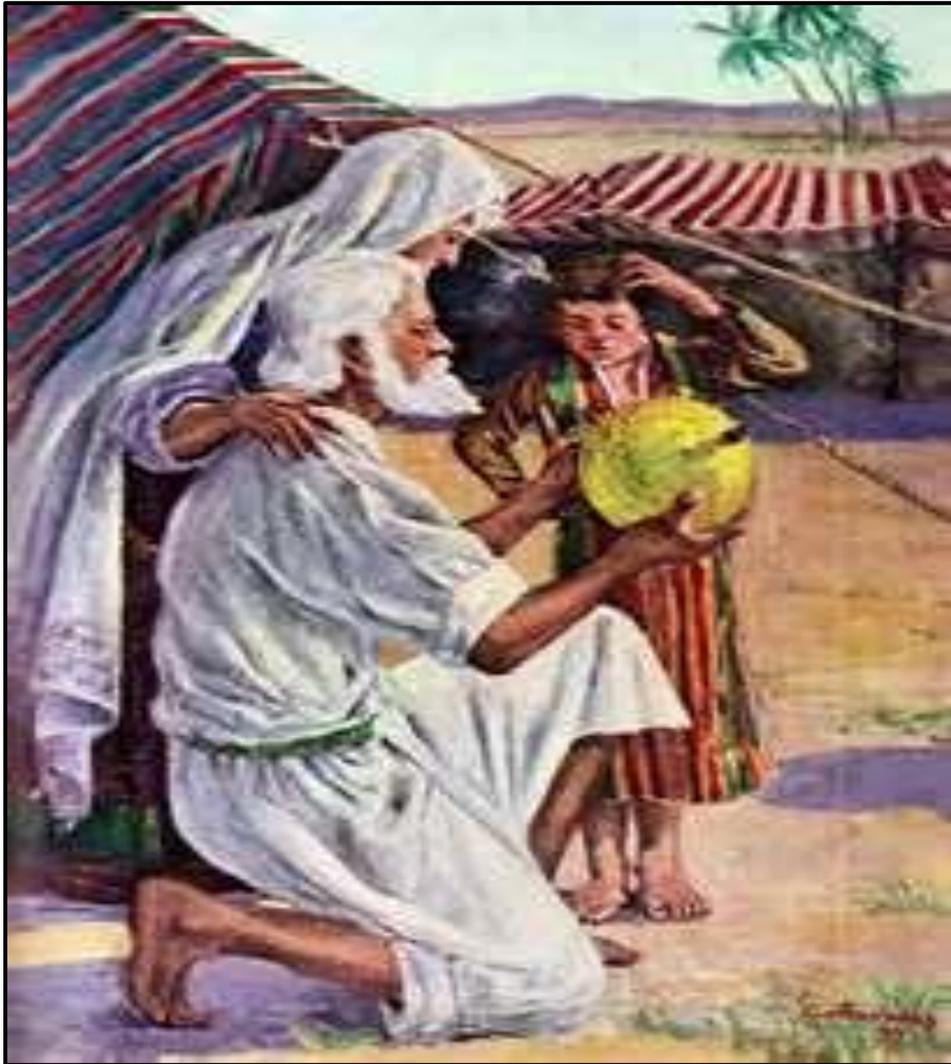


Destination: Khor Rori, Dhofar

By joining a formal caravan, Lehi's family could have reached their destination in about 90 days. But Nephi knew that even if he was given a ship, he didn't know how to navigate it or repair it, so Nephi chose to take much longer traveling through the desert. He records that he spent 8 years in the wilderness. This added time would give him the needed navigational training-- reading the sun, the moon, the stars, and, oh yes the Liahona, without the need to risk a one-of-a-kind ship along with all of his family.

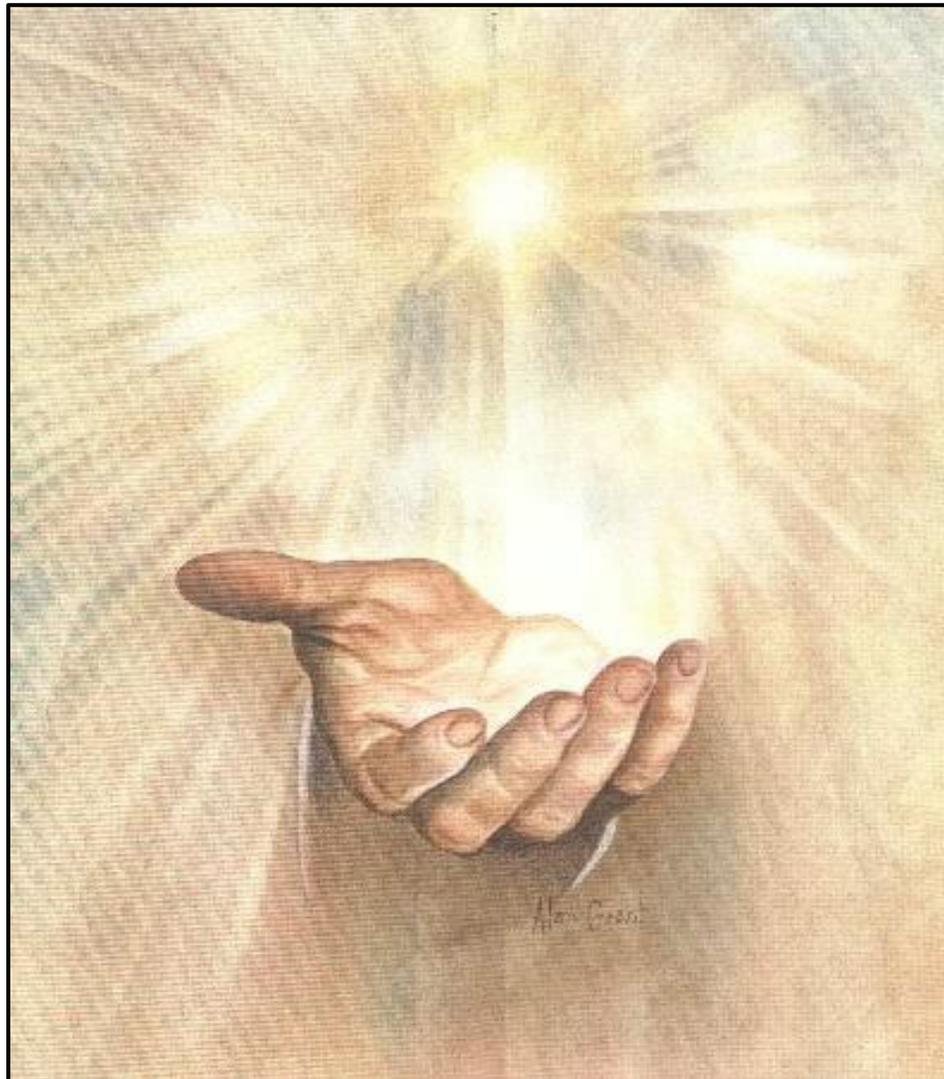
Question #3  
Who made the ball  
(director, compass, or Liahona)?

Question #3 Who made the Liahona (referred to also as a ball, a director, and a compass)? There are some options worth discussing.



### Option #1: The Lord Himself

Option #1: The Liahona might have been totally prepared and delivered by the Lord himself. Indeed in three places, Book of Mormon writers state that the Liahona QUOTE "had been prepared by the hand of the Lord" (1 Ne 18:12, 2 Ne 5:12 , Mos 1:16). Certainly the Lord can do anything, but is that phrase meant to be literal or symbolic?



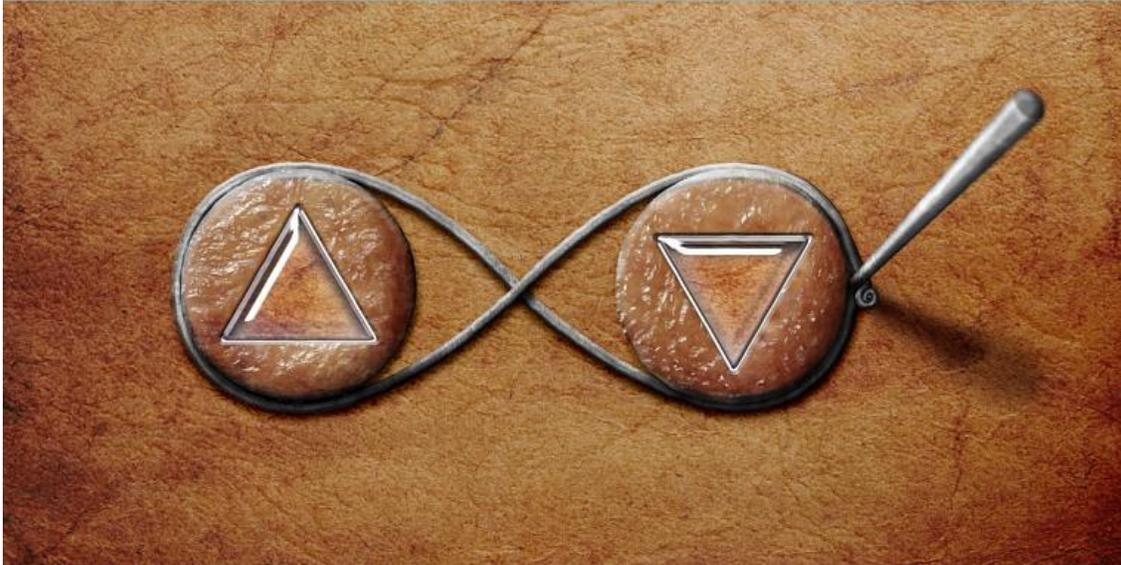
## Literally Transported By The Hand of the Lord?

Interestingly we find in Omni 1:16 that the People of Zarahemla (who we also refer to as the Mulekites) were QUOTE "brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters." almost the exact words used to describe the origin of the Liahona. So did the Lord literally pick the Mulekites up in his hand and transport them to the Americas? Did they magically appear one morning in the Americas just like some teach that the Liahona appeared magically one morning at Lehi's tent door? I haven't heard one person teach as much about the Mulekites.



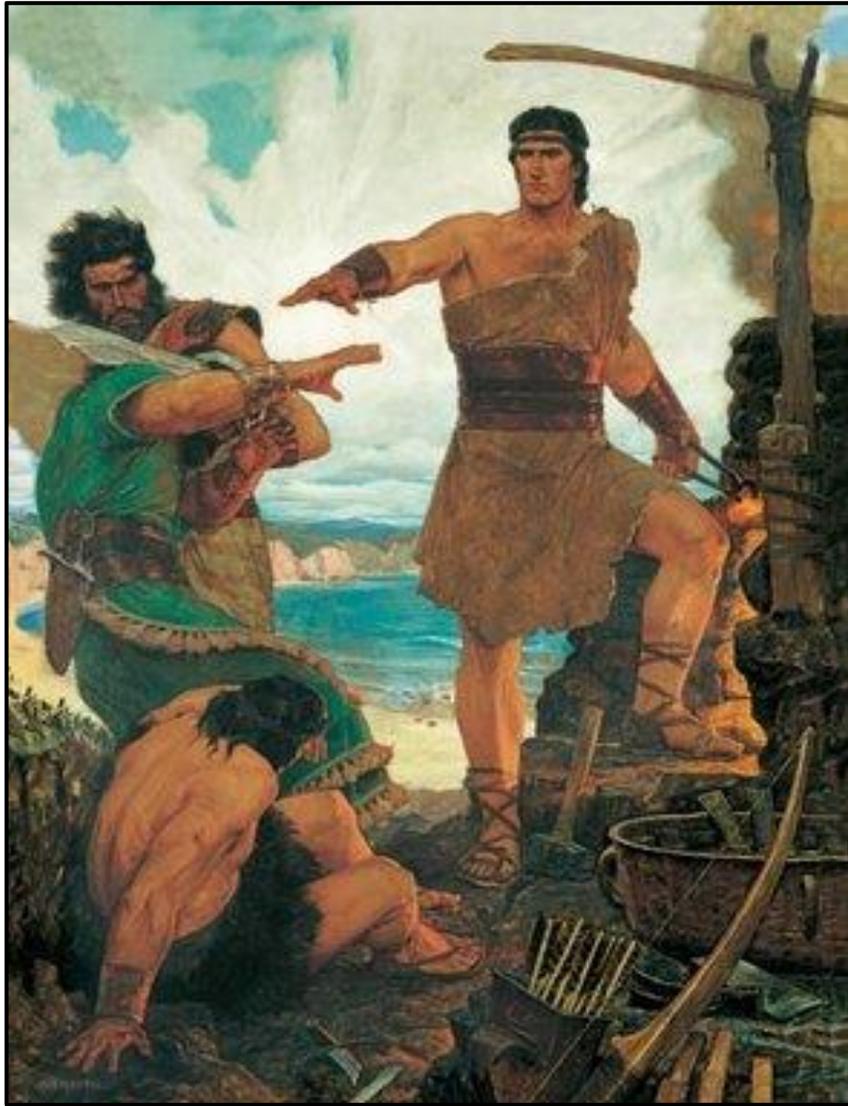
## Option #2: An Angel

Option #2: The Liahona could have been delivered by an angel, similar to Moroni delivering the plates and other sacred items to Joseph Smith. Along this same line of reasoning, and according to Mosiah chapter 28, although multiple Nephite record-keepers had preserved the plates and sacred items, passing them along to the next chosen person, these sacred things (which included the Liahona) were said to be QUOTE "kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord." Interestingly, among these sacred items were two stones, called Interpreters, that were said to have been QUOTE "prepared from the beginning," and "handed down from generation to generation" as a testament to the covenants associated with the Promised Land.



## The Interpreters

In the Book of Mormon narrative, the Interpreters were first given to the Brother of Jared by the Lord, and are associated with the Jaredites, who possessed the Promised Land before the time of Nephi. The Interpreters are not mentioned in relation to the Nephites until the times of King Mosiah. Yet intriguingly, according to Mosiah chapter 8, King Mosiah possessed these stones apparently before the records of the destroyed Jaredite nation. That is, before the 24 plates of Ether were ever presented to him. Thus the question can be asked, How did King Mosiah get these stones? Did an angel deliver them to him? Perhaps this was the case with the Liahona also. Perhaps like the Interpreters, the Liahona was prepared from the beginning and passed from one official caretaker to another, even if it required an angel to do so.



### Option #3: Nephi

Option #3: Nephi made and delivered the Liahona himself. Apparently, Nephi had metallurgical expertise, because later when the Lord commanded him to build a ship, he only asked where to find ore, NOT what to do with it. Interestingly, some time after leaving the Valley of Lemuel, Laman & Lemuel complained that Nephi was trying to become a ruler over them. According to First Nephi 16:38 they charged that QUOTE "He worketh many things by his cunning arts that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure." This begs the question, what had Nephi worked by his cunning arts to deceive their eyes? And how could Nephi claim to be a King with so few people in Lehi's party?



## Symbols of Kingship

RECORDS (Rightful Heir)

WORD (Defender)

ORB (World Ruler)

CROWN (Glory from God)

Historians note that through the ages there have been certain symbols of Kingship. #1: Records, which established one's claim as rightful heir. #2: A royal scepter or sword, which made one a defender of the people. #3: An orb which symbolized that one was ruler over the world, and #4: A crown, which symbolized the glory given one by God.



## Kingship Regalia

Here is another representation of the Kingship regalia.



## Nephi's Symbols of Kingship

Brass Plates

Sword of Laban

Liahona

Visited by an Angel

What would have represented Nephi's Regalia? #1: Nephi had the Brass Plates (or the records of the Tribe of Joseph). #2: He had the Sword of Laban. #3: He had the ball or Liahona. and #4: He had been crowned with Visions from the Lord.

While three of these four items might seem remarkable, one might wonder what made the sword of Laban so special. Interestingly, according to Jewish tradition, Abraham is said to have inherited an antediluvian sword by which he QUOTE "conquered the kings." The sword was passed down to Isaac and Jacob (or Israel) by birthright, and then to Israel's son Joseph. Laban was the caretaker of the records of the Tribe of Joseph, so had he become the caretaker of the antediluvian sword? Perhaps there are clues in the narrative. Apparently, Laban had broken his covenant promises as he lay symbolically drunken and fallen on the ground, and he was to suffer the consequences. Significantly, and seemingly in accord with covenant ritual, Nephi slew Laban with Laban's own sword. Then Nephi symbolically put on Laban's robes. Nephi also took Laban's sword with him. He also spoke in the voice of Laban as he obtained the brass plates.

Question: Did Nephi now have claim to the birthright of the tribe of Joseph? One can argue as much. And did Nephi have the right to Kingship over the House of Israel? At this point, all that was lacking of the Kingship regalia was the Liahona.

## LAW OF STEWARDSHIP

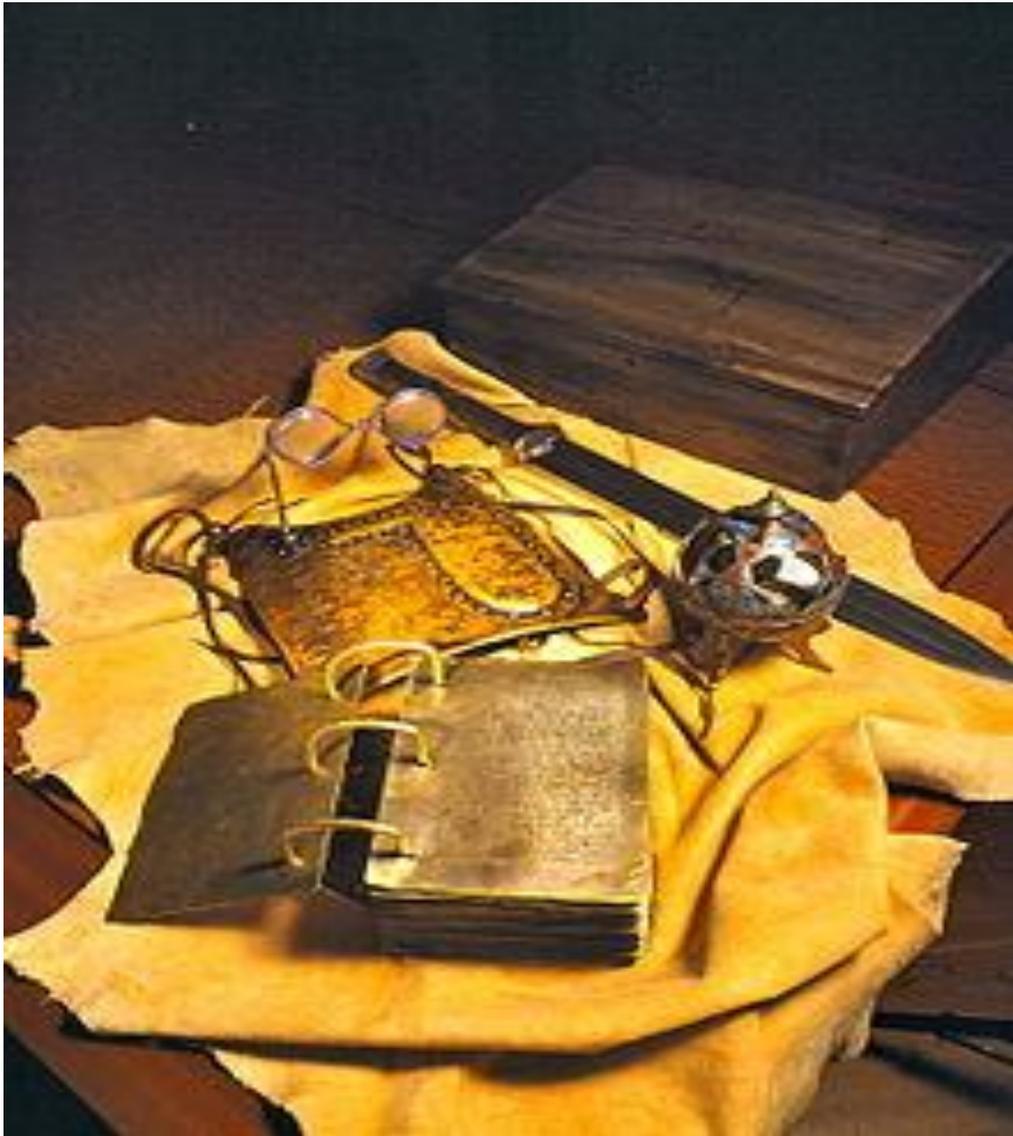
The Lord won't do for man  
what man can do for himself

The Law of Stewardship says that the Lord won't do for man what man can do for himself. Nephi had personally retrieved the records and the sword of Laban, although with the inspiration of the Lord. Did Nephi also make the Liahona with inspiration from the Lord? Apparently Laman and Lemuel certainly thought that Nephi was capable of doing so as we have previously discussed.



## Nephi forging the Large Plates

One might keep in mind that it was Nephi who would forge both the small plates and the large plates as well as the tools to construct the ship. Second Nephi chapter 5 tells us that Nephi taught his people to QUOTE "work in all manner of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores." It seems that Nephi was certainly capable of making a brass ball.

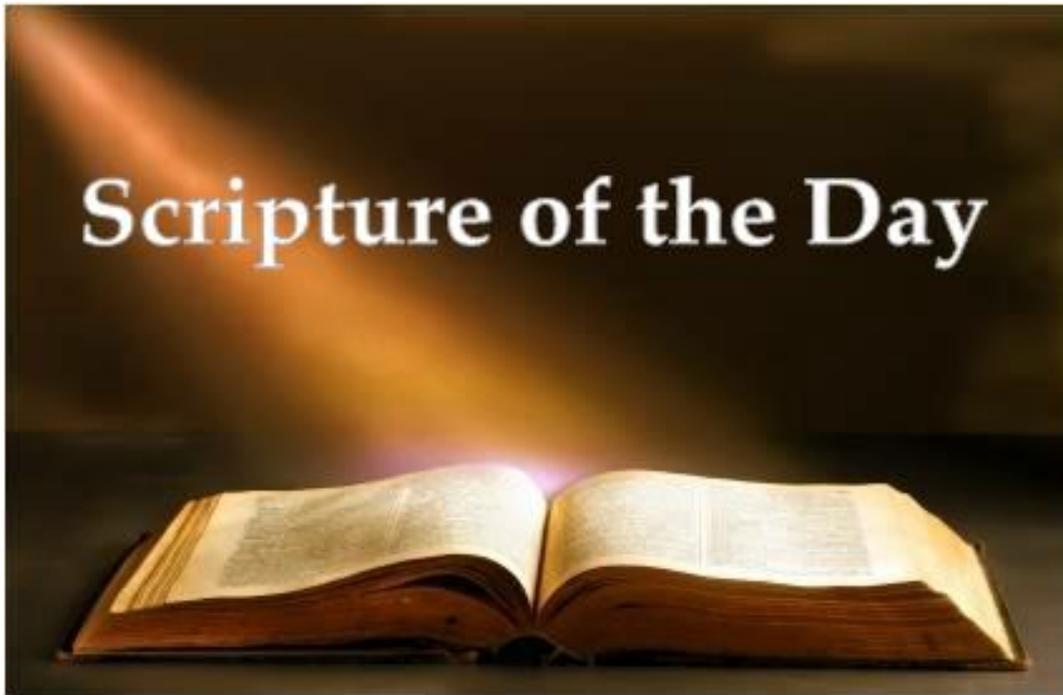


## Regalia of Moroni and Joseph Smith

One last thought before I leave this question. Intriguingly, Nephi's Regalia was passed down from Nephi to his literal descendant Moroni.(M 1:5) Does this say anything about Moroni's birthright and authority? Eventually, Moroni, now in angelic form, would present these items to Joseph Smith. Does this say anything about Joseph's birthright and authority? Was Joseph Smith also a literal heir from the tribe of Joseph?

Question #4  
Did writing appear miraculously  
on the ball?  
(1 Ne 16:26-29)

Question #4: Did writing appear miraculously on the ball? (1 Ne 16:26-29) While it has been taught that the words of the Lord miraculously appeared on the ball, the scriptures only state that the words were written and changed from time to time. But by whom? Nephi had at his disposal the brass plates. Yet these plates were written in Egyptian characters, and only Lehi and Nephi seemed to be able to read them (1 Ne 1:2, Mos. 1:4) Lehi and Nephi would then have sought opportunity to teach what they learned to the rest of the family.



Is it too much of a stretch to imagine Nephi placing a "scripture of the day" on the Liahona for the benefit of everyone who gave heed to the message? Are there not scriptural passages that have caused us to fear and tremble, just as the words on the ball did so to members of Lehi's group, according to the text?